

# A LEGEND MISCONSTRUED

*Ervad Darius N. Sethna*

An article entitled 'Parsi Facts' appeared in the supplement of Sunday Times dated 17th November, 1991. Written by Meher Marfatia. Amongst many ambitious things it mentioned the following :-

"Legend has it that the Emperor Akbar so admired the Parsi Religion that he actually had his own Navjote Ceremony performed. When the benevolent Mughal conceived the eclectic Din-E-Ilahi, he invited various heads of faith to share their tenets. Navsarl's Dastur Meherji Rana explained Zoroastrianism to the ruler, who was impressed enough to undergo the sacred thread ceremony, for a first hand experience of the religion's ethos".

Like most 'Legends' nothing can be further away from the truth, as there is no historical evidence or documented record of any kind whatsoever to substantiate this figment of imagination of the Parsis.

This 'Legend' emerged as a myth during the Victorian era when certain Parsi poets and thinkers poetically and figuratively glorified the incident of Akbar Padshah's meeting with our Dastur Meherji Rana.

One such poetry which is well versed amongst the parsis proclaimed that the great ruler Akbar became a wearer of 'Sudh-rae' (the sacred garment placed upon a child's body for the first time during the performance of the sacred navjote ceremony).

The other meaning of the word 'SUDH-RAE' is right path and even straight path - hence- what the illustrious Mughal Emperor Akbar conceived was not Din-E-Ilahi as quoted by the writer, but the enlighten-

ment of the right path - pure path and straight path - leading to righteousness, as explained by our revered Dastur-E-Dasturan Meherji Rana according to the Zoroastrian philosophy.

## ***In Fact***

1. The Holy Koran forbids any person who embraces the noble Islamic faith by birth or through choice, to forsake their Islamic religion that for any other. Penalty for such an act is punishable by death. Surely, the great and wise Mughal King Akbar being devout muslim would not commit such a cardinal crime against his own faith by adopting the Zoroastrian religion - no matter how much he was impressed or admired the teachings of the Zoroastrian religion.

2. CONVERSION-INTER-MARRIAGE and acceptance of 'JUDDINS' (people of different religion) into the Zoroastrian faith is totally forbidden by the doctrines, tenets, customs and traditions of the Parsi Zoroastrian Faith. Any such act is considered as a paramount sin against the laws of purity of nature. Surely, a great Dastur-E-Dasturan Meherji Rana would not and could not have been a part to such an act as to perform the sacred navjote ceremony of a devout muslim - King or otherwise. Navjote ceremonies performed of mixed breed children created by inter-marriages by some corrupt and unworthy parsi priests - is also not recognised as legal by the religious order and not accepted by the Zoroastrian community at large.

Hence, with respect, this Legend of the Great King Akbar and Dastur Meherji Rana is often Misconstrued.