

"GOD SCATTERS BEAUTY AS HE SCATTERS FLOWERS O'ER THE WIDE EARTH AND TELLS US ALL ARE OURS."

A RETREAT IN CANADA AT THE FEET OF ASHO ZARATHUSHTRA.

Greetings, my dear reader, wherever you are!

Your humble servant has just returned from Canada and U.S.A. From 9th October to 16th October 1999, a 'retreat' was organised by Silloo Mehta of "Mazdayasni Connection." California. This was the 9th such retreat in North America. It was held in Canada at a beautiful spot near Ottawa, which is a camp-ground owned by our friends, Freny and Keki Bulsara, an adventurous and enterprising couple. A camp ground is a place where the tourists bring their campers i.e. huge van type automobiles which can be converted to mini-houses. The sole aim of these visitors is to enjoy the beauty of the Mother-Earth, to hand over one-self into the hands of God, acting through groves of trees, small paths, a big lake, and breath taking scenery all around.

What a piece of Spenta Armaiti it is! The music of Kardeh 8 of Haptan Yashta is silently going around. It is so silent that one can hear the rhythm of one's own breath. It feels as if a stage is set for Ahuramazda's divine voice to be heard. And then suddenly a cool breeze touches the face and the voice is whispered in the ears - the sweet sound of moving leaves on the trees. Look up to the trees and now the eyes are rewarded by a spread of amazing colours of the autumn leaves. What colours!! Every hue, every wave-length of red, orange and yellow is present. Suddenly the sun comes out of a huge silvery cloud and the moving leaves glitter this time in shining colours.

The sages and poets have sung that you can reach God through your eyes and ears. Hear His Music and see His Beauty. They have said, "You, my God, have thrown me out of your divine Home, so that I can see your beauty. You say this is your illusion. May it be so. But if your illusion is so beautiful, how beautiful You yourself must be. Is this beauty of yours your invitation to burn myself in separation from you? No! It can't be illusion; shall I say it is your handwriting? If so, it is a handwriting which changes every second! The same beauty spot changes so rapidly! You are a forger and your forgery pushes me to you."

No! This is no handwriting, no forgery. Are these not the **points of attunement with Thee, my Lord?** Haptan yasht says so. We attune ourselves with all your seven rainbow colours called 'Ameshaspend's; with your streams of singing waters and their unknown sources; with these paths which curve into the unknown; with those majestic mountains which store your divine energy; with those twinkling stars; those birds bursting out in songs; that roaring sea; this green-ness of your trees, and the trees themselves which are your frozen blessings.....

Did you know, my dear reader, how beautifully the beauty of Ahuramazda is described in Kardeh 8 of the Haptan Yashta? No? Then come to Ilm-e-Khshnoom. You will have a beauty-bath in the roaring Naigara and the cooling stream; in the blazing sun and the glittering fire; in the food and water before you; in your own breath and heart throb.

Sorry! But see how I was carried away just at the thought of Freny-Keki's camp ground!

In the presence of such stunning Beauty, I spoke for about 7 days. Do you know what my subject was? Asho Zarathushtra! His Glory and His Miracles! "Gadaa va Afdih" as the inspired Pahalvi writers say. (They have taken these transformed words from the lost Avesta Spend Nask, corresponding to the 13th word of "Yatha Ahoo Vairyo" prayer, "Angha-eush".)

THE CONCEPT

Before I give you some idea about what I spoke, I would like to tell you about the concept of a religious camp. Silloo likes to call it a 'retreat'. **You take a break from your daily arduous life and just for a few days deliver yourself into the hands of Ahuramazda and Asho Zarathushtra and our Daenaa or Din or**

Religion. It is a spiritual holiday. Few of us stay together, pray together, eat together and have nothing but the thoughts of the divine for a few days. All worries, all anxieties, all confusions, all battles of life are packed up, placed on your home-shelf, and almost forgotten. There is a God's shelf within us. We bring it down and place it in our mind. We wipe away the layers of forgotten dust from it. We enter into some divine subject like say, Sudreh Kushti or Manthra Prayers like Gah, Niyaish, Yasht, kriya-kaam, Meher Patet, Yazata, Asho Zarathushtra or any other. **Whatever the subject be, we come face to face with such questions: what are all these toils and turmoils of life? Why am I here on this globe like it is a motel or Dharama-shalaa? Has life any meaning? Where did I come from? Where am I going? Why death? What is it? What are these religious commands? Why these 'Tarikat's and do's and don't's?** As these questions unfold, we gradually become conscious of the answers to the riddle of life. There is an aim and a purpose. How do we act and behave so as to go nearer to the aim? The hazy cloud of confusion disappears. We suddenly feel that we could have lived our lives more peacefully and cheerfully than so far lived, whatever adversity or calamity might have throttled us. And then we are energised to live our future life in a much better way. **An awakening dawns on us. Religion is not something of just a side-line. It is not only a part of life, but life itself. Whatever I think, speak or do should be such that I may gift it to Ahuramazda....**

This is the idea behind our camps or retreats. There is an inherent call: wake up, awaken, illuminate; shift your perspective; abide by the commands of the Din, and above all **open up the fountains of devotion hidden in the dense jungles of your mental confusion.**

In our retreats, we (Silloo and I) emphasise that Religion, that is life itself, is a tricoloured phenomenon: Knowledge, Duty and Devotion. On the knowledge part, we provide some data and materials from the mystical sciences. About the duty-part we suggest ways, means and exercises for day to day life emphasizing that every thought, word and deed in the daily second-to-second life must be based on Din. And on the devotion part we do try to inspire in you an ardent devotion for Asho Zarathushtra, His Din and Ahuramazda. **There it becomes an exercise to awaken Zarathushtra consciousness in you.** Needless to say that the undercurrent is Khshnoom; but we also take you into the territories of other great Religions and Mysticism, and even of most modern physical and biological sciences.

NO POMP OF CONGRESSES

You will please see that this concept is entirely different from the Zoroastrian congresses and conferences, which are often held by Parsis in different parts of the world. There it is a mass scholarly affair devoid of any attempt to awaken spirituality. One pompous aim is declared: we preserve the Parsi culture and we want to be proud of our religion. Both these are misplaced. **Cultures are preserved through the spirituality and religious awakening and practices.** None of these is touched in these congresses. The participants while going home have not gained anything. While in our retreats every participant returns with a lot of spirituality awakened in him or her. They discuss while going home, what noble, divine and mystical thoughts passed in their minds, what beauties of the Din they came across, and how at times their eyes moistened with devotion. Nothing absolutely nothing of the kind in those congresses. From day one while organising them, politics starts its game and aggravates as they end. That is not Religion, my friends, and not the way to survive.

"To be proud of Religion" also has no meaning. Pride goes before the fall; and such misplaced ideas inherently lead to belittling other great Religions. **Parsis can survive if and only if they generate a community field of their own** - a morphogenic, non-local field where every member of the Community is connected with every other through a kind of magnetic field. We lived in such a field right upto 19th century. We Parsis preserved and protected all the spiritual Institutions and commands of our Din for 12 centuries. As the poisonous Godless Western ideas of that century began to be injected in the veins of the Community through pompous scholasticism, we dropped the Din and the result is : the tolls of extinction. Can we regenerate the field? We in our camps try to do it. - on a very humble scale.

* * * * *

We had so far nine 7-days retreats in North America and three 2^{1/2} days camps in Udwada. I have come across varieties of the Parsi psyche, from completely ignorant to reasonably knowledgable Khshnoomists.

What I feel is that ours is the only community which do not catch their children young in the matters of Religion. And then it is too late. There are some feeble attempts to educate children, but they are too egoistic and ill-informed to save the situation.

Let me tell you very little about what we discussed in our last retreat. The subject was the Glory and Miracles of Asho Zarathushtra. The basic theme was that **He is a Yazata, who walked on the earth in a human form. His body was subtle and saturated with divine energies.** The stories found in the Paharvi Zarathushtra Nameh in Dinkard are full of mystical meanings. Miracles of His infant-hood, childhood, and Divine Mission were explained in as simple manner as possible. **The mysteries of His alleged wives and children were opened up with the help of the Khshnoomic Treasure contained in Dr. Chiniwalla's "Nikeez no. 1". His alleged death was not death, but 'Vikheez' which means: His last act on Earth to focus the black solid cloud of evil on His divine body and thereby disintegrate the cloud.** This was depicted through the Video film "Dawn of Consciousness" done by Silloo, which has the scenes of Vikheez.

* * * * *

At our camps, the first two days run slowly, but the rest of the 5 days swift away with triple speed. At the end, our hearts have mixed feelings. We are a bit sorry that this had to end, but at the same time, we feel exceedingly refreshed. **We have swimmied in the soothing stream of Asho Zarathushtra's divine Waters. Our imagination has flown in rainbow territories. Our heart has throbbled in rythum at the name of Asho Zarathushtra. Our mind has become stronger. If, even calamities are God's divine gifts, we will face them cheerfully with Asho Zarathustra's auspicious name on our tongue and the Fire of devotion burning in our heart.**

With memories of Ahura's beauty we took leave of Freny, Keki, their daughter Havovi and her husband Aspi. I delivered a lecture in Toronto on "Ashem Vohu" on the 18th October 1999. On 23-10-99 I also spoke before a small audience in the home of Bakhtavar and Fred Desai at Cincinnati under the auspices of Zakoi - Zoroastrian Association of Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana. On 7th November, Silloo had organised a talk on Ameshaspend's at Cypress (near Los Angeles, California.) On 9th November I packed up towards Mumbai.

You know why I write this. No self publicity but apologies for this late issue.

* * * * *

**God scatters beauty as He scatters flowers
O'er the wide earth and tells us all are ours:
A hundred lights in every temple burn
And each shrine I bend my knee in turn.**

- **Walter Savage Landor.**

(Parsi Pukar July-August '99 Vol. 5; No. 1-2)