

CONVERSION HYDRA

HISSES AGAIN!

By **K. N. DASTOOR**

[Editorial Note :

Some newspaper-men are at it again !

Two old cries are heard once more: (i) abolish Dokhmenashini; (ii) have Juddin 'Navjote's (so called). And they are accompanied by the usual methods: (i) rely on the shortness of public memory, (ii) suppress unfavourable facts, (iii) twist unsuitable facts, (iv) suggest falsehoods, (v) quote misguidingly, (vi) give headings contrary to the contents.

Journalism is a responsible vocation, more so when applied to religion and religious questions. Of all things, it requires honesty — honesty of **presentation**.

The only way of combating such public dishonesty is to present the truth.

In this series starting from this issue, K. N. Dastoor does it. He presents facts first and then the reasoning. He does not give out a fact which is not supported by evidence or authority.]

The climate for the birth of the conversion hydra — Western winds of physical sciences and Zoroastrian studies — In search of license to marry European damsels — Public Meeting of 2.8.1903 — Report of the Sub-committee of eleven scholars — Misapplied historical research — Two and only two flimsy reasons for proposed present day conversion — Rejection of the Report by the Public Meeting of 16.4.1905 — Justice Davar's reliance on the Resolutions at the Meeting of 16.4.1905.

Greek mythology talks of hydra, a serpent having nine heads, any one of which when cut off, was replaced by two. The English language, in its usual fertile way, has applied the word to an evil, which tends to reappear after each effort to root it out.

One such hydra-serpent was born in the Parsi community somewhere in the year 1903, and since then it is harrassing the community by appearing again and again each time after its head is cut off.

It is the question of "conversion"; or "proselytism". Is a person born in another Religion allowed, by the Zoroastrian Religion, to enter into its fold? Does Zoroastrian Religion permit such conversion? Is it a "missionary" Religion?

Till the end of the last century, there was no doubt in the mind of the whole Parsi Community that no such conversion is permitted in the Zoroastrian Religion. It cannot be. It would be inconsistent with the working of all the spiritual institutions and disciplines

of Zoroastrianism and would be suicidal to the Community.

But the last quarter of the 19th century provided a climate for the birth of that hydra serpent. Two kinds of winds from the West were blowing over the Community. One was the progress of material sciences and the other was the study of the Zoroastrian Holy Scriptures and Writings by Western Scholars.

NO GOD, ONLY SCIENCE PLEASE !

Physical sciences proclaimed that mankind had understood all nature and all its workings and forces. Each event and each phenomenon of the material world had its "natural explanation". It was not at all essential to bring in, for understanding these explanation, a creature by the name of God. Theories of Science were accepted as absolute truths. Athiesm was encouraged. Religion became a huge superstition.

GOD, BUT NO OTHER SUPERSTITION PLEASE !

The other wind was the Western Study of Zoroastrianism. Its Scriptures and Writings were explored and translated. The translations were clearly affected by the then blowing wind of science. Of course, they could not infuse athiesm in a religious study. God had to survive there, otherwise the translating Professors would be out of job. But they could at least try to preserve God within the framework of the then scientific thought.

The result was that Religion became a study in history and geography ! Even Prophet Zarathushtra was seen as an ordinary historical human

being or a common sense being or, better still, a "scientific" being. No miracles please ! That is unscientific and therefore unshrolarly. No talk of invoking mysterious or spiritual forces by religious or yogic or devotional practice; please ! That is unscientific and therefore superstitious. But let God be there ! Don't say He is beyond experience and therefore a Mystic Being (although that is the truth). This is after all a study of Religion and no Religion can be without a God at least ! Let us keep Him, but discard all other mysteries and mysterious forces. If you find them in the Scriptures (unfortunately they are in abundance there), explain

(Contd. from page 6 Dr. Chiniwalla)

To say that this reduces Zoroastrianism from sublime to ridicule is an understatement!

And yet the same Western-dazzled Parsi scholars would look to such ridiculous propositions with slavish respect; but when a Parsi Savant, well read in modern Science and western studies both, present before them the divine Truths contained in the Holy Writings, they just close their eyes; the only reason being that he is talking of "mysticism".!

But can there be Religion without mysticism?

To-day even modern science is unable to avoid mysticism!

Dr. Faramroz died on 6th August 1962, — on the day of Kadimi Khordad Sal — leaving behind him the divine treasure of written IIm-e-Khsnoom, the genuine divine knowledge as taught by Zarathushtra and his great 'Soshyant's and Disciples.

May his soul go ahead on the Path towards Ahura and guide us to tread it!!

them away historically, geographically or scientifically

In this hypnotised atmosphere, the translations of the scriptures read like the babbles of primitive man. For instance, scholars referred to Gathas as belonging to the cattle age; the word 'Gaetha' was translated as "stable for the cattle"! Vendidad was a primitive code; 'Yasht's were full of many Gods and therefore superstitious.

The two winds from the West arrived here, and entered the minds of some rich Parsis And the first cell of the conversion-hydra was formed.....

THE BIRTH.....

Fine! These Western studies showed that all our religious institutions and beliefs are superstitious. So this tradition of not accepting any non-Zoroas-

trian in Zoroastrian Religion was also an unscientific and unscholarly superstition. Then there was no bar in marrying a white-skinned 'madame' from Europe and making her a Parsi Zoroastrian! Why not? And look! Some of those great Western Scholars said that Zoroastrianism is "an aggressive and missionary religion", and have quoted some Scriptures in support of this proposition!

For instance there was a passage in Gathas — Ha 31-3, in which the white skinned scholars saw "the Proselyting spirit" of Zoroastrian Religion. Prof. Jackson said in his "A Hymn of Zoroaster, Yasna 31" :—

"Zoroastrian religion was active and vigorous seeking and gaining converts, as we see from many passages in the Gathas By this we win an admirable sense for the whole

passage, which is thus in keeping with the proselyting spirit of Zoroaster's religion". (1)

And another scholar Dr. Mills said about Ha 31-3 :

"And he declares that this is the doctrine which should be proclaimed for the conversion of mankind. Here we observe that the Zarathushtrian Mazda-worship was aggressive and missionary in its spirit, and in a proselyting sense by no means indifferent to the final destiny of the Gentile world". (2)

So there it was! The license to marry the European damsels! And who could dare to challenge these great European Savants, Professors and Doctors? Who would care about those old fashioned views of the Parsi Community.....?

The hydra-serpent was now fully born and grew up swiftly.

A Parsi gentleman married a French lady in Paris. He brought her to Bombay and got one of the Preists to perform her Navjot ceremony. He then went through with her the marriage ceremony, according to the Zoroastrian rites. He claimed that his wife had become a Parsi, professing the Zoroastrian Religion, and that as such she was entitled to participate in all the charitable and religious Funds and Institutions of the Parsis. He claimed that she was, amongst other things, entitled to have her body taken to the Towers of Silence. This created great uproar amongst the bulk of the Parsi Community. (3).

THE COMMITTEES AND QUESTIONS

A requisition dated 13th July 1903 was made to the Trustees of the Parsi

Punchayet Bombay, who then called a public meeting of Zoroastrians on 2nd August 1903. The meeting appointed a general committee of 196 Parsis to investigate the question of conversion. The 196 appointed a smaller committee of 35, who in turn appointed a still smaller sub-committee of eleven. These eleven were all scholars in the Western study of Zoroastrianism. They were requested to answer the following questions :

1. Is it good (or beneficial or healthy — the Gujarati word is " દુરુદ ") to give entry into our religion to the persons of other religions in view of the present religious social etc. condition of our community?
2. If it is good, what sort of investigation should be made about their aim and qualifications before they are admitted in the religion?

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3. (a) To whom should they first apply for being admitted into our religion? (b) Which priest should perform the ceremony of admission? (c) By whose permission the priest should perform the ceremony? and (d) What should be the ceremony?

4. What sort of notes should be made in the records of the community for admission of such non-Zoroastrians?

The sub-committee was to answer these questions "only from the religious standpoint". (That was what they said in their report.) (4). (a)

THE REPORT

Between 16.9.1903 and 8.2.1904 the sub-committee of 11 (in fact 10, because one member could not attend) met 13 times (not quite lucky), and gave a report.

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The report shows that for an answer to the first question, the eleven themselves framed two subsidiary questions :

1. What do the words of the Prophet and others say about the propogation of Religion in the Prophet's own time?

2. What do our books say about the propogation of religion during the time after the Prophet? (4) (b)

You will observe, on comparison, that these two sub-questions are off the track of the main question no. 1. That was: In the present religious, social and other conditions of the Parsis, was it good to admit non-Zoroastrians? There was no mention of the past, or the times of and after Prophet. No historical and geographical research was wanted. Perhaps, being scholars, they were swept away by the winds of western scholarship. Or perhaps this was an opportunity of displaying the scholarship to the community. Whatever it was, the learned men presented in their report several references and evidences from the Zoroastrian writings purporting to be in support of conversion. These they gave an an Appendix to their report. In the main body of the report, they stated to the effect that there being evidence in the Scriptures and Writings in support of conversion, it "appeared good" to admit anybody from other Religions, if he by his free will and pleasure so desired. This, however, did not answer the main question which referred to the present conditions and not to past history. What are the reasons for adopting conversion policy to-day?

The eleven did try to give reasons; they were only two — both of them flimsy and frivolous.

One was to this effect :— Because of the western education and reform,

some Zoroastrian young men were attracted towards other religions; if therefore some fit person from another religion desired to come into our fold, the misguided young Parsi would then think "Look! when others come in, why should I go out? There must be something in our religion, after all". And he would then remain a Zoroastrian and try to study Zoroastrianism and understand its good points. (4) (c)

This was the one big reason for conversion — and that from the alleged "religious standpoint"!! The learned men never gave a thought to the spiritual institutions, disciplines and traditions prevalent in the Zoroastrian Religion and community and never considered how conversion would be fatal to them and to the community. Perhaps, in the then material winds, they thought those institutions and disciplines as superstitions or "unscientific and unscholarly."

As to the fictitious young Parsi preparing to leave Zoroastrian Religion but changing his mind after seeing a non-Zoroastrian becoming a Zoroastrian, he would not survive long as a Parsi if he studies the Western translations of our Holy Scriptures where Gathas are said to be of "cattle age", and Zoroaster an erring man of ordinary common sense and fleshly feelings! Perhaps the newly convert would also leave soon, if his intention was pure conversion and not an excuse for a mixed marriage!

TRUTH MONOPOLISED?

The second and only other reason given by the learned eleven was to this effect: our religion had knowledge and "rays of the light of truth"

“सत्यां एनी रोशनीनां दिशु” and if some

alien is attracted towards such truth and knowledge, we should not stop him! (4) (d)

The direct inference is that other religions do not advocate truth and have no knowledge! They are ignorant religions, untrue religions! Truth and knowledge are monopolies of only Zoroastrianism!! **Is this not an insult to the other great Prophets and other great Religions?** Have they no truth in them? Which Religion has not emphasised the spiritual value of truth? **To ask somebody to come to the truth by converting himself to Zoroastrianism, implies that in his religion there is no truth!** Do we Parsis really mean this?

Is it not a more reasonable view that **all Prophets are sent by God**; all Religions are Paths leading towards Him; and **each one should follow the Religion in which one is born?** Every Religion is a spiritual exercise, a prescription to convert evil into good, and Nature has ordained different prescriptions for different groups of humanity.

And that is the Truth taught in Zoroastrian Religion, in Gathas, and the Holy Scriptures. We'll discuss that later on.

Let us go back to the sub-committee of eleven, and see their answer to the other three questions.

(To be continued)

NOTES AND REFERENCES

(Numbers below correspond to the bracketted numbers in the article)

- (1) "A Hymn of Zoroaster" yasna Ha 31 (1888) p. 27 and p. 53 — as quoted in sub-committee's report (4) below.
- (2) S.B.E. Vol XXXI. Part III, page 37 as quoted in (4) below.
- (3) From 1901, 11 Bombay Law Reporter 85 — at page 89.
- (4) The report of the sub-committee of eleven — published by Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat, Bombay (1904): (a) pages 3-4, (b) page 5, (c) page 7, (d) page

Resolutions of the Community not to Accept ANY KIND of Conversion.

There is No LAW or CUSTOM
that a Child of a Parsi father by a
Non - Parsi mother becomes a Parsi.

Justice Davar's Judgment does
not lay down any such law.

The conversion hydra was born in our Community in the year 1903 when a Parsi gentleman brought a French wife. She was stated to have been "converted" to Zoroastrianism by the performance of the Navjote ceremony and then married according to Zoroastrian rites. The husband claimed that thus she had become a Parsi and was entitled to all the rights of a Parsi in the Funds managed by Parsi Panchayat and also in the Agiaries and Dokhmas. A great uproar arose in the Community. A public meeting was called on 2-8-1903 and a Committee of 196 Parsis was appointed to investigate the question of conversion. A sub-committee of 11 scholars was appointed, who addressed themselves four questions viz. (i) is it "good" to convert? (ii) what qualifications should a proposed convert have? (iii) what procedure should be followed in converting? and (iv) what record of converts should be kept?

We have seen, in the last issue, the sub-committee's answer to the first question. Convert, so that Parsi youths might not convert themselves

into other Religions; they would think, "since others want to become Parsis, there must be something in our Religion". That was one "reason" for encouraging conversion! And what a reason? Can the goodness of our Religion be brought home to the minds of the Parsi youths only by showing them the in-coming converts? Can that not be done in a much better and more direct way of teaching them the good points of the Religion?

And the second reason was that our Religion was based on truth and if some person of other Religion wanted to adopt the truth, we must allow him to do so! That means other Religions have no truth in them!! Are we so fanatic and narrow-minded as to contend that truth is the monopoly of Zoroastrian Religion only? Are we so ignorant of the spiritual content and heritage of other great Religions, amongst the followers of which we are living since centuries?

WHO SHOULD BE CONVERTED?

In answer to the second question

regarding the qualifications of a proposed convert the sub committee recommended very stringent conditions. The 'candidate' should apply to "competent authorities"; one year should pass between the date of application and date of admission; public notice of the intended conversion of the person concerned should be given in the Press; objections received should be considered; then the candidate should be examined regarding his desire and qualifications to 'become' a Zoroastrian; he should be asked why he was leaving the religion of his birth; and what he saw in Zoroastrian Religion so as to induce him to be converted; and last but not the least he should know by heart and understand the full meanings of Kushti prayer, Sarosh Baj, Yasna Ha 12 and 'Rajishtayao' and 'Ferastuye' prayers! (4) (e)

Those who to-day push forward the sub-committee's report for an excuse to perform Juddin 'Navjote's conveniently suppress these stringent requirements recommended by the same sub-committee. Those are the followers of the 'truth' And some 'truthful' newspapermen have joined hands with them I don't know whether they know Yasna Ha-12 by heart and its meaning

The answer to the third question prescribed (i) competent authority to whom the incoming candidate should apply and (ii) the ceremonies to be performed. He had to apply to the 'Head Priest' of the relevant place and the ceremonies were (i) ordinary 'nahan' (ii) giving him Sudreh-Kushti (ii) giving 'Barashnoom' and (iv) giving Sudreh-Kushti again.

Mind! it is not just so called Navjote performed with hollow pomp, big noise and wrong pronunciations, in a

five star hotel!

In answer to the 4th question, the sub-committee laid down the method of keeping a record of the persons of other Religions "admitted" in Zoroastrianism. This does not require any discussion here.

DARKNESS AT NOON!

The Appendix to the report of eleven purported to provide references and evidence in support of conversion. Were they convincing? With profound respect to these scholars, I regret to say they were not. **Even on the translations given in the report itself, no meaning or interpretation of conversion could be derived.** The twisting of words and expressions surpassed all reasonable limits. At several places it sounded like an attempt to find darkness at noon in an open field. In particular, the passages from Gathas viz. Ha 31-3 and 45-1 read from sublime to ridicule. **The translation of Ha 31-3 as given in the report itself did not warrant the interpretation Jackson and Mills had tried to thrust on it.** The only explanation of this exercise on the part of such scholars is that they were carried away by the western winds. None of them had the courage and faith to face the material onslaught.

THE REPORT REJECTED BY THE COMMUNITY

Before we enter this black cloud of misinterpretation, I'll first inform you about the fate of the sub-committee's report. It came before the main Committee of 196 and through them again before another public meeting of the "Samast Anjuman" (the whole community) held on 16th April

1905. That meeting passed a **Resolution rejecting the sub-committee's recommendations!** The following is the translation of the Gujarati Resolution :—

“This meeting of the Parsi Anjuman acknowledges the receipt of the report dated 2nd March 1905 of the Committee appointed by the Zoroastrian Anjuman on 2nd August 1903 in the matter of admitting the persons of other religions in the Zoroastrian Religion, which report has been printed and published, and **RESOLVES THAT** looking to the present religious, social etc. condition of the Parsi Community, it is not proper to admit in the Parsi Zoroastrian Community, persons from other religions or communities because such deed would break the originality and unity of, and is harmful to, the community.”

Thus, the Western winds, which swayed away the scholars, could not combat the wisdom and fore-sight of the whole community.

Two more Resolutions were passed at the same public meeting of 16-4-1905.

In the Second Resolution it was resolved to boycott any non-Parsi claiming to have entered the Parsi Community by any alleged procedure and also to boycott any priest who would perform the alleged Navjot of any such non-Parsi.

The Third Resolution was equally emphatic in condemning any kind of conversion. Its English translation is as under:—

“This meeting of the Parsi Zoroastrian Samast Anjuman declares by this Resolution that the two foregoing Resolutions which are unanimously passed to-day re-

garding and in relation to the persons belonging to other Religions or communities, shall apply equally to any child born hereafter to a mother belonging to other religion or community and claiming to have married to or not married to a Parsi Zoroastrian father; and **this Meeting considers harmful and does not at all accept the alleged custom of admitting such children in the Parsi Community and giving them the rights and benefits of the Community.** But to those of such children who have been hereto before given such rights and benefits of the Community, this Resolution shall not apply by way a special exception”.

It will thus be seen that the Parsi Community is opposed to admitting even a child born of Parsi father and non-Parsi mother. The above Resolution in terms emphatically states to the effect that there is no such alleged custom of accepting such children as Parsi Zoroastrians.

JUSTICE DAVAR'S JUDGMENT

After the Community expressed its emphatic views on the question of conversion as above, the gentleman, who had brought the French wife, carried on correspondence with the Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat, claiming that his wife had become a Parsi and that she was entitled to all the rights a Parsi had in the funds, Agiaries and Dokhmas managed by the Parsi Panchayat. Ultimately, a suit was filed in the year 1906 by the said Parsi gentleman and his friends against the Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat. That was the famous suit No. 689 of 1906 in the High Court of

Bombay - (11 Bombay Law Reporter 85) wherein Justice Davar and Justice Beaman gave their judgements.

In the said suit only two issues were before the Court: (i) whether the defendants were properly appointed trustees of the Parsi Panchayat, Bombay and (ii) whether a person like the French wife of the said gentleman was entitled to the benefit of the Religious Institutions and funds managed by the Trustees. There was no third issue. We are not here concerned with the first issue. **The answer to the second issue was given in the negative and that is the only decision of the Court on the question of conversion.** There are other statements and opinions expressed by the two Judges, but they have no binding effect whatsoever and do not lay down any proposition of any law. The only proposition decided in the said suit was that the French wife was not a Parsi and

not entitled to the benefits of the Parsi Funds and Institutions.

A lot of confusion is tried to be caused by referring to Justice Davar's judgement and it is tried to be shown that the judgement in effect laid down a legal proposition that a child born of a Parsi father and a non-Parsi mother should be considered to be a Parsi. No such law is laid down in the judgement. On the contrary, Justice Davar, on page 110 of the Report, refers to the afore-said third Resolution of the Parsi Community passed at its General Meeting held on 16th April 1905 and says:

"That the Parsi Community, at Public Meeting, held on 16th April 1905, expressed its disapproval of any conversion being allowed, and are strongly opposed to any such conversion in the pre-

(Contd on Page 19)

Conversion Cont. from page 13)

sent times, and resolved henceforth not to admit even the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers."

Nowhere in the judgement, the Learned Judge has laid down, as a point of law, that such children as aforesaid should be considered as Parsis. The often repeated statement, that the judgements in the above suit compel the Parsi Community to accept such children as Parsis, is entirely wrong. There is no such compulsion laid down in the judgement. The point whether such children would

be considered as Parsis was not at all before the Court. That was not the question on which the Court was called upon to adjudicate and determine the law nor did the judgements purport to arrive at a conclusion and lay down the law on that point. The observations on this point that are scattered scantily in the judgement constitute a mere obiter dictum. As would be seen from the above words of the judgement, Justice Davar actually referred to the Resolution of the Community not to accept as Parsis, the children of a Parsi father by a non-Parsi mother!

All Religions Dersve Profound Respect— 'Truth' and 'Good' Are Not The Monopology of Zoroastrian Religion!

'Gatha's Advocate Fight Against Evil - Not Fight to Convert a Hindu to a Parsi!

The report of the learned eleven submitted to the Community in 1904-5 advocated conversion. They said it was 'good' to convert a non-Parsi because our Religion was based on 'truth' and if a person born in other Religion wanted to adopt 'truth', why not allow him? So the learned eleven declared indirectly that all other Religions were not based on truth; the truth was only the monopoly of Zoroastrianism!! To say this after staying for 12 centuries in India, the land of great Religions and 'Rishi's, was in fact closing the eyes towards truth, and that too, in the name of truth! That was the religious fanaticism coming from a highly educated community reputed for human virtues including tolerance. It was an act of unfaithfulness to the great Hindu Religion the followers of which gave refuge to us and the greatness of which is stamped in every molecule of air we breathe. It was an act of stark ignorance and insult to all other great Religions, which thrive in this dear land of Bharata and in the world. Those newspapermen, who without any study or thought advocate conversion on the basis of this Report of the sub-committee, may perhaps ponder over their own religions fanaticism.

JUSTICE DAVAR MISCONSTRUED

These champions of 'truth' also try to rely on the judgements of Justice Davar and Justice Beamon. Their love of truth again induces them to read things which are not there! We saw in the last issue that those judgements do not lay down an alleged proposition of law that a child born of Parsi father and non-Parsi mother becomes a Parsi. On the contrary, Justice Davar mentioned, with emphasis, that the Parsi Community had resolved in their Public meeting of 16.4.1905 not to admit such children. (The text of this Resolution is in the last issue of this humble 'Dini Avaz')

THE PARSI FANATICS OF CONVERSION

Now is the time to enter into the scholarly part of the sub-committee's Report. In an appendix to their Report, they referred to and relied on several passages from the Holy Scriptures and other writings of Zoroastrianism, alleged to lay down that Zoroastrianism not only advocated conversion but also declared it to be an act of Godliness; it was "a missionary and aggressive"

Religion! Mark the word 'aggressive'. It means you could convert even by aggression! Reliance was placed on all references to "fighting", occurring in the Zoroastrian Writings. Such references are numerous. That 'fight', according to the learned eleven, was fight to convert a Hindu or a Mohemedan or a Christian or any person of other Religion to Zoroastrianism!!! Actually, those passages refer to **the fight with evil which is within and without man.** 'Dregwant' or 'Durvand' does not mean a non-Parsi!! It means the humans dipped down in the mud of evil — which all of us are. But these scholars, dazzled by the white skinned highbrow Professors from foreign countries, equated 'evil' with other Religions and declared pompously that the followers of all other Religions were Durvands — the followers of evil, and Zoroastrianism taught to fight with them and bring them to the path of 'the good', which was there in one Religion only viz. Zoroastrianism! Thus there was one and only one Religion which taught 'the Truth' and 'the Good'. All others are 'untrue' and 'bad'!

Please ponder! Are we Parsis such religious fanatics? Have we not made a name for our broad-mindedness and tolerance? And see where these conversion fanatics are trying to lead us! Look to their logic, their reasoning. It is that perverse reasoning which has led mankind to many devilish wars in the name of God! Are we PARSIS to follow this reasoning? Do the newspapermen and their Parsi John, Tom and Eric realise what they are doing when they push before us this Report of the dazzled eleven?

WHY SEVERAL RELIGIONS?

What has the Religion of Zarathushtra to say on the existence of several Religions amongst mankind on this earth? The Truths as taught by the Prophet Zarathushtra on this are:

1. Man has in him a divine ray of Ahura. He was, in the past, of the past, with Ahura, but had to separate from Him.
2. The force that separated him was "the Evil", which was at one stage of Creation found attached to the Ruvan (the Soul) of man. (Faravardin Yashta).
3. The aim of Ruvan then was to alchemise this evil, transmute it into good and then revert to Ahura and merge in His Divine Light again.
4. To enable the Ruvan to carry out this aim, Ahura and His 'Yazata's created the ultra-material and material worlds, and so far as man is concerned weaved the evil into his physical and ultra-physical body and made the body the dwelling for the Ruvan.
5. Man on earth has to alchemise the evil so interwoven in him. To enable him to do so, Ahura has prescribed different Religions. Thus, **the existence of various Religions is according to the Great Plan of Ahura.** (Gatha Ha 31-11, Ha 46-6, Ha 49-9)
6. The persons born in different Religions have different physical, mental and spiritual compositions. Each Religion prescribes certain texts, procedures, practices, exercises and disciplines, which are different than those prescribed by others. The basic aim is to fight and alchemise the evil, but methods

prescribed have some inherent differences due to different human compositions. (Gatha Ha 31-11). It is, therefore, not ordained for any man to try to change his own Religion. To convert or be converted creates a great spiritual disorder.

7. Since each Religion is according to the Great Plan of Ahura, each is entitled to profound respect. Each is based on truth; each lays down a Path towards Ahura. (Gatha Ha 34-13)

Refrain ye Parsis! from saying that ours is the only Religion of 'Truth' and 'Goodness' and therefore convert even by making aggression ("aggressive and missionary"!)

Somebody else did that to us and that is why we are here in India.....

Zarathushtra has not taught fanaticism; He has taught us to respect all Religions and all Men of God.

And I may ask, which of us are religious fanatics? Those who do not advocate conversion or those who advocate it?

PASSAGES FROM SCRIPTURES

Let us now enter into a few of the passages quoted by the glamorous eleven in the alleged support of conversion.

The first is **Gatha Ha 31-3**.

I will not bother you by quoting the Avesta here. But I put down here the Gujarati translation of the passage as appearing in the Report.

“(દીનને ખાતર) હડનારાઓને તથા દીન ચારીદારોને જે બહોળી (અથવા સંપૂર્ણ) પુશાલી તે બખશી છે તે (પુશાલી) અગ્ને મીનો (હોરમગ્દ) ! હમારી નેજી તથા ગસ્તીને લીધે તું હમુને બખશ. હમુને (ઈઆને મને તથા મારા શાગેરદોને) બલ્યવાને

માટે અગ્ને હોરમગ્દ ! તારા મોહિંડાની જખાનથી તું કહે, જેથી સધળા માલ્યુસોને હું દીન ઉપર યકીન રાખનાર કરું.”

The English translation of the above Gujarati passage is:

“Oh Mino (Hormazd)! The vast (complete) joy Thou hast bestowed upon the fighters (for religion) and the followers of religion, bestow on us due to our shine and righteousness.

Oh Hormazd! tell us with the tongue of Thy mouth, for us (i.e. me and my pupils) to know, so that I may maintain, in all men, faith on religion.”

Do you, my dear reader, see any message in the above translation, ordering or even remotely referring to conversion of a Hindu or Mohammedan or Christian or Jew to Zoroastrianism?

There is the word “fighters”, in the translation but the passage nowhere says fighters for religion or Din. The word ‘Daena’ or any other word for Din-Religion is not there in the Avesta passage. The words ‘for religion’ is in the bracket, placed by the translator. He thinks that the fighter should mean here fighter for Religion. But no such meaning is warranted. The Avesta word is “Ranoibya” (રાનોઈબ્યા). It has some root of ‘Rann’ (રણ) or battle ground but not the battle ground for conversion! It refers to the battle ground for fight against Evil, which is within man and also out there in nature. The word would rightly mean “fighters” but not fighters for religious conversions!

WHY DID ZARATHUSHTRA COME?

Throughout the five ‘Gatha’s, ‘fight’ is referred to as fight against evil. Zarathushtra was sent by Ahura Mazda because “the soul of the earth” raised a challenging cry towards Him that

there were upon the earth terrible conflict between good and evil; the earth had become full of oppression and tyranny of evil upon good. There were wars and battles and fights arising from the pursuits of evil by man. That is Gatha Ha 29-1. The soul of earth was then informed that Zarathushtra was coming and would combat effectively against all the forces, energies and weapons of evil. That is the purport of the rest of Ha-29. Zarathushtra then comes and binds the evil rampant on earth. That is the purport of 'Gatha's, Vendidad (Far., 19) and all Avesta. And He teaches man to fight evil within him. These external and internal evils are referred to throughout in Gathas, and all references to 'fight' are against those evils. There is therefore no reason whatsoever to construe "fighters" as "fighters for religion" in the sense: "fighters for converting others to Zoroastrian Religion". But that is how some Western Scholars construed the passage and our dazzled Parsi scholars joined in chorus!! And the present day newspapermen pretend to follow them without even reading a word from the original; they derive all their "knowledge" from stray quotations given in a 1904-booklet containing the sub-committee's report.

THE WORD: VAURAYA

The champions of conversion, purport to rely also on the last words of this passage (Ha 31-3). These are: "I may maintain, in all men, faith on religion". The Avesta line, of which this is the purported translation, has no word there for 'religion' or 'Din'. The only word is "Vauraya", in which these champions have read the mean-

ing "I may **convert**" and then applied it to "conversion" of a Hindu, or Mohmmedan or Christian to the Zoroastrian Religion — a very long airy jump indeed! According to most of the scholars, the word is derived from Avesta root 'var', sankrit root 'Vri' — meaning "to choose to select, to believe" or even "to convince." Zarathushtra desires to convince mankind against evil and teach them to fight against it so that mankind may march towards its Mukti — Frashogard — towards Ahura! Even if you adopt the word 'convert', the conversion is not from a Hindu to Parsi, but from evil to good; from dogmatism to belief in Ahura; from doubt to faith; from IRRELIGION TO RELIGION; from Evil worship to God-worship;; from 'Daeva-Yasni' to 'Mazda-Yasni'.

—K. N. Dastoor.



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Is Increase in Numbers the Be-all and End-all of Zoroastrianism?

Ervad Phiroze Masani's Powerful Refutation of the Oft-repeated Arguments on Conversion and 'Juddin' Marriage

Conversion hydra was born in the beginning of this century out of an unholy wedlock between the Western interpretations of Zoroastrian Scriptures and the desire of some high society Parsi youths to marry European damsels. The turmoil in the Community resulted in the famous law suit before Justice Davar and Justice Beamon. The judgements in that suit laid down as a matter of law that a non-Parsi lady undergoing (i) an alleged Navjot ceremony and (ii) an alleged marriage ceremony according to Parsi rites with a Parsi, does not become a Parsi entitled to the benefit of Funds and Institutions managed by the Parsi Panchayat. As is being repeatedly pointed out since last about 65 years, these judgements do not lay down an alleged proposition of law that the child of a Parsi father and non-Parsi mother is a Parsi. Remarks in the judgement of Justice Davar on this point are obiter dictum and he has in terms referred to the resolution of the Parsi Community not to accept such children as Parsis. Unfortunately, the newly born cheap newspaper-men who have taken upon themselves to nurture the hydra are too old to have time either to read these

judgements or to understand what is obiter dictum.

Some time after Justice Davar cut off the head of the hydra, it grew up again — this time in the form of a book by name "Zoroastrian Theology" written by an American degree holder Dastoor Dr. Dhalla. In the guise of expounding the alleged 'theology', the book attempted to advocate conversion in a very scholarly style. Justice Davar — this time not as a Judge but as a Parsi — could see that the book was written with a view to use it in a litigation which the conversion faddists might launch again. He, therefore, encouraged **Ervad Phiroze S. Masani** to write a book refuting the propositions advanced in Dr. Dhalla's book. Ervad Phiroze wrote "**Zoroastrianism, Ancient and Modern.**" In its "Prologue", he has stated that **Justice Davar was ready even to bear the expenses of the book. The book is dedicated to Justice Davar himself.**

DR. DHALLA-IAN PATTERN STILL RESORTED TO

The arguments in support of con-

version (or proselytism) advanced by Dr. Dhalla have been very effectively refuted by Ervad Phiroze in his book. Yet the conversion advocates of to-day go on raising the same old, obsolete and shattered arguments. The number of marriages by Parsi boys and girls to non-Parsis has increased frightfully and therefore those old arguments are repeated again and again by the families affected by the onslaught. These arguments arise out of an attempt to justify such marriages. They are not based on any study of Zoroastrian Scriptures and Science or of the social, psychological, biological and genetic aspects of this serious question touching the very existence of the Community! People just go on firing that we must increase our numbers, otherwise we shall vanish. The position is, however, exactly the other way round. We shall vanish if we mix up genetically with other communities.

Since this and all other shallow and vague arguments of the conversion advocates follow the same old pattern set out by Dr. Dhalla, the most effective way of answering the arguments is to quote from Ervad Phiroze's "Zoroastrianism Ancient and Modern." **His exposition of the subject has the inherent strength of being sustained by any reasonable man and more so by a Court.** Today when the cheap newspaper men and their satellites threaten to go to Court on the question again, Phiroze's convincing arguments are and will be more relevant. They provide excellent food for thought for those who desire to bring in an alleged new definition of a Parsi in some alleged "Parsi conference." **These newly born 'conference-Parsis' sitting in their own ivory tower and trying to thrust their own de-**

finition on the Community are blissfully unaware of the feeling and thinking of the Common Parsi people of Bombay, Navsari, Udwada, Surat and other places, on this question. Why has the Community consistently opposed any mixing of blood throughout their stay in Bharata and why the 'Anjuman's of such religious places as Navsari and Udwada have not joined the 'tamasha' of such conferences, will be clear from Phiroze's masterly exposition.

EXISTENCE IN NUMBERS ONLY?

In Chapter II of his book Ervad Phiroze has dealt with the question of conversion mainly from the point of view of Religion and Religious Scriptures. The chief (and perhaps the only) argument advanced yesterday and to-day in support of conversion is that we must increase our numbers. This is harped upon often and often by Dr. Dhalla in his 'Zoroastrian Theology', as also by the shallow writers and persons interested. Referring to this argument Phiroze says:

"In this age of rank materialism it is but natural that most of the people can have no idea of the subtle laws of nature working in all human activities. The cumulative Law of Asha implies all the beneficent forces in nature carrying out the Divine Moral Order of the Universe as inculcated in the Zoroastrian Law. When the community begins to decline in its number on account of the inexplicable disturbance caused by the people themselves to this Moral Order by not living a life parallel to and in strict accordance with the Law of Asha, a strange remedy for the increase of the population is suggested by

a few of the community viz. that of **proselytism**. This suggestion has caused much provocation of late in the community when attempts have been made by some philologists to prove the advocacy of proselytism from the extant Zoroastrian Scriptures by their usual **practice of twisting and perverting the texts so as to render them suitable to their views**. One of such attempts is the Book of Zoroastrian Theology under review. The writer (Dr. Dhalla) tries his utmost to carry home to his readers that the practice of proselytism is distinctly advocated in the Zoroastrian scriptures, and this advocacy of proselytism is the sum and substance of the entire book. This subject of proselytism and marriage with the aliens is one which can be viewed from many standpoints — Sociology, Biology, Embryology, Anthropology, Philosophy and Religion.”

Phiroze asserts that the number of Parsis declines not because they do not marry outside or do not convert, but because they do not lead a Zoroastrian life. **Zoroastrians themselves are forgetting to be Zoroastrians**. What is the sense then of affixing a mere external stamp of ‘Parsi’ on an outsider? On this point Phirozè quotes and refutes Dr. Dhalla. Dr. Dhalla says:

“If Zoroastrianism is to live in this world as a living faith, it must have sufficient numbers in its fold to keep up its vitality.”

And Phiroze replies,

“A religion always has its life, so long as it is put into practice in every day life by each individual member thereof. Zoroastrianism seems to die out and is dying out at the present day, not because there are only one hundred thousand souls belonging thereto, but

because most of these have imbibed very nasty materialistic views from outside by which their life is guided, and are abandoning day by day all the precepts of Ashoi or Perfect Rectitude worthy of observance in every day life, and are crying for a religion of physical convenience and material ease with no sanctity or spiritual purity or responsibility. If the writer (Dr. Dhalla) desires Zoroastrianism to live, it is his duty to write a book on practical purity as taught by Zoroaster and to exhort his readers to faithfully observe all those canons taught in all the Avesta Scriptures. The vitality of Zoroastrianism can never be expected in the nature of things to be upheld by an addition of some Hindus or Mahomedans or Christians into the community and by making an external stamp on their designations as “Zoroastrians.” **The vitality of Zoroastrianism can only be upheld by making faith a living force and sincerity the basic virtue in every present member of the Zoroastrian fold who should be quite willing and ready to observe all the tenets of Purity as taught in that great religion**. It is thus by adding to the quality and not to the bulk of the community, that stability can be maintained and increase can be made in the number of the community in the near future. **First teach your own religion to the members of your own community, 99% of whom are quite ignorant of the tenets of their sacred religion**. In the Yasna Haftanghaiti Ha 35 we find a very fine passage regarding the teaching of religion. There it is stated that—

Then a man or a woman knowing the Truth may practise it as such, and may teach it to those who are

capable of practising the same as it ought to be practised.”

“From this it is seen that it is the duty of every Zoroastrian first to know the Laws of Ashoi taught by the prophet, then to practise the same himself or herself, and then as a practical observer he or she will have a natural right of preaching the same to other co-religionists who are capable of practising the same. Thus we learn that without the qualification of strict profession of a religion by its own members, mere number of adherents can never help to sustain the life of that religion. Nature requires truth or intrinsic value of everything, and not mere show of things. Alien people who are nominally styled Zoroastrians by the 20th century innovators of proselytism would not give life to Zoroastrianism but on the contrary take away the life from it.”

GATHIC AND NON-GATHIC WRITINGS

Supporters of conversion had tried to snatch out some authorities from the Zoroastrian Writings. They quote from Gathas and Vendidad and ‘Yashta’s, and also Pahalvi and Persian writings. But the most curious part of this scholarly exercise is that these are the same persons who allege that only Gathas propound pure Zoroastrianism and the rest of the writings are misguiding; and yet most of their authorities in support of conversion are tried to be derived from non-Gathic writings! This disease is rampant in Dr. Dhalla’s book and Phiroze comments:

“Attention is here drawn of the reader to one point which he is requested to bear in mind

throughout — which is — that although the writer of Zoroastrian Theology separates the Gathas as purely Zoroastrian and the other Avesta as pseudo-Zoroastrian, he bases his arguments in more than one subject not on the Gathas but on the so-called Later Avesta also, and that wherever the references quoted from the Later Avesta go against his personal views they are run down as Younger or Later or post-Zoroastrian, but whenever they seem to be in favour of his Idols-of-the-Mind, he supports them as if they shared the first-rate authority with the Gathas.”

The present day conversionists do the same. They are worse than Dr. Dhalla in that they throw their arguments without any study or serious reading or application of mind on such a fatal subject! (To be continued).

—K. N. DASTOOR.

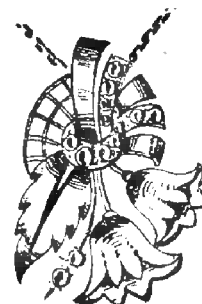
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How the Parsi Community has Reacted Sharply Against Any Mixing of Blood and Genes.

*No Distinction between children of Parsi Fathers by
non - Parsi Mothers and of Parsi Mothers
by non - Parsi Fathers.*

The advocacy of conversion did not and does not arise from an alleged anxiety for the survival of the community. It is merely an attempt to justify the marriages of Parsi men and women outside the community. In 1903, a rich Parsi gentleman brought a French wife and some learned Parsi scholars exerted themselves to find out passages from the Scriptures in support of conversion. The Juddin marriages then led to the question of Juddin Navjote's of the children, and this in turn raised the million dollar question, who is a Parsi Zoroastrian? A lot of confusion was and is tried to be deliberately created on this question. And then is brought forward, the question of 'survival'.

There are thus three props on which the Juddin champions base their arguments:

1. that our Scriptures advocate conversion of an alien to the Zoroastrian Religion;
2. that Justice Davar's and Justice Beaman's judgments lay down some legal definition of a Parsi, which is binding on the Parsis and constitutes the law of the land; and

3. that if we do not accept as Parsi Zoroastrians the children of Parsi fathers and non-Parsi mothers or of Parsi mothers and non-Parsi fathers, our 'population' will be reduced to zero.

Each of these three props is hollow and even decayed from its interior.

The Scriptures are turned and twisted beyond any reasonable limit; it sounds like Satan quoting Bible for justifying the sins of his followers. (See Dini Avaz Vol. 1, Nos. 5 & 6).

The judgments of Davar J. and Beaman J. do **not** lay down any legal definition of a Parsi or do not set out the alleged binding law that a child of a Parsi father and non-Parsi mother is a Parsi and should be accepted as a Parsi.

And putting forth the fear-ghost of dwindling population is just a hoax and an eye-wash or much better a brain-wash. **Any group of humans can preserve its identity and individuality only by remaining unmixed by marriage with other groups. Once the import and export of blood and genes begin, the group's existence is in danger.** This is a fact, historical and scientific both. It applies with greater intensity to we

Parsi Zoroastrians because we have in our Religion certain spiritual disciplines and 'Yoga's' and institutions, which would crumble if the import-export is not checked; and along with them shall crumble this enlightened race of the Parsis.

The Community is aware of this danger. And that is why it has vehemently opposed, any attempt at any mixing of blood and genes-whether through Parsi fathers or Pari mothers.

I shall today place before my intelligent readers a short history of how the community has done this since last 75 years.

It all started, I repeat, from a rich Parsi youth's attempt in 1902-3 to justify his marriage with a French wife. He started correspondence with the Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat. The community offered a spontaneous and strong resistance. Meetings were called, speeches were delivered, arguments were thrown, articles were written. In August 1903 a public meeting of Parsis was called; a committee of 196 was appointed to go into the question of conversion. That crowd-committee appointed a sub-committee of 35 and that crowd was further reduced by a sub-sub-committee of 11. These eleven were scholars of religion, who gave their report that Zoroastrian Religion enjoined and encouraged conversion. I have discussed the merits (or rather demerits) of this report in the previous issues of Dini Avaz (Volume 1, Nos. 5 & 6).

The report of the eleven had its journey upwards through the sub-committee of 35 and committee of 196, and ultimately landed in another public meeting held on 16th April 1905. **That meeting rejected the scholars' report.**

Whatever the scriptures might be saying, we do not want to mix ourselves up with other communities because we want to survive as a race of Zoroastrians with all its inherent genetic characteristics and with all its spiritual and religious institutions and practices. That was the sound thinking which prompted that meeting to pass three Resolutions. I gave the texts of two Resolutions (Vol 1, No. 6 of Dini Avaz). The first Resolution torpedoed the report of the learned eleven. The second one resolved to boycott those Mobeds and Priests who performed any Juddin Navjote (whether of a child by Parsi father or Parsi mother). And the third Resolution in terms declared that there was no custom of admitting the children of Parsi father and non-Parsi mother into the Religion and no such child would be admitted or accepted as Parsi.

The rich youth and his satellites then knocked the door of the law. The famous case was filed in the Bombay High Court, where the only question was whether the French wife was entitled to the benefit of Parsi Trusts, 'Agiaries' and 'Dokhma's'. I use Justice Beamon's own emphatic words regarding this:

"And this clearly invites a precise statement of the real question we have to answer. That question is not whether the Zoroastrian Religion permits conversion but whether when these Trusts were founded, the Founders contemplated and intended that the Converts should be admitted to participate in them." (1908) 11 Bom. L.R. 85, at 150) (emphasis by His Lordship himself).

This question, both the Judges

answered in an emphatic negative. The judgment do not lay down any law further than this. There are, of course, reference to the children of Parsi fathers by non-Parsi mothers in the judgments; but as pointed out to our community n times (where n tends to infinity) these constituted obiter dictum and did not lay down any law. I also repeat that Justice Davar in terms referred to the third Resolution of the meeting of 16-4-1905 which said that a child of a Parsi father and non-Parsi mother would not be admitted to the race and religion.

To go back to the history, even after the court case the community went on resisting any attempt to bring in the Juddin question. The most noteworthy step in this direction was a meeting of all the Parsi Priests held in 1914 which resolved that no Navjote of a child of Parsi father by non-Parsi mother would be performed by any Priest.

The next important event was the publication of "Zoroastrian Theology" by Dr. Dhalla and "Zoroastrianism Ancient and Modern" by Phiroze Masani. (See Vol. 1, No. 5 of Dini Avaz) Dr. Dhalla's book was to become Juddin advocates' bible. But Justice Davar encouraged Phiroze Masani to write his book as a thumping answer. Phiroze refuted each and every argument of Dr. Dhalla on conversion and ornamented his book by giving a list of 45 inconsistencies of Dr. Dhalla spread in his book!

The next important historical step was the drafting of the definition of a Parsi in the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936. The Juddin champions were trying to thrust a definition accepting children of Parsi father and non-Parsi mother. But due to the exertions of

Mr. Manekji Davar, Mr. Faredoon Dadachanji, Mr. Mancherji Khareghat and Mr. Homi Seervai the Juddin advocates' attempt failed and the definition that ultimately found its way in the Act is "**A Parsi means a Parsi Zoroastrian.**"

Then came the noisy chapter of **Bansda Navjote in 1942.** A few Parsis in Bansda State had kept Adivasi mistresses and their progeny had multiplied. One Mr. Faramji Bode and Mr. Barjorji Bharucha arranged to have 'Navjot's of this progeny; they were 'children' from the age of 7 to 70! There was an uproar in the community. Jame-Jamshed took the lead. The files of 'Jame' for the year 1942-43-44 provide an excellent account of how the community reacted sharply to Bode-Bharucha act. These files also show that the community did not make any distinction between children of Parsi father by an alien wife and Parsi mother by alien husband. In fact, **Bansda progeny was all the work of Parsi fathers!**

In August 1944, the Parsi Priests had a public meeting where the Bansda act was condemned and its leader the priest Mr. F. Bode was boycotted.

In 1945 some of the Bansda Navjotees filed a suit in the Bombay High Court against the trustees of an Agiary, claiming that they were Parsis and were entitled to enter the Agiary. They brought Dr. Dhalla, the Juddin champion, as their expert and powerful witness. But in cross-examination by counsel Mr. Manekshah, Dr. Dhalla admitted that he himself would never perform such a Navjote, because a large part of the Parsi community was against it! Bansda Navjotee plaintiffs were promptly advised by their coun-

sel Mr. Setalvad to withdraw the case.

When this case was pending, the Parsi Panchayat had received a requisition signed by 24,000 Parsis voicing strong protest against the Bansda Navjotes. Again on 16-3-1945 there was a Samast Anjuman Meeting condemning these Navjotes. All along the stand of the community was: no mixing of blood whatsoever, no distinction between children of a Parsi father by non-Parsi mother and of Parsi mother by non-Parsi father.

The next step was an alleged **declaration by 14 'Dastoor's in 1949** where one of the paragraphs stated that they had to accept the definition of a Parsi as laid down by the law. This was another attempt to thrust Justice Davar's obiter as law, and meant that the community should accept children of Parsi fathers by non-Parsi mothers. But the community reacted sharply again. The two head priests who belonged to hereditary Priesthoods of Navsari and Udwađa not only did not join in this declaration of 14 'Dastoor's', but opposed it strongly. One of them Dastoorji Mirza presided over a public meeting held on 9-10-1949 for recording the **strong protest of the community**. Here again the community confirmed that Justice Davar's judgment did not lay that law and that no mixing of blood and genes should be allowed whether by a Parsi father or mother.

In 1963 one more such confirmation was asserted by the community. A movement was launched by some Parsis to induce Parsi Panchayat to call a Samast Anjuman meeting to give tributes to the late Barjorji Bharucha (of Bansda fame). Such meetings are called only for those prominent deceased

Parsis who had rendered exceptional service to the community. A requisition was sent to the Trustees of Parsi Panchayat to call such a meeting for Mr. Bharucha. Parsis, however, had not forgotten the Bansda Navjotes done under his leadership. The late Mr. Jehangirji Chiniwalla and his weekly 'Parsi Avaz' took up a counter-movement. A counter requisition with thousands of signatures was sent to the Parsi Panchaya reminding them that calling such meeting would mean ratification of the great ill deed by Bode Bharucha and Company. Trustees honoured the counter requisition. No meeting was called for Mr. Bharucha. On 30-11-1963 a public meeting was held to protest against the then intended meeting for Mr. Bharucha where again the community confirmed its previous stand on the Juddin question. (Before this meeting was held, the Trustees had resolved not to go in for the mourning meeting for Mr. Bharucha).

Once again the community expressed its views in another public meeting held on 1-4-1970 under the leadership of Mr. Maneck Mistry.

It is thus as clear as the sun (except to a few self-centred owls) that **the community is against any mixing of the blood and genes by any kind of Juddin marriage or Juddin Navjote and it does not accept any distinction between the children of a Parsi father and non-Parsi mother and of a Parsi mother and non-Parsi father. There is no law that makes such distinction.** The community has adopted this consistent stand since Parsis came here in this land of Bharata and has expressed the stand most emphatically and effectively

(Continued on Page 20)

