

STORY OF LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF A VERSATILE GENIUS



ERVAD PHIROZE SHAPURJI MASANI, A MISSIONARY OF ZOROASTRIANISM

Can you imagine a man who could be a brilliant scholar of languages and literature; an excellent mathematician; a solicitor; an acclaimed pundit in Zoroastrian and oriental studies with some extraordinary achievements; an ardent student of Zoroastrian mystic Science; an incessant writer on Zoroastrian subjects; a noted teacher,

a fearless speaker and editor; a presit (mobed) having passed through all the disciplines of priesthood; and above all, a human with the ever glowing fire of devotion and faith in his heart and an earnest and sincere craving for kindling the same fire in the hearts of his fellow-beings?

Can you ever think that such a versatile man could have very recently lived amongst us?

Yes, there was one – **Ervad Phiroze Shapurji Masani M. A., LL. B. Solicitor** (span of life: 5-9-1887 – Roj Daepdin, Mah Asfandarmard, 1256 Y. Z. to 18-2-1943 – Roj Sarosh, Mah Shahervar 1312 Y. Z., a short but most extraordinary span of unceasing energy and activity).

His 33rd anniversary fell on 18th February 1976 and let us therefore remember the life, work and achievements of this versatile Parsi genius.

BRILLIANCE AT SCHOOL

Phiroze was only 13, when his father departed. But the young boy at school was showing extraordinary talents and abilities. A very sharp intellect capable of taking keen interest in any subject, coupled with unlimited capacity of hard work, made Phiroze a very brilliant student. Besides awarding him all prizes, and giving him first rank, the School had to promote him twice in one year. Even in School days Phiroze took great pleasure in teaching his fellow students and encouraging them to achieve good results. That was the first sign of the ordained mission of his life; because later on he was to teach and preach the most difficult chapter of Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian Science and Knowledge to his community, by words spoken and written.

Those youthful days also reflected Phiroze's devotion and faith towards Religion. He passed through the disciplines of 'Navar', which qualifies an 'Athornan' to become a full priest-mobed-able to perform the divine ceremonies.

BRILLIANCE AT COLLEGE

The jewel radiated more brilliance in College. First class first throughout, Phiroze used to win all the prizes, medals and scholarships that the College and University had. He was the winner of James Taylor Prize Medal, Wordsworth Scholarship, Cobdon Club Medal, P M Jeejeebhoy

Prize, Alice Scholarship and above all the Chancellor Medal which was awarded to a student standing first amongst the students of all different languages. "Phiroze Masani has swept the whole bag of prizes", remarked the College Principal.

Right from the College days Phiroze plunged into public life. He was too intelligent to be swept away by the then onslaught of material winds from the West. Those winds were producing a chilling effect on Zoroastrian spiritual disciplines, institutions and ethics. Phiroze raised his young and powerful voice against those who were dazed by the western thoughts and wanted to "reform" Zoroastrian Religion, its practice and even its original teachings!

THE ZOROASTRIAN (!) CONFERENCE

In about the middle of the year 1909, a body called 'Zoroastrian Conference' was formed by a few Parsis, who had no strength to withstand the material downpour of the then western thought. They wanted to scrap all spiritual disciplines and ceremonies. They publicised a few innocent looking objects but the real object was to strip the Religion and reduce it to zero.

In one of the public sittings of the conference Dastoorji Kekobad of Poona was the President. In his speech while referring to several "useless ceremonies", he gave an instance of Sanskrit Ashirvad chanted during our marriage rites. According to him that Sanskrit chanting had no religious significance; it merely arose out of some promise given by our ancestors to Jadirana, the King at Sanjan who gave them refuge. Phiroze was in the audience. He stood up and asked in a cool determined voice to the effect that was it not a sin to commit a breach of a promise given to our benefactor? Was it not the sin of 'Meher-Druji? (This means the sin of breaking a promise, which generates evil force within the person breaking it and also in nature).

Phiroze was at that time hardly 21 years young! The speaker Dastoorji and the whole assembly was taken aback. Phiroze's statement was a very significant pointer that this so called reformists had even no good ethics in them; they could openly advocate breach of promises and then in the other breadth would say that good thoughts, words and deeds constituted the whole Religion! Several eminent persons including one Khansehbeh Kavasji Dadachanji rushed to Phiroze and pet his back. "Shabash young man"!

What was the force that prompted this youth to raise his voice against this hypocrisy in the name of Religion? It was no doubt his sharp wit and courage flowing from a keen intellect. But there was something else also.

And that was: **Phiroze had met Baheramshah Navroji Shroff!!**

That simple-looking Parsi from Surat had come into direct contact with certain Zoroastrian Sages living in their secret abode inside the mountain Daemavand at Iran, and had learnt from them by certain spiritual methods the esoteric Science and Divine Knowledge contained in the Zoroastrian Daena (Religion). Baheramshahji was in those secret abode of Zoroastrian Sages for about 3 years during about 1875-78. After returning to Surat, for about 25 years he had not said a word about that miracle of his life to anybody. However, on an auspicious day in the year 1905, he declared about his sojourn with the sages before a small group of Parsi students of Zoroastrianism, and from that moment, the pure and pristine Knowledge and Science of the Zoroastrian Daena began to percolate in the community. In about 1908-9, when the racket of the alleged Zoroastrian conference had started, one Kaikhushru Choksi and Evad Phiroze Masani brought Baheramshahji to Bombay.

The public speeches of Baheramshahji had a startling effect on the Parsi Community. In the last issue of this humble Dini Avaz, we had indicated the amazing impression created by Baher-

amshahji on some renowned savants of oriental studies like Kharshedji Kama, Jehangirji Vimaladal, Rustomji (Bapaji) Dastoor, Khodabax Poonegar, Sohrab Bulsara etc.

"I HAVE FOUND IT"

All the academic brilliance and profound learning and scholarship of Evad Phiroze Masani achieved their goal in Ilm-e-Khsnoom, the Mystic Science and Knowledge Baheramshahji had started propagating. It was a final answer to all the doubts of young Phiroze and its propagation became his life-time mission. All the studies he had made, all the subjects he had mastered and all the problems he had keenly considered culminated themselves in a beautiful edifice of intellectual, spiritual, divine and devotional thought. Every thing fitted in its proper place. The pure teachings of the Daena percolated throughout the length, breadth and depth of this master brain. His heart became a fountain source of faith and devotion. And a craving to awaken his fellow beings to the divine radiance of the Zoroastrian Religion overpowered every nerve of this exceptional human.

And that was the force behind the standing up of this youth of 21 years and challenging the big pretenders of the alleged Zoroastrian Conference in their own den.

THE MISSION

But that was just a straw compared to what Phiroze had started doing. To awaken the faith of his Zoroastrian brothers and sisters, by placing before them the jewels of Ilm-e-Khsnoom, became his inflexible mission. Everything was to be sacrificed for this, all worldly successes were to be thrown away if necessary.

How magnificently Phiroze achieved his mission, how much he wrote and what he wrote, how he fought against oddest odds and what blessings he received from Divine Forces, Energies and Beings, - all this we shall see in the next issue. To-day I shall mention briefly what exactly Ilm-e-Khsnoom means.

WHAT IS ILM-E-KHSNOON ?

Some people say it is a 'School of Thought'; some say it is one of the many interpretations of the Zoroastrian Religion; some say it is some odd theories full of technical words and jargon.

All these notions are wrong, incorrect and illusory. **Ilm-e-Khsnoom is just another name of the Zoroastrian Daena itself.** The Zoroastrian Religion teaches Great Truths of Nature. It presents a compact edifice of the Truths regarding the whole Creation and place of everything in it. Why and how everything is created, why and how everything evolves spiritually, why, how and where everything will reach its Final Goal, and how a human should behave in life to advance towards the Goal— these are the vast subjects taught in Zoroastrianism; and one collective name of this Divine Knowledge, Science and practical training to live a life, is Ilm-e-Khsnoom. It is not something different

from Zoroastrian Religion; it is THE Zoroastrian Religion itself. It is not a school of thought, because that implies that it is one of several but inconsistent interpretations of Zoroastrianism. That is not so. It is the pure Teaching of Zoroastrianism itself and not one of many interpretations. The fact that the brilliant mind of Phiroze was attracted towards this Divine Science, is indication enough that Ilm-e-Khsnoom is not something illusory, but a Science of solid and irrefutable Universal Truths as taught by Lord Zarathushtra. And have you ever come across any branch of Knowledge, Science or Learning which is without its own technical terms, words, phrases and expressions?

(To be Continued)



Life and Achievements of Ervad Phiroze Shapurji Masani

Justice Davar's Judgement & Phiroze's Book, "ZOROASTRIANISM, ANCIENT & MODERN"

Ervad Phiroze Masani, the brilliant student and scholar, the winner of numerous University prizes and the challenger at the so called 'Zoroastrian Conference', had met Baheramshah Shroff.

Phiroze could perceive with his sharp intellect that what Baheramshahji taught as Ilm-e-Khsnoon was The Mystic Science of the Zarathushtrian Religion and was a final answer to all the doubts and questions which arose in its studies. It was a spiritual gift sent to the Parsis of India by the mystical Agencies of the Prophet Zarathushtra Himself. It had all the power and strength to revive the faith of the Parsis in the corrosive times.

The Message

Phiroze became the publicity-man for Ilm-e-Ksnoon. In 1910 due to the exertions of Phiroze "Zarathoshti Ilm-e-Khsnom Institute" was established. "Ye Parsis! your Religion is the storehouse of all spiritual knowledge; each of its instructions, institutions exercises, ceremonies, teachings, disciplines and practices as prevalent amongst us is meant and prescribed for your spiritual upliftment and evolution and each is based on great spiritual Truths. Do not be carried away and dazzled by the science and studies flowing from the West. They

have their own limitations; their 'explanations' are mere speculations destined to have a very short life. Do not discard your great spiritual and moral institutions and practices. Merge them in your life. That is the only way towards the salvation, spiritual Renovation, Frasho-Gard." That was the message of Bahramshahji and that was the message Phiroze propagated throughout his life.

The Ilm-e-Khsnoon Institute held public lectures and private classes. It was now time not to rely on spoken word only.

Phiroze founded a quarterly magazine 'Frashogard' in Gujarati. Its first issue came out in July 1911. The very first Editorial article of Phiroze was scintillating with sincerity, conviction and missionary zeal. He wrote: "Thanks towards the just and great Ahura Mazda, by whose gift and grace several unseen Beings, Agencies and Energies continuously help the whole creation in its spiritual evolution; and through such Beings an auspicious child is born today in the world of literature."

Frasho-gard was destined to live for about 30 years. During all these years, Phiroze adorned its pages with his sincere, powerful and convincing articles. One of his earlier series had the title "How can the Upliftment of the Parsi Community be achieved?" These articles reflect the far-sighted-

ness and practical wisdom of the brilliant author. He declared in no uncertain terms that in spite of its then worldly pomp, the Parsi Community was deteriorating; it was a falling race. Why? Phiroze gave several cogent and pertinent reasons.

Causes of the Downfall

One greatest reason was that Parsis were drifting away from their Divine Religion. Education was without any religious and moral teachings. Editors of Parsi Newspapers did not understand their great responsibility in nature. Parsi youths remained unmarried. Family lives were full of petty quarrels. Some people advocated proselytism; they said, "do Navjote on any man and woman and increase the number of Parsis" which was the surest way of being eradicated. The so called educated youth was full of vices. Parsis were losing faith towards their divine spiritual and moral institutions, disciplines and exercises. 'Tarikat', the Procedure of life prescribed by the Prophet Zarathushtra was being ignored.

And that was the root of all the deterioration and degradation. If the Religious prescriptions and disciplines were adopted in life, all the troubles would disappear. But that required Faith. How could the Faith grow and flourish? By obtaining knowledge of Religion. From where? From Ilm-e-Khsnoom, the mystic spiritual science of the Zarathushtrian Religion.

The Remedy

What Phiroze wrote in 1911-12-13 is true even today. The situation has worsened. But the reasons are the same; and the remedies are also the same. So

long as Religious disciplines were at the centre of all activity, Parsis flourished. When they were swept away by the poisonous winds from the West, they began to fall and are falling—in quality as well as in quantity. The remedy is not the increase in number by bringing wives or husbands from other communities and allegedly 'Navjoting' their offsprings. When the sons and daughters of Parsi parents are throwing away Sudreh-Kushti, what is the sense in putting them on mixed-blood children? The remedy lies in inducing faith in the youths born of Parsi parents and not in pretending to bring in others and add to the faithlessness. A garden is turning into a jungle; there is no wisdom in making it denser.

The Famous Law suit and Justice Davar's Judgement

These problems of conversion, proselytism, and marriages outside the community had begun to arise at the

With Best Compliments from :

**WESTERN INDIA
TYPEWRITER CO.**

Dealers in everything for :
**TYPEWRITER AND DUPLICATOR
ACCESSORIES, REPAIRS-SPECIALITY**

General Assurance Building,
232, Dr. D. Navroji Road,
Fort, B O M B A Y - 400 001.

end of the last century, and aggravated fast. Phiroze was one of the first fierce fighters against these poisonous and destructive evils. The Western winds of materialism and materialistic studies of Religion, had created a handful of Parsis who advocated these evils and that gave a license to some rich high-society Parsis to bring European wives. A famous law-suit ensued in 1906. One of such Parsis wanted to establish in a Court of Law that his beautiful French wife must be declared a Parsi Zoroastrian because (i) she had married him and (ii) she purported to adopt Zoroastrian Religion by having an alleged 'Navjot' performed on her and that she was entitled to the use of the Charity funds, fire-temples, Dokhmas and other religious institutions managed and possessed by Trustees of Parsi Panchayat, Bombay.

The case was heard by Justice Davar and Justice Beamon. The Court held that such persons as that French lady could not be declared to be a Parsi and was not entitled to the benefit of the Parsi Institutions.

Opening another Front

After the above suit was decided, the advocates of those evils became busy plotting once more. They should, they thought, have a book written by a scholar of some weight, stating that Zoroastrianism encouraged conversion, proselytism and juddin marriages. They found out a scholar for the job — a foreign returned Parsi priest with some American Degrees. His name was Dr. Manekji N. Dhalla.

The scholar wrote a book "**Zoroastrian Theology.**" In it, he said with an apparent scholarly vein, that Zoroastrians should throw open their

Religion to all and that was encouraged in the Religion itself.

Fight Back — Write Back!

It was necessary to counteract the poison with which the book flourished. It might be a step towards another litigation. **Justice Davar himself, as a wise Parsi, was worried.** Somebody should give a scholarly reply to Dr. Dhalla's book. Those were the days when materialism was in full swing and to counteract the arguments in the book, a writer of special gift and qualification was needed; he should be a scholar of the Western studies and at the same time a defender of the traditional institutions and disciplines of Zarathushtrian Religion.

Nature had kept such a writer ready for the community. He was Ervad Phiroze Shapurji Masani. He was asked to write a book against Dr. Dhalla's. Can you imagine who encouraged Phiroze in his task? The same Justice Davar of that French wife's husband's law-suit!! [Those who refer to Justice Davar's Judgement in support of Juddin marriages and Navjots may please ponder over this! (The first thing — they should **read** the judgement!) (1909) 11 Bom. L. R. 85]

Phiroze wrote his "Zoroastrianism. Ancient and Modern" (1917).

Let us read Phiroze's own words in the Prologue of the book:—

"The book of Zoroastrian Theology is one of the many books of this so-called Rationalistic School of Avesta students. It echoes all the absurd, non-sensical and unreasonable views held by the majority of the philological school of the Avesta about the greatest, best and most excellent universal religion of Zoroaster. The book advocates

very emphatically the admission of aliens into the Zoroastrian fold simply with the investiture ceremony, and the advisability of inter-communal marriages. It seems that the book has been written with the sole mission of Juddin-conversion and Juddin-marriages, for the writer throughout the book strikes the iron wherever he finds it hot. When the attempts of the advocates of proselytism are baffled in the recent suit against the Trustees of the Parsee Panchayat of Bombay (vide 11 Bom. L. R. p. 85), they have tried to procure in black and white the arguments proselytism in the name of Zoroastrian scriptures and Dr. Dhalla ran to their succour. **The late Sir Dinsha Davar who took part in that law-suit as one of the Judges conjointly with Sir Justice Beaman, was dead against the foul attempts of these proselytists for various valid reasons.** When he saw that Dr. Dhalla's Book was motivated only for preaching proselytism he feared lest the book might some day be held up as authority by a counsel in any other similar proselytism-suit and desired to have a book refuting home all the rotten ideas contained in the Zoroastrian Theology, so that such a refutation in a book form might be presented to the Bench by a counsel on the opposite side. Thus this book "Zoroastrianism — Ancient and Modern" was commenced with the far-sighted view of its usefulness held by the hero Sir Dinsha who was ready to sacrifice a mite of his money for the sake of saving his small community from being merged into an unnameable base product of various bloods incompatibly and unscientifically and irreligious mixed together by Juddin marriages."

It is the same Justice Davar, whose judgement is offered — wrongly and

misguidingly — as an excuse for Juddin Navjots! He was prepared to help Phiroze financially in the publication of the book. Phiroze dedicated the book to Justice Davar. The dedication reads:

**"TO
THE LATE HON'BLE JUSTICE
SIR DINSHA DANJIBHAI
DAVAR, KT.,**

A true Parsee Hero,

Who has for good routed the efforts of the advocates of Juddin-Marriage and conversion, who has saved the Parsee community from Racial Degeneration and extinction, who has by his learned decision from the Bench in the year 1908, given effect to the wishes of thousand of Parsi Donors that the use of the Charity Funds, Fire-temples, Dokhmas and other religious institutions endowed by them should be allowed to Parsees only.

This Book is dedicated as a token of Respect by his Admirer.

Peace be with him!

WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM :

Faramroz, Cama & Co.

SALES OFFICE :

Taj Bldg., 201, Dadabhai Navroji Road,
BOMBAY-400 001.

Phone : 26 30 08

BRANCH :

1/125, M. Y Road, SECUNDERABAD.

Phone : 7 5 9 1 4