

ORTHODOXY Vs. REFORMS

Time tested traditions and customs vindicated in the light of Modern Science - -- By Noshir H. Dadrawala.

In a speech delivered in Bombay, some years ago Prof. John Hinnels Senior Lecturer in comparative religions at Manchester University lamented: "one of the basic ills of community is that it has not been true to itself. Where I believe the community went wrong was in the way it copied or aped the west. The early 20th century generation departed from its own ideals and deserted its traditions, they and those like them are not true to themselves. What (father) Wilson (in the 19th century) and other missionaries failed to do and what the Arabs failed to do - Crush Zoroastrianism - Western secularism, materialism and religions indifferences are doing effectively".

To modern Parsis wearing the "Sudreh-Kusti" has become bothersome, "Dokhmenashini" primitive, Rituals" inconvenient, traditions useless, and prayers ineffective. In short orthodoxy is out. Reform is the "in thing".

We were however amused reading an article on orthodoxy and heart attack in an American Scientific Journal "PREVENTION" of August 1986. The article states: "For years doctors have been observing how the vegetarian diet of seventh-day Adventists lower their risk to heart disease

and cancer. How doctors in Israel have found that religiousness itself, not just diet may protect against heart attack.

To doctors compared the degree of religious orthodoxy in over 500 Jewish men and women in Jerusalem who had experienced a heart attack. They were compared with a similar group who had not had a heart attack. About 50 per cent of those who had a heart attack defined themselves as nonreligious, compared with less than 20% of those who had not had a heart attack. And nonreligious people had a significantly higher risk regardless of whether they had high Cholesterol levels or high blood pressure.

Why does religious orthodoxy protect against heart attacks? The doctors are not sure. But they think that psychological and social factors could play a protective role." It is possible that the strong belief in a supreme being and the role of prayers may be protective" (International Journal of Cardiology, January 1986). A study done in the United States in 1979 supports the Israeli finding. Individuals who belong to a Church or temple also have lower mortality rates than those who do not (American Journal of Epidemiology, February 1979).

"Of course" sceptics will say "with statistics you can prove anything." "So that if they are compiled in the west?". We wonder.

As if on cue in a recent lecture a parsi scholar remarked "with statistics compiled over a few decades scientists have been able to establish some connection between smoking and cancer. Not every one who smokes may get cancer. But statistics prove that people who smoke are at a greater risk of contacting cancer. Similarly if statistics could be taken, it will be seen that when more Parsis wore Suderh-Kusti, believed in "Dokhmenashini" respected traditions and customs, they were more in numbers, economically stable and more healthy in every respect".

Some Parsis are against "Dokhmenashini" because according to them they refuse to be "torn and devoured by vultures". Of course they are fully prepared to be devoured by thousands of worms, maggots and ants over a period of year under the soil or traditionally baked over a pyre of woods or grilled/barbecued in an electric crematorium.

They complain of pollution and stench in a Dokhma but have any of these Parsis cared to examine the environment in and around a graveyard or been around to inhale the foul and unbearable stench emitted from a burning corps. Have they ever witnessed the cracking of bones or the arching of the spinal cord during cremation. If they have and still wish to be baked or gradually putrified under the soil, only God can help them.

They complain why non Parsis are not allowed inside a fire temple or permitted at the time of "Sachkar". Can their mere sight really cause various imbalances during "Sachkar" or to a consecrated fire? We do not know. However according to modern quantum physics it is quite possible. "The new physics, quantum mechanics, tells us clearly that it is not possible to observe reality without changing it. If we observe a certain particle collision experiment not only do we have no way of proving that the result would have been the same if we had not been watching it, all that we know indicates that it would not have been the same, because

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THAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR IT" (The Dancing WULI Masters - An over view of the new physics by Gary Zukav, published by Bantan Book U.S.A.)

Orthodox Parsis revere the consecrated fire of an "Atash Behram" as a living, vibrant spiritual king (Padsha). They communicate with it and even seek various boons. To the radical this is of course nothing short of insanity. However according to E. H. Walker -- an eminent physicist "Photons" (basic particles/waves of light) may be conscious. He says "consciousness may be associated with all/quantum mechanical processes. Since everything that occurs is ultimately the result of one or more quantum mechanical events, the universe is "inhabited" by an almost unlimited number of rather discrete conscious entities that are responsible for the detailed working of the universe (the nature of consciousness - Mathematical Biosciences, 7, 1970, 175 - 176).

The conceptual frame work of quantum mechanics, supported by massive volumes of experimental data, forces contemporary physicists to express themselves in a manner that sounds, even to the uninitiated, like the language of mystics.

The unfolding of quantum mechanics was (and still is) a drama of high suspense.

Orthodox Parsis often talk about vibrations (modern vibes) affecting the efficacy of certain rituals. The orthodox Parsi feels the vibrations of a non Parsi

affect a ritual due to reasons of different wavelengths. "Jugglery of words". "Hocus Pocus" the radical would say. However Dr. Prince de Broglie says "Theoretically, in fact, everything has a wavelength - baseballs, automobiles and even PEOPLE although their wavelengths are so small that they are not noticeable (The Dancing Wuli Masters).

Gary Zukav rightly puts it "Nonsense is that which does not fit into the prearranged patterns which we have superimposed on reality. There is no such thing as nonsense apart from a judgmental intellect which calls it that. True artists and physicists know that nonsense is only that which, viewed from our present point of view is unintelligible. Nonsense is nonsense only when we have not yet found that point of view from which it makes sense.

Further, during sachkar a dog is allowed to view the dead body, but not a non Parsi. What could be the rationale of such a strange custom.

The Vendidad explains that "Druj-i-Nasush" (Force of evil) retreats at the sight of a dog (sâgdid).

Vibrations of varying wavelengths from the eyes of humans and dogs would once again be "Hocus Pocus" to our radical friends and deemed a figment of some fanatic's imagination. However, according to Gurvich's theories,

Kazakh scientists have found a way to register extraordinary emanates from people's eyes. They used a special film emulsion sensitive to the ultra violet spectrum along with selective filters, and after suppressing all heat radiations, obtained every strange pictures. According to Dr. Ingushin, "we discovered an emanation from the eyes of animals and humans and the energies coming from human and animal eyes vary with emotions and environmental conditions" (International conference on Bioenergetics in Moscow, 1972).

The journal of Paraphysics (Vol. 6, No. 5) notes "we obtained from human eyes, under conditions of auto suggestion, after an exposure of only one thousand of a second, very clear images on the emulsion".

With the fact established that human and animal eyes do emanate vibrations of varrying wavelengths and frequencies it is not difficult to see the rationale behind allowing a dog during sachkar and not a non-Parsi. It is not that the vibrations of a non-parsi are inferior to that of a Parsi They simply differ and that is all. But the difference makes all the difference in the efficacy or otherwise of any Zoroastrian ritual. This is not only proved by the scriptures and tradition but more recently by modern science itself.

Regarding the onslaught of "Druj-e-Nashus" the scriptures say it rushes in from the North in the form of a "Mukushi"

(fly/microbe). Strange as it may seem, but thousands of years ago our ancestors had recognized the presence of microbes. But the onslaught from the North? Did it make any sense?

Fortunately in 1975 Dr. Richard Blackmore of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute U.S.A. discovered that BACTERIA responded effectively to the earth's magnetic field. Dr. Blakemore discovered to his amazement that for every experiement carried out by him, the bacteria on his samples of mud always collected and gathered themselves on the Northern side. So facinated was the Doctor by his amazing discovery that he threw himself body and soul into the study of

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the strange behaviour of these small microscopic creatures. It was discovered that when a magnet was placed near the bacteria (thus reversing the original magnetic field) the tiny creatures promptly turned their own direction in adjustment to the revised magnetic field.

Further research proved conclusively that the bacteria were not simply being pulled or attracted towards the North under the influence of the magnetic field but rather they actually followed it on their own.

Now here was a fact of nature discovered by modern science in the year 1975 but known to our ancestors thousands of year ago. Modern Parsis "Pooh Pooh" the ancient custom of segregating a women in her menses. However the Vendidad states that a women in a state of menses should keep 15 steps away from fire and water. She should keep 3 steps away from pious men and if she even chances to glance at a person in prayer the latter must undergo fresh prelimineries and renew his prayer all over again.

Scientists today with the aid of Kirlian photography have been able to observe the personal atmosphere of women in a state of menses and found to their amazement denseness and morbidity in it. It is little wonder therefore that even Jesus Christ cried out "who touched me ---- my Glory is gone out of me" (Gospel of St. Luke) when a woman suffering from irregular menses touched him.

However there is more to it than just vibes. Studies at the John Hopkins University Laboratory by Prof. Macht and Prof. Lobin have proved the existence of certain toxins (called menotoxins) in various body fluids of menstruating women. Studies have revealed that menotoxins have an inhibitory effect on the growth of roots and stems of living seedings, yeast and in all cases of freshly cut flowers. Menotoxins also distort the geotropic properties of young seedlings. Is it therefore any wonder that our sagacious and foresighted forefathers recommended segregation?

Scientists today are making more and more discoveries which only amuse but do not surprise orthodox Parsis. If an Einstein discovers the theory of an ever expanding universe, the orthodox Parsi is not surprised, because he already knows about "continuous progress through infinite and measureless space" (vide Fravardin Yasht paras 57 and 58). If an astronomer traces the roots of the moon to our earth, the orthodox Parsi simply smiles remembering the word "Gao Chithrem" (seed of the earth) in para three of the Mah Bokhtar Niyayesh (litany to the moon).

To be an orthodox therefore is not a matter of shame but pride. The west is already bowing its head before the spirituality and lofty sciences of the East. It is hoped radical Parsis will begin to see the changing tide.