

TOWARDS EXTINCTION ?

OUR WILL TO SURVIVE IS GONE!

Is the Parsi Community on its way to extinction?

It seems, it is. We are showing every symptom, which a Community would exhibit when it is near death. Death here means, to be submerged away into the vast ocean of humanity. Presently we are just a reducing handful with the label "Parsi" attached. The label is surely being erased out. The reason is that our existence as a small pocket of humanity depended solely on our Religious life and we are fast forgetting it day by day. Our Religion and the way of life taught by it made us survive notwithstanding our tiny size and the onslaught of calamities, howsoever strong. That way of life was not just a boast of Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni - 'good' thoughts, words, deeds and the hollow moral sermons based thereon, and the notorious Gatha-alone cult; it was the observance of religious practices and sincere adherence to the spiritual tenets and Institutions, like Sudreh Kushti, Manthra Prayers, Kriya Kam, 'Atash-Kadeh's, Dokhma. The moral integrity of the Parsis, their truthfulness, their obliging and charitable disposition, their natural apathy for untruth and several other virtues veritably emanated from the religious observances and practices.

Today all those practices are just left in name. The pep behind them is gone. Thus the male Sudreh's have become sleeveless and the female, waistless, if not completely eliminated. Agiaris are the houses of make-believe. A 50 minutes Kriya is rolled up in 15 minutes; Yazashney has become obsolete; Vendidad begins at 3 a.m. and is dozingly finished at 5 a.m., by an office-going "moted" - that too provided somebody comes to attend the ceremony, (the required duration being between 7 to 8 hours.) Manthra-prayers have been shortened to instant 'nirang's so called. Dokhmenashini is blasphemed by pretended journalists, who do not know ABC of Religion. The "high priests" close their eyes toward the trickeries and deceits going on in the Fire temples under their own "administrative" charge. The young have a fashion parade in the Fire-temples.

What about the proverbial integrity and honesty of the Parsis ? Please don't ask me, I was the vigilance chief of a large public sector undertaking, which had Parsi customers. Suffice it to say that the words Manashni, Gavashni Kunashni are now strictly confined to the cheap newspaper-columns.

As to the self proclaimed Akabari and the Parsi Trusts, some are the fertile grounds for vigilance inquests. Some have put up Doongerwadi lands for sale, and others may follow suit. Communal properties are allowed to be snatched away. Complete lethargy prevails in the community. Nobody raises even a feeble voice of protest.

There are a handful of youths, who crave to know about the great Parsi Religion and its spiritual tenets, traditions and institutions. They only get conflicting guidance. There are some 'teachers' and 'guides' and 'Sahebs' and 'studies', and each of them thinks that the truth is their exclusive monopoly and that the reality has landed on them alone and nobody else. There are some Parsi wind-bags who talk of mysticism on a non-parsi stage but forget it before the Parsis. The "high-priests" are too high with their philological jugglery to be able to give any meaningful guidance. They remain silent when a holy Scripture Vendidad, which is associated with the Nirang miracle, is called "bull shit", and Fravardin Yashta (the main Manthra of Farokshi), which is an essential part of our 'Kriya' for the departed, is branded as false by a Muslim on internet.

Attempts made to unite the orthodox thinking has proved abortive. Ignorance prevails on every matter of religion. Excuses are offered to avoid religious disciplines. Questions are asked "Why so" and "Where is it written", but there is too much intellectual laziness to understand or get the answers. Religion is not a simple subject, if you want to have an intellectual interest in it. Its subject matter ranges from a dust particle to God. It is not a matter of shouting ignorance on Dhanshak table. But that is what we do.

Is there any hope? Frankly and for good reasons, No. It seems to be too late. Because the will to survive as a community and to preserve the identity is gone. If to be saved, that will is required to be strongly energised; THAT is the first step. It is true that the Saviours and 'Soshyant's will arrive to save the humanity and the community. But before they arrive, should we not be ready for them?

This issue of Parsi Pukar carries a few articles on the grim subject: the threatened extinction of the Parsis. Idea is to provide some food for thought. What else can be done?

There is an article on the Amish, Community of America, their amazing way of life and their prosperous survival in spite of being deliberately away from the American modernity. It illustrates the truth that the

observance of Religion and Religious tenets and traditions can be the only foundation of survival for an ethnic community.

Ervad Burzin Peshotan Unwalla, a youth from America laments on what is 'taught' in his country in the name of "Zoroastrianism".

There is an article expressing the views of Dr. Freddie Mehta (Courtesy: Parsiana). He propounds that mixed marriages and stark ignorance about our Religion bring us nearer and nearer the brink of a wipe-out.

- Editor

* The Sixteen Sanskrit 'Shloka's Narrating the Parsi way of Life *

Somewhere in the 9th century, when a contingent of the Parsis arrived at Sanjan, their leader, **Dastur Nairyosang Dahval**, described to the **Rajput king, Jadi Rana**, the Parsi way of Life, to preserve which they had left Iran and were seeking the king's permission to live in his kingdom. This narration of the Parsi life has been expressed in 16 Sanskrit 'Shloka's. Here are their main ingredients: -

"We are the Parsis, fair, truthful, patient, benevolent, brave and strong.

We are devoted to the all powerful Ahuramada. We pray before the five elements of Nature through the recital of our 'Niyais - mantra's.

We know there are two forces in Nature: light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance, Dharma and adharma, health and pain. **We have an armour garment called Sudreh, and a woolen string Kushti, as pure as the waters of the Ganga.** We keep them on our bodies all the time. We keep our heads covered. We never extinguish fire but keep it burning and offer drywood, sandalwood and incense along with our manthra prayers, five times a day. We refrain from talking, during meditation, while reciting prayers, taking a bath and during four other activities. We use nirang to purify ourselves physically & spiritually and while performing our religious ceremonies. **We believe in the sanctity of marriage.** Our women have golden character. To dig wells, lakes, build bridges, to help the needy & all other forms of charities are given utmost importance by us. We train our children to cultivate good qualities and sound character. **Such are we, fair, truthful, patient, benevolent, brave and strong!"**

That was the Parsi life, when we arrived on this land of the Saints. Bharat.

Are we today THOSE Parsis? If NOT, have we any capacity left to BE something like those Parsis?

(The above summary of the Shloka's are by courtesy "**Mazdayasni Connection**" of California. **Sillo Mehta's powerful and 16 years long magazine.**)

(Parsi Pukar - APRIL 1997 Vol. 2; No.10)