

APRIL 1972

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USE of ROSARY in

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VOL. VIII.No. 6.

APRIL 1972.

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EDITORIAL.

ACTION PATTERN OF THE PARSI PANCHAYAT.

Parsi public thinks one way, Parsi Panchayat thinks another way and that another way is no way to think. Community's thinking section wonders how one servant, Sohrab Bajan, is still tolerated as the so-called administrator of Godrej Press when he has thoughtlessly, thoroughly and totally bungled the entire assignment. Trustees gave him a razor without any safety holder. He did his best. He cut throats of a dozen Parsis and sheared the beards of the Trustees. The Trustees look clean (shaved) from a distance which lends enchantment to their view. Close up some Trustees use Listerine liberally to mask the foul breath of falsehood emanating from their mouths. A lie is a lie and they know it when they describe their adopted administrator as effiecent,

Let us analyse their tongue which wags falsehood when they try to extend time to avoid Bajan's expulsion, which should be forthwith, without delay, without flicker of any eyelid. Look at his horrifying record of service.

Using all lawless practices with malice prepens he brought about removal of Mr. Rati Bulsara from the post of the manager of the Press. Mr. Boman-Behram's choice was sound. He had decided and he had recommended Mr. Bulsara to be made Manager of both the Press and the Envelop factory. By what mental twist he went against Mr. Bulsara to favour Mr. Bajan is a secret conversion under Bajan's selfish persuasions and Lady Jehangir's insinuations. I had written in plain terms in my letter to Mr. Boman-Behram that so long as you (or any of the Trustees) will keep Mr. Bajan as a servant in the Parsi Panchayat Calamities will follow you. Becoming a turn-coat may be a habit. He turned coat from Independent to Congressite. In that he lost his coat and his shirt buttons. His head now rests on the stiff collar in attempt to save Bajan from Collapse. If he had not misguided Lady Jehangir in her error of judgement about Mr. Bajan the present debacle may have been averted.

I have turned ^{OUT} correct in every detail. Bajan has proved himself useless and unworthy of the responsible assignment. His is a record of losses and wastage. Losses of good men to Panchayat and wastage of revenue and further Capital of 125,000 sunk to boost up Bajan. *These are the very same Trustees who could not spare Rs 3000 for Bulsara to renew types. Only Bajan could be relied on to waste money.* Mr. Bulsara within first six months of his office as manager made a profit of Rs 10,000. Then Bajan was thrust in for no good

reason. In further six months Bajan wipes out profit made by Bulsara and makes loss of Rs10,000, i.e. in all the auspicious entry of Bajan costs the community a loss of Rs20,000. Then in succeeding two years Bajan's administration records losses in the press to the tune of Rs40,000 and more. This for the press only.

Envelpo department which used to give annual profit of Rs80,000 now gives profit of Rs20000 and even 15,000. Lady Jehangir, Mr. Boman Behram and Mr. Erach Nadirshaw look upon this achievement as marvelous efficient and struggle most energetically to retain Bajan. God knows why? I don't. Do you see any good reason? We all don't but some outsiders think deeper and believe that the underlying reason must be something of a secret amongst these three constant supporters of Bajan. No apparent reason can support Bajan in this office as every employee of the Parsi Panchayat openly shows resentment at Bajan and laughs under the sleeves for Trustees who are so weak-kneed. In their opinion Bajan should be expelled "forthwith" with capital F as this word is a favourite with Panchayats correspondence about all employees to be discharged. Lady Jehangir has shown utter disregard for the opinion of the community who want Bajan's explanation. Lady threatened to resign if Bajan was thrown out and Mr. Mullan, the strong man of the Income Tax office felt his energies taxed too much to resist Lady's entreaties. Once every fortnight there are such weakening week-ends when stalwart male Trustees become toddlers. It is the task and the duty of the chairman to put his foot down firmly and end such uncertain gait. Community wants him to act as their head and not play an escapist.

Now one Mr. Sanjana of Bandra has levelled allegations against Bajan. They are serious nature and yet some Trustees have made efforts to protect Bajan under ~~his~~ flimsy excuses to side-track the main issues. I have written to the Trustees that I shall lead valid convincing when they start inquiry. Inquiry is a must and Bajan must be asked to explain and clarify his position. Let us observe what stuff the Trustees are made of.

Trustees pampering Mr. Bajan say that this move is because Mr. Mistry does not like Mr. Bajan. So what? So many others too do not like Mr. Bajan. That is not the point. The point is why do some Trustees like Mr. Bajan with such record and many precedents which have made the position of Trustees so uncomfortable. Let Mr. Boman Behram explain it.

PARSIANA APRIL 1972

THE USE OF ROSARIES AMONG ZOROASTRIANS.

BY

SHAMS-UL-ULMA DR. JIVANJI JAMSHEDJI MODI B.A., PH.D.

Of all places that I have visited during my travels, now and then, in Indian place has pleased me, or fascinated me, so much as Darjeeling, where, as said in a preceding paper, I had the pleasure of staying for about 5 weeks in May-June 1913. The fascination came, not only from the beautiful scenery and surroundings of the place and the grand and sublime snowy Himalayas in the front, but also from my frequent visits to the Tibetan Gompas or monasteries, from my conversation with their Lamas or Tibetan priests, and from my study of the Tibetan manners and customs as observed and studied there—studied from persons and studied from books. The Lamas and their monasteries, their religion and customs formed there the principal subject of my study.

In the Tibetan monasteries, next to the Lamas or the priests, their ritualistic word, their alat, drew my principal attention. Their dorje, which has given the hill station the name of Darjeeling i.e. the place of dorje (a sceptre-like instrument, symbolizing, at first "the mystic thunder-bolt of the Lamaist religion" and then ecclesiastical authority) reminded me of our Avestic vazra or Gurz.

The other principal articles or instruments that drew my attention there, were their Prayer-machines, the subject of which can be divided into three heads:

1. Prayer flags.
2. Prayer-wheels, which are also spoken of as prayer-cylinders, prayer-drums, prayer-mills and prayer-barrels.
3. Prayer-beads, or rosary or chaplets.

I have spoken of these three kinds of the Tibetan Prayer-machines at some length, in my three papers before the Anthropological Society of Bombay. It is the study of the question of the use of Prayer-beads or rosaries among different people, suggested by the Tibetan rosaries, that has led me to study of the subject of this paper.

We know the rosaries form a part of the religious paraphernalia or ritualistic apparatus of many religious communities, such as the Hindus, Buddhists, Mahomedans and Christians.

Mr. G. Clarke Nuttall in his article, entitled "The Rosary and its History", says:

"It (rosary) is a link with the days behind History. Its origion is lost in the dawn of civilization in the far East, and though many now feel it is a hinderance rather than a help to their devotions, it has undoubtedly played a definat and real part in the chief great religions that havemoulded the minds of men". Mr. Nuttall refers to the use of rosaries among some religious communities, but says nothing of the Zoroastrians. But we know, that Zoroastrians, both of Persia and India, use it in some of their rituals.

The origion of the use of the rosaries among various communities seems to be this:

1. Certain short prayers have to be recited for a number of times in the midst of long prayers. We Zoroastrians have to repeat certain small prayer - formulae in the midst of long prayers. For example we have to recite 10 Ahunavars (Yatha Ahu Vairyo) and 10 Ashem Vohus in the midst of the Ormazd Yasht; 21 Ahunavars and 12 Ashem Vohus at the end of the Patet; 200 Ahunavars and 100 Ashem Vohus in the recital of the Vendidad.

We do not know for certain, why one particular number is enjoined in one particular prayer, and another particular number in another particular prayer. We have the injunction to repeat certain prayers thrice. For this we can safely say, that that was on account of the importance of the prayer, the object being, that its teachings or precept maybe more strongly impressed upon the mind. For example, the Vispa Humata prayer, one of the most beautiful and instructive prayers, teaching the adoption of the best of our moral precepts, is enjoined to be repeated thrice, so that its precepts may be impressed very vividly on our minds.

But in the case of the repetition of certain short prayers for a large number of times, we are not in a position to give any particular reason, except the reason that among the ancients, as observed in the case of the writings of Pythagoras, who is spoken of as a disciple of Zoroaster, numbers are believed to possess certain efficacy, and that they symbolized some truth. But this is a case of the recital or the repetition in the midst of some, larger prayers. These repetitions are not many.

2. Then there is the case of the larger number of repetition in the case of separate recitals, not connected with, or not occurring in, the midst of long prayers. For example, take the later injunctions to repeat 1200 Ahunavars during the Gatha Gahanbar holidays and 12 Ashem Vohus in the preceding five days.

In the case of the later injunctions for these numerous repetitions what we see, at the bottom of the injunctions, is, what can be termed "a shortening process", observed in the case of many religious observances. Let us take the above case of the recital of the Ahunavars and Ashemvohus in the above mentioned 10 days-days known among us as the Farvardegan or Moktdad holidays. It seems that, at first, it was enjoined that a good pious Zoroastrian must recite the five Gathas of Zoroaster, during the five Gatha Gahambar holidays-the first Gatha Ahunavad on the first, the Ahunavad Gatha holiday; the second Gatha Ushtavad on the second, the Ushtavad Gatha holiday, and so on. These five Gatha days which come at the very end of the year, are spoken of in our later books as the meh or the great Farvardegan days, and the preceding five days are spoken of as the keh or the lesser Farvardegan days. It was enjoined that during each of the keh or lesser five days, a good pious Zoroastrian was to recite the chapter of the Yacna, known among us as the Fra-mraot ha, because it begins with the words Fra-mraot. It is the 20th chapter of the Yacna which is a commentary on the Ashem Vohu prayer. It appears further, that latterly, when it was found that there were many who did not know these Gathas and the Fra-mraot ha by heart, or even did not know to read them from books, the injunction was made easy, and it was enjoined that those who could not recite or read Gathas and the Ha, might, in their stead, recite 1200 Ahunavars and 12 Ashem Vohus respectively. This was, as it were, the first step in the evolution of the shortening process. It further appears that latterly, not only those, who in this connection, may be termed the illiterate, took advantage of this facility afforded by the priests, but also some of the literates, who saw that in this substituted process a little of their labour of reading the long difficult Gathas was saved.

This shortening process, the process of substituting short prayers or prayer-formulae in place of long prayers, seems to have proceeded, latterly, further in the case of short and easy prayers also. The recital of a certain number of Yatha Ahu Vairyo and Ashem Vohus was also permitted in the place of the recital of the daily prayers like the Nyaishes. Here is a list of such prayers with their equivalents in the short formulae as given by the later Persian Revayats.

NAMES OF THE PRAYERS.

NUMBER OF TIMES THE SHORT PRAYERS OF WERE TO BE RECITED IN THEIR STEAD WHEN ONE DID NOT KNOW THE LONG PRAYERS BY HEART OR DID NOT KNOW TO READ THEM.

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. Khorshed Nyaish. | 103 Ahunavars. |
| 2. Meher Nyaish. | 103 " |
| 3. Mah-bokhtar Nyaish | 85 " |

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NAMES OF THE PRAYERS.

NUMBER OF TIMES THE SHORT PRAYERS
OF WERE TO BE RECITED IN THEIR
STEAD. HERE ONE DID NOT KNOW THE
LONG PRAYERS BY HEART OR DID NOT
KNOW TO READ THEM.

4. Atash-Nyaish	65. Ahunavars.
5. Ardvicura Nyaish.	100.
6. Each of the five Gahs or prayers for the five periods of the day.	65.
7. Patet (The Prayer of Repen- tance.)	121. "and 12 Ashemvohus.
8. Ahura Mazda Yasht.	103. "and 10 Ashemvohus.
9. Ardibehest Yasht.	65. "
10. Sarosh Yasht Hadokht.	75. "
11. Sarosh Yasht vadi (i.e. the larger Sarosh Yasht-i-Yazas- hne)	103. "
12. Each of the Afringans.	121. Ahunavars and 12 Ashemvohus.

With the introduction of this shortening process, the rosary seems to have come to use. One cannot count accurately on his fingers the number of times he had to say these short prayers. So, the use of some counting apparatus or materials came in. Latterly, the shortening process went further, and people began to repeat only the first word, 'Yatha', of the Ahunavar and to turn a bead of rosary. Then people ceased even to utter the first word Yatha, and the mere turning of the beads of the rosary came to be considered a religious or pious act. Thus, from the preliminary position of a counting machine, the rosary came to occupy the position of a religious instrument or a praying-machine, and people now turn its beads in the midst of ordinary business.

It seems that the use of rosary itself as a counting-machine came in at a much later period among the Parsis. In the midst of the recital of the Yacna, in the preliminary ritual known as the paragna, the priest has to recite the 101 names of God 10 times. The priest, even now a days, does not use a rosary for the purpose. He has before him, on the alat-gah or the stone platform where the ritualistic utensils are placed, a number of wires known as the Barsam wires. The priest uses these wires for the purpose of counting. He recites the 101 names of God and then sets apart one of the Barsam wires. He sets apart 10 wires and completes his reckoning and prayers. Thus, the ten recitals of the 101 names are counted, not by any rosary, but by means of the metallic wires.

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which are used in the ritual for another ritualistic purpose.

In the recital of the Vendidad in the Nirangdin ceremony, during one part of recital, 200 Ahunavars and 100 Ashem Vohus are to be recited. It is for counting these prayers that a rosary containing 100 beads, generally of Kerba i.e. amber, is used now a days. It is said that at Naosari, a special rosary of this kind is kept by the Dastur who lends it to others for ceremonial occasions.

As to the use of rosary among the Zoroastrians of Persia, I learn, on inquiring from my friend, Mr. Khodayar Shkeryar Dastur of Persia that it is used in Persia for the following prayers and ritualistic purposes.

1. The occasional recital of the short formula of the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer, 1000 times, by old ladies.
2. The recital of the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer by the priest in the Vendidad ceremony. This is also done, as said above, by the Zoroastrian priests of India.
3. On the occasion of the Tirangan Jashan i.e. the Jashan on the day Tir and Mah Tir, when all the Zoroastrians, whether priests or laymen, generally recite the formula in honour of Tishtrya or Tir, which occurs in the Avesta. The formula runs thus and is repeated thrice in the Nayishes: Tishtrim Dravo-chashmanem Yazamaide i.e. We praise the Trishtrya with strong eyes. This formula is recited 1000 times early in the morning on the above Jashan day.
4. Again on the occasion of the Chaharum ceremony, when the Dah-mobed is required to collect, so to say, "Avestas" to be prayed in the interest of the dead from the people there, the rosary is used for keeping the account.

The custom of what is called "collecting the Avesta", referred to above requires some explanation and remarks, especially as it resembles a similar custom among the Indian Zoroastrians. On the occasion of a death, the near relatives and friends of the deceased, deem it meritorious to get some prayers recited in honour of the dead. So, the family priest, or the priest of the village goes round among the relatives and friends and asks them as to the number of prayers they would like to be recited in honour of the dead. He turns a number of beads of the rosary for the number of prayers ordered by each relative and thus counts up the total enjoined by all.

This custom of the Iranian Zoroastrians is similar to a custom of the Indian Zoroastrians with this difference, that the Indian Zoroastrians do on the Oothma day, which is the third day. The custom in India is known as the "lakh bhanavvi" i.e. to get a "lac PARSIANA 1972.

recited", thereby meaning, that a hundred thousand of Ahunavars or Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayers may be recited. Though the number ordinarily spoken of is one lac, in reality, it is one lac and five hundred. The custom is this: On the third day after death, at the end of the Oothamma ceremony, the eldest son of the deceased, or in his absence, or as his substitute, any near relative presents himself with the family priest before the senior priest in the assembly of priests that meet for the ceremonies. He is then made to mention by that senior priest, the particular ceremonies he is to get performed for the deceased during the first year after death. Formerly, it was customary, that a list of the ceremonies was settled beforehand by the head of the family, in consultation with his family. Now according to his or their means, or according to the wishes of the wishes of the deceased as enjoined by him either orally or by his Will. For example, it may be so many Yacnas, so many Vendidad etc. The person then gets those recitals made. He considers it his Farz or duty to do so. The recital or declaration before the senior priest was therefore also known as "Farz apvi i.e. Enjoining the Duty (to the heir)." Latterly, instead of settling beforehand, the particular ceremonies to be performed during the course of the year, a stereotyped form is used, which the son or relative has to repeat as dictated by the senior priest.

It seems that in India also, upto about 50 years ago, the family priest inquired of the relatives, if they desired any prayers to be recited on their behalf in honour of the deceased. They gave the number which they desired to be recited. On having the figures from all the relatives and friends the total number was announced before the assembly. The heir generally or some other member of the family undertook, as a matter of duty (farz), to get duly recited by a priest or priests the total number of prayers as desired by all the relatives joined together. Now these prayers that are enjoined were generally the Ahunavars or the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayers. Their number generally varied. But it seems that it generally amounted to one lac. So, latterly, whether the total, as desired or as subscribed by the relatives, amounted to a lac or not, a lac was taken to be the usual stereotyped number. Hence the words lakh bhanavvi i.e. to get a lac (of Ahunavars) recited. Though the name of the custom signifies a lakh (a lac), the wording of the formula of the farz speaks of one lac and five hundred Ahunavars. It seems, that, though, the original intention is to get one lac Ahunavars recited, in case there may be a mistake in counting, 500 more are directed to be recited, to avoid the defect of any mistakes in counting.

The family priest is entrusted with the task of the recital. He is given about Rs. 15 for the recital. He recites a certain number every day, according to convenience or arrangement, and finishes the number before the first year after death.

It is these different kinds of the recitals of the Ahunavars that seem to have brought the rosary into use among the Parsees. On the third night after death, a suit of clothes and some utensils are consecrated and given to the family priest as a payment in kind. In these articles of consecration, a rosary is also generally consecrated and presented to the priest.

As said above, the original custom was to announce the actual number of prayers, whether they be Ahunavars or other prayers before the assembly, but latterly, the number became a stereotyped number of a lac and five hundred. Then the announcement became, as it were, a part of the ritual. Often the announcement is not acted upon and the family does not get all the prayers recited. The spirit, even the misguided spirit is lost and the letter-letter pure and simple, nay not even the letter, remains. This is a typical instance of how customs, bearing some sense and meaning in the original, lose all their significance within half a century and continue as mere meaningless customs.

The above custom of lakh bhanavvi is also spoken of as Sosh bhanavvi i.e. to get the sosh recited. The word sosh is the corrupted form of Sraosha. As said above, at times, the relatives of the deceased, desired some other Avesta prayers, in place of, or in addition to, the Ahunavars, to be recited. These were generally the Yacna prayers in honour of the Yazata or angel Sraosha, who according to the Avesta, guards and guides the souls, living or departed, of men. As the number of Ahunavars has been fixed or rather stereotyped into a lac and five hundred, that of the Yacnas and the Vendidads has been stereotyped into three. In addition to these, the number of the Daroons (Avesta Draona) or the consecrated breads that are offered on various occasions during the first year after death has been fixed at 24.

This custom of the announcement of the prayers is also spoken of by some as gae bhanavvi i.e. to get a recital or announcement made for a cow. It is said, that perhaps, a formerly, the Parsees, following their Hindu fellow-countrymen, considered it meritorious to get, on special solemn occasions of joy or grief, a cow released from the hands of the butcher. The occasion of the Oothamna ceremony on the third day after death was considered by some to be a solemn occasion of that kind and a cow was set free from the hands of a butcher on such an occasion. Now a days, we only find a relic of that custom in the above phraseology, though no announcement is made to that effect before the assembly. A sum varying from one to five Rupees, is paid to the family priest now a days in lieu of the former custom and that

payment is spoken of as gae bhanaman i.e. "(The fee for the announcement of a cow.)" Some speak of it as Sosh Bhanaman i.e. fee for the recital of the lac of Ahunavars. This phraseology shows, how the three customs have been mixed up. But, perhaps this is a remnant of an old Central Asian Custom. We find that among the modern Tibetans, whose ancestors seem to have belonged to Central Asia, there is a custom, wherein a cow, yak, or goat is presented to a Lama or priest on the day of the disposal of the dead body. The beads of rosaries among the Indian Zoroastrians are generally made of glass. Well-to-do people have those of amber and even silver.

The Persian Zoroastrians speak of their rosaries as Band-i Yatha Ahuvairyo. The rosary is so called because it is made up of a number of bana i.e. knots made out of a thread, and because it is generally used for the recital of the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayers. It is prepared by the priests. Now a days they also use glass beads. At times the beads are made of vetch or pulse. The use of vetch or pulse as materials for beads, is in accordance with the general fact, that in almost all old communities, it was some vegetable product that supplied the materials of beads. For example, the very word "rosary" in English comes from rose. The Sanskrit word mala for rosary also means a garden. Our Indian word hardi for a rosary also means a garden. Our Indian word hardi for a rosary comes from har, which also means a garland of flowers. The Tibetan word for rosary is also connected with garden. All these words lead to show that in early times compressed flowers or vegetable products formed the beads of rosaries.

It is not unusual to find a Parsee Mobad, now a days, recite the eight Yatha Ahu Vairyos at the end of the Fravashi prayer, holding up, at each recital, one of the eight flowers that he has before him in the recital. The eight flowers before him serve him as a kind of rosary for counting the number of the eight Ahunavars.

One may ask the question, whether rosary was known to the ancient Iranians? If known, what is the Avestaic word for a rosary? We do not find any word for rosary in the Avesta. So it seems, that, though its use is old, it is not very old. It may have come into use at a comparatively later time.

From our Avesta word mar (Sanskrit Pahlavi) Pers. Latim Me-mor) comes the Pahlavi word for beads. The modern Persian word for rosary comes from the Pahlavi word. These words suggest that the repetition of certain prayers seems to be a very old practice. Among us, the Gujarati word 'Gunvu' (to count) has come to mean "to recite a religious prayer". For example, the old ustads (teachers) of the last generation used to say to their chelas (disciples) "Path Guni Ja" "count the task" i.e. "recite them".

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NEWS & VIEWS.

INDO-BANGLA ACCORD.

SHIPPING.

India gives Bangla its first ship.

The m.v. "Vishva Prem" which played a significant role in the Bangla desh liberation war, was today handed over by India to the new nation to become its first merchant ship.

Rechristened "Bangla Doot", the 9,150-tonne vessel will begin its maiden voyage on Monday to the U.K. and the continent under the command of Capt. S.A. Chowdhury.

Mr. C.P. Srivastava, chairman and managing director of the Shipping Corporation of India, handed over the vessel to Capt. Rahman, chairman and managing director of the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, at the King George's Dock here.

The vessel has been sold to Bangladesh under the Indo-Bangladesh trade agreement on a "deferred payment basis."

Thanking the government of India for its assistance to Bangladesh both before and after its liberation, Capt. Rahman, in a voice choked with emotion, said the ceremony marked the fruition of the endeavour for mutual co-operation. "This gesture will help boost the economy of our war-ravaged country," he said.

Capt. Rahman said that to develop its foreign trade, Bangladesh would acquire a fleet of 43 vessels in ten years. Out of them, nine ships would be purchased within a year.

Mr. Srivastava said that the SCI proposed to make available one more ship from its fleet to the BSC soon in accordance with the decision of the government of India.

EDUCATION.

Broad principles and areas of collaboration and Co-operation between India and Bangladesh in the fields of education, science, culture and sports were discussed and agreed to at the meeting held between Dr. Nurul Hasan, minister for education, social welfare and culture, and Pro. Yusuf Ali Bangladesh minister education and culture.

Dr. Nurul Hasan presented to the Bangladesh minister a set of text books and science teaching kits for schools, books on culture and

other subjects for use at school and university levels brought out by the Sahitya Akademi, the Sangeet Natak Akademi the NCERT and the National Book Trust.

A selection of musical instruments and sports equipment formed part of the presentation. Later, Prof. Yusuf Ali saw the NCERT's mobile van for teaching science.

Earlier the Bangladesh minister visited Rajghat and Shantivana where he placed wreaths on the samadhis. In the afternoon he called on the president Mr. V.V. Giri.

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