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Qissa-i-Sanjan...

The obscure history of the men of the true faith

In the year 1600 AD on Khordad roz, Fravardin mah, a priest, Bahman Kaikobad Hormuzdyar Sanjana put the finishing touches to the 864 lines of his epic, the *Qissa-i-Sanjan* or the Story of Sanjan.

The verses were the first written record of the Zoroastrian migration from a troubled Iran, across stormy seas to the hospitable shores of India. For over 600 years, since the Zoroastrians landed in the 10th century AD, the story had been orally related from generation to generation.

"I have heard this (tale) from a wise dastur who was renowned for virtue," wrote Bahman. "May the dastur whose name is Hoshang live long, whose wisdom had always great excellence... He told me this tale according to the sayings of the men of old and repeated the obscure history of the men of the true faith."

Little is known of Bahman except that he was "already advanced in age at the time (of writing) and that he came of a family noted for its literary tastes and aptitude for the composition of Persian verse," notes Shahpurshah Hormasji Hodiwala, the noted historian in his book *Studies in Parsi History*.

Bahman's father, Kaikobad, whose "heart delighted only in calling Iranshah to mind," appears to have been a leader amongst the Sanjana priests settled in Navsari.

"When...we consider the details of the history contained in the *Kisse-e-Sanjan*," wrote Rustam Barjorji Paymaster, a distinguished lawyer, journalist and publi-

cist, whose translation of the verses is published in the issue, "we are confronted with a controversy which has led to the formation of two rival schools of thought, one believing it to be history, the other placing it in the category of a historical novel."

The controversy regarding the *Qissa-i-Sanjan*'s historical veracity came to the fore at the beginning of this century, when some Parsis decided to raise a monument at Sanjan to commemorate the Zoroastrian landing.

The dissidents, notable among whom were Ervad Jamshedji Dadabhoy Nadirsha, an Avesta scholar who is said to have travelled extensively in Persia, and B. N. Bhathena, who presented a paper entitled "Kisse-Sanjan: A Palpable Falsehood" at the 12th All India Oriental Conference in Banares in 1943, contended that the whole of the *Qissa-i-Sanjan* is a figment of Bahman's imagination. Bhathena accuses Bahman of having composed the *Qissa-i-Sanjan* with "a view to glorify the Sanjana priests as the protectors of the religion of the Parsi community."

Both scholars discount the traditional notion that the Zoroastrians fled Iran in the wake of religious persecution and sought refuge in India. They claim that the Parsis in India today are the descendants of already established Iranian Zoroastrian traders and businessmen who had set up their colonies in Punjab, Sind, Gujarat and Thana, while Zoroastrian kings were still ruling in Iran.

Bhathena notes, "The fact is that on the downfall of

Yazdegird III, the Parsis in Iran had no cause to leave the country. The Arabs were not able to establish their rule securely for a considerable time; they had not resorted at once to convert the Zoroastrians forcibly to Islam; and there were powerful and freedom loving Zoroastrian chieftains who challenged and defied the authority of the conquerors for a long time after the fall of the Sassanian dynasty.

"When these brave *Ispahbads* were gallantly giving resistance to the Arab invaders, only the cowards can think of leaving the motherland to her fate and running away to some distant place for safety. If the supporters of *Kisse-Sanjan* rank their ancestors among the cowards, I have nothing to say."

Opponents of the *Qissa-i-Sanjan* dispute the existence of Jadi Rana, the account of the war fought by the Zoroastrians on behalf of his successors and, "in short, the whole *Kissa* is palpably false and entirely baseless," according to Bhathena.

Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, the reputed Zoroastrian scholar, defended the *Qissa-i-Sanjan* and commented, "Not a single voice was raised against (the *Qissa*) for these hundreds of years. It was only when I launched the column movement, that the first voice of opposition was heard."

Dr John Wilson, the noted Christian missionary whose school was attended by several Parsis including K. R. Cama, the noted scholar, at the turn of the century, states the verses are "the most important document of the very meagre accounts possessed by the Parsis of the settlement of their forefathers in the country."

Hodiwala says, "Bahman's statements appear to have been based not only on a nucleus of genuine oral tradition but perhaps of written memoranda... Those memoranda... must be pronounced trustworthy and valuable... Bahman himself tells us at the end of the poem that he had written the *Qissa* according to what he 'had seen and also learnt from the conversation of his elders.'"

In a translation of the *Qissa* published by the Lutfuddaulah Oriental Research Institute in Hyderabad, the preface written by Sayyid Ahmadullah Qadri, then president of the Institute notes, "It is far from reality to say that the story of the poem is fictitious. This *Qissa* is based on facts indeed, but there is difficulty in locating periods... as it is a historic poem, there is no room for conjectures. Its author, Bahman, was a learned and able poet."

Rustom P. Karkaria, the noted historian and author, commented on Bahman's epic in an introduction to a translation of the *Qissa-i-Sanjan* by Paymaster: "Literary merit it has few, language is at times obscure and faulty, while its imagery is sometimes grotesque, still with its faults, it has always appealed to our people in a wonderful manner and we are sure the hold it has on Parsis will be stronger in the future. It is a voice from the past speaking of a past remoter still, and momentous as containing the germs of our present position in this land and of the future which time may have in store for our race. This tale of Sanjan is in embryo our Odyssey and Aeneid combined."

The *Qissa-i-Sanjan* was originally written in Persian and then translated into Gujarati. A Gujarati prose rendering was done by Framji Aspandiarji Rabadi, a noted

19th century Parsi scholar.

English translations have been undertaken by Edward Backhouse Eastwich, a noted 19th century orientalist, Paymaster, Hodiwala and Hakeem Sayyid Shamsullah Qadri amongst others.

Parsiana reprints in this issue Paymaster's translation which is amongst the most readable. Though there appear to be as many spellings of the *Qissa-i-Sanjan* as there are translations, *Parsiana* has adhered to Dr Mary Boyce's spelling.

Researched by Arnavaz Patel (now Chubb)

GOD, (I CRAVE) THY FAVOR

*In the name of God, the giver, the beneficent,
the merciful, the just, the kind, the matchless,
the high and the great.*

In the name of God, the wise and holy, every moment I sing heartily His praise.

Night and day I offer to Him abundant thanksgiving because my soul is made happy (victorious) through His praise.

I do not say anything in season and out of season, except thanksgiving to Him, for He is the eternal King of the creation. He is powerful (and) mighty everlastingly, for the eyes of His servants (creatures) are constantly seeing through Him.

He is our refuge and helper everywhere; He forgives sins and accepts our prayer and repentance.

Again He always comes to our succor. He has given us knowledge and shown us the true faith.

He is the protector of the poor and the Lord of the Universe. He pardons sins and forgives (the sins of) mankind.

Further, He is our constant guide (and) is the companion of our secret hours and solver of (our) difficulties.

Thou hast a perfect control over the creation. Thou art the King, Thy kingdom is without decline.

Thou art the Lord over lords. Thou art our darling, matchless and incomparable.

From clay Thou makest by Thy power the shape of man and Thou puttest into the soul, glad and happy.

Thou carriest from the loin (spinal cord) a drop of seed into the womb, Thou art the One who delineates forms on water. Thou gavest the drop of seed the form of a body, Thou madest the world visible in it.

Thou gavest man the outward, visible tongue; and Thou again hast given him the inward (invisible) gem (of wisdom).

Thou hast given him two eyes for the purpose of seeing and hast made two ears for hearing.

Thou hast given him a tongue for speech, so that it may move like a pair of compasses in Thy praise.

Thou hast given him the sense of smell for enjoying sweet scent. Thou hast given him feet to stand up and worship (Thee).

Thou hast bound 32 pearls (of teeth) with one string. Thou hast created the sense of taste in the mouth (palate).

In such a (perfect) manner has the world been drawn on the slate of your workmanship that one can sacrifice his life for such workmanship.

To the souls of lovers Thou bringest sorrow (yet) Thou hast given (them) comfort and joy with melancholy.

Thou hast (painted) the picture of the two worlds on (the tablet of) nothingness (chaos). Thou hast made man the leader of angels.

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Opponents of the *Qissa-i-Sanjan* dispute the existence of Jari Rana, (and) the account of the war fought by the Zoroastrians on behalf of his successors



I grant that divinity befits Thee, Wisdom has testified to Thy existence.

Every time I express unbounded thanks to Thee my tongue is fittingly employed every moment of such expression.

Love has put a cord round my neck, so that wherever it draws me I proceed.

I have no help but to obey the Command of God, because He has thrown me everywhere into cheerful resignation.

No one deserves eternity except God, since He is always matchless.

All this entirety of existence has emanated from Thee, Thou hast given shape to the world through Thy wisdom. Thou hast created Adam out of clay and Thou hast named him Thy deputy.

Thou art He who is not subject to changeability, Thou art He who takes us by the hand to assist us.

None resembles Thee, none is like Thee, the whole of the creation emanates from Thee only.

Thou hast created the earth and the heavens and Thou hast graced them by creating man.

To Thy court Bahman has turned his face, enlighten his heart (mind) in this world.

Make his heart thrive in the true religion, and free his head from the chains of sorrow.

Keep him always prosperous (staunch) in the faith (and) by Thy own grace illumine his soul with light.

I have no benefactor save Thee, and in both the worlds my hopes are centered in Thee.

O Thou merciful One! forgive (my) sin, my tongue recounts (weighs) Thy attributes.

Thou doth help my friendless soul, Thou dost favor Thy servant with Thy bounty.

To whom shall I turn my face, if Thou drivest me away; where shall I go since there is none other than Thou.

I am ashamed of the crudeness of my words, I am not fortunate in this kind of art.

I have come before Thee to make apologies, for Thou holdest eternal sovereignty.

O Thou supporter of the world! befriend me, for I am Thy slave, the dust at the foot of the earth (i.e. Thy humblest creature).

I will not make any other altar except Thy door. What shall I do that will be acceptable to Thee?

In life be Thou my companion, because these companions (of this world) will not come with me (i.e. avail me).

At the last the wheel (sky) will reduce me to ashes, what fear or dread have I to die this death?

When my soul goes to Heaven, bring the words Asham on my tongue at that moment.

At the moment when the soul leaves the body, direct an angel to me.

Acquaintance may be formed with the souls of the departed so that my soul may be enlightened thereby.

The sin that I may have committed secretly, pardon it, O Merciful One, through Thy kindness.

What excuse can old Bahman offer to (Thy) Court (Thee), who has committed a number of faults in Thy service? But forgive his sins, and free him (his soul) from secret defeats.

Accept the words of my prayer, for I have experienced from Thee divine mercies.

O God! Thou knowest my secrets. Why dost Thou make me run here and there for



The landing at Sanjan Illustration courtesy: *In Search Of My God*

nothing?

My salvation in this world is from Thee, why then should I desire release (salvation) from others.

Youth is gone and old age has approached. My straight cypress (form) has stretched its head to Heaven.

Old Bahman is the poorest of the poor. Be Thou my helper and assist me everywhere.

Thou art my Judge in both the worlds, Thou befriendest the weak and the helpless (like me).

O God! wash my sleepy eyes of their carelessness and (O God) turn my face towards vigilance (i.e. make me vigilant).

Judge me not, O beneficent King, in proportion to my sinfulness.

From man nothing comes but sin, direct me to Thyself with the help of faith.

I am crying bitterly in Thy Court, so that Thou mayst not include my name amongst the sinners.

If thou wilt favor Thy servant, he will be exalted in both the worlds.

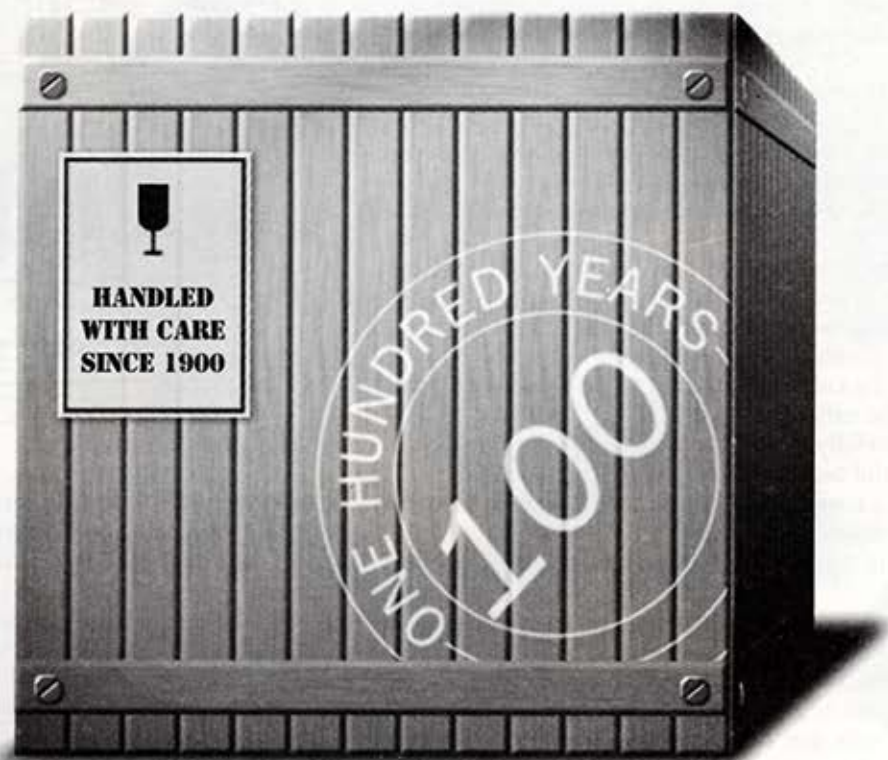
I was reflecting within myself about Thee, and was hesitating in my thoughts.

O Thou Judge, acceptor of prayers, I pray for Thy mercy.

On the arrival of believers in the true faith to the land of India from the city of Khorasan

Now hear wonderful narratives from the words of priests and from ancient writings.

Should I speak, it would be impossible to relate the whole



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history, and even on paper the whole cannot be expressed. Yet I will find out a portion of it; but of a hundred words I will utter only one.

I have heard it from a wise Dastur, who was always famous for his goodness.

He had also read *Zend* and *Avesta* and had repelled the followers of Ahriman from himself.

In his city he was a Dastur by whom undoubtedly the religion was constantly made shining (in evidence).

In those days his order prevailed over all (and) he arranged the affairs of the religion.

Whoever wanted to know of him the secrets of the religion, could by his directions well regulate the affairs of religion. He was an instructor in the city and his disciples were mighty pleased with him.

He narrated this story from the ancient tradition. He described the inward secrets of the truthful.

One day he told this story to me and pierced the pearls of news excellently.

This was the Dastur who told me this story. May goodness be his consort everlastingly.

I am repeating what he told me. I am revealing the secret works (legends) of the faithful:

In the days of King Gushtasp, holy Zoroaster showed the path of religion.

In the *Avesta* is narrated what would appear (in future); namely that a tyrannical king would appear among you.

The true religion would be broken up thrice, in consequence of which the faithful would be ruined and wounded.

The name of the king would be Sitamgar (tyrant) and the true religion would suffer at his hands.

Now hear carefully what I say regarding the religion, it was thus the faithful became again sufferers.

At length their King Alexander appeared. He openly burnt the books of the religion.

For 300 years the religion fell low and the devoted were oppressed.

After him for a long period the faith was languishing (until) Ardeshir became king.

A second time (then) the true religion was restored; in the world was heard its good report.

Ardai Viraf was sent to the divine Court for (obtaining) knowledge of heavenly things.

Thereafter again the ill-omened Satan broke up this faith.

He again caused obstacles in the true faith and from every direction proceeded complaints about religion.

After a period, when King Shapoor appeared, once again the good religion became fully shining.

When the devout Adarbad Maraspand girt up his loins for the sake of the religion.

He made copper of seven materials and melted it and poured it on his own body,

He removed every difficulty of the faithful and a second time he restored splendor of the religion.

From King Shapoor to King Yazdegird, the religion got its (original) dignity and position.

The days of Zoroaster came to an end for a time and no one found any trace of Zoroastrian state.

When a thousand years passed after Zoroaster, the true religion thus came to an end,

When King Yazdegird lost his sovereignty and a king of alien faith seized his throne



The Sanjan pillar

From that time Persia was broken up. Alas! the kingdom and its religion were both made desolate.

At that time all who had faith in *Zend* and *Pazand* became scattered.

The lay followers of the faith and the dasturs all had equally to conceal themselves for the secret preservation of the religion.

They all for the sake of their religion left their residence, place of abode, garden, hall and palace.

They remained a hundred years in Kohistan (the mountain) when their condition was reduced to such extremes.

Once a wise benefactor considered deeply the state of their religion.

He told his companions that it was difficult to remain there also any longer, on account of the fear of the enemy of the faith.

He ran with priests and laity at once to the city of Ormuz.

When 15 years passed in that territory and they suffered a number of indignities at the hands of people of an alien religion,

There was a wise dastur in that place who was an able astrologer.

Who had found from old calendars that our stay there was to come to an end.

(He advised) if we wish to leave this country we must at once move out of it;

Otherwise we shall all fall into a snare (come to grief), our wisdom will be useless and our work spoilt.

It would be therefore better that leaving the demons and the

The true religion would be broken up thrice, in consequence of which the faithful would be ruined and wounded



infidels we should proceed to India.

Being afraid of their lives and for the sake of their religion all then fled to India.

When the ships were launched into the sea and the sails were adjusted

They made women and children sit therein and they drove their ships fast towards India.

When the ships came all of a sudden towards India, without doubt they anchored at Diu.

Having secured a place there they came down — at last they found themselves once more on land.

The faithful remained there for 19 years after which an astrologer made a prediction.

An old dastur read in a calendar and immediately said, "O enlightened friends,

"We must remove hence to another place where we may find another place of refuge."

All were pleased to hear him and they sailed fast towards Gujarat.

When the ship had proceeded to some distance in the sea they were overtaken by a storm.

All the priests were perplexed and were overwhelmed in the whirlwind.

They rubbed their faces (fell prostrate) entreatingly in the Court of the Almighty and began supplications standing.

Saying, "O you Omniscient, help us out of the difficulty. Take us out of these hardships for once.

"O you victorious Bahram, come to our help, extricate us out of this difficulty.

"By your kindness, we shall not be troubled about the typhoon nor shall we harbor fear in our heart or soul.

"Come to assist the helpless, guide those who have lost their way.

"If we find a way out of this whirlpool, no calamity will overtake us again.

"If from this sea we reach the territory of India, happy and delighted

"We will kindle the victorious fire (atash behram); release us from this hardship and give us power.

"We accept this in the presence of God, because we have no one except Him (as our friend)."

By the blessing of the victorious fire of Bahram all fortunately escaped from that danger.

The very hour their supplication was accepted, God befriended them in their work.

A favorable wind blew with heavenly light (and) the very same contrary wind disappeared.

When the captain of the ship brought the name of holy God on his tongue and steered the ship at once,

All the dasturs and the faithful bound their sacred thread (and) immediately steered the ship in the sea.

It was so fated that thereafter they all arrived (towards) in the vicinity of Sanjan.

There was a good Raja in that place who was known for his righteousness.

His name was Jadi Rana; he was liberal, sensible and wise.

The dastur, who was noted for his learning and wisdom, went

to him with a present.

He gave him benediction and said, "O you King of Kings, give us shelter (place) in this city,

"We are poor and have come to your city and at your abode to ask for protection.

"For the sake of our religion we have come to this place; we have heard that there is a Raja here

"Of the descent of benevolent Kings; that he has always been famous in India,

"(That) he will give us shelter in (his) own city and kingdom, he will look upon our condition with an eye of mercy.

"We rejoiced at hearing this news and we came to you under pleasant auspices.

"Now we have come to your city and we have escaped from the infidels in hope of (meeting) you."

On hearing this all the subjects of that beneficent Raja were pleased at heart and delighted in soul.

When that prince saw them, all of a sudden he took fright. He was afraid of his crown lest they should render the country desolate.

The Raja was afraid of their dress and asked the dastur about their secret (observances).

At length he said, "O you pious dastur, first tell me the secret of this affair.

"Namely, what is after all the custom of your religion? What are secret, and what are open observances?

"First, let me see what your religion is, thereafter I shall prepare a place for you.

"Secondly, you must give up the language of your country so that I may give you a resting place (here).

"You must avoid the language of the country of Iran and pick up the language of India.

"Thirdly, your women must put on clothes like our women.

"The fourth is this, that these weapons and swords must be laid aside (put within the scabbard) and should not be worn anywhere.

"Fifthly, when there is some good work (marriage) in connection with a child, it must be performed in the evening.

"If you accept these conditions, then you can get a place of residence in our city."

When the dastur heard all this from the Raja, he had no help but to accept all that he said.

The aged mobed then told him, "O you wise Raja, listen to what I say about our religion.

"Do not be sorry on our account here, nothing wrong will proceed from us.

"We shall be friends with the whole of India and we shall everywhere cut off the heads of your enemies.

"Know for certain that we are worshippers of God (Yezdan) and have left (people of another faith) unbelievers for the sake of our religion.

"We have left behind us whatever we had, we have suffered much difficulty on our way.

"Even our residence, country and our possessions have we abandoned, O you fortunate King!

"We are strangers (foreigners) from the descent of Jamshed,

The ships were launched into the sea and the sails were adjusted. They made women and children sit therein and they drove their ships fast towards India



we revere the moon and the sun.

"Thirdly, we esteem the cow, water and fire on account of their good qualities.

"We worship fire and water, also the cow, the sun and the moon.

"Whatever God has created in the world, we pray to it, since He Himself has approved of it.

"This kusti (sacred thread) of ours, with 72 threads, we bind (round our waist) and we sleep with a pure heart.

"The women, who sit (apart) in monthly course, do not look to the sun, the sky and the moon.

"They keep at a distance from water and fire, since these things are of the essence of light.

"They carefully abstain from all things, during the light of daytime and the darkness of night.

"So long as the menses disappear they sit (apart) and when they wash their heads (i.e. are free from menses) they see fire and the sun.

"Again the woman who begets a child must remain apart for 40 days.

"She must abstain herself just as when she was in menses; if she does not do so, the things (she touches) become polluted.

"The woman who gives premature birth or birth to a stillborn child

"She cannot go or run about where she likes, she even cannot converse with any person.

"That woman also with great (strict) abstinence sits apart for 41 days."

And whatever other customs and rules they had, were all described to him one after another.

When they had recounted the secrets of their faith and pierced the pearls of discourse in the best possible manner,

When the Hindu Raja had heard these words of the dastur, his heart was fully satisfied.

The very moment the good Raja ordered them to take their residence in his kingdom.

The men who were wise, virtuous and tactful

(They) examined the land piece by piece, (they) found a commodious place and informed the dastur of it.

A plot in the desert was found acceptable, it was a pleasant spot and they took it up for their abode.

The people liked the place and a city grew up out of a jungle. It was altogether a barren desert, and old and young all came down to that place.

When the dastur saw that good place he selected a spot therein for residence.

The dastur named that spot Sanjan, it became prosperous like the land of Iran.

From that day they call it Sanjan, know that the city is named after it.

In it they were happy and comfortable and everyone passed his time according to his desire.

One day they had business with the Raja, (so) they all went up to him with a happy thought.

The dastur told him, "O you son of a king, you have given us

a place in this kingdom.

"We now wish that in the land of India we should instal our sacred fire.

"The land must be cleared for three *fursangs* (leagues), so that the sacred ceremonies may be properly performed there.

"No stranger should have access to that place and none should approach it except the people of the faith.

"Not a single one of a different faith should come to that spot, then only our (work) ceremony with the fire can be correctly observed.

"If any one were to make a noise there, undoubtedly there would suddenly be a great disorder in the religious work (ceremony)."

The Rai said, "I have given my permission, I am pleased with you for this work.

"I heartily give you my authority since such a great king (i. e. the sacred fire who was called Iranshah) there should be in my time.

"O wise man, what could be better than this, hallo! at once gird up your loins in this business."

Instantly the prince issued his order and gave to the dastur a pleasant spot.

The very moment Jadi Rai, the Hindu Rana, cleared the place in every direction.

He removed those of a different faith to three *fursangs* (leagues) and no one remained there except men of wisdom (i.e. the faithful).

For three leagues no one lived in the vicinity, no one lived within it except men of the faith.

Round about the *arwisgah* the dasturs, each in piety shining like sunlight.

(They) were there, night and day, keeping watch, by the order of Yezdan (God) such work was shown to them.

At that time everyone was (wise) well-informed and (each one) was capable in the affairs of his religion.

On certain days and months they performed *ijashni* ceremonies at night and made several attempts (in the affairs of religion).

The faithful were engaged in their own work (and) they made several preparations against the (encroachments of) aliens.

Even the the Prince Jadi Rana himself used to send several things (offerings) of every description.

In those days all the affairs were managed by the faithful.

All work could be performed by them with ease because they had brought their materials from Khorasan.

With those materials (implements) which were (brought) from Khorasan they worked there without being disturbed.

Because, along with so many dasturs and laymen of that pure religion who had come to that place

Several alchemists had come, so, by the favor of God, everything was made easy for them.

They (alchemists) had brought with them materials and they kindled the sacred fire in accordance with the rules of religion.

According to the custom of the faith all old men and dasturs

continued on page 14

" PAAK DAADAR AHURA MAZDA NI MADAD HOJO "

July 2001

AN INVIOABLE ZOROASTRIAN INJUNCTION, against Animals Slaughter, & hence an Absolute ZOROASTRIAN IMPERATIVE for Total Abstinence, enjoined in ZOROASTRIANISM, against consumption of Animal Food (Non-Vegetarian) DIET, — which is an ABHORABLE EVIL & TO BE CONSIDERED AS ONE OF THE GREATEST SINS — & AS "N A S O"

THOUGHTS FOR BAHAMAN MONTH (BAHAMAN AMESHSHASHPAND – ARCH ANGEL & "MAVAKAL" OVER ALL ANIMAL KINGDOM & ALSO "MAVAKAL" FOR DEVELOPING AN ENLIGHTENED GOOD SPIRITUAL & MYSTICAL MIND IN HUMANS) — IMPERATIVE NEED OF IMBIBING VEGETARIANISM, BY ALL ZOROASTRIANS.

BY, Engr. EDAL JAL CASSAD

B.E.(CIV. ENGG.) F.I.E. F.I.W.W.A., F.I.I.B.E., F.I.C.I., C. ENGG. (INDIA), F. I. C. C. M.

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This is with reference to the timely & perceptive Two Column Write – up by Columnist MR. MARZBAN J. GIARA in his Article **"THOUGHTS FOR BEHMAN MONTH,"** in the "Parsi – Taari – Aarsi" Column, of Mumbai Samachar, Dt. Sun. 24th June 2001. The above write-up has rightly extolled the imperative need, for us Parsees – to at least now onward & hence forward – to unfailingly change over to a Pure Vegetarian Diet, in our daily life – totally shunning the sinful consumption of obnoxious & deadly MEAT, FISH, FOWL & ANY OTHER ANIMALS FLESH, EGGS ETC., which is termed as N A S O, putrefied rotting poisonous flesh in ZOROASTRIANISM.

As succinctly pointed out in the above very Educative Write-up, Ervad Dr. PESHOTON F. PEER, over a period of years, wrote as many as 24 detailed & very informative Enlightening Articles, in our community's Newspapers, Mumbai Samachar & Jam-E-Jamshed, etc & in other Forums, to emphasize the need, about M A N's (& particularly us Zoroastrians) DIET TO BE VEGETARIAN, only. Ervad Dr. Peshoton Peer, — (may his worthy Soul, proceed higher & higher in the MINOI AALAM towards "ANAGHRO RAOCHAAO" — "Eternal Lights, in Ahura Mazda's Realm") — had in these 24 Articles strongly enjoined our Zoroastrian Brethren, to eschew & mend their thus far, wrong & SINFUL Ways (as all Dead Bodies, — slaughtered or otherwise dead — including Animals, Fowls etc being unquestionably considered as filthy putrefying & rotting NASO & not to be touched even, — leave aside the question, of consuming their Putrefied Flesh), — which ZOROASTRIANISM absolutely ABHORS & DEBARS. Unfortunately, due to some KARMIC QUIRK OF DESTINY, FATE & KARMA, to our sorrow our latter day Co-religionists & even our ERVADS & HIGH PRIESTS & DASTURS, of this oldest 8,000 years old, totally MYSTICAL & SPIRITUAL Faith of ZOROASTRIANISM, have misguidedly taken to eating Meat, Fish, Fowl & other Animals Flesh – being totally ignorant of the **Tenets & Injunctions**, in our Excellent Creed, having a Hoary & the Oldest past, known in Human History, — in this present part 12,000 years Sub-Cycle of Human Existence, from the total 84,000 years Cycle of Human Existence, before its Total Annihilation & Dissolution, by Divine Decree & subsequent recommencement of the Human Existence, again by Divine Decree of A H U (Ahuna – Vairya), by "PAAK DAADAR AHURA MAZDA".

The BOOK of these 24 Articles, on the ABSOLUTE IMPERATIVE OF VEGETARIANISM in ZOROASTRIANISM, as translated some years ago by Mr. GIARA, in ENGLISH, with other relevant Articles & Information, on the absolute need for all Zoroastrians, to partake VEGETARIAN DIET only, eschewing all items of Animals Flesh, Fish, Fowl Eggs etc., which is being published shortly this year, by Ervad Dr. ROHINTON PESHOTON PEER, of the PARSEE VEGETARIAN & TEMPERANCE SOCIETY, MUMBAI, formed around 90 years ago, will be an **ABSOLUTE REVELATION & STUNNING EYE-OPENER**, to the present day **unfortunate misguided & abysmally religiously ignorant Generation of Zoroastrian "CHICKEN / MUTTON D H A N S A K I A S"**.

In this context our Revered Dasturji KAIKHUSHRU MAHIYAR KUTAR, of Dadar Parsi Colony Agiari & Dadar Athoranan Madressa, (& a Guru / Teacher, to his innumerable students of Zoroastrian Religion, including Mr. GIARA), used to STRESS, (To Quote) "in his Religion Classes, that according to Zoroastrian Religion, we (PARSIS), should be VEGETARIAN" (Un Quote). It is therefore indeed a sad irony & a Quirk of Fate, that, (To Quote) "however, he Dasturji Kutar was candid enough to admit, that from childhood – ("Mamma – e – Khavravayu, — nahi – to – Maro Bucho nablo thai jashe") — he had acquired a taste for Non-Veg Food & therefore he ate non-veg food". (Unquote). A pity, this was, because the Law of Karma & inevitable Retribution, is Inexorable & Implacable & brooks no Exceptions, what so ever !!

Further it is most unfortunate & a monumental tragedy – "Beware GOD IS NOT MOCKED – for as you Sow, so shall you Reap – (To Quote) "Many of our Present HIGH PRIESTS – (unlike the earlier stalwart ones like Revered

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Dasturji KHURSHED S. DABU, demised in 1978) – are Non-Veg & they are of the (MOST ERRONEOUS) view, that Zoroastrianism does not prohibit partaking of Non-Veg Food. (Un Quote). HOW SAD & WHAT CAN BE MORE LUDICROUS !! In this context, it is indeed heartening & to be applauded & emulated at earliest, by all Zoroastrians, Mr. GIARA'S Resolve & Action, (To Quote) "AT MY SON'S NAVJOTE IN 1987, WE HAD PRINTED IN THE INVITATION CARD, THAT DELICIOUS VEGETARIAN FOOD ONLY WILL BE SERVED" (Un Quote).

In this connection it may be added, as an aside, that even at the present Writers wedding, over 33 years ago at Albless Baug on Friday 10th May, 1968, our family had resolutely served FULL VEGETARIAN DINNER only, to our invited guests. Ofcourse, unlike in the last 15 – 20 years, the Concept of having available delicious Vegetarian Thali dinner in Parsee Weddings by M/s. Purohit Hotel, Thackers, Rajgurus, Ms. Tarla Dalal etc, had not developed & our Parsee Caterer, inspite of promising & assuring us the Moon, had made a mess, of the Full Vegetarian Dinner. BE THAT AS IT MAY ----- Here also Ervad PESHOTAN PEER, used to caution & advise, (To Quote) "that (though) many of the Parsees have acquired, the habit of partaking non-veg food i.e. Meat, Fish or Chicken, ATLEAST AT FEASTS for NAVJOTES OR WEDDINGS, to AVOID THE SIN OF MASS SLAUGHTER OF BIRDS & ANIMALS. (Unquote).

As strongly pointed out in the above article, there are innumerable Scriptural References from our AVESTA Prayers, GATHAS, VISPERED & VENDIDAD - (& here we must remember, that what presently remains & is available of the Holy AVESTA, & Other Zoroastrian Religious Texts, since last 2,3 0 0, years, after the accursed Alexander's Burning of our Holy Zoroastrianism Scriptures Library, is hardly 5 % of the original 2 1 NASKS)—Besides from ANCIENT IRANIAN HISTORY, from the SHAHNAMEH etc, & further from proven Scientific References, from the point of view of HEALTH, ANATOMY, PHYSIOLOGY, HYGIENE, MEDICINE, etc why MAN'S - DIET SHOULD BE VEGETARIAN.

The Living Zoroastrian Mystic – Saint from Iran, of the 1 6th Century A.D.—around 5 Centuries ago — Dastur AAZAR KAIVAN, who settled in Patna India, & taught Zoroastrian Mysticism & Spirituality, for over 5 0 years in India, to all his Initiated Followers & Disciples, of all Castes & Communities in India, & which included in large measure HIS Zoroastrian Disciples, WERE ALL STAUNCH VEGETARIANS WITHOUT EXCEPTION. The subsequent Living Zoroastrian Spiritual Masters, Satgurus & Adepts, who continued the AAZAR KAIVAN SCHOOL OF ZOROASTRIAN MYSTICISM & SPIRITUALITY, for another 1 0 0 years & their Zoroastrian Disciples & Initiates, after Dastur AAZAR KAIVAN'S demise, WERE ALL VEGETARIANS, to the CORE .

Likewise , in the 3rd Century A.D., the Zoroastrian Mystic & Spiritual Master — M A N I (Born in a Royal Family) & whose commonest designation & appellation was, "Apostle of Light", had innumerable Zoroastrian Disciples in Iran, (then called Persia) & whose Disciples of all communities stretched from Northern India through Persia, Mesopotamia & the Middle East to Egypt, WERE ALL VEGETARIANS THROUGHOUT THEIR LIFE. (Refer the Book "J E S U S – IN SEARCH OF HIS ORIGINAL TEACHINGS", by John Davidson, M.A. (Cantab), Cambridge University, U.K.). All above, is briefly outlined to serve as a PLATFORM FOR INTROSPECTION & CONTEMPLATION, for present day Zoroastrians, both of the LAITY & PRIESTLY CLASS, to return at the earliest, to the RIGHTEOUS PATH OF VEGETARIANISM, to save themselves, from the I N E S C A P A B L E & I N E X O R A B L E K A R M I C B A S H I N G, WHICH IS SURE TO FOLLOW, OTHERWISE, AS NIGHT FOLLOWS DAY.

Under the able lead & inspiration of their Spiritual Mentor & Master, USTAD SAHEB BEHRAMSHA SHROFF, who in the beginning of the 2 0th Century & for over two Decades thereafter, re-surrected and propagated Zoroastrian I L M – E – K S H N O O M – which is the only True SPIRITUAL & MYSTICAL understanding of the Zoroastrian Faith – all True Believers & Followers of I L M – E – K S H N O O M, follow the Vegetarian Life Style, in their endeavor to attempt to raise their Consciousness & strive to reach towards the Divine, Paak Daadar Ahura Mazda. Also our Revered & Respected Zoroastrian Scholar & Educator, MR. BEHRAM SHAH D. PITHAVALA, presently 9 6 years young & who is still an Active Contributor to Zoroastrian subjects, in our Community's Newspapers & Magazines, is a total Vegetarian. MR. PITHAVALA also has for 6 0 years, through his learned Religious Articles & Books on Zoroastrianism, emphatically proved, that the Vegetarian Diet, alone, is strictly prescribed & enjoined for all the Parsees & Zoroastrians, with no exceptions permitted.

Our Revered Dasturji Khurshed S. Dabu, Head Dastur of Wadiaji Atash Behram for 40 years (& presently his son Ervad Noshir K. Dabu, of Ahmedabad), who have striven since last over 5 0 – 6 0 years, contributing weekly Articles, pertaining to all aspects of our noble Zoroastrian Faith, in Mumbai Samachar, Jam – E – Jamshed & other Zoroastrian periodicals were / are staunch Vegetarians & Espoused the AHIMSA, - non killing - Life Style, all through their lives. Even the world famous English Playwright George Bernard Shaw, a Staunch Vegetarian fittingly exclaimed, (TO QUOTE) "I DON'T WANT MY STOMACH TO BE THE GRAVE YARD OF DEAD ANIMALS."

That there is an inviolable Zoroastrian Injunction, against Animals Slaughter – is borne out, by the following many Centuries old write up, in Gujarati, in our Religion, (to QUOTE)

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An Inviolable Zoroastrian INJUNCTION, against Animals Slaughter,

જાનવર-વધ (કપાયું) એ જમાનાની બૂરી ઈલાત છે. તે હરવર-પ્રાણીએ મુકી. હદ-ઈનસાફથી મુકી. જેની રૂએ બુરાં પરિણામ ઉતરે તે ફરીથી મુકાય નહીં. અને બુરી માનુષો બહાઈ. આગ. રોમ. મરકી પાછી ઉતરે નહીં એવું ઈચ્છો. યાદ રાખીને ગોખો. એને ખાતર ઈચ્છો કે જાનવર હવે પછી કપાય નહીં. વધુ કંઈ એવું કહે કે જાનવર વધુજ અટકે અને તેને બદલે નબાતાતનું કપાયું થાય. શું કામ કરવા જાનવરનું કપાયું અટકે અને નબાતાતનું કપાયું વધે એમ ઈચ્છવું જોઈએ? ફરી-કરેલી નજદીક આવે તેને ખાતર: કેમકે બુરી ઈલાતેના જમાનામાં બુરજ પેદા પડે છે. જાનવરનું કપાયું બુરજ છે જેથી ઈન્સાન ગોસ્થને કાપીને પોતાના પગમાં ફુલાડી મારે છે. ગોસ્થો થઈ વખતે ઈન્સાનોની આવી છાકટ મતી ઉપર અફસોસ કરે છે અને 'જમાનાનાં એવાં કર્મની ક્યાંદ હોરમજદની આગળ કરે છે. હદ અને ઈનસાફ પ્રમાણે ઈન્સાફ થાય છે તેથી ઈન્સાનની ઉપર બુરી માનુષો ઉતરે છે. — Page 19

"DIN-VAZ" Bi-Monthly Zoroastrian Magazine (Nov.-Dec. 1999)

(P.T.O. also)

પુસ્તક રજૂ અડક ૨

Above Injunction in Gujarati Which Translates (literally) in English, as given under :

TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH, (From Gujarati Original), of ABOVE ZOROASTRIAN INJUNCTION.

"The Slaughter of an Animal, is the Evilest (& Despicable) Trait of an ERA. This has been constituted (Ordained) by A H U R A M A Z D A. Himself, on the Basis of Fair Play & Natural Divine Justice, which is Always dispensed in proportion to the Degree of the Cause (of the Evil) Perpetrated. Because the (Evil Practice of) Animal Slaughter, can never be countenanced, Evil Effects descend (Rebound) on its Perpetrators & Abettors, THUS the Evil of (Animal) Slaughter cannot E V E R be continued or condoned. HENCE, always wish & ever keep to heart & mind, that if the Evil (painful & devastating) Events of W A R S, F I R E S, F L O O D S, E P I D E M I C S, should not devastate & be repeated on our Planet Earth, & for this much desired Benediction, there should be no more Slaughter of Animals. Further ACT, to ensure that Animal Slaughter is put a stop to, which in turn, assists Evil Tendencies, to come to a halt, (whose Inherent Evil Tendencies Inclination, is invariably present in Humans).

Why should there be desire, for stoppage of Animal Slaughter ?? JUST SO, as to have a decline in the Evil Traits & Tendencies (In Humans) & thereafter by them, to strive to come closer to cultivation of PIETY & DIVINE CONSCIOUSNESS (FRASHOKERETI), — as in the AGE of EVIL, only EVIL gets MANIFESTED. To Slaughter an Animal Is an (unmitigated) Evil, thus by slaughtering Animals, it is as if a Human Being, strikes the A X E, on his own Feet.

Animals at the time of Being Slaughtered (to Death), L A M E N T over the Cruel Mentality of Humans & Complain (Invoke God's JUSTICE), before the Lord (AHURA MAZDA), against the Human's such Cruel Action, of the time. As a consequence, on the Inexorable Basis of Natural & Divine Justice, Sufferings & Calamities, befall upon the Humans, because every (Evil) action is judged, in degree & proportion of its Justness or Unjustness. Due to this inescapable (Dispensation of Justice) above Painful consequences follow, — (like WARS, FIRES, FLOODS, P I D E M I C S, etc.) "

A Free Translation, with Relevant Elaboration & Commentary of above is as under :

An Inviolable Zoroastrian INJUNCTION, against Animals Slaughter, & hence a Zoroastrian IMPERATIVE for Total Abstinence, enjoined in ZOROASTRIANISM, against consumption of Animal Food (Non-Vegetarian) DIET, — which is an ABHORABLE EVIL & TO BE CONSIDERED AS ONE OF THE GREATEST SINS !

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"To slay an Animal, merely for (Sake of) our Palate & Taste is a very low (& despicable) Instinct, in a Human Being. The All Knowing (Illuminating) Quality of Paak Daadaar Ahura Mazda, describes this Low Instinct as UNJUST, & the Root Cause for (Unavoidable & Inescapable), Harsh Results, (In Human Life). Like attracting Wars, Fires, Floods & A N A R C H Y, in general. To Prevent all these Miseries, the Repetition of our actions of Slaughtering the Animals, (& Consuming of their Flesh) cannot be ever encouraged & / or condoned. Remember, & desire (i.e. ensure), that no such Action, (of Slaughtering Innocent, Dumb, Animals & Partaking of the Flesh of their dead putrefied bodies – rightly termed as 'N A S O', in Zoroastrianism), — through our hands be repeated or continued – to avoid the repetition of the C A L A M I T I E S, mentioned here before)".

"(INSTEAD), to evolve a formula, to stop such Slaughter, which is a Negative (In human) Aspect, in Humans, like "N A B A T A T", & Instead do something, & (strive to) evolve some way, to produce Currents of Positive Aspects (& Goodness), to spread in our World. This is what one should do, to preserve the Animal Kingdom & Increase the Goodness Currents & What one should strive for, to bring forward & Rise to & Elevate oneself to GOD CONSCIOUSNESS".

And it is for this reason, (i.e. Animal Slaughter & their Flesh consumption by Humans), that Evil (Propensities) take Birth, in the Time, that (above) Evil is practiced or followed. The Slaughter of any Animal Beings, is taken as an Evil thing, & the doer of such (reprehensible) action, does nothing else, but (tantamount to) aiming an A X E on (& cutting) his own Feet.

The helpless & hapless, (dumb & innocent) Animals, at the time of their Slaughter, LAMENT on such ignorant Attitude, of Humankind & complain before Pak Daadaar Ahura Mazda, against their (humans) such (Deplorable & Despicable) Actions, & (Invoke God), with a desire that they (Humans) may also be so (unjustly) treated, (& thus) this becomes the Seed, for Miseries to come, (on such Human Beings, Condoning Animals Slaughter & Wrongfully partaking of flesh, from their dead bodies—which is a Greatest, " N A S O", as per Z o r o a s t r i a n i s m)".

In this context, is given below, the English Translation, of a Letter to the Editor JAM – E- JAMSHED Weekly, Bombay, by Mr. BAHADUR M. BHARUCHA, Senior Citizen of Andheri, Printed in the Sunday 27th Feb. 2000 Issue, in GUJARATI language. (to QUOTE)

"To, THE EDITOR, JAM – E – JAMSHED WEEKLY, BOMBAY Saturday 2 7th February, 2 0 0 0

Dear Respected Editor,

Re.: E N G L I S H Translation of a Letter to the Editor, JAM – E – JAMSHED WEEKLY,
BOMBAY, Printed in the Sunday 2 7th Feb., 2 0 0 0 Issue, in G U J A R A T I Language.

AN INVIOLEABLE BAN ON CONSUMPTION OF FLESH & ALCOHOL, FROM THE ZOROASTRIAN POINT OF VIEW.

It has been related on DD 2 Metro T.V. Channel, in a special Programme for the Parsees, on their last New Years Day (23rd August 1999), that there is no BAN according to the Zoroastrian Religion, on limited consumption of Flesh & Alcohol. I strongly object to this erroneous Statement & I am sure many Zoroastrians will agree with me. The above Statement is False, Misleading & an Insult to our great & Pure Religion. No Religion can ever – countenance or accept killing of any Animals for food, (For Human Beings Sense Gratification)".

Our Religion considers the FLESH of any (Slaughter or killed) Animals as N A S O (that which is in a State of Disintegration & Putrefaction), & infact we have prescribed elaborate Zoroastrian Rituals, to protect & keep safe distance, from such items, as are considered to be N A S O.

Today, Hundreds of Zoroastrians take exclusively a V E G E T A R I A N D I E T – shunning all MEAT, FISH, EGGS etc. Further, the following points, given below, prove beyond doubt, that there is an I N V I O L A B L E B A N, on eating & consuming any Animal Flesh in Zoroastrianism.

1. All close Relatives, of deceased Parsee, are forbidden to eat any Flesh for Three days from date of Demise.
2. Hundreds of Zoroastrians, do not eat Flesh, on four days of every month, viz; BAHMAN Ameshaspand, MOHOR, GOSH & RAM. Many do not eat any Non – Vegetarian Food, even on the preceding & succeeding days, of the above four days, namely on HORMUZD, BAHMAN, ARDIBEHST, for BAHMAN ROJ & so on, for Mohor, Gosh & Ram.
3. Hundreds of Zoroastrians do not eat FLESH for full month dedicated to BAHMAN Ameshaspand, because BAHMAN AMESHAPAND (Archangel) is universally considered to be THE PROTECTOR of the Animal Kingdom as Ordained.

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My Revered Guru, Dastur KHURSHED S. DABU, (Head Priest, WADIAJI Atash – Behram, for 40 years), used to strongly Castigate, Rebuke & Reprimand the Parsees, (i.e. in a manner of speaking would “WHIP PARSEES”) in all his Religious Lectures on Zoroastrianism, delivered at Surat & Bombay, strongly emphasizing & declaiming that possibly Parsees born of Satan ONLY could consider to eat Flesh in any form. (HENCE THINK PARSEES THINK !)

Likewise by imbibing Alcoholic drinks, the Noble Enshrined Zoroastrian Principles of GOOD – THOUGHTS, GOOD – WORDS AND GOOD DEEDS, cannot be put into practice, to any positive purpose & effect On the contrary, due to this despicable practice, of imbibing Alcohol, Man tends to yield to EVIL – THOUGHTS, EVIL- WORDS AND EVIL – DEEDS, easily & effortlessly.

I wish The Religious Researchers & Scholars Would Throw More Light On This Subject. I Wish Brother ERVAD NOSHIR K. DABU (Son Of DASTURJI KHURSHED S. DABU), To Start A Debate On This Subject. U S H T A T E !! (MAY HAPPINESS BE TO YOU).

Yours truly, Sd/- BAHADUR M. BHARUCHA, Senior Citizen (Andheri)” (U N Q U O T E)

All the above should be considered as a serious “FOOD FOR THOUGHT” FOR ALL PARSEES, TO SERIOUSLY PONDER UPON & INTROSPECT, CONTEMPLATE & AT EARLIEST, TO RESOLVE TO BRING ABOUT THE LIFE STYLE CHANGES IN THEIR DIET, BY REVERTING TO A STRICT VEGETARIAN DIET, from their present Karmically & Sinful Non-Veg Food. Even MICKEY MEHTA , the Renowed Trainer & sculptor of famous Indian Models – Male & Female strongly & passionately advocates for PARSEES, to change over to a Vegetarian Life Style.

May Parsees develop the Courage & VOHUMANO (Behman – the Enlightened Mind) — atleast now & hence forward—in the present 21st Century A.D. & 9th MILLENIUM A. Z. (After Zarathushtra), to change over resolutely, to a Totally VEGETARIAN Diet & Lifestyle. May God Bless You All.

ATHAA JAMYAAT YATHA AFRINAAMI, AEDUN BAAD.

“PAAK DAADAR AHURA MAZDA NI MADAD HOJO”

Yours truly,



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July 2001

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"By your kindness, we shall not be troubled about the typhoon nor shall we harbor fear in our heart or soul. Come to assist the helpless, guide those who have lost their way"

QISSA-I-SANJAN *continued from page 8*

installed the sacred fire (Iranshah) full of abundant light.

In those times there were people who had knowledge of the faith and managed all matters of their religion with wisdom. In these times God knows what the state of our religion is, only faith is required to practice according to its rules.

In that province all laymen and priests held a festival with rejoicing.

In this way 300 years, more or less, elapsed and some left the place and others came there.

They became scattered in India and they selected a place in every direction according to their liking.

Some turned to Vankanir, and some took their way towards Broach.

Some went to Variav; all went speedily to their respective abodes (selected by them).

Some arrived at Anklesar and some proceeded towards the city of Cambay.

Some took all their kit to Navsari — all with their title-deeds and fortune.

Each one got comfort in some place and thenceforth made it his abode.

In this manner many became happy and prosperous for two centuries.

In those days in Sanjan city several houses (families) of dasturs had remained.

On them there was the decree of fate (a calamity), I don't know what became of all the dasturs.

There was a dastur, young (hearty) in his goodness and of good intentions and a sweet tongue.

The name of the dastur was Khooshmast and always he did benevolent works.

His son, whose name was Khujesta, desired to perform baj and barsam ceremonies.

The performance of *ijashni* ceremony was his constant work, baj and barsam were his constant companions.

He was also well versed in (the performance of) *ijashni* and there always remained his presence at the *arwighah*.

That holy person was highly esteemed. May he have happiness in paradise!

In this manner 700 years elapsed, in that city they had several descendants.

When several years passed, the crooked heaven became unpropitious to them.

All of a sudden the world became narrow to them, and time made an attempt on their lives.

After some years by the turning of the wheel of fortune the King (of Gujarat) received information about the Raja of Sanjan.

When 500 years passed after their (Zoroastrians') arrival in India, Moslems arrived at Chapaner.

The sending of his army by Shah Mahomed for fighting the Raja of Sanjan and the latter coming to know of it

A good king appeared to have fortunately sat on the throne in

that city.

He was called Sultan Mahomed. The subjects called him "Shadow of God."

After several years, when it appeared (that) towards Sanjan in India there was a King,

One day he told a Vazir of his (named) Alefkhan that an order had been issued by the prosperous King.

(That) immediately with an army he must go towards Sanjan and capture the province from him.

By the order of King Sultan Mahomed he issued forth from his place like smoke.

At that moment he prepared the whole army, he let his eaglelike (banner) fly:

When Alefkhan removed his army to that place, and reached the prosperous Sanjan,

The Hindu King came to know of it, that a numerous army had been brought from every direction.

That he had selected 30,000 horsemen, all brave and noted warriors.

The Raja became unconscious on hearing the news. The next hour (when) he recovered his senses,

The very moment he called all priests — all men of good faith and mobeds.

(And) that benevolent King asked them, "O faithful friends, what is the remedy?"

"You were the chosen of my ancestors, they have done you great good.

"Immediately gird up your loins in this emergency of mine, You be my guides in the battle.

"If you recount the favors of (my) ancestors, you will not fail to show your gratitude."

An old priest thereafter replied, "O King, don't be aggrieved on account of (at the approach) the enemy.

"Each one of us, until death, will shed the blood of a hundred thousand of the enemies.

"Truly in battle it is our custom that so long as our life remains, its value is this:

"That not a single soul from among us will turn back, even if a millstone were to turn on the head."

Hearing this, the Prince gave each one of them a robe of honor. During that period (to ascertain) how many men of the good faith there were, old and young,

A count was taken of the entire community (and) 1,400 were brought on the record.

Immediately they put their saddles on their horses. The horsemen stood up putting on their armor.

In that place the men of the good faith drew up their ranks side by side with the Raja.

The dawn peered out of dark night (and) the light of the stars went below the cave (of darkness).

Fight between Alefkhan and the Hindu Raja and the flight of Alefkhan caused by Ardeshir

From the other side when Alefkhan, with his horsemen, putting on the armor, came into the battlefield



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When evil fortune frowns, a hard stone becomes like wax.
If Ardeshir fought so many battles and made efforts, of what use
were they when fortune had turned away from that person?



They put embroidered saddles on their horses (and) the banners on the backs of elephants.

They saddled their horses for the purpose of the fight, the land was distressed by the (weight of the) elephants.

Commanders arranged their armies and exposed weapons of war on every side.

When on the field they had drawn up their numerous armies, they instantly blew the Roman (or brazen) trumpets.

The army was so arranged on each side, on one Moslem and of the Hindu Raja on the other.

Day and night they were engaged (in battles), the pace of the horses had to be slackened on account of full gallop.

The two commanders on each side, who were like whales, encountered each the other like leopards.

The world became darkened through clouds like pitch, from which rained swords, spears and arrows.

On both sides so many were killed in the battle that heaps were formed of the slain.

Not a soul came to the help or succor, such was the decree of providence (against them).

Of the army not one looked around; all were killed in the battle without number.

Suddenly a flight took place from the maidan, so that one could not recognize another in the battle.

The devout layman told his companions, "I do not find of the Hindus anybody befriending us (from) before or behind.

"The Hindus have fled from the field of battle, none has remained here except the faithful.

"Now is the time to fight, O my dear friends, we must plunge into their ranks like lions.

"If we attack their force in a body, we will shed the blood of opponents with sword and arrow."

The first person of the faithful that came into the field (was the man) who was known as Ardeshir among them.

That instant famous Ardeshir spurred his swift-footed charger into the battlefield.

He plunged all of a sudden into the ranks (of the army), having taken in his grasp an iron javelin.

He stood in the field with the javelin in hand, with an armor on his body and a sword tied (round his waist).

At first arrows rained in every direction and the armor was (consequently) torn on the (bodies of the) warriors.

The world-illuminating sun was concealed, how could anybody know whether it was night or day?

Owing to the dust the face of the sun was veiled; on every side man fell on man.

You would say the world was covered with pitch, and in it were glittering arrows like diamonds.

Of the spearmen and mace-bearers, at last, out of thousands many were lost.

The earth and the sky became darkened and black; the dust became (red) like tulip on account of the blood of chieftains.

Blood flowed from the body like fountain, spears were cut to pieces by the swords.

From head to foot the heroes were drowned in iron (were

armed) which was shining like the bright sun.

Darts flew about on both the sides, blood began to flow continuously in the dark dust.

Spears pierced into their chests and blood dropped through the armors.

No one turned his face from the blows of heroes, all weapons demanded blood-shedding (i.e. were waiting for shedding blood).

By the shoes of horses the earth became plated with iron, in every direction it overflowed with blood up to the knees of men.

In this manner the battle continued for three days and (three) nights, so that the hands and feet of men refused to work.

From every side lightning and swords began flashing, by sharp swords the heads of chieftains were cut.

In the battlefield the Moslems were defeated; they were killed in the battle with the (Hindu) Prince.

Alefkhan fled away under (cover of) the darkness of night, he forgot his tents and weapons.

His army was entirely daunted and fled away from Ardeshir. Many enemies were killed in the battle and at both (Ardeshir) stood victorious.

The entire pavilions, tents and equipments fell entirely into the hands of Ardeshir.

The next day, the sun came up from the mountain range and the world was all at once illumined by his light.

On the second fight of Alefkhan with Ardeshir and his victory

From the armies on both the sides the shout of battle issued, and the earth a second time was filled with commotion.

By the sound of bells and Indian pipes many heads became dull (confused).

Again Alefkhan prepared for battle, the hawk of battle-drum was again flown (beaten).

The famous Commander Ardeshir came in an instant running to the spot.

He immediately told the excellent Raja, "For every hundred of them (the enemies) we are (only) one.

"Now what will you take us as in this work (emergency), because at least this time there is a larger army (opposing us)?

"We will either give them our lives or take (their) lives, with this intent (resolve) we will remain in (stick to) the battlefield.

"In this field (battle) God is our friend, for He always solves our difficulties."

On hearing these words all were exceedingly pleased, and many hearts were relieved from pain.

They then immediately put on their armor and again came to fight with (Alef) Khan.

That instant, famous Ardeshir hung his noose on the saddle like a black snake.

Many lionhearted men came into the ranks, with Indian sword on the waist-belt and spear in hand.

He (Ardeshir) shouted out loudly, "O ye tigers, why have you got confused (perplexed) in the fight?"

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"Who is now your Commander, what business has he here, what is his name?"

A champion came (out) and said, "Look, I am he who will in one blow shed the blood of (several) brave men"

Under him was a galloping horse (and) he came running to him (Ardeshir).

With a spear in hand he came to fight, like a drunkard he reeled on every side.

To Ardeshir he gave a shout, saying, "Beware now, O you son of a pious man.

"Your rival in combat has now come to you, now show your superiority in prowess."

That instant, Ardeshir gave him response, "Your antagonist has come to you with all preparations."

Both of them became (fought like) lions in this battlefield and both had been satiated with (tired of) their (own) lives.

At last Ardeshir overpowered him, and threw him down from the back of his horse. He (Ardeshir) threw down his noose and drew him in it. He (Ardeshir) came down from his horse and cut off his head. When Alefkhan found that he was killed, his heart was very much pained (affected).

He (Alefkhan) then ordered that the people of Fars (Persia) and of the Raja should be killed and should not (be allowed to) live on the spot.

When he came in support of (to help) his army to take revenge he instantly spurred on his horse to the battle.

A flashing of the swords arose and blood ran (from their bodies) like a river in sand.

When the armies on both the sides encountered each other, blood oozed out from their bodies like a sea.

Waves arose out of (in) a sea of blood, there was injury to men from every direction.

There was no (not an inch of) space left even for an ant to pass, what could man do even for a moment without the command of God?

Ardeshir then came (plunged) into the midst, and remained there — his days were numbered.

An arrow pierced him in the waist and (the point) came out from the other side all of a sudden.

His body became torpid on account of the wounds (that he received) since every limb of his became a fountain of blood. Ardeshir fell prostrate from his saddle, his army became perplexed and helpless on his account.

Alas! for that brave Commander that time at length destroyed him;

When evil fortune frowns, a hard stone becomes (soft) like wax.

If he (Ardeshir) fought so many battles and made (so many) efforts, of what use were they when fortune had turned away from that person?

On both sides many (a number of) soldiers were killed, (and) officers, gallant and illustrious.

That instant, the Hindu Prince was killed and a panic arose in the battle.

Alas! for that good Hindu Prince, who died and his city became desolate on all sides.

About the flight of the faithful to mount Bahrut and their proceeding to Bansda

At last the faithful dispersed. There is a mountain in India named Bahrut.

Many fled there to save their lives — there is no help (escape) from the order of God.

Twelve years elapsed in succession, they took with them in a proper manner the sacred fire (Iranshah).

After a time, by the decree of providence all set forward with their families and connections.

They then had with them the (sacred) fire of Bahram (and) all came towards Bansda.

When the town of Bansda got the news of his (fire) coming, they came to receive him with love.

With 300 horsemen they went in company of several noted persons to meet them.

They brought them into the city with a hundred marks of respect, in like manner as a sick man (who had taken poison) finds an antidote.

Hereafter Bansda became like the season of spring (i.e. rejoiced) and in this way a long time passed.

Thereafter people of the descent of the faithful, in whatever province that there were these (men) of pure faith,

Men and women, young and old, went there for worshipping the King of Iran (the sacred fire).

As in former times (when) in exalted Sanjan, they went (there) from every direction (for the sake of prayer).

In this manner the Parsis came to Bansda also from every place with a number of articles (presents).

For 14 years thereafter the spheres revolved in accordance with their desire.

On Changa Shah's bringing the sacred fire to Navsari from Bansda

In those times a follower of the faith appeared, the like of whom there was none (in those days).

He was distinguished in his time for his devotion to the faith and several marks (miracles) were exhibited by him:

He was *Dahewad* (a leader of the village) whose name was Changa bin Asa, who used to comfort the hearts of the faithful. In the latter times that man of virtuous qualities did not allow the good faith to remain in imperfection.

If one had no *sudreh* or *kusti*, he used to provide means to him (for the same) out of his own pocket.

That man had taken several good measures for the promotion of the faith, no one came to him full of affliction.

To whom he did not provide a remedy or whose heart he did not console with his whole soul.

In those days several men of the good faith became religious through his favor.

My tongue cannot sufficiently portray that man of the good



The fire being housed in the Bahrut Caves

Illustration courtesy: Shreeji Iranshah

faith who did so much service to his religion. One year that holy man formed a resolution and went to the fire-temple (at Bansda). At that time there was the festival of *Sadeh* (and) the fire-temple was in the city of Bansda. In the month of Adar and on the day Adar, O brother! that festival of *Sadeh* occurred, That devout and enlightened man took along with him all laymen and priests. In his sight they all prostrated themselves and performed worship in that place. Thereafter each one with joy and rejoicing returned from the fire-temple by that way. People went away from that place marching with gladness and comfort to their homes. After this when two or three months out of the year had passed, the well-wisher (Changa Asa) brought this into his heart — One day he called the entire *anjuman* and there he made a speech about the fire-temple (thus): "I wish, O well-wishers! that we should bring from there (i.e. Bansda) our King of Kings (i.e. sacred fire) to this place. "If we daily have sight of the king, much benefit will accrue from it. "Secondly, every year we experience much difficulty on the way on his account. "Because in this month there is excessive rain, (consequently) our going there is inconvenient. "O my dear friends! what would be better than this that we should go there (to Bansda) with discreet (wise) persons "(And) bring the victorious fire, so that we may daily see his face. "By him (i.e. by his grace) our livelihood and income would increase and the hearts of the people of the faith would be gladdened." All the people rejoiced at hearing him (Changa Asa), all were relieved from the trouble of (going to) Bansda. They brought him (the sacred fire) with a hundred marks of honor and located him in a beautiful temple. Three of the good faith were in his (i.e. of the sacred fire) service and remained with him (sacred fire) for a long time. They were in his service day and night, they were appointed for each *gah* in his service. The name of one was Nagen Ram, he was always desirous of doing pious deeds. Another dastur there was whose name was Khurshed. His father was always (known as) Kiyam-ud-din. The third dastur was Janyan, son of Sayer, he was always well known for his services to the fire. They had their families and households, who were all in company of Iranshah. They proceeded with great pomp and honor, dignity and

splendor. The three dasturs reached Navsari, all with their households after a long journey. In those days that religious dastur (Changa Shah) was assisting those officiating priests. May he have this servant's salutation in this world, may he have his resting place among the celestial.

On the completion of the book

Countless and continuous thanks to the Lord of the world, nourisher of His servants. He set my tongue to (this) work; He opened mysteriously a door of His favor. The dastur has shown (related to) to me this story, may God keep him prosperous in both the worlds. I, the humble one, whose name is Bahman, my camp is in Navsari. Further, know that my father is Kaikobad; his heart is glad in the remembrance of the King of Iran (i.e. the sacred fire). His father (was named) Dastur Hormuzdyar, may his place be full of light in brightest heaven. O friend! know that his surname is Sanjana, by (help of) every (sort of) knowledge he was weighty (i.e. discreet) in his work. On account of that knowledge his surname was Sanjana, because he has shown his wisdom in religious matters. Another name (title) that was given to him was the "High Priest of Religion." In every place they (the people) opened their passage (road) to religion through him. He had his house in Navsari, which can be estimated to be 200 years old. May a hundred thousand salutations and praises be on him and also on the souls of the pillars of religion. With success and by the order of God, in this manner I have written the story of brave men. Know that when a religious man reads it, he will at the end pray for me. May more than thousands of salutations from me reach those good persons and men of those times. May the Holy Spirit send back (salutations) on my soul and ask for pardon for it from God. May praise be on the spirit (Zoroaster) everlastingly and may his soul and heart always be rich. In 969 of the Yazdegird era, this story was written. In the month of Fravardin and on day Khordad, these couplets were finished justly. (When) I wrote and completed this story, at the end I asked for justice for myself from God, I ask for considerable blessings from the reader for some time because by him my honor and position will be increased. May his soul remain with the holy spirit who every moment heartily wishes me to be happy. I have narrated this story (*Kisseh*) according to what I saw and heard from my elders.



Further, my master has revised it (and) he has grown such roses in the garden.

O God! grant him the natural term of life that his years may be like spring-tide

When I narrated this story, I followed the path of the truthful. Since you have (seen) received from me this good story, pronounce upon me fitting benedictions.

May there be endless, countless praise and ample thanksgivings on devout Zoroaster.

Further, may you have the grace of God so that you may give

to my soul the gift of eternity.

Satan became slave, (this is) completed, this writing is finished, my work is over.

This story of Khorasan (*Kisse Khorassani*) is completed.

The copyist is the devout servant Noshirwan son of Manekji, of the good faith, the son of heavenly Edalji, son of Cooverji. Whoever reads this will send praises to him, and it (the book) is completed on the auspicious day of Bahram, the month of Khordad, Kadmi year 1112 of Yazdegird of Sasan, the auspicious dynasty of Persia.



“A mirror, not a clock”

In January 1999, Dr Alan Williams, senior lecturer at the University of Manchester's department of religions and theology, cast new light on Bahman's epic. In the course of his Naoroji Godrej Memorial Lecture under the aegis of the Athravan Educational Trust, titled “A mirror, not a clock: new light on the Qissa-ye-Sanjan,” Williams argued, “We tend to regard the Qissa-ye Sanjan a bit like an old clock, or an apparatus which will reveal what were the stages and processes of Parsi time past. This, I venture to say to you, is precisely what the Qissa-ye Sanjan is not, nor was it ever intended to be. It resembles more a mirror, in that it reflects things which otherwise cannot be seen, because they are obscured by time and forgetfulness.” Parsiana reproduces the summation from Williams' scholarly thesis:

The *Qissa-ye-Sanjan* is in accord with the deepest structures of Zoroastrian religious mythology: the victory over the predicament of existence and the arrival of the virtuous community into a better world of *Frasho-kereti* in Avestan/*Frashgird* in Pahlavi comes at the end of the full 12,000 years of creation. The demons, noxious creatures, tyrants and enemies who have afflicted the divinely created world of order and goodness are finally expelled from the world after the battle to end all battles, followed by the Final Judgment, and heaven and earth coalesce in the blessed condition of *Frasho-kereti*. The story of exile and arrival follows this familiar structure, as the community follows its fate, having lost their monarch and homeland. The *Qissa-ye-Sanjan* tells how religion and royalty have come together in establishing the sacred fire as their king, which is enthroned at last at the center of their community. Coalescence of the place of the priest and the king affords the laity a new duty, not as warrior defenders of their own realm — for, remember, they have promised never again to bear arms, and have done so in India only for another's kingdom — but the duty of the merchant patron of the community. In the 19th and 20th centuries Parsi society has changed radically from one in which religious tradition and its priests had a high status and leading role in the community to one in which the mercantile, entrepreneurial and professional middle-class laity dominate in all respects. This process of change was already beginning to happen at the time of the composition of the *Qissa-ye-Sanjan* and the text

shows how such change is part of a gradually shifting relationship of power between the different estates of Zoroastrian society. The old traditional partnership between living king and living prophet, of Zoroaster and Wistaspa, was followed in historical times by the alliance of king and priest, state and church. Then with the fall of the Sassanian empire in 652 CE and the disestablishment of the Zoroastrian church in Iran, the sacred authority of the community was invested solely and symbolically in the Atashbehran, the royal fire, and actually in the priesthood who tended the fires and who were supported by the laity. The *Qissa-ye-Sanjan* tells how all classes of Zoroastrians joined forces with the Hindus against the Muslim enemy. In the latter part of the story, we see the beginning of the process where not only protection, but also guidance, of the community is passing into the hands of the laity. Although it may seem to be in concept and design a priestly text, we may see that it is dear to the hearts of the laity for good reason. It celebrates the role of the laity as fully engaged in the spiritual and material welfare of the community. It describes a new society which has crossed the sea of history and arrived on other shores, where a new prosperity, material and spiritual, is striven for, now no more for nobility and priesthood alone, but for all.

The *Qissa-ye-Sanjan* is more than a historical document: like the best traditional ‘histories,’ it tells of significance and value and, above all, strategy as the community face their predicament. Their predicament of being a minority in their own land of Iran became the predicament of being a minority community in the great ocean of Indian society. The text speaks in mythic discourse, as so often in religion, because this is no different from the very predicament of existence spoken of by Zoroaster himself: to be the minority of the virtuous, to be an ordered, bounded group in a disorderly, wild world. The Parsis cherished this story, took pride in their ancestry as émigrés from Iran, made a home in India and became a most successful community before and during the British colonial period. The religious, or mythological strain of the *Qissa* has, however, been little appreciated by scholars. There is something characteristically Persian and uniquely Zoroastrian about it, as it describes the trauma of pain of separation from the homeland, so familiar in Sufi mystical literature, and the nostalgic yet unsentimental endeavor to arrive and thrive in a new homeland.



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