

A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO BELITTLE KSHSHNOOM

[In December 1986 and Jan., 1987, "The Bombay Samachar" published two write-ups, which denigrated IIm'e-Khshnoom. Khshnoom-Fidaie, Sohrab N. Patwa, sent a suitable rejoinder, which, for some inexplicable reason, was not published by that paper.

"Dini Avaz" now reproduces it for its readers.]

A perusal of two write-ups one by Ms. Dina MacIntyre (B.S. 21|12|86) and the other by M|s Kanga & Masani (B.S. 4|1|87) clearly indicate that systematic deliberate attempts are being made from some quarters to belittle KSHSHNOOM.

Unlike English and Gujarati, which are analytical languages, Avesta like Latin & Sanskrit is a synthetical language; moreover its grammar was completely lost & a crude form of it has been resurrected by comparative study of like languages. Then certain words and phrases are used in an allegorical or spiritual sense other than what their literal meanings connote; e.g. in Yasna 44|18 the Prophet asks Ahura Mazda how he shall be worthy of the reward of ten pregnant mares and one camel; This literal translation must be understood in the allegorical or spiritual sense in which the words "ten pregnant mares & one camel" are used. For these very reasons S. Insler, in the very first para of introduction to his book "The Gathas of Zarathushtra", has to say, "The Prophet's hymns are laden with ambiguities resulting both from the merger of many grammatical endings and from intentionally compact and often elliptical style which characterizes his poetic art. Similarly, there exists no early analytical commentaries of the Zoroastrian traditions, written in the wake of Zarathushtra's influence, which could present in details the meanings of his message to the community of his adherents...., Thus, to anyone strug-

gling with these lyrics, the Gathas truly appear to be a book of riddles" (Emphasis by the writer).

Under the circumstances, Ms. MacIntyre is not at all qualified to express an opinion on the Gathic stanzas cited by Ervad K. N. Dastur in his talks delivered during his stay in U.S.A. The conclusions arrived at by taking into account more translations in the absence of knowledge of the language, its complications and difficulty in understanding the same would be suicidal. Moreover, the only argument advanced for rejecting the evidence cited by Ervad Dastur in support of the view that Zoroastrian religion does not enjoin conversion is that he propagates KSHSHNOOM — the esoteric side of the Zoroastrian religion — which was founded by Mr. Behramshah Shroff about whom Professor Mary Boyce on p. 205 of her book "Zoroastrians" amongst other things, has stated that his doctrines had been characterised as a thorough-going adaption of theosophy and complete disregard for textual or historical accuracy. In fact Ustad Behramshah Shroff repeatedly stated thus. "थये सोश्रीमा माननारा वरथेस्तीजेना रवानने गुवरवा बाद सरोश पुअतो नशी" (after death souls of Zoroastrians believing in theosophy fail to receive the assistance of Sraosha). Secondly, the eminent oriental scholar Mr. Khudabax E. Poonegar in reply to a question according to p. 148 of Behramshah Shroff Memorial Volume had stated that Mr. Shroff did not hold views in support of theosophy and on certain occasions expressed opposition inch by inch. Thirdly according to p. 151 of the same volume Mr. Poonegar had stated that the founder of the philological school in India and the erudite oriental scholar Late Mr. Khurshedji R. Cama had expressed a view that, "We the students of Avesta do not at all understand its substance properly, the explanation given by Behramshah is the proper one". In all fairness, it

may be stated that Western Scholars have rendered invaluable service in reviving the study of our scriptures but in absence of the knowledge of long standing tradition and at times due to total disregard for other available literature on the subject, they had not been able to arrive at correct conclusions in certain cases. **In the light of the above, the opinion of Prof. Mary Boyce about Behramshah is incorrect and misleading.**

The write-up of M/s. Kanga & Masani is more damaging than the earlier one in this regard. Assuming that the comparatively younger audience in the States is more educated in its own respective fields of activities, as compared to audiences at Albless Baug, in absence of reasonably good knowledge of the religion, the comparatively younger audience is in no better position to sit in judgement over what Ervad Dastur had to say in his lectures and they have to dive deep into it before rejecting the same. For that matter, it is not easy to understand what any religion has to say on any specific matter. Hence, unless one is properly equipped, outright rejection of the explanations only exposes the ignorance of those who do so. These lectures introduce the audience to the available knowledge on the subject and if at all one is interested therein, he has to make a hard & sincere effort to acquire that knowledge. There may be honest differences of opinion on certain matters but outright rejection and/or condemnation of views expressed by Ervad Dastur in absence of cogent arguments in support of the difference of opinion is meaningless and mischievous.

Ervad Dastur visited the States at his own expense to meet his daughter. The "couple" took the opportunity of his presence over there and requested him to give the benefit of his knowledge to those who cared for it. Accordingly, they sent out a circular letter to like-minded associations in the States to avail of the opportunity to listen to Ervad Dastur's views. There can be nothing further from the truth to say that Ervad Dastur foisted himself upon the Zoroastrians staying in the States and secondly, on

a personal enquiry with the couple it is learnt that they were happy with the outcome of the arrangements made by them as they themselves were very much satisfied and that they had received letters of appreciation from places where Ervad Dastur delivered the talks and/or discussed the subjects in groups etc. . . It is a travesty of truth to say that "the couple fell for the ruse".

M/s. Dosabhai Desai, K. N. Dastur, Adi Doctor and Savak Madon are like peas in the same pod and there is absolutely no difference of opinion on religious matters amongst them. M/s. Kanga & Masani have given a wrong statement in this connection simply to malign KSHNOOM deliberately.

Our forefathers migrated to the west coast of India with the sole purpose of maintaining the identity of the religion and the race. It is a different matter if we find it difficult to maintain the same under changed circumstances but

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that possibly should not be the reason for a change in our approach. It is also true that today a few families have been left where mixed marriages have not taken place, but then if we sit down and try to justify this action by quoting scriptures, we are indulging in an exercise of deceiving ourselves.

All religions lay down eternal truths which cannot be changed from time to time depending upon the prevailing circumstances. Hence, observance of religion in India could not be different from that in any other part of the world as stated by Mr. Irani in support of supporting Ms. McIntyre. The fact that KSHNOOMISTS shall be observing the sixtieth death anniversary of Ustad Behramshah Shroff on 7th July next is in itself a proof enough to indicate that Mac Intyres, Iranis, Kangas & Masanis shall come and

go and meet with their own fate, but the caravan of KSHNOOM marches on in its own humble way and carries out its mission uninterrupted, because it is the esoteric knowledge of the Zoroastrian religion itself. Occultism and mysticism as made fun of are not of recent origin but are as old as civilization, yet fresh and promising. ABRACADABRA is the modern substitute for mysticism for those who do not believe in it.

Editor's Note : Since the above was written, it is learnt that Ms. McIntyre has resigned from ZAPA, of which she was a member for many years ! Here is one more example, which vindicates two points : (1) there are devout Zoroastrians settled abroad, who tolerate no nonsense in the name of religion; and (2) nobody gets away by belittling the pristine spiritual science of the Zoroastrian Religion — Ilm-e-Kshnoom !

— Sohrab N. Patwa