

THE MIRACLE OF BAHERAMSHAH NAVROJI SHROFF RISING OF A RADIANT STAR

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In the first decade of the present century, a miracle occurred amongst the Parsi Zoroastrian community of India. A middle aged gentleman clad in the traditional Parsi dress with a box type Pagdi and having a good sized beard on a lustrous face with keen shining eyes, was giving discourses on the Religion of Zarathushtra and its spiritual institutions. **The miracle was that the gentleman's worldly education had not proceeded beyond Gujarati Standard IV and yet his discourses were full of references from Avesta, Pahalvi, Pazand and Persian languages!** He spoke like a scientist presenting advanced scientific subjects before a lay audience. It can well be called the Science of Religion or the Science of the Soul (Ruvan). It covered the Beginning of the Creation and the constitution of man and also of a speck of dust! He talked of the Past of the Past and the Future of the Future! Scholars, scientists and men learned in various branches of modern knowledge were astounded. How can this 'uneducated' man speak like this?

He said that his destiny had led him to a secret abode of Zoroastrian Saints in Mount Demavand and there the Divine Knowledge was infused into him by certain spiritual methods, means and procedures!

He called this Divine Knowledge of Zoroastrian Religion as "**Ilm-e- Khshnoom**". The word "Khshnoom"

occurs twice in Gathas - Ha 48-12 and Ha53-2. The scholars have assigned various meanings to the word. Ervad Kangaji has given the meaning as "K n o w l e d g e of Din" and has read in it the root of "to know, to realise, to recognize." Pahlavi versions indicate "revelation". Harlez gives the meaning 'Knowledge'; Mills, "keen intellect"; Spiegel, "satisfaction"; Darmesteter, "pleasure" or ecstasy. And Baheramshahji's version merged all these meanings into one viz. "**The Divine Knowledge which requires keen intellect and gives divine ecstasy to its possessor**"!

It is the Knowledge pervading all that we have got with us as our Religion and all that modern science has tried to scratch from the surface of Mother – Nature and much more. It is not a "school of thought" for interpreting Zoroastrian Din; it is that Din itself!

No Religion can be without mysticism. This follows from the very nature of things. Our capacity to know and experience Nature is highly limited. Our five senses and our intellect are unable to establish contact with the whole of reality. Deep within us and everywhere outside us regions and things exist, events and phenomena occur, forces and fields operate and waves and energies whirl, which our personalities fail to register, experience and even dream of. All the scientific

knowledge the humans on this earth say they have collected in this last quarter of the 20th century, points an emphatic finger at this great truth. Three hundred years long arduous journey in the fields of modern science undergone to understand and explain the machinery of Nature has ended before an impenetrable barrier with a sign-board on it, "You shall not enter".

Religion is the Science of mysticism; all Religions are. Nature reveals itself only when a human marches towards God. And is not 'God a most baffling mystic concept? He can be understood only when experienced. He can be experienced only when the path prescribed by His Messengers is treaded upon. For a Zoroastrian the path is in his day to-day life. He has been gifted with spiritual institutions, disciplines and 'Yoga's to be practiced not on a mountain or in- solitariness but while living as an ordinary family-man. Sudreh Kusti, Mantha-prayers, Agiary, Atash Beheram, Yasna - ceremonies, Manashni-Gavashni-Kunashni, genetic preservation - these are the spiritual disciplines and institutions gifted to a Parsi.

And each of them, if you want to know, has a vast Mystic Science behind it, covering as its subjects ranging from a speck of dust to Ahura Mazda; from the Beginning-'Hoshbam', to the End - Frashogard. **The faint glimpses of this Mystic Science were indicated by this simple man-Baheramshah Navroji Shroff. (1858 to 1927).**

He had stayed in the secret abode of the Zoroastrian Saints for about three and half years (1875-78). After returning, he did not reveal his experience or knowledge to anybody for about 25 years. Only in 1906 he allowed a

few rays of the light of his knowledge to pervade the Parsi Community of Surat. Later - in 1908 - he was brought to Bombay.

What happened there? Let a Parsi of those days speak:

'In the year 1908, I received a post-card signed by Mr. Khodabux Poonegar. It stated that one Parsi gentleman Mr. Baheramshah Navroji Shroff of Surat had suddenly come into contact with a sect of holy Zoroastrian Saints who had their abode in a secret cave somewhere in North Iran; and who were preserving our Religion and its 'tarikats' (i.e. tenets, teachings and practices); that Mr. Baheramshah had brought from those Saints some knowledge about our Religion; and that a meeting was arranged with him in the Bengalee School, Fort, Bombay.

"Since the above lines were sufficient to ignite my curiosity, I attended the meeting setting aside all my work. In presence of the late Sheth Khurshedji Rustomji Camaji and others - about 30 scholars of Avesta pahalvi, a simple traditional looking middle-aged gentleman described, with some hesitation, his above journey" (which led him to the Saints in Iran) "and answered very patiently a volley of questions and also gave a highly philosophical talk on "the loftiness of Fire." **The said Sheth Baheramshahji, after confessing that he was ignorant of any western education, used in his talk several words in Avesta, Pahalvi, pazend, Persian without referring to any**

written notes and thus created an excellent impression on the scholars of modern thought. However, since many present could not understand him properly, he was asked to talk again on the next day, when before a fully packed hall he could explain some more teachings with the help of Mr. Manchershah Master, the Head Master of the Mission High School at Surat, who had come into contact with Baheramshahji much before that occasion."

-Sohrabji Banaji in Baheramshah Shroff Memorial Volume '(1930) page 11.

Mr. Banaji was the trustee of Banaji-Limjee Agiary and a prominent Parsi of those days.

May, I give you a list of a few other

eminent contemporary Parsis who lived in Baheramshahji's time and accepted the FACT of his coming into contact with the Zoroastrian Saints and also the FACT that he had in him a profound mystical Knowledge on the Zoroastrian Religion?

1. Manchershah Pallonji Kekobad, Head Master, Mission School, Surat.
2. **Jamshed Nusserwanji Mehta**, Chairman, Karachi Municipality and a well-known Zoroastrian of golden character.
3. **Jehangirji J. Vimadalal**, Solicitor a prominent public figure and orator.
4. Khurshedji K. Suntok, an eminent Advocate.
5. Ardesher N. Billimoria, Editor, "Cherag".

6. Ervad Faramraaz N. Kutar, the co-translator of *Shahnameh* in Gujarati.
7. Dr. Hormazshah J. Vania, a famous Doctor of Karachi.
8. Baheram P. Bharucha, a well-known astrologer.
9. Ervad Phiroze S. Masani Solicitor, a brilliant scholar of Oriental Studies.
10. Dr. Faramroz S. Chiniwalla Ophthalmic Surgeon, p r o f u s e writer on Zoroastrian Mysticism.
11. Jehangir S. Chiniwalla, Advocate, a great speaker and writer.

Let some of these speak:

Manchershah Kekobad writes:

"He (Baheramshahji) was not a man of genius. Leave aside Avesta Pahalvi, he had not good knowledge of Gujarati even. English, he had never learnt. How could he know Persian and Arabic? *Yet, how could he gain such wonderful knowledge of the Zoroastrian Religion and Tenets? Even if we do not accept his doctrines, there is no escape whatsoever from accepting that it is not at all probable that his knowledge was spurious.*

"In one of his lectures the late (Khurshedji) Cama was the president, when he admitted that this was "surely Zoroastrian philosophy". (He said) 'I feel that this man has something we do not "have.'

"He (Baheramshah) was all in all so far as Pristine Exposition of the Religious Law of Zoroaster is concerned." (Baheramshah Shroff Memorial Volume Page 247).

"Ustad- Baheramshah was the only persan who explained the Zoroastrian Religion in its correct light in the present time.... I believe that we could' have learnt from him many **mystic subjects of the Zoroastrian Religion.** (ibid page 33).

Jehangirji Vimadalal wrote:

"The coming out in our time of the late Baheramshah Shroff with the Knowledge of our lofty Religion was an amazing incident. **A man of simple looks and dress who, leave aside Avesta Pahalvi, had almost nil knowledge of English or Gujarati - could stand an a public platform and speak an the mystical philosophy of the Zoroastrian Religion,** the mystic effects of Zoroastrian ceremonies, different stages of Holiness, different kinds of Fires, various types of 'druji's, the unseen effects of Mantha prayers, **and that too without any notes or writing-this was really a noteworthy and miraculous event in the present day history of the Zoroastrian Religion; it was like the sudden appearance of a "radiant star in the atmosphere of the Zoroastrian studies.**

"That Baheramshah had a **mystic philosophy RELATING TO THE ZOROASTRIAN RELIGION cannot be denied even by his strongest adversary. . . He had such deep knowledge of Religion not known any time before and there is no doubt that he could express it like a real learned man. Anybody who is in his senses cannot deny that a spring of the Zoroastrian Mystical Knowledge**

with all its technical words was flowing from the mouth of this man who from our worldly standards was uneducated and ignorant

THERE IS NO REASON, THEREFORE, FOR DISBELIEVING THE EXPLANATION HIS FRIENDS GIVE ABOUT THIS MIRACULOUS PHENOMENON.

It is not beyond experience that the spiritually advanced 'Saheb's can impress mystical knowledge on others' minds. No book is known from which Baheramshah could have gained such knowledge. Even if we assume the existence of such a book, we cannot believe that a man like him can himself read and digest it and then explain its contents to others.

We, have therefore, proper reason to believe that he must have come in contact with the Saints of Mystical Knowledge and because of' that he could perform this task.

"I will in the end finish this article by stating that the late Baheramshah had a mystical philosophy of Zoroastrian Religion. He possessed the best knowledge on our Tarikat's, ceremonies and other mystic doctrines. Although he did not disclose all his knowledge, he has left behind a valuable treasure, from which our generation will learn a lot about the mysticism of our Religion and will get **much useful knowledge, which is not available from any other known source.**

- (ibid page 240)

Baheramshahji did come in contact with the Zoroastrian Saints.

Baheramshahji had in him a spring

of the Mystical Science of the Zoroastrian Religion.

Nobody IN HIS SENSES can escape these truths.....

One hundred years have passed since Baheramshahji came into contact with Zoroastrian Saints. 75 years have passed since he revealed some glimpses of the Divine Knowledge. 50 years have passed since his death. 7-7-1977 is his 50th Baj (anniversary) day. And the Science of Zoroastrian Religion is written and published in more than 40,000 pages! The spring of that Knowledge is ever-flowing in our Community. Those who can drink, drink deep; those who cannot, just bray at the marching caravan from a safe distance. **They are too lazy and too old even to read and grasp modern thought and science - leave aside mystic science.** Immunity towards any scientific mental exercise is the root of their diseases. And the most glaring symptom of this disease is to shout and yell, scream and screech, and jump and box and kick in the air - all from a distance. That exercise has now made them immune towards the TRUTH a most pitiable condition. . .

This barking against Ilm-e-Khshnoom reminds us of the famous lines of Maulana Roomi, (translated in English):

"The moon goes on pouring its light and the dog goes on barking! Everybody behaves according to his own inherent nature."

-K. N. DASTOOR.