

# ASHEERWAD

With more and more Parsee boys and girls marrying outside the community, under the Special Marriage Act or contracting civil marriage, by just signing on the dotted line, the main question that arises is, are they aware that in Nature, which means, in the Zoroastrian Religion, such worldly contracts are considered null and void? Why, we even know of cases where both the partners are Parsees and yet live as husband and wife, without going through the **Asheerwad** ceremony, by merely signing a contract before the Registrar!

The most important point that is forgotten in these cases is that in our Religion, only that union is recognised as "marriage" in which (a) both the spouses are born-Parsee Zoroastrians and who profess the Mazdayasni Zarthoshti Religion and (b) both have undergone the **Asheerwad** ceremony. **According to the Zoroastrian Religion, marriage is not only a contract but a sacrament.** Such a sacrament can only be given by qualified Parsee priests.

Why is the **Asheerwad** ceremony so very indispensable for a lawful, valid marriage among Parsees? To answer that, one should understand the composition of a Zoroastrian wedding ceremony. This can be divided into two parts:— (1) The Nahan ceremony and (2) **Asheerwad** ceremony.

(1) Both the Zoroastrian boy and girl have first to undergo a purificatory ceremony, known as Nahan, in which the consecrated urine (**Nirang**) of a consecrated white bull (**Varasio**), which acts as a talisman, is administered to the couple by qualified priests. While sipping the **Nirang**, both the boy and the girl have to recite certain sacred chants. Non-consecrated bull's urine (**Taro**) is also applied on the body and allowed to be dried, after which a bath is taken, with water drawn from a well, a river or a running brook.

(2) Then comes the longer second part. It consists of chanting of sacred **Avesta** and Pazand prayers by qualified Zoroastrian priests, in the presence of fire and two witnesses. In these prayers, it is categorically stated that "the ceremony is being performed according to the canons of the Mazdayasni Religion". The exact Pazand words are, **Awar Daad u Aaeen e Deen i Mazdayasni**, which means, "according to the law and custom of the Mazdayasnian Religion".

Further, in the **Asheerwad** ceremony, there are two Avesta passages in the midst of other sacred Pazand passages. These two form the most important part of the Nuptial Blessings. They are very important, because they are two **Nirangs**, "Talismanic Chants", which shower special benedictions for the unification of the souls and the bodies of the parties in holy matrimony. This will ensure the accelerated progress of the souls of the husband, wife and the children born to them. Also, because of the **Asheerwad** ceremony, children born to the couple inherit the best qualities of both of them.

**Marriage, thus, is not merely the contract for the physical union of the parties to the marriage, but an agency which brings about the salvation of the soul, which is the only aim of this incarnation.**

It is interesting to note that even according to the personal law of the Parsees, no marriage of a Parsee is valid and legal, unless both the marriage partners are Parsee Zoroastrians, who go through the **Asheerwad** ceremony, performed by duly qualified priests.

From all this alone, it can be conclusively inferred that there can be no marriage in the Zoroastrian sense of the term between a Parsee and an alien.

Adi Doctor