

Glimpses from the Life-story of Bahermshah Navroji Shroff

By B. K. MISTRY
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[On 7th July 1977 we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Ustad Saheb Baheramshahji. A free booklet on some glimpses from his life-story was published. Our appeal for donations to publish it met with a good response. The booklet has gone deep inside our Parsi Anjuman of India and abroad. Those who did not know anything about Baheramshahji were surprised. Those who just used to dismiss the miracle are set to thinking.

Dini Avaz Committee is thankful to all who donated and to all who helped.

Many readers of Dini Avaz have insisted that the content of the booklet should be reproduced in the Journal in suitable installments. So here we go. We record that this life-story of Baheramshahji is a simple narration of facts as recorded at several places and in particular in (i) Baheramshah Shroff Memorial Volume (1930) and the (ii) History of the School of Ilm-eKhshnoom written in a long series by Jehangirji Chiniwalla in the Parsi Avaz Weekly. There is no falsity or even exaggeration anywhere. - Dini Avaz Committee.]

smile and the sky, as if to welcome a royal visitor, spread out a golden red carpet. The birds were chattering in the trees and their leaves fanned by a gentle breeze, made them appear to be bowing to the rising sun. The streets in the little town of Surat had come to life. The usual din and clamour of a busy morning could be heard - clatter of utensils being washed, gossip of housewives exchanging notes on the day's cooking, prayers being recited and the children getting ready for school.

It promised to be a glorious morning., But to Behram who sat at the window of his house, everything seemed so bleak and miserable. There was a forlorn, far-away look on his face which mirrored the tornado of thoughts that raged within his mind. He knew that he loved his mother and could not bear to part from her. At the same time, he could not stand the strain and hostility which pervaded his life in the family. The only thing to do was to run away.

But how? What will he do? Where will he go? To a boy of about 18 years of age, it posed an enormous problem, especially when that boy's education was limited to the 3rd or the 4th standard Gujarati and who did not know any trade or art by which he could maintain himself. But an impelling force within him

THE EARLY YEARS

In his fiery chariot Khurshid Yazad - the sun - was just starting on his daily journey with a glowing

seemed to goad him on, as if to say, that all would be well, if he mustered enough courage to leave the house. Behram had made his decision. He would run away at the earliest opportunity. A cool breeze caressed his cheeks and his agitated nerves calmed a little. He heard his mother calling him.

"Behram! Where are you! Stop dreaming and come here to help me." His mother was angry. Partly he was to blame but then Oh! How he loved to hear that voice.

MORE ABOUT BEHRAM

Behramshah Navroji Shroff - for that was the full name of the boy announced his presence to this material world, without any fanfare, except the usual lusty cry of anguish of a new-born babe, on the 3rd August, 1858. (According to Parsi calendar: Hoz Tir Yazad and Hah Behman Ameshaspand 1227, Yezdezardi.) His birth took place in Bombay at 7.00 hours and 34 minutes (B.T.) on a Tuesday.

Behramshah belonged to a well-to do Parsi family. His father was a 'Sharaf' (a broker) and that is why the family surname which was really 'Surti' was changed to 'Shroff'. His family had a priestly background and though Behramshah himself was not even ordained a 'navar', his grandfather Ervad Peshotan was a 'pucea' Yozdathregar, and the latter's father was a priest by profession, an Athravan, who guarded the Holy Fire of a Shahensai Fire Temple in Surat. Thus Behramshah was brought up in a priestly environment and it is but natural that spiritual strength flowed

through his veins. It is said that Behramshah's grandfather "Pestotan also had business relations with Mr. Jamsetji Jeejibhoy Batliwalla, who later became Sir Jamsetji Jeejibhoy, Baronet.

Unfortunately, Behramshah lost his father at an early age. Another great misfortune from childhood was that he could not speak properly. He stammered and stuttered -- a drawback, which impeded his progress in his early years. No wonder, his education came to an end with the 3rd or the 4th Gujarati class.

Behramshah's mother belonged to the well-known family of 'Tarachands' of Bombay. After the demise of Behramshah's father, their residence shifted to Surat, where his mother's relatives were also staying. Here strife reared its ugly head and as has been narrated before, the result of it was that Behramshah decided to leave his mother's house.

OFF TO PESHAWAR!

One fine day, Behramshah put on, one dress over another, a second gold ring over the one he already wore on his little finger and set off .. he did not know where. But there was some inner force which seemed to have chalked out plans for him. So he first decided to go to Ahmedabad. From there, he went to Kathiawad. Arriving at Godhra, he stepped on to the Punjab Mail which took him to " Peshawar, where he knew his uncle - mother's brother - stayed and had a shop. The journey may be skipped over, but for the reader with an inquiring bent of mind who would like to know how Behramshah could undertake such a

long journey, so ill-equipped as he was, it would suffice to say that the journey though arduous, difficult and long, Behramshah came through it safely, sometimes working his way, sometimes paying for it and at times hitchhiking.

His uncle was taken by surprise at Behramshah's arrival. He knew about family bickerings but had not expected Behramshah to come to Peshawar. His first anxiety was about his sister - Behramshah's mother and he dashed off a telegram informing her about his arrival. And also, from the first day, he started scheming and thinking of ways and means to persuade Behramshah to return to his mother in Surat. Whatever plans the uncle had, Ahura Mazda had other plans for Behramshah.

A MEMORABLE EVENING WALK

From his childhood, Behramshah had a strange fascination *for open* spaces, trees and mountains where Nature could be seen and felt at its best. He loved to take long walks every evening in Surat and this practice he continued when he arrived in Peshawar. When Behramshah's uncle came to know of this, he warned him. "Look Behram," he said, "this is Peshawar, a Frontier Province, the land of Pathans, a ferocious people and not Surat. Do not go far away to lonely spots and above all do not talk to strangers. These Pathans will not only rob you but kidnap you and hold you to ransom."

It was not easy to frighten Behramshah but he realized the wisdom of his uncle's warning and decided to follow his advice. One day, on his

evening walk, Behramshah came to a road named Kinari Bazar. He continued walking and left it behind to arrive at the gates of the city, called Chaman Darwaza. This also he crossed, momentarily forgetting his uncle's grave warning and went further towards the border. After he had gone a little distance, he felt an urge to relieve himself. Having answered Nature's call, in keeping with his upbringing like a true Zoroastrian, he cleansed his hands with dry mud on the ground, since there was no "water nearby, and performed his 'kusti'. He finished his prayers and turned round to find himself face to face with two tall, stalwart, handsome, shining men dressed in the costumes resembling Mobeds. For a moment, Behramshah felt terribly afraid. How was he *to escape* from these men? Surely, they would rob him, kidnap him, or perhaps kill him. This is what comes from not following an elder's advice, *he* thought to himself. As if reading his thoughts, the men looked at him, so gently, so benignly that Behramshah felt almost at ease. But his fears had not completely left him, and seeing that they were not likely to harm him, he slowly started to back away so that he could run and escape. But they foresaw his move and one of them spoke to Behramshah in a language which he could understand.

"Do not be afraid of us, my boy! We are your friends. We are not evil people. We are not going to rob you or harm you in any manner".

As he spoke these words, such love, kindness and affection seemed to emanate from them that Behramshah felt himself completely disarmed of suspicion and hostility towards them.

They continued to talk, as if they had known him for years. While Behramshah felt drawn to these kind men, there still, lurked within his mind a faint tinge of suspicion. As if to remove this last vestige of suspicion, the shining men slightly unfolded their costumes and showed Behramshah what they wore underneath. He was taken aback by what he saw. They too, were wearing the Sudreh and Kushti - like him!

The sight of the Sudreh and Kushti gave Behramshah new courage and he was no longer afraid. In fact, he had taken a liking to these men who had treated him so kindly and graciously. They then pointed out a 'Khimeh' or tent pitched at a distance.

"There, in that tent, is our 'Aka' (chief)" they said "He is anxious to meet you and has invited you to go with us to his tent."

Behramshah agreed to go unhesitatingly, and walked with them up to the 'Khimeh' or tent. The spectacle that greeted Behramshah as he entered the tent held him spell-bound for a moment. A group or 'Anjuman' of men were seated on a finely laid-out carpet, spread out with dry-fruits, sherbat, flowers and fruits, around a highly dignified person who appeared to be the 'Aka' or the Chief. The resplendent appearance of the Chief is not easy to portray, even for an artist of words for he radiated a holy glamour, which would defy any attempt at description. With a gentle look of exceeding love, which seemed to penetrate deep down into Behramshah's heart, the Chief introduced himself as "Rashidji". He then asked him his name and inquired about his family. He also wanted to know how

many Parsis lived in Bombay and especially how they practiced their religion, as if he were ignorant about it all. Now the trouble with Behramshah was that he stammered and his command over Urdu or Hindi was so poor that before he could finish his reply, Rashidji would prompt him and sometimes complete the reply for him. Thus by showing such kindness and interest in his talks, Rashidji won over Behramshah's heart completely.

However, in spite of it all, there was a single thought uppermost in Behramshah's mind : to go away and free himself from these people. But Rashidji had intuition of this thought and trying to allay Behramshah's fears, engrossed him in lively conversation on various topics. He asked him what he prayed and how much he knew about prayers. He made him

recite the Sudreh-Kushti prayers.

Rashidji then made an offer. He told Behramshah that they had come from Iran, to be exact, from the Demavand Koh (secret cave-like place in Mount Daemavand) and invited him to accompany them. Once again, doubts began to assail Behramshah and he said, "I will ask my uncle about it and take his permission to go with you."

Now, Behramshah was anxious to return home. So, Rashidji had two lovely bags filled to overflowing with dry-fruits, which he gave to Behramshah and instructed the two men who had brought him, to take him safely up to Kinari Bazar. As soon as they reached the road, the men bade farewell and Behramshah was once again on his own. He quickly directed his steps towards his uncle's house.

THE NEXT STEP

Behramshah had no intention of keeping his meeting with Rashidji and his men, a secret from his uncle nor could he have done so, because those two bags of dry-fruits would have given him away at once. So, at dinner table, he recounted the full story and gave his uncle a detailed account of what had happened. His uncle after listening to him attentively, warned him of the dangers that faced people who were decoyed by pathans to be held to ransom, and advised him not to go near that place again. Behramshah was greatly disturbed by this talk. Very much confused, he went to bed.

No sooner had he fallen asleep, then he saw a dream. It was a beautiful dream. He found himself in a big garden, with flowers in full bloom and fruits hanging from trees tempting to

be picked. A gardner, took him around the garden and finally to a stream, so pure and crystal clear. The gardner sat on a parapet for a while and then plunged into the stream to disappear completely. Behramshah woke up. When he again went to sleep, he saw much more pleasant dreams. .

The next day morning Behramshah decided that he would not go anywhere near Chaman Darwaza but follow his uncle's advice and stay away. But as the day advanced he was drawn more and more to the idea of going back to Rashidji's tent.

In the meantime, Behramshah's uncle knowing that the young boy could not be easily persuaded to go back to Surat, decided on a clever stratagem to lure him back to his mother's side. The uncle contrived to have a telegram sent which stated that Behramshah's mother was seriously ill and that he should leave Peshawar immediately. When the telegram was shown to Behramshah and its contents read out, he felt mixed up, for now, he could go to Rashidji and tell him about what had happened and explain his inability to accompany him to Daemavand Koh; at the same time, he was worried about his mother's health.

In a gloomy mood, he walked down Kinari Bazar and hurried over to Chaman Darwaza. There he found the two men waiting for him. Smilingly, they welcomed him and took him to Rashidji. Rashidji too, greeted him with love and bade him enter the tent He tried to draw him into a merry conversation but realized that Behramshah looked grim and appeared not to be in a mood to talk, Rashidji

wanted to know what weighed on his mind. Behramshah told him about the telegram, his mother's illness and the impossibility of his going with them to Iran, since he would be leaving Peshawar, immediately, to be by his mother's side.

Rashidji when he heard this news closed his eyes and seemed to meditate. He opened his eyes, smiled broadly and said, "Your mother is quite all right. In fact, today is her birthday. In the afternoon she had a hearty meal of 'dhandal' 'dahi' and fried fish!

The telegram is just a plot to send you back to Surat."

Behramshah was convinced that Rashidji was speaking the truth, but

what was he to do? He expressed his fears to Rashidji. "What am I to tell uncle? Surely, he will never grant me leave to go with you. What shall I do then?"

"Go and tell him the truth. And do not worry. Your uncle will give you permission to come with us. Of that, I am sure."

Once again, receiving with thanks, Rashidji's gift of dry fruits, Behramshah went with the two men, to be led safely up to Kiriari Bazar, from where he walked slowly to his uncle's house, wondering what his uncle would have to say about it all.

(To be continued)

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Glimpses from the Life-story of Bahermshah Navroji Shroff

Dini Avaz Vol 2 No. 5 and 6

By B. K. MISTRY

TIME TO START

When his uncle saw the bag of dry-fruits in Behramshah's hands, he was not angry. He knew where the boy had been and wanted to hear all about it. As the story was unfolded he listened carefully, raising his eyebrows now and then in great amazement.

Behramshah narrated everything and as he went on disclosing the details; the uncle wondered how Rashidji could have found out about the boy's mother's birthday which was quite correct; and how could he know that the telegram was fake? The uncle realized that these men were not ordinary people and no harm would come to his nephew if he went with them. His ideas had suddenly changed, just as Rashidji had predicted. Who knows, Rashidji himself with his spiritual powers, might have been responsible for this change! Seeing Behramshah looking at him wonderingly, the uncle smiled and said, "You can go to Iran. May God go with you and keep you safe wherever you may be."

Behramshah's joys knew no bounds and he looked forward to the evening of the next day when he would meet Rashidji in his 'Khimah' (tent).

When they met, Rashidji was happy too, on hearing the news. He advised Behramshah to leave his bag

of clothes behind with his uncle. But something else that Rashidji told him, left him tongue-tied. He was informed that his mother who now knew of his presence in Peshawar had arranged to send a certain sum of money by Postal Money Order every month. And that Behramshah should take a letter to the Postmaster authorizing him to collect the M.O. every month on his behalf and credit the amounts to a savings account, till his return. Accordingly, later, Behramshah visited the Postmaster who readily agreed to make the necessary arrangements.

On the appointed day, Behramshah came to Rashidji's 'khimah', leaving his clothes behind as instructed. When the time came to unpitch the 'khimah', Behramshah put on the clothes given to him by Rashidji. The 'khimah' hummed with activity and within a short time everything was on the journey.

It was a thrilling moment for packed and ready. It was time to start

THE JOURNEY TO MT. DAEMAVAND

Behramshah as the caravan started moving. Soon the city of Peshawar and the frontiers of India faded out of sight. He had been told that it would be a long and arduous journey beset with dangers from frontiersmen, the ferocious Pathans, who would not he-

sitate to rob, any caravan that passed their way. Yet it was the kind of adventure he loved - at any rate, a great experience.

In a story like this, hampered by limitations of space, it is not possible to narrate the details of Behramshah's journey. Briefly speaking, the first halt was at Kafristan, from there to Afghanistan's upper border and thence towards the northern part of Khorasan. From Khorasan, the caravan proceeded in a north westerly direction till it reached the city of Azerbaijan. The caravan was in the north-western provinces of Iran. Now the march began to their destination and goal: Mt. Daemavand.

The long journey was without incidents. On several occasions, they came face to face with ferocious tribes -

men who, ordinarily would have massacred them but for the spiritual powers of Rashidji, who, by reciting certain 'Nirangs' (holy formulae) cast a talismanic ring round the caravan and made it invisible to the enemy.

Soon they arrived in sight of Mt. Daemavand in the Alburz range of the mountains of Iran. The roads leading to the foot of the 'Koh' - huge cavern or recess inside a mountain almost big enough to house a small township - are well-guarded secrets, protected by talismans and invisible to human beings.

As they approached the foot of the mountain, the caravan broke off into two groups. One group started, climbing the mountain, and where it went nobody knows. The remaining group led by Rashidji, came near the walls

of the mountain. Behramshah who was with this group stood at a distance along with others. From there, he saw a tall, heavily-built old man who seemed to be a 'mobed' - a holy man suddenly appear along with some other men who looked like his helpers.

These were 'Kehravs' or pathfinders who knew the secret mountain paths. The old, holy man stood before the wall and to Behramshah's amazement took out a big rock from the wall and laid it aside.

The other rocks seemed to have been arranged in a certain pattern and as these were removed one by one, a big entrance came into view, which was high enough for a person on horseback to enter easily. The advanced group of the caravan slowly entered the tunnel followed by the rest. The progress was slow as the passage was in total darkness. As they went further a glimmer of light came through and a gentle breeze blew. At last, they found themselves in the light of the sun. Along with others, Behramshah climbed up a slope till they reached a flat plateau the land of the 'Abeds', the land of Saheb-e-Dils or Saheb-Dilans, meaning in ordinary language, spiritually advanced people, who had attained mastery over their hearts. The tranquility that prevailed in that place and the voluptuous beauty of the landscape made Behramshah wonder if he was in paradise, such was the magnificence that greeted his eyes.

BEHRAMSHAH BECOMES A DENIZEN OF DAEMAVAND KOH

By now every member of the caravan had set his foot on the holy land of Saheb-Dilans. They were all greeted by the holy Shraoshavarez Marzbanji

Saheb, their chief and leader who guided the destiny of the little community or sect within Daemavand. All of them bowed reverently before leader and made their way to their respective abodes. Behramshah was introduced by Rashidji himself and was accorded a very warm welcome. As desired by Shraoshavarez Saheb he was entrusted to the care of Rashidji, Sheriyar, Khoda Murad and Asfandiyar.

Behramshah stayed in 'Firdaus' (Paradise) which is the name given to the abode of the 'Abeds' within Daemavand, for three and a half years. Here within this short period, the ignorant boy from Surat who had studied hardly up to the fourth Gujarati blossomed forth as a great Master of Knowledge holding scholarly discourses on the Zoroastrian religion in Avesta, Pahelvi and Persian. How he accomplished this, forms an interesting narrative in itself but we shall come to it later. In the meantime, let us peep into Firdaus and study briefly the way of life of its inhabitants.

It is said, that some forty-nine years before the fall of the Zoroastrian Empire, some holy Master-Souls or Abeds of the time went into seclusion taking with them the Holy Scriptures and whatever was required for the strict observance of Zoroastrian religion in its pristine purity. The present inhabitants of Daemavand Koh numbering 2000 were said to be the descendants of those noble, spiritually advanced souls.

The tiny population of Firdaus is divided into three classes, the highest being the 'Maghavs' who are 'Athravans' 72 in number always, towering above all others of the priestly order of

Yozdathregars. The second class comprise the Yozdathregars, who are priests engaged in ceremonies headed by 'Dasturs' under the direction of Magavs. The third, is the main population and these are the shepherds, agriculturists, warriors and artisans. Their main occupation is agriculture and in this, they are self-supporting. There is no coinage or currency and all needs are met by barter, both within the colony and outside.

The men wear their hair long almost up to the neck and keep beards. They are tall, handsome and strong. Over their Sudreh and kusti, they wear short shirts ('badians') and long pyjamas which reach up to the ankles. Over the shirts, they have coats (daglis), resembling the Western style tail coats, cut out at sides. Their heads are covered with white caps or white scarfs tied at the back in a knot. Some wear 'pugrees' which resemble our present-day priests' headgear.

The women are bewitchingly beautiful and tall. Their dress unlike their dazzling beauty, is quite simple. Pyjamas or 'ijjars' cover their legs and frocks are worn over blouses, which are quite long and respectable. Like the men, they cover their heads and also wear a thin, almost transparent veil.

Their dwelling places are hewn out of rocks, by a chemical process, and are what might be called marvels of architecture, which must be seen to be believed. Their homes provide every comfort and are quite airy and well ventilated. The drainage system is automatic - another marvel of science - and all matter drains out by itself into deep ravines where naturally there is no need to scavenge the waste.

BEHRAMSHAH'S EDUCATION

The task of educating Behramshah in Zoroastrian lore was assigned to a lady teacher by the name of Tanaz Banno. This education was imparted to him in two ways: By 'Sinah-dar-Sinah' (i.e. heart to heart) by which he received 1/8th of all his knowledge of 'Khshnoom'. Unlike ordinary knowledge, which is acquired by reading, writing and memorizing, the knowledge of Khshnoom can be imparted only by the master, heart to heart, after the disciple goes through a series of disciplines of Zoroastrian religious practices and rites.

The remaining 7/8th was gifted to him by Shroashavarez Saheb himself by 'Sejda' or 'Dalil-e-Saraish'. This method induces a disciple to fall into a kind of spiritual trance and then makes him see like a drama or a movie, events of the past which happened thousands of years ago, the worlds unseen by mortal eyes, and the future events. In this manner, Behramshah was taught the 'Stoat Yasna' (Colour thought-vibrations) and 'Jame Jahnuma' (Time Reading) and other 'Ilms' like Numerology, Astrology, Mind Power, etc., etc.

BEHERAMSHAHJI'S TRAINING

"Our Ustad Saheb was destined to remain only for 3 years on the talismanic land of the Sages. This 3 years time was not sufficient for the full knowledge.....It was then found necessary to endow him with powers.....The main 'Farhang' called 'Stoat Yasna' was thoroughly instilled in him; that gave him a fair knowledge of the exoteric (profane) side and the exoteric spiritual side of the Writings and the Nikiz of the Veil Daena i.e. Good Religion. The secret of Nature's working was shown to him in the Sezda theatre as much as was possible".

*Dr. Faramroze S. Chiniwalla.-
"Essentials &
Origins of Zoroastrianism"-page 9 (1942)*

Glimpses from the life-story of Behramshah Navroji Shroff

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By B.K Mistry

Unfortunately, Behramshah's educational progress was, being impeded by his stammer and a very weak memory. The holy Shroashavarez Saheb realized that at the rate at which Behramshah was learning, he would not be able to complete his education within the time span of 3.5 years allotted to him. Therefore, through his spiritual powers and by performing the 'Afringan' and the 'Daham Afriti', two very important ceremonies, Shroashavarez Marzbariji Saheb succeeded in curing 2/3rd of Behramshah's speech defect and endowed him with a highly retentive memory, After this, Behramshah's progress was rapid." And the way he assimilated knowledge pleased all his masters.

During the course of his education, Behramshah tried to seek the answer to a question which often perplexed him. Why was he the chosen one to be invited to Daemavand Koh and given the gift of 'Ilme-khshnoom'? 'Eventually, he received the answer.

To explain this, one will have to turn the clock back by centuries, perhaps by thousands of years. In those hoary times, the present Shroashavarez Saheb was a Holy Abed' .. a highly Spiritually advanced soul. In the same Previous birth, Behramshah was a general in the army. Even a holy Abed can cultivate enemies and especially more

so, because of zeal for truth and righteousness. One such enemy had planned to get rid of the holy soul when he was at his prayers, But just before the fatal blow could be struck, Behramshah, the then General, came on the scene and killed the assassin. Thousands of years must have gone by and the time had come to repay the debt incurred in the previous birth. In Hindu philosophy, this is called 'karma' whereas in Khshnoom the word is 'keshash'. That is why, Shroashvareez Saheb had influenced Behramshah with a desire to go to Peshawar and from there it was easy for Rashidji to take him to Daemavand. All this was preplanned and ordained by the laws of "keshash".

When Behramshah entered the portals of Firdaus, the inmates had referred to him as 'Aznabi' (a stranger or outsider) and looked on him with curiosity which ordinarily an outsider's presence evokes. But within a short while he became friendly with all and was very popular. So much so, that one farmer, named Sheriyar, who loved Behramshah like a son wanted to give his daughter in marriage to him! But Saheb Shroashavarez Marzbanji would not permit such an alliance because according to him Behramshah's destiny lay in India.

Time like a swiftly-flowing stream passed rapidly and soon the duration of Behramshah's stay in Firdaus came to an end. So with a heavy heart, Beh-

ramshah made preparations for his return to India. He received the blessings of the highest in Daemavand, bade good-bye to his 'Abed' friends and after casting a final glance at the unforgettable beauty of his paradisiacal abode, he allowed himself to be blindfolded. A loving guide went with him for some distance when the folds were removed, he was blessed once more and left to follow his own way home. Although apparently unprotected, he traveled in perfect safety on the strength solely of the blessings - he had received. His journey took him over a larger part of Iran and Upper India till he reached Peshawar, his uncle's home. His departure did *not* sever his relations with Firdaus, for he had been initiated into the mysteries of 'Sezda' and could turn on his mind to his Masters in Daemavand and receive messages and guidance. From Peshawar, after collecting the moneys saved by the Postmaster through his Money Orders, he started for his home in Surat.

A NEW ERA DAWNS

Behramshah's mother was overjoyed to see her son back home. More than three years of separation had helped to heal the wounds inflicted by strife and hostility in the family. The shadow *of* ill-will had completely disappeared and its place was usurped by the sun-shine of love. So was it with Behramshah - his joy too was overflowing - for absence had made his heart fonder for his mother.

The great change in Behramshah was at once noticed by his, mother. The irresponsible angry youth, who had so suddenly left her; had come back as a wise, mature man. He naturally told

his mother the whole story of his wonderful stay in Firdaus and the knowledge of 'Khshnoom' which he had received from the 'Abeds' of Daemavand Koh. But he cautioned his mother not to speak about it to anybody.

Behramshah on his return from Iran could have easily stepped into lime light and got as much publicity as he wanted. In fact, he could have caused a sensation. Yet he chose to observe silence, not for just a *few* years, but thirty long years; and it is on record that he agreed to come to Bombay after a great deal of hesitation. That, in itself, reveals the nature of the man and what he stood for - a simple, truthful life of righteousness bereft of braggadocio and free from any sensual yearning for material success.

It has never been claimed on behalf of Behramshah that he possessed super-natural powers or that he was a miracle-working "Godman". He was almost dragged to Bombay, from Surat to present his masterly expositions on the esoteric doctrines and significance of the Zoroastrian Religion

It happened like this: It was a Sunday and Behramshah had gone to a Fire-Temple in Surat. In an adjoining room, a few young men, members of an association, called "Bazme Ruz-e-Ahuramazda" were having discussions on religious subjects under the guidance of Mr. Munchersshah Pallonji Koikobad (known as Manchershah Master) who had founded it. Behramshah just peeped into the room to hear what was being said. Seeing him at the door, Manchershah respectfully invited him to take a seat. A young man was saying something on the subject

of 'Atash'. Behramshah sat through the discussion and at its conclusion mentioned that there were several 'Atash's in Nature and named some of them. Manchershah at once saw that here was the man they were seeking - who could give them the knowledge they thirsted for. Behramshahji revealed, with great hesitation, the source of his knowledge. And that is how it all began with the first series of lectures delivered by Behramshahji in the "Bazme Ruz-e-Ahuramazda". Baheramshahji had later on stated that he had disclosed his secret that day in obedience to a message from 'Sahib-e-Dilan's.

Manchershah introduced Behramshah to Mr. Kaikhushroo Burjorji Choksi and the two of them somehow succeeded after great efforts to persuade Behramshah to come to Bombay and place his knowledge before the community. Thus began a series of lectures covering a wide spectrum of religious subjects, like, the consecration of "Atash Behrams" with 16 different Fires, Ahunvar, Stoat Yasna, Shroasha Yazad, Manthra and innumerable others, to list which is beyond the scope of this little book.

And thus dawned the new era of 'Ilm-e-Khshnoom' which means, "the Divine Mystical Knowledge of the Zoroastrian Religion, which gives spiritual ecstasy to its possessor". It is the key to a treasure-vault of knowledge; but it is a pity that not many of our community realized its spectacular value. It is a sad commentary on our community that while it goes hammer and tongs over petty matters, it remains indifferent towards a miracle which occurred before their own eyes! But those who were objective, - impartial and unprejudiced could not help accept

ing the miracle. Names and views of a few such prominent Parsis are already referred to in Vol. 2, no. 3.

Thank Ahura Mazda that Behramshah came on the scene at a time when the winds of materialism were blowing from the West. The alleged advance of physical sciences coupled with the historical studies of Avesta threatened to uproot the pristine purity of our Religion and all its spiritual institutions, disciplines, "Tarikats", ceremonies and spiritual rites. Unfortunately, Parsis are strangely fascinated by the West and whatever comes from it is accepted as gospel truth, howsoever absurd and even damaging! So was it with some of our Westernized Parsi scholars who, through these dry studies tried to make a hash of our Scriptures and gave a handle (or a licence) to beat the community with conversions and marriages to non-Parsis and reduce the great Religion to mundane matters of history and geography. A dark cloud thus hung over the community. With the advent, however, of Ilm-e-Khshnoom as propounded by Behramshah, the menacing cloud was dispersed and the dawn broke through - the dawn of a new era.

Another misfortune that seems to pursue our community is that its members, though very intelligent, easily fall a prey to the dishonest and irrelevant preachings of those who close their eyes to the glaring spiritual Truths interwoven in our Religion and boast of 'reforming' it. It is an amusing spectacle of the blind leading the blind. These so-called "reformists" have always adopted an omnipotent posture of "Heads I win, tails you lose!" This is really a pitiable state of affairs, but with a little bit of sincerity,

honesty and humility forthcoming from these persons much can be achieved. Have these gentlemen, who at every opportunity heap ridicule and derision on our religious practices and institutions, ever cared to study "Khshnoom" literature, which is in abundance? Have they ever tried to understand the opposite point of view? In fact, they have consistently avoided facing the truth.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. But the danger is not to the handful of critics or 'reformists" nobody would care what happens to them, - but the whole community faces extinction by their foolishness.

Behramshahji's teachings brought us the dawn of a new era. May we have

the strength, the courage and the wisdom to hold on to this dawn and do not allow our great community to slip into darkness.

But that is not destined to be; otherwise, Baheramshahji would not have been taken to 'Sahib-Dilan's....

Baheramshahji died at Surat on the 7th day of 1927 - a wonderful life of 68 years, 11 months and 4 days.

What happened to the spring of knowledge he brought us? Did it dry up?

No! The, spring flows on

(Concluded)

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