

Parsis—are they vanishing ?

By Dr. H. R. BANA, M.Sc., Ph.D., F.P.S. F.G.A.

The very fact Parsis survived for 1200 and odd years under conditions worse than the wiped out nations and civilizations, is itself a miracle of Zoroastrianism. Accepting this fact, I or any other optimistic and faithful Parsi Zoroastrian should not feel doubtful about our survival for at least another thousand years.

It is not correct to say that the community is not alive to this danger of slow wipe out which has increased after 1948 enormously, due mainly to (A) the economic downfall arising out of (1) general economic trend, inflation and soaring cost of living throughout the country, (2) dwindling influence in government, (3) lack of business opportunities in the country and outside, (4) lesser educational and employment opportunities, (5) mismanagement of the well-established reputed Parsi business firms by the younger generation, (6) and passing of the control of (entrusting key-posts to) and/or sale of such business houses to non-Parsis, (7) drifting of our talented youths to foreign countries in search of better Job—service-business—educational opportunities (all material gains), (B) SOCIO-RELIGIOUS downfall due mainly to (8) increase in percentage of unmarried youths, divorces, youths marrying judins, (9) lower moral standards of our youths, through bad company, poverty, low immoral trades and yellow press, (10) deteriorating conditions of Parsi priesthood which is further weakened through heretic Fatwas of some so-called high priests, (11) general apathy and dislike for the priest-class amongst the laity, (12) lack of religious training, religious influence and faith (ETEKAD).

Under the prevailing conditions when our microscopic community has to rely solely on spiritual help and guidance from Almighty Ahuramazda and his Prophet Zarthustra, for

Dini-Avaz notes with deep regret the sudden demise of Khshnoom — Fidai, Ervad Dr. Homi Rattansha Bana, a doughty warrior in the cause of Zoroastrian religion and tradition, in August 1984.

Dr. Bana, a gemologist of repute, was deeply devoted to orthodox Zoroastrianism. His sharp tongue and powerful pen tolerated no nonsense from the heterodox who advocated mixed marriages or conversion.

His sudden death is a grave loss to the Orthodox Section of the community. May Sarosh Yazad guide Ervad Homi bin Rattansha's Soul on Chinvat.

its existence, in the absence of our own State, Constitution, Army, Navy, Air-Force or anything that we can call our own except Faith and Religion it would be suicidal to resort to conversion as a means of increasing the number. Perhaps in the final count the repercussion by the co-religionists of the juddin converted may prove uncounterably harsh and may help quickly decrease or total wipe out fo our unprotected microscopic community. Some decades ago Harijans wanted to leave Hinduism and proposed to take up Zoroastrianism enmass. Our then wise leaders late Sir Cowasji Jehangir, J. R. B. Jeejeebhoy and others discouraged the move from its very roots. Parsis are alive to this danger and survive through Faith. It is predicted that by about 2002 A.D. Zoroastrianism will revive in Iran and many from amongst the Parsis of India will honourably re-settle in Iran under special invitation from their Iranian blood brothers. Our youths, our children who will wit-

ness this great historical event should be kept informed and in readiness for the revival of our Faith.

In 1944 A.D. did anyone know about the sudden disappearance of the powerful British Empire? If one believes in psychic predictions or the experience of the mystics, I recommend reading Paul Brunton's "Search of Secret Egypt", his experience in Pyramid after midnight and at the Tomb relics of Tootan-Khamen. There the reader will have to judge by himself the indications about the revival of the first religion of the world, the library of which is intact as shown by the Magi-keeper of the Pyramids to Brunton, reference being to no other religion but Zoroastrian. The prophesy is there is Jamaspi. This is now corroborated by several world renowned astronomers and astrologers. In "A Gift of Prophesy — The phenomenal Jeane Dixon" by U.S. author Ruth Montgomery

has lately predicted the birth of a prophet-somewhere in the middle-east in 1962, who will revive the most forgotten the first religion of the world.

Some heretics and some misguided reformists who themselves or their near and dear ones have married juddines are propounding the idea of conversion. This idea, as indicated earlier, will convert parsis a pure noble. Aryan race-into a nation of bastards and half-castes, lacking in the original traits and characteristics for which we, Parsis are so proud today. Our best scholars and bio-genetists have shunned this idea as suicidal. I will quote a few of those valuable opinions. In Jame Jamshed of 26th August 1944, Mr. S. F. Desai has stated that the Roman, Greek, Assyrian, Egyptian and Indian civilizations were wiped out because of inter-communal marriages. The powerful Irequois Confederacy of American Red-Indians which was quite a political power till 1600 A. D.

is today almost extinct due to their intermarrying with white or black Americans. Similarly Incas of Peru, Maories of New Zealand are further instances of conversion of minority to majority.

In Jame Jamshed of 26-11-1947 Prof. J. J. Asana suggested eugenical survey of our community and follow up of the data so collected for each family to bring about communal solidarity. In the same issue of Jame Late Prof. Maneck Pithawala stated that Proselytism would have washed away this splendid community within a century in India. In Jame of 23-5-45 Prof. Asana lays stress on our noble Aryan blood and advocates its preservation at all costs. He states that the germ-plasm (TOKHAM) can be permanently preserved even if the community marries within itself (ENDOGAMY). The same arguments were repeated in their joint article by Messrs. Asana and Desai in Jame of 5.11.47. Jame's editorial of 26.5.1945 had supported the views of Asana-Desai and Pithawala. Majority of our community even today holds the same view, confirmed at intervals through unanimous resolutions by Parsi Ajuman meetings.

So far no one has given concrete step and measures through which the decrease of number can be prevented. A list of most glaring causes for the decrease has been given above. Taking these causes one by one, it is the aim of this short article to suggest some prevention and remedial measures.

Economic Downfall: — Uneducated ill-bred poor masses of India suddenly grew into power through adult franchise after independence. It was difficult for them to tolerate the higher living standard of one percent prosperous Indians. Through socialistic Pattern of society and similar slogans they wanted to bring down the higher standard of living achieved by few Indians, in level or at par with the 90 percent poor. All those who had acquired higher living standards through service, education, honest business enterprise and otherwise during British

Rule were labelled Anti-Indian. Parsi community by and large was the target of such jaealous propagandists. Business policies, Prohibition policy, export import policy, nationalisation policy, contract policy, etc. were so formed that honest independent well-organised business houses of the Parsis had to close down.

Under the circumstances detailed above, the small community of Parsis, the remnant of a glorious race is falling economically, no doubt about it. What are the remedial measures? Parsi no more will be given favoured treatment or even the fair rightful treatment because of the growing communalism, communism, socialism, provincialism and casteism in India. My suggestion to my community is to unite and resort to internal economy. If you have to buy something for your household, first ascertain if it is available with a Parsi shopkeeper and buy it from him even if it means paying a few Paise more than the market price. If you have to sell something in case you are a manufacturer always employ Parsi Salesman, Parsi Office staff and Parsi Selling Agent. In case a Parsi youth is desirous to enter small trade or farming and if you find him trustworthy honest and enterprising, assist him to get funds, encourage him to put through the trade and guide him in the line.

In a small community like ours, the question of unemployment should not pose any problem provided all Parsi Business houses unite and make it a point to give first preference to Parsis. In fact this is the right which a Parsi Businessman should exercise more rigidly without feeling shy about the label of communalism. Today under the prevailing competitive and corrupt Indian conditions, to be communal-minded to help the deserving people of our own community is absolutely necessary for the survival of our small community. Out of one lac Parsis if we take out fifty thousand females and twenty-five thousand old and middle-aged males, fifteen thousand non-earners children and students, we will be left with only ten thousand youths

(male) who are the bread-earners, the real backbone of our community. To employ these ten thousand youths in good supervisory posts in Parsi Business Houses is not a difficult job. Unfortunately the Parsi Business Houses have not framed any such scheme unitedly to draw from a central Parsi youth employment exchange or recruitment organisation. I consider it the duty of the Panchayet to keep a register of Parsi youths on the lines of employment exchange and approach Parsi Directors of Business Houses to give preference employment opportunities to Parsi youths. A well employed Parsi youth can rear a Zoroastrian family and reduce the burden on charities. A well-employed Parsi girl is in service temporarily and can not maintain a family. Moreover if she is beautiful and well paid she is likely to go astray or fall in wrong hands or marry a juddin.

If Parsi Panchayet trustees are not found active enough to move Parsi Business Houses to give good posts to our youths, the Parsi youths themselves should come forward, form themselves into an United Active Front, make friends with young Parsi Directors and Executives of Business Houses and make them to accept Parsis in good posts for better efficiency of their organisation. To go a step further the Parsi youths should act on the lines of management consultancy firms and capture personnel and recruitment departments, from where they can assist young, deserving Parsis to get good supervisory posts. Influencing Parsi Directors and executives is no doubt a tough job. Many of these are too snobish and too anti-Parsi. Some of these lack courage of conviction and are afraid that they will be labelled communalists by the shareholders and other colleagues. It is my experience that many times Parsi executives do more harm than good to the Parsi employees working under them while they are always ready to boost up even boobies belonging to majority community and related to the ruling class. In contrast there are many wise young Hindu executives who go in for only Parsi youths to fill

in responsible posts in their firms, to get higher efficiency and clean administration.

In the rapidly industrialising country of ours there is no dearth of employment and business opportunities and with some slight initial encouragement an energetic Parsi youth is bound to succeed.

Flow of money is bound to be slow as ours is the poorest country and is gripped by economic ills like inflation, recession smuggling, changing government policies and heavy tax burden. But that affect all communities.

To bring up our economy and to save our community from falling into the economic graveyard, I therefore suggest first and foremost (A) Internal economy and (B) encouragement to our deserving youths to capture small trades where self-labour is most essential like sweetmeat maker and seller (Mithaiwalla) Mistry (Masonry-carpentry-building contractor) weaving, fishing, scrape industry (Bottlewalla-Acidwalla) Printers, Wood industry (Unwalla) motor mechanics, Banking, Dairy firm and vegetable products sellers — provision books, etc. From the surnames of Parsis one can have an idea as regards various trades like Choksi, Shroff, Banker, Jagirdar, Pastakia, Masalawalla, Bhajiwala, Hakim, Wadiwala, Kapadia, Banatwala, Kerawala and what not from which our forefathers made their honest living. (C) Parsi

Never try to hide the bitter truth with a sweet lie. Be straightforward even if a sword is to pass through your heart. Cling to the naked truth. Swami Sivananda

* * *

Learn to avoid doing anything that might lead another to sin. Even better practice helping others to do good.

* * *

Take care not to surround yourself with so many possession lest they gradually possess you.

standard of living be lowered. (D) Expenditure on Marriage feasts should be minimised. (E) Family ties should be brought closer. Total family system and contented simple family life should be reverted to. Life of toil from morning till night should be given preference to the clerical easy going low paid life. Risky jobs like Pilots, Air-force, etc., should be avoided because we can not afford losing our young men, one Parsi youth is equivalent to 5,000 Indian youths. (F) Economic ills gripping the communities today are required to be systematically studied by experts and their suggestions should immediately be implemented under a five year phased programme by an united front of our Akabars and/or enthusiastic youths.

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS DOWNFALL : —

Materially we seem to have advanced during British Rule but spiritually we have suffered an immense loss. Study of Avesta Pahlvi was rejuvenated and our scriptures were philologically studied and translated but misinterpreted in the absence of the knowledge about esoteric hidden meaning of Avestan Manthras. Christian missionaries basing their arguments on philological translations of the scriptures attacked our religion and were successful in converting some of our intelligent youths in the late nineteenth century. However the esoteric explanations of our scripture came to us in the first two decades of twentieth century and religion was understood much better through the school of Ilme Khshnoom. However the rot had set in and had spread far deeper far deeper into the priest-class than the laity. Some Dastoors picked up the arguments of Christian missionaries and started ministerpretation of our scriptures, ceremonies and religious observations. These Dastoors shattered the faith of nearly one-fourth of our community and simultaneously throughout down the priest class from its exalted position of spiritual guide and philosopher to a lowly hireling of laity to chant Avesta on his behalf for his dead. As a result the intelligent sons of priests

refused to take up priesthood as a life mission and a noble profession. Only those sons of priests who could do nothing were made to take up priest craft as a last resort. The intelligently devoted, awe-inspiring priests of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who used to teach spirituality, who used to perform and preserve complete Zoroastrian ceremonials and rituals, who used to establish Zoroastrian religious houses, Agiaries, Atashbehrams, Dokhmas, etc., who used to perform minor miracles through Avestan prayers, who in their spare time used to copy religious manuscripts, study Religious literature and write religious books, suddenly vanished from our community and the void created was filled in by uneducated commercialised low grade mobeds who could do very little from spiritual angle for the community and actually stopped to very low level of cheating their ancestors, their Prophet and the community as a whole. Most of them preferred such simple performances like Afringan where money can be made easily to the higher

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liturgical ceremonies. In their spare time they unlike their forefathers tried to make easy money through gambling. Study of religion was absolutely out of question, leave aside writing of books. They thus damaged their own position in the eyes of laity. Actually the class of irreligious Parsis took advantage of this fall of priestclass and began to advocate openly the selling off of our Agiaries and Dokhmas — Yellow Parsi Press also started publishing anti-religious anti-communal materials to encourage these heretics. This had a very bad effect on the moral of the community.

Some schemes formulated by wealthy Parsis for emancipation of priest-class could therefore bear hardly any good results. Priests who can perform perfect higher liturgical ceremonies have grown so few today that hardly two dozen pairs (Joti and Rathvi) exist today at Navsari, Surat, Udvada and Bombay. We have a trust for emancipation of Udvada priests. We want to raise a pair of Navarias who can be for lifetime, perfect yozdathregars. Even handsome monthly remuneration from the Trust without obligation just on an undertaking to take up priesthood, has not lured two priestly boys from Udvada to accept the offer. If priestcraft has fallen so low the community will have to think over the gravest of the grave problem as to who will look after our Atshbehrams, Agiaries, Dokhmas, Pavmehels and performance of higher ceremonials. Retired Priestclass Parsis can fill the gap as a service to the religion. Under the circumstances can we allow Behdins to perform minor ceremonials like Afringan Stom, etc., after omitting certain words like . . . Khish Ijashna Kard Hom Darun Yast Hom?

Do we want our priestclass to survive? If yes, we should take immediate steps to produce and support at least two pairs of young priests every year who are proficient enough to perform higher liturgical ceremonies through strict observance of Bareshnoom, for each of the cities like Navsari, Surat, Broach, Poona and ten such pairs

for Bombay. Please remember that the existence of the community will be in peril in the absence of the strong, learned, devoted and high esteemed Priest class. A separate Panchayet of Dastoor, Athornans and priests can be formed as an enclave in Parsi Panchayet.

Social Downfall :— With the fall in economy and with the shattering of faith the community has lowered considerably in moral and social values. The world is heading towards materialism and science and the community can not remain an exception. Had there been devoted selfless and educated class of Mobeds the community would not have fallen so low in moral values as it is today. A close scrutiny of Press publications, cinema house, clubs, and dance Houses suggest a craze amongst the old and the young to go after sex, nudity and vulgarity, aided and encouraged by scientific methods to shield the evil from public exposition. With money growing scarce and living standard rising day by day the women of our community have got out of their homes and have taken to various types of jobs to earn a small sum of money at the cost of self-respect, moral, family atmosphere, protected home life and religious practices.

If you want to be better Zoroastrians if you want your children to be good Zoroastrians please make it a point to be near them, to keep them away from the company of low class Juddin servants, Juddin school or College friends and generally from bad company. It is absolutely necessary to keep a close watch over our children as the world is full of wolves who seek to prey upon innocent unprotected children and spoil them. It is also necessary under the present deteriorating moral standards of the youths, to be strict, firm and at time harsh on our children, in their own good. Many a parents have repented for their too-much leniency and do as they like policy towards their children either out of love or sentiment. As soon as a boy or girl comes of age the sex-impulse is bound to trouble them. At this very stage the Zoroastrian parents have to

preach tactfully how to control the sex impulse, how to behave when "attacked" by sexy friends, companions and why Zoroastrian code of conduct denies sex-contacts at improper age and with people of alien faith.

Unfortunately the present day Parsi parents are themselves so ignorant, indifferent and careless about sex matters that they just refuse to recognize the right of their children to get parental advice. Even in press columns where advice columns are open to sex questions the adviser columnist is not found capable to guide the youth on the right track. I know of an instance where the columnist had argued that Parsi girls marry outside the community because four figure earning Parsi youths of marriageable age were not available. If such columnists are there to guide the destiny of our children surely the community would go to dogs. No doubt cost of living is high today. Moreover as argued earlier Parsi youths do not get good jobs, business is slack, money is getting harder. Under the circumstances we have to live and preserve the community. If at all our girls have any feeling for their community they should never desert the community at this critical stage by marrying a Juddin and creating religious problems through this act of religious faithlessness and treachery. Instead in these days of communal hardship they should grow wiser, should marry a lower income group Zoroastrian youth, should help him to build a Zoroastrian family and stay contented with his three figure salary instead of going after selfish materialism, sexy desires and four figure earning Juddins. In our scriptures the girls marrying Juddins are placed in level with adulteress, Prostitutes.

The girls who have no faith in our Religion, in our scriptures, in preservation of purity of blood can marry Juddins to sit on his riches. Once she does that she has to drop out from the community.

She can not keep one leg with Juddin and another with Parsis. Once she has manifested her disapproval to Parsi marriage, she should permanently stay with her Juddin husband.

Her desire to stay faithful to two religious — a case of divided fidelity is likely to create endless problems for our small Parsi community and for herself and her relatives on both sides. Prophet Zoroaster demands total complete unflinching FAITH from his followers throughout life. At Birth, Marriage and death (१४५ — ५२५ — ५२५) a faithful follower of Prophet Zoroaster undergoes only Zoroastrian rituals of Navjots, Aashirwad, Gehsarna and Sachkar.

How can game of changing of fidelity be allowed by a great Religion which teaches us to be faithful, principled, disciplined, truthful, virtuous and honest? As it has happened, such acts of changing fidelities have ruined many well established political parties. The same fate would befall over small community if the youths marrying non-Parsis will be allowed to stay Parsis. That is why Parsi Panchayet in 1919 A.D. and 1929-30 A.D. had in clear words labelled such girls marrying Juddins as Juddins, with no claim on anything that is Parsi. The community revived these old resolutions at the mammoth meeting of Parsis at C. J. Hall on 1.4.1970.

As I said earlier the economic downfall of the community as a whole, through no fault of the youth of the community plays a major part in our girls marrying to acquire material gains in this short life. This reason is linked with general poverty to which the lower middle class has fallen. Many Parsi girls have taken to dancing, acting, cabaret or nude dancing and ultimately prostitution just with the sole aim to earn more and maintain the family. Most of such girls in the initial stages at the time of entry into these trades and even their parents have claimed innocence and have been trying to prove that they

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were straight and honest. God forbid. The experience after a year or two, particularly in case of actresses and dancers, is that they ultimately wind up by marrying sex-loving rich juddins. Four figures no doubt play greater role in their life. Fidelity to Prophet : who cares? Spiritual upliftment goes to hell. Parsi Press is found to encourage such vulgar girls in their off-the-centre irreligious adventures; nay, they feel proud of such low strata beauties of the community. If the Parsi parents are faithful, Prophet loving, God fearing Zoroastrians I would advice them in right earnest to get their daughters married to Parsi youths at an early age immediately after she gets, necessary school education upto S.S.C. and some training in cooking, sewing house-keeping and such useful trades. Many of the College and modern offices, hotels and clubs, cinema and dance houses are breeding grounds for future prostitutes. In the absence of faith, devotion, religious training and parental control a girl or a boy, however respectable and innocent is likely to fall a prey in the snare of sex and evil which some of the accomplished pimps carry in their currency pockets.

I suggest that Parsi Social Workers can do highly praiseworthy and religious job if they can undertake solely the match making job for Parsi youths. Social workers of various colonies should unite to form a central matrimonial committee or Bureau and try to arrange matching of partners. Parsi youths' clubs, and social gatherings may go a long way to encourage marriages of Parsi youths. It is commonly noticed that some selfish social workers try to gain best boys for their own daughters and once their daughters are married they suddenly retire from social work. In case they fail to entangle their daughters with the boys they desire, they spread false rumours about the boys who did not select their daughter. Parsis should beware of such selfish social vultures and expose them. Under the garb of social work some prostitutes also carry on lucrative business in blood. Some social workers just hold the label to increase their influence which they use to their advantage to attend

parties, to get gifts and so on. Some collect funds through vulgar Tamashas in the name of religious and educational institutions but the funds are never accounted and utilised on lavish after-show parties, picnics and gatherings of the social workers. A check on such practices can be enforced only by the donors if they care to see how their donations are utilised and whether they are in reliable hands.

Finally, I appeal to the rich, the sethias, the businessmen, the Dastooris, the Akabars and the youths who are faithful to the Great Prophet Zoroaster, to read this long article with deep concentration and prepare under all the odds and adversities to emancipate our Priestclass, our young boys and girls and save the community from peril without surrendering to the reformist dogmas of conversion, cremation, Juddin marriage or Juddin Novjote.

May DAST-E-GAIB of our Holy Prophet, Holy Ameshaspentas, Yazatas, Frohars Saheebdelans and Soshyants assist us to revive our race and Religion — Atha Zamiad Yatha Afrinami.

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