

"PARSIS AND RACIAL SUICIDE"

by Prof. Firoze C. Davar

IF THIS DOES NOT CONVINCING THE COMMUNITY, NOTHING
WILL, AND SUICIDE IS ROUND THE CORNER.

[Note: There is no doubt that the Parsi Community is heading towards a racial suicide. The death wish has gripped it. Its alleged leaders and high priests have lost their power of rational thinking. The former are intentionally continuing to be ignorant of the spiritual foundations of the Parsi civilisation and culture. Many of them have started avoiding even to use the word Parsi. The priests have no strength left to resist the onslaught.

Firoze C. Davar, M.A., LL.B., was a very famous Professor of English Literature in an Ahmedabad College. He was a keen observer of the behaviour of the Parsis. Somewhere in forties he had published a 15 page booklet under the title "Parsis and Racial Suicide." He has shown convincingly that mixed marriages are a direct and certain step towards racial suicide. His prophecy is now fast coming to reality.

The booklet is reprinted below:]

Parsis hold the proud record of being pioneers in various fields of activity: it is very much to be wished they may not prove pioneers in racial suicide through mixed marriages. Alexander destroyed our empire and many of our scriptures in B. C. 330. The Arabs almost obliterated us as a Zarathushtrian race in 651 A.D. Will it be left to history to record the dismal tale of the Parsis gradually and voluntarily extinguishing themselves from the 20th century onwards? Who can save the Parsis if they are resolved not to save themselves? Who can rescue an intelligent man, who in broad daylight and with wide open eyes is determined to hurl himself headlong into a well? We are heading for disaster at a terrific speed, which makes us uncomfortably realize that our communal existence can only be a matter of a few generations.

We Parsis, who settled in West India, were not the only refugees from Iran. About the beginning of the Christian era, a group of Iranians came and settled in Multan, and were known as the Mag Brahmins. They were all absorbed in the larger Hindu race, and no trace is left of them, except a few lines in history. Another Iranian group came and settled also in North India: Tamerlane wiped them off, lock, stock and barrel. In all likelihood, other smaller Iranian groups were similarly absorbed in the larger Indian communities, so completely as to escape even the notice of history. Only that Iranian group, which came and settled at Sanjan in Gujarat, has had the good fortune to survive, and we are their descendants. **Are we prepared to survive and continue the precious heritage of our illustrious forbears, or submerge ourselves, our religion and all that we hold most dear into the Indian Ocean? Are we determined to survive, and by our merits prove ourselves worthy of the survival, rather than choose the ignoble alternative of racial extinction through mixed marriages? It is for the Parsi upholders of such marriages to reply.**

Our ancestors, on landing in India, were said to have promised the ruler of Sanjan that they would live like sugar in milk, that is, maintain cordial relations with all. Unfortunately this delightful tale is unauthentic. But whatever that may be, the Parsi advocates of mixed marriages seem to have misinterpreted the story to mean the absorption of the Parsis in the other communities as sugar in milk! But the story is self-explanatory and needs no comment. Amicability with all is commendable: extinction in all, especially when it is uncalled for and uninspired by a lofty ideal, is condemnable for its folly.

According to the Zarathushtrian laws and customs as they prevail at present, we do not proselytize others to our faith: at the same time we are going in for mixed marriages at breakneck speed. How long is our community to survive if the candle is thus being burnt at both ends?

Many years ago, we are told, a Parsi touring in Europe, accosted a Western savant, who was surprised that his interlocutor was a Zarathushtrian. "What!" said the savant, "Are you the follower of the Prophet of ancient Iran?" "Exactly" replied the Parsi. "You, you, the progeny of Darius and Noshirwan?" asked the

astonished savant. "Quite so." replied the Parsi. "But," inquired the savant, "Were you not all finished by the Arabs?" "No," said the Parsi, "It is not so bad as that; a few of us are very much alive and thriving in West India, and still smaller number can be found in Iran". The savant was overjoyed at those unexpected revelation of the survival of Zarathushtrianism, and gave the Parsi a warm embrace. Evidently the European loved the Parsis far more than some of the Parsis do themselves. If the good savant had been alive today, he would certainly have been shocked at the idea of race-suicide by the Parsis.

At this stage we should like to rebut two charges that have been leveled against the Parsis:- (1) We are supposed to be too exclusive and wish to remain isolated. In fact just the opposite is the truth. We are an amiable and adaptable race. Our amiability is due to our nature. Our adaptability is due probably to the thought that the welfare of a microscopically small race like ours depends on our earning the goodwill of the larger communities. With the exception of a few occasions, in which non-Parsis are debarred from our ceremonies, we are perfectly adaptable, even to a fault: **nay, a race more adaptable than the Parsis would be hard to find.**

(2) We are also accused of holding the belief that our religion and our community are superior to all others. In reply we may state that in every community there is a hopelessly insignificant percentage of bigots, believing in their racial and religious superiority, and Parsis can be no exception to the rule. But the numbers of these Parsi megalomaniacs are diminishing rapidly, and blind faith gives way to enlightened reason. We only know that our religion is but one of the many faiths that lead to God, and our community is as good or as bad as any other. We are against mixed marriages not on the ground of our assumed superiority, **but because we emphatically maintain that our religion and culture deserve to survive and not be frivolously frittered** away. We only wish that our communal solidarity may not be shaken to the roots, and that as a unified and compact community, we may be left alone to serve God and man according to our own lights and to the best of our capacities.

Our ancestors, when they first settled in India, wisely banned mixed marriages in order to preserve our racial traits and heritage, which were too precious to be lightly tampered with by indiscriminate unions with non-Parsis. The writer remembers that about half a century ago a Parsi Anjuman meeting was held in Bombay to voice its vehement protest, at the marriage of a Parsi woman with a non-Parsi and the woman's action was denounced in unmeasured terms. Today the community finds itself helpless. The parents, even against their own wishes, have to climb down, or have the humiliation to see their protest flouted in their faces by their daughter in sheer derision. Threats of suicide and fasting unto death to force the parental consent are happily not in fashion among us, but the situation, as it is, is sufficiently provoking. And how does society take it? We have now arrived at a stage when mixed marriages are flagrantly and openly boosted and proclaimed from the house-tops in prominent journals, with illustrations of the smiling partners of such marriages, and the culmination of the tragedy is reached on finding that the writer is - a Parsi! **We are already in the danger zone; the menace to our community is overwhelming; and hence the urgency of this article.**

Mixed Marriages

The causes of mixed marriages are thoroughly well known, they may only be referred to and discussed. After having received education (very probably co-education in cosmopolitan schools and colleges) upto the post-graduate level, our girls seek employment, in offices, where they come into contact with non-Parsis. We live in an age of individualism, in which the girls, who have already arrived at the age of discretion (rather of indiscretion), are ill-inclined to be restrained by parental advice, but more disposed to take a rash and irretrievable step. The remedy lies not in keeping our girls ignorant, nor in compelling them to remain in veiled seclusion, **but in mild persuasion and advice.** Repression and vindictive measures will prove futile, and only add to the bitterness of the family.

Our boys were the first to set the bad example. Due notice was not taken of it by our community, in the belief that children born of a Parsi father and non-Parsi mother would after all be Parsis and admissible in the Parsi fold. Then Parsi girls followed the evil example, for evil is more readily followed than good. Then like Rip Van Winkle, we arose to find ourselves in a disquieting world, where we were scoffed at as hopeless old fogeys. But in fact it is not the Parsi father but his daughter, wedded to a non-Parsi husband, that stands to

lose considerably by the step she has taken. She will probably dissociate herself from Parsi places of worship and sometimes even from Parsi society. If she becomes a widow with slender resources and a large family, her position will be truly unenviable. If she reluctantly returns to her parents, they will naturally be averse to bring up her children, the offspring of a non-Parsi father in their house. The children usually return to their paternal grandparents, whose surname they bear, and whose religion they follow. They will have the misfortune of being deprived of their mother's company except at fitful intervals. The danger is still greater when the Parsi woman marries a non-Parsi, following a proselytizing religion: in that, case the woman is almost sure to be proselytized herself. Hence, it is advisable for a Parsi girl to look before she leaps.

It may, however, be conceded that a mixed marriage is not a crime, for, had it been so, the law would have seen to it long ago. It is wrong to maintain that mixed marriages are bound to be unhappy. Such sweeping generalizations are untenable, for they are capable of exceptions. **We maintain that mixed marriages are condemnable for Parsis, calamitous to the very existence of our community, and detrimental to the interests of the Parsi girl, who thoughtlessly embarks on the perilous voyage.**

Champions of mixed marriages hold that such unions, promoted by "pure love", are justifiable. Pure love is a sentiment to be respected and not ridiculed; but all the same, it must be governed by reason, which is often thrown overboard at this precise critical juncture. Love and reason are opposite forces, but their co-operation will yield the best results. "Pure love" is the favourite expression of youth; but it must not be merely calf love, nor should it be indulged in to the utter disregard of reason. Reason also has its limitations: it cannot penetrate into the secret of God's existence, or into the mysteries of poetry, or the raptures of music; but for most of our worldly activities reason is the safest guide.

(To be continued...)

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DO YOU PARSIS WISH TO MANTAIN YOUR EXISTENCE OR ERASE YOURSELVES?

- by Prof. Firoze Davar

[In the last Issue of Parsi Pukar (Vol 10 - No.3), we published a few pages from a booklet "Parsis and Racial Suicide" written by the late Professor Firoze Davar. The following are a few further extracts.

A small community like Parsis championing conversion and mixed marriages is on its way to racial suicide. That is a purely common sense proposition. It is amazing that some Parsis have their intellectual level so low as not to understand it.

Prof. Davar has in the previous extract given cogent reasons for propounding that mixed marriage is a menace to our community. In what follows he raises further points leading to the questions: Have you Parsis lost a desire to maintain your communal existence? **Do you at all wish to survive as a community and be not a thorn in the flesh of other communities?**

Surely the Community is facing a grave and terrifying danger from within and without - in the present days, more from without than within when we advocate conversion as an excuse for mixed marriages. God forbid, we may enter en-masse on the hit-list of somebodies.]

Unity in Diversity

The goal of all cultures in general and of India in particular is "Unity in diversity". Diversity of religions, communities, countries, languages, colours have all to be taken for granted and respected as such, and synthesized into a world-unity, for we cannot have one country in the world, as we cannot hope to have one community in the world, as dreamt of by the protagonists of mixed marriages. We aim at a world-unity in which no community or religion is absorbed in the whole, but a unity in which the right of every community or religion to exist is recognized, and to which each contributes its mite.

Countries are often formed by the interposition of mountains and rivers. The Himalayas divide India and China as the Pyrenees separate France from Spain, and the English Channel, England from France. Are we to launch on the quixotic adventure of wiping out these "obstacles" with a view to having one country in the world? Is not world-unity possible in spite of mountains and rivers, especially when the miracles of modern science have practically brought the whole world together? Thus diversity is natural to and indispensable in life. Life is like chessboard with 64 white and black squares. If the squares are all of one uniform colour, white or black, the game cannot be played. Similarly we need diversity to play the game of life, and to see the oneness of the Divine Soul in the multiplicity of creation. Unity is oneness, concord, agreement, harmony. **Unity is impossible through mixed marriages**, which only beget uniformity, which is a stereotyped, monotonous sameness. Unity is a moral virtue and vibrates with life; uniformity is a mechanical process which leads nowhere.

The larger communities lose little or nothing by mixed marriages: **it is the smaller one that is swamped or overwhelmed, so as to lose its communal identity.** Nay, the bigger communities even gain in volume by such marriages, as the ocean gains in bulk by the absorption of the stream, while it is the stream that is lost beyond recognition in the process. The bigger communities can afford to sleep over this matter, which is of vital importance to the Parsis, who must "awake, arise or be for ever fallen."

How can mixed marriages attain the goal of world-brotherhood, and if attained, how many millennia will be needed to establish a creed less colourless race, which will never be guilty of communal or religious trouble, for the evident reason that no community or religion will be left to fight over! And at what cost are we to have this world-unity? At the cost of our beloved religion and community, to preserve which our ancestors trusted the winds and the waves, and faced danger and death? Why pursue the noblest of ideals, the goal of all religions, through the absurd process of mixed marriages? Are all moral and spiritual means of establishing world-unity exhausted that we resort to mixed marriages, which, when practised on an extensive scale, will spell the extinction of our little community, while the goal is receding in the distant horizon?

Religious unity is not to be achieved by the prevalence of any one particular religion, for that would deluge the country with blood. This experiment has often been tried before, and we have grown wiser by the results. What is wanted is a growth of spirituality, which instinctively realizes the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. This sounds platitudinous, but this sublime platitude has never been practised on a universal scale. To realize the Lord in all creation, and all creations in the Lord, is a precept meant for highly evolved souls.

If we are determined to have one religion in the world as leading to world-unity, it may preferably be the Religion of Humanity. It contains the quintessence of every revealed religion, without the necessity of prophets and scriptures, rites and ceremonies. It is enough that we are essentially and truly religious. We are free to follow our own revealed religion enthusiastically, but we should see that it completely embodies all the principles of the Religion of Humanity.

The last method is popularly known in our country as "emotional integration." It has a secular outlook but a religious attitude to life. It is based on the thought that we are all incomplete, but that we can be integrated into a whole by displaying the emotions of love, mercy, non-violence, toleration etc. to one another.

We Parsis should know what can be beneficial or detrimental to the interests of our community. This article is meant particularly for Parsis, and we hold that they should not dream of marrying outside their community. Those who love and esteem their community and wish for its continuity will never think of doing otherwise. **Parsis should try to maintain a high standard of health, intelligence and morality**, so that even if they go in for cousin marriages they can only transmit health, intelligence and virtue to future generations. When we claim to survive as a race, **we must justify our right to do so by character and merit.**

What is wanted is an ardent desire to maintain our communal existence. We must set our house in order before it is too late. Above all, mixed marriages should be scrupulously avoided. Tuberculosis is curable at the initial stage, but not when it has reached the galloping crisis. That is a time when prayers only can be offered for the patient, who is now beyond any medical relief. We appeal to all Parsis to settle the question of mixed marriages before it settles us by ringing the death knell of our small but time-honoured community. We have high respect for communities and wish them well, and pray that this article may not be misinterpreted as written by a rank communalist. **We wish to survive as a community not to be a thorn in the flesh of other communities**, nor be a nuisance to government by demanding various rights without thinking of discharging their corresponding duties. **We wish to stand up as a consolidated community**, not to serve ourselves but to **serve our** country and the world. We are more anxious to achieve world-unity than are some misguided Parsis, who wish to reach the goal through mixed marriages. But through marriage among our co-religionists we aim not to create a motley miscellaneous crowd, but a true brotherhood of communities, not a heterogeneous hotchpotch, but a genuine harmony with the world.

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