

PHIROZE MASANI! WHAT A LIFE ?

by K. N. Dastoor,

Phiroze was born on 5th September 1887 - Fasli Roj Farvardin, Mah Sherevar. His last day on this temporal earth was 18th February, 1943 - Fasli Roj Spendarmard, Mah Spendarmard. Each day of this relatively short life of 56 years was sprinkled with the blessings of Saheb-Delaan's. His personal Karma in life was entangled with many ups and downs, but all along the Ashavan Sahebs kept their loving and protecting eyes on him. Not much information is available about his personal life and we do not need it. What we are required to know about this exceptional person is his tireless exertions to kindle the Fire of Faith in the Parsi hearts, and his successes and achievements in that direction.

From his childhood Phiroze Masani was being prepared for that strenuous task. His educational career was brilliant. He was a masterly scholar in the present days studies of the Parsi Religion, which was based on the psuedo sciences of Philology, Linguistics and Grammar. English literature was his favourite subject. In University examinations, he used to bag Prizes and Medals and all academic honours.

More Important was that he was a Mobed having duly undergone Navar and Maratab Kriyas. Mobedic Paghdi adorned his head all throughout his life.

At his age of about 22 years, he was made ready by higher Forces to meet Ustad Saheb Baheramshah Shroff. He was by then an angry young man - angry at the invasion of the Western thinking on the Faith of the Parsis. His inborn instincts were revolting to the onslaught. The Western studies were throwing arguments and materials against all the traditional and spiritual Institutions of the Zarthoshti Din. "Orthodox versus Reformists was the order of the day. It was quite a hard task to combat the guess-work theories oozing from the West. Something quite radical and effective was necessary. And here it was - IIm-e-Khshnoom.

The Advent of Baheramshah Shroff

Munchersah Kekobad and Kaikhushru Choksey were the two gentlemen who were destined to bring Baheramshahji from Surat to Mumbai. Phiroze also joined them. Baheramshahji was made to present before the Avesta Pahalvi scholars his extraordinary knowledge on the various aspects of the Din. The scholars were stunned at his amazing expositions and more towards the way of his presentation. The use of Avesta, Pahalvi, Farsi, Pazend and seemingly Arabic words and phrases emanating from a man, whose normal education had not gone beyond the than Gujerati fourth standard, and that too in a smooth flow without any written notes before him, was an astounding phenomenon. Khurshedji Kama, Khodabux Poonegar, Sohrab Bulsara, Rustom Dastoor Maherjirana (Bapaji) wrote so and said so. Khodabux poonegar an erudite scholar, a translator of the Gatha, is on record to say that **several Avesta Pahalvi scholars were attracted towards Baheramshah Shroff's expositions like a magnet and several looked to him with great respect.** Phiroze belonged to the first of these two categories. All this happened in 1908-09. The fountain of Khshnoom started flowing. Phiroze turned the flow into a gush.

Earlier, on 2nd January 1907, a few kind hearted and compassionate Parsis had formed a **Parsi Vegetarian and Temperance Society**. They had intense mercy towards the animals who were slaughtered for human food. Their hearts were bleeding with pity. Their sincerity vibrated with their passion. When the Society was introduced to Baheramshahji in about 1908, he was greatly moved at the burning sincerity of its members. "Are you trying to do the kind of work Abeds are doing?" That was his first spontaneous reaction. What he meant, amongst other deeper things, was that the cruel slaughter of the cows was the demand and command of the present Satanic times. Not only those meek animals but also the cow IN man i.e., his selflessness, his virtue of "giving away", his Gospandi nature was also being mercilessly slaughtered, and you will not be able to do anything except chirping like a tiny bird in a burning jungle, where the trees are cracking with deafening noise.

Two decades thereafter, on 2nd January, 1932 at the silver jubilee function of the Society, Dr. Saheb Framroze Chiniwalla referred to Ustad Saheb's above words and compared the situation with the famous Farsi mystic poet **Khwaja Shamsuddin Hafez of Shiraz's** agony towards the miseries of the humans. He has expressed his intense compassion in the first 5 couplets of his Diwan-e-Hafez. Dr. Saheb's presidential address at the function is set out in Frashogard Vol. 21 No.1 to 4 - July 1931 to June 1932. He presented the inherent explanation of Hafez's couplets, based on Ustaad Saheb's interpretation which no other translator has dreamt of. Hafez said he was dying with the extreme distress his heart was undergoing, when the miseries and sufferings of the humans were passing before his eyes.

FRASHOGARD

Baheramshahji then allowed the Society to propagate the Khshnoomic Doctrines and Truths from its stage. The Khshnoom movement now gathered momentum. Phiroze was now fully engrossed in his mission. The time was ripe for an organ of Khshnoom, a periodical which would accelerate the flow of Khshnoom. Parsi Vegetarian and Temperance Society was toying with the idea of such a magazine. Even before the advent of Baheramshahji, Phiroze had in his mind the name "Frashogard" for it. When Baheramshahji was told about the proposed magazine and its name, he approved both. He was very pleased at the name Frashogard. He explained (within the framework of his permission) what Frashogard means. From the 5th Vol, of the magazine (1915), it carried a specially made picture on its first cover page. The same issue contained a special article directly written by Ustad Saheb himself under the heading "Frashogard ni Taavil", in which he explained the technical (Ilmiati) aspects of the phenomena of Frashogard in nature and its stages. (Please see page 13)

* * * * *

PHIROZE, THE BLESSED

The fact that Phiroze and his mission was blessed by the Saheb-Delaans was confirmed by a dream Munchers Shah Master had. He saw a Mehfil of Zarthoshti Aabeds sitting with great grace and dignity, and a short statured Mobed was seen running from one place to another. Munchers Shah instantly felt that the Mobed was Phiroze. The late Jehangir Chiniwalla had told this in his class lecture at Mithaiwalla Dar-e-Meher, when this writer was present.

* * * * *

PHIROZE, THE ANGRY YOUNG MOBED.

My uncle Bapaji who was a disciple of Baheramshahji and a University Professor, and my father Ervad Navroz bin Dinshah who was a Pav Mahel Mobed of rare qualities and virtues had told me about an event in Phiroze's life. Somewhere in the first decade of the 20th Century (1910 perhaps) there was a Conference of some pompous scholars and their lay-satelites who called themselves "reformists". The aim was to tell Parsis to discard all their spiritual and traditional Institutions. Why? Because the modern European scholars of our Religion have found that all those were the craftiness and conspiracy of later priests and that the Gatha was the only "true" "Zoroastrianism". One of the speakers said that it was not necessary to recite Sanskrit Aashirvad in our marriage ceremony because it was just a word given to Jadirana by the then refugee Parsis. A young Mobed with angry eyes in the audience jumped up and shouted,

**"Would that not be the sin of Meher-daruji? A breach of a solemn promise?" That was Phiroze!
Age around 23 years!**

There was a sensation in the audience. That one question was sufficient to expose the naked futility of not only that reformist conference but the whole of the so called reformist movement. Phiroze's question can well be transmuted thus: Does it not mean that all your exercise on reformism is based on immortalities like breach of promise? The speaker was stunned. His tongue was stuck to the palate. A learned Dastoorji (I am not sure, but he was probably from the erudite Sanjana family) rushed to Phiroze to pat his back: "Shabaash,

Shabaash"!

My teacher Dosabhai Desai used to tell me that Phiroze's face often looked like the face of an angry young Mobed, who would care a dime for any Akbarshah or Bajirao, when Din was concerned. A born Valiant-for-Truth!

* * * * *

"ZOROASTRIANISM, ANCIENT AND MODERN"

There was one well known (the late) Dastoorji Dhalla of Karachi, who began as orthodox and ended as "reformist". (May his Ruvaan proceed further and further towards Frashogard!) He wrote a pompous book "**Zoroastrian Theology**" published by Columbia University. It became the Satan's Bible for the so termed "reformists." The book was haunted with two obsessions: One was the Gatha-alone cultism and the other was the alleged command of Zoroastrian Religion to convert others even by force if required.

Dr. Dhalla's book came to the then Trustees of Mumbai Parsi Punchayet for patronage and support. Justice Dinshah Davar was one of the Trustees. He convinced the other Trustees not to patronise the Book. The then reformist Press launched a dirty attack on Justice Davar. It was Phiroze's Khshnoomic colleague Ervad Sohrab Panthaky who suggested to Phiroze to write a book in reply to Dr. Dhalla's mishmash. "Please do it for Justice Davar's sake" he told Phiroze. Phiroze contacted Justice Davar. He was highly impressed by Phiroze's knowledge and zeal. He promised all encouragement and help. Unfortunately he died before Phiroze could complete the Book. But it was finished and published in 1917, with the financial help by one Framroze Kavarana, in the name of his son Kaikhushru, a brilliant scientist, who had died young.

The name of the book was "**Zoroastrianism, Ancient and Modern.**" It is primarily intended to refute Dr. Dhalla's immature arguments. But **the book can be well considered as a primary text book of IIm-e-Khshnoom.** Dr. Dhalla's propositions are controverted on the grounds of the Western philology and the Truths revealed by Khshnoom. Phiroze says in the prologue that philological studies "merely procures the shells..... whereas Khshnoom inserts the original kernel necessary to make the whole nut." Khshnoom can help and embellish the philological study of Avesta, he wrote. His book is the sure proof of this. For instance, while refuting the babies of Dr. Dhalla on Manthra Prayers, he has given, on the word "Stota", 13 references from the Gatha, 13 from the 'Yashta's, 7 from Yazashney, 5 from Visperad, 1 from Hadokhta Nask, and 1 from Avan Niyash. (Total 40). On "Manthra", there are 12 references from the 'Gatha's', 15 from Yazashney, 10 from Visparad 29 from Yashta's, 4 from other Avesta (in all 70.) Phiroze's translations adopt the usual methodology of the Western philology, but inject therein the Khshnoomic meanings and explanations. This converts the philological copper into spiritual gold, which can take any honest objective, truth loving person in devotional ecstasy.

The Book has been reprinted in 2000 AD and is available at Parsi Vegetarian and Temperance Society Vatsa Bldg. Janmabhoomi Marg, Fort, Mumbai.

WORK ON THE PAZEND PRAYERS

Phiroze was a scholar par excellence in the Western methods of the study of Avesta, Pahlavi, Pazend and Oriental languages. He has translated all Pazend 'Aafrin's and 'Setaayash's. Bapuji told us that Baheramgor Anklesaria, a formidable scholar and critic was all praises for Phiroze's monumental work on Pazend Prayers.

PHIROZE'S HELP TO KAVASJI KANGA'S TRANSLATIONS

A particular illogicity exists in our Community. On the one hand there is a Gatha alone cult (now baptised as GAC), which says Gatha alone is the Zoroastrian Religion. On the other hand, there are dozens of varied and variant translations from various scholars and as Mary Boyce, the favourite Scholar of the orthodox clan herself has pointed out, there is wide diversity of opinion as to what the Prophet originally taught in the Gatha. The recent translator Insler enumerated several heavy difficulties a translator of Gathas comes across. It is "a

book of Seven Seals," he wrote. The million dollar question arises: how can you say Gatha alone is the Prophet's religion when there is a mountain of uncertainties in their dozens of Westernised translations? We have the Gujarati translation of Kavasji Kanga in which we find the tremendous amount of doubts and obstacles he faced. He had the humility to express his inability to translate about 10 passages. They were Haa 31-2, 32-7, 32-14, 33-9, 46-5, 46-9, 50-3, 51-14, 51-16. While publishing the 4th edition in 1934, Kavasji Kanga's grandson Navroji Pestonji Kavasji Kanga requested Phiroze to translate those passages, which he did. 4th Edition thus has Phiroze's translations of those passages at the end. A serious student of the Gathas will see from Phiroze's translations how the Khshnoomic meanings bring out the spiritual and esoteric message and essence of the Gathas. "Only they shall see who has eyes to see."

Similarly, at the request of Kavasji's grandson in the 10th Edition of Kavasji's translation of Khordeh Avesta (1926), Phiroze's translations of "Yaa too ji Zarathushtra..." passage of Haptan Yashta and para 59 of Kardeh 19 of Baheram Yasht are appended. The edition also contains Phiroze's translation of Pazend Aashirvaad forming part of the Manthra blessings recited at the Parsi Marriage ceremony.

* * * * *

But the best work of Phiroze is his Frashogard Journal 1911-1943. Please see page 11.

FAREWELL! PHIROZE!

Phiroze died on 18-2-1943. The issue of July-December 1942 (published after February 1943) carried the news on an attached slip; the issue carried Phiroze's 40th article in the series: "Remedies for the upliftment of the Parsi Community". The subject was about Kriyakaam particularly the ceremonies for the departed.... And that was the last.... Who knew he himself would depart?

Minoo Patel laments on page 28.

Nanabhoy Mama pays a glowing tribute on page 27.

Those who knew Phiroze and his Himalayan task wept in silence. Some were too stunned to believe. Their heart cried like Rumi's towards his Guide Shams-e-Tabreez.

કી ગોફત કે આન ઝેન્દયે જાવીદ બેમોર્દ?

કી ગોફત કે આફતાબે ઉમીદ બેમોર્દ?

કોણે કહ્યું કે તે જાવેદાન જીવનારો મરી ગયો?

કોણે કહ્યું કે તે ઉમીદનો આફતાબ મરી ગયો?

અને શ્સે તખ્રીઝ માટે ઝમી ગાય છે :

લાબલાયે વય આનગાહ કે બી ઇસ્તીઝ બુદ

દર દર દો જેહાન અઝ ઉ શકર રીઝ બુદ

ગર દર દેલે તન્ગે ખુદ તુ માહી બીની

અઝ મન બેશનવ કે શ્સે તખ્રીઝ બુદ

જ્યારે એના હોઠો ગુસ્સાથી ભરાઈ જતા

ત્યારે બન્ને જેહાનમાં તેમાંથી સાકર વરસતી

જે તારાં ખુદનાં તન્ગ દેલમાં તું માહ ને જુએ

તે મારાથી સમજ કે તે શ્સે તખ્રીઝ હતો.

આ સતરની ચોથી લીટી મોલાના ઝમીની માફી

મંગીને સહેજ પદલું છું કે :

“અઝ મન બેશનવ કે માહે ફીઝીઝ બુદ.”

એના ગુસ્સા ભરેલા હોઠમાંથી તો બન્ને જેહાનમાં

સકરનો વરસાદ પડતો હતો. એના ગુસ્સામાં પણ

છીનની દાઝની મીઠાશ હતી.

આ જેહનથી તન્ગ થઈ જતાં તારાં દીલમાં જે

કોઈ વખત ચાંદ દેખાય,

તે હું કહું છું તે સમજ કે એ તો માહે ફીરોઝ હતો,

તે માહ હતો જેનું નામ ફીરોઝ હતું.

* * * * *

દેલ તન્ગ ના કર, દેલનો ખોલનાર આવી ગયો છે.

ઇલમના સ્વર લઈને ફનૂમનો સિતાર આવી ગયો છે.

તરા શકો ગુમાનને માખીની જેમ કચડી નાખશે

કે કુહે કાફમાંથી હુમાનો ચિત્કાર આવી ગયો છે.

અરે આ શું? અમારાં આસુમાંથી પણ હાસ્ય ટપકે?

કે કુહે દેમાવંદથી કેકાને હસાવનાર આવી ગયો છે.

* * * * *

CONTRADICTIONS GALORE OF DR. DHALLA

In his "**Zoroastrianism, Ancient and Modern**" Phiroze Masani has given on pages xxx to xxxiii, "A collection of Dr. Dhalla's 45 inconsistencies," contained in his Book "**Zoroastrian Theology.**" Dr. Dhalla was a man of confused thinking. His writings and speeches suffered from an indigestion of traditional orthodoxy and the 19th century Western thinking. He advocated Gatha-Alone-Cult and branded Yazats as "pre-Zoroastrian divinities" to be discarded, and yet he himself venerated the Yazats like his forefathers (p. 77-78 of his Book.) **Mary Boyce has referred to this** and other contradictions with which, as she says, he "was able to live." (Page 213 - "Zoroastrians, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices" - Mary Boyce - Routledge and Kegan Paul (1979 - 1985-6-7). He blasphemed the Rituals all his life, but when his good wife died, he got all the traditional Religious ceremonies performed. (Dr. Hormuzshah Vania of Karachi testified to this.) He purported to base his thinking on Darwinian theory which was the foundation of Godlessness in the then Western thought and even today! (vide Richard Dawkins). In my youth I was quite astounded and amused at this Darwinian Dastoor!

Phiroze's collection of Dr. Dhalla's 45 inconsistencies makes an amusingly interesting reading. Below are Just a few items from Phiroze's list:

Pahalvi works - useful versus useless; Gathas and younger Avesta - split versus supplement; far removed versus commentary; 21 Nasks - not given by Zoroaster versus Lord God has announced them to the holy prophet; efficacy of Zoroastrian rituals none, versus ceremonies longed for by the fravashis of the dead; Zoroaster, practical, common sense thinker Vs disorder in the World demands the services of a great Master-mind, a genius, a philosopher nay a prophet, a YAZATA!

Tell me! These are only 7 out of the 45 coloured spectrum of Dhalla-ian contradictions.

As Mary Boyce said he could live with them. But does she know the reason? We Parsis have the habit of being carried away by pompous Western degrees. We shower praises not on the merits or contents of what somebody says or writes from his head, but on his high sounding University tails. We do not care to read and find out ourselves. By the way the Jafrey-Irani(s) - GAC are self declared Dhalla-ites.

- K.N.D.

(Parsi Pukar Jul.-Aug.-Sep. 2003 - Vol. 9; No. 1)