

## Historical Development of Panthaks among the Bhagarsath Priests in Navsari

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The aim of this paper is to describe and clarify several aspects of the historical development of the Parsi community after the fifteenth century in Navsari with references to Gujarati historical documents, "Athoran Tolani Bhagarsath Vanshawali". The present author offered a detailed description of historical development of Panthaks among the Bhagaria priests in Navsari, focusing on the divisions and distributions among 5 pols of Nāvar, Nirangdīn, Varsyo, and Boi ceremonies. The following are the main results of our study.

The Parsi community is composed of the Mobed (priests and their descendants) and the Behdīns (all laymen and their descendants). The Mobed have come down from the Panthaks which have been divided into the five genealogical pols or stocks. These five genealogical stocks have been separated into smaller lines which actually function as a social unit of Zoroastrian Parsi life in this world.

The Behdīn have been related to the Parsi community through their Panthaks which enable them to follow Zoroastrian beliefs and practices. The evidence shows that the Mobed, according to the agreement of Panthaks, divided the months, the days and the hours into far smaller parts in order to perform Zoroastrian religious practices. The Parsis' residence is also closely connected with their own Panthak. The social structure of the Parsis, from historical point of view, is mainly composed of Panthaks and genealogical factors. Not only the sharing of turns but also the substitutes of unavailable priests are also fixed in a manner consistent with Zoroastrian Panthaks, and they have been treated as having succession to property among the Parsis.

It is according to the Panthaks that such life rituals as birth, Navjot, marriage, funeral ceremonies, a great number of religious ceremonies in connection with the sacred fires, Parsi trust deeds, Palak(adoption), and foundation or maintenance of the sacred fires have been carried out by Zoroastrian Parsis in Navsari.

Key Words: Zoroastrian Parsis Panthak Bhagarsath Mobed Behdīn

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I Preface

The aim of this paper is to describe and clarify several aspects of the historical development of the Parsis after the fifteenth century in Navsari.

In the late fifteenth century the Parsis sought guidance from Irani priests in Yazd concerning rituals and observance. In 1478 Nariman Hoshang travelled to Yazd and was started the correspondence, which continued down to 1778<sup>(1)</sup>.

“The Persian Rivayats” shows that Changa Shah was a leader of the Zoroastrians and that the Iranis sent manuscripts or instructions asked for by the Zoroastrians in India who were not well versed in Pahlavi<sup>(2)</sup>. The correspondence continued down to the end of the eighteenth century and the Zoroastrians in India obtained a great deal of guidance and instructions about Zoroastrian thought or practices. But unfortunately the concrete description of historical development of the Zoroastrian community is not given in “the Persian Rivayats”.

The present author has chosen to offer a tentative description of it with references to Gujarati historical documents which are preserved in Navsari. The focus of study is on the concrete description of historical development of Panthaks among the Bhagarsath priests in Navsari. It is hoped that this attempt will shed light on the actual religious life of Zoroastrian Parsi community in the past.

In this paper, religion will be studied not only in terms of religious doctrines or rituals but also from the point of view of its socio-cultural integration. Religion can exist only in the form of socio-cultural integration. Upon this hypothesis our study of religion should be continued; hence, further clarification and analysis of historical

development of any religious community, its social structure in the past, and politico-economic interests as well as mental attitude is indispensable to our investigation of the structure and function of religion.

For the purpose of this study, the Gujarati historical document "Athoran Tolani Bhagarsath Vanshavali" will be used as a primary text as well as other authentic documentary evidence. The material recorded the genealogy of the Bhagarsath section of Parsi priests, together with an account of the system regulating the distribution of the various sacerdotal function offices and privileges among the Bhagarsath priests of Navsari.

The origin of the term 'bhagariā' is, Dr.Firoze M.Kotwal argues, from the priests' act of 'bhagar kādhvī (Guj.). 'bhagar kādhvī' is 'to take out the Bhagar or drōn (Av.draonah-portion: sacred breads) in the consecration of sacred breads(drōn) brought to the Vadī Dari-Mihir. Hence, Bhagar Kādhnārā or Bhagariā(Guj.) means those priests who act 'bhagar kadhvī'.<sup>(3)</sup> The Bhagariā or Bhagarsath priests and its descendants have long since existed in the core of Zoroastrian Parsi community in Navsari. They have been, if we follow Max Meber's concept, the trāger of Zoroastrian beliefs and practices as well as socio-economic development of Parsi community in India. Our description of historical development of Panthaks among the Bhagarsasth priests could be an introduction to elucidate the history of Zoroastrian Parsis in Navsari.

## II Historical background of the Mobed in Navsari

The Zoroastrian Parsis who migrated to India from Iran in about the 85th year of Yazdezardi, that is, around 716 A.D., settled down at Sanjan in Gujarat. In 12th century a number of Parsi families migrated towards south Gujarat from Sanjan and settled in great numbers at large places like Navsari, Ankleswar, Baroch and Khambhat(Cambay).<sup>(4)</sup>

In around 1275 A.D., Zarthōsht Mōbad, grandson of Hōrmazdyār Ramyar, settled down in Navsari accompanied with his two sons, Kāmdīn and Mōbad. Bahrām Mōbad, Zarthōsht's younger brother, left Sanjan for Bharuch(or Broach) and Pāhlan Mōbad, grandson of Zarthōsht Mōbad, moved to Surat to be the ancestor of the Gōdāvṛā priests.

In the mean time the priests who settled down at these places along with the

Zoroastrians established for the first time priestly five Panthaks(sects). Regarding to religious ceremonies and rituals, written agreements were made in order to establish five Panthaks of the priests in about 1290 A.D. and the area or limit of the Panthak concern was fixed in the said agreements.<sup>(6)</sup>

Because of the great increase of Parsi population in Navsari toward the end of 14th century the descendants of Kāmdīn Zarthōsht were obliged to employ from Sanjan Hōm Bahmanyār, who came to Navsari with his only son Farēdūn in order to help the descendants of Kāmdīn Zarthōsht. Hōm Bahmayār continued to tend the Sanjan Ātaš Bahrām at that time, to which the descendants of his brother Hōrmazdyār Bahmanyār in Sanjan objected, accusing them of earning their reward in two places. They asked Farēdūn and his two sons, Asha and Mahyar, to serve either Navsari or Sanjan.

Farēdūn and his two sons, Asha and Mahyar decided finally to work only in Navsari, "provided that the descendants of Mobad Kāmdīn, headed by Pāhlan Ānnā and Kākā Dhanpāl, agreed to divide the share from the proceeds of ceremonies equally between themselves and the three sons of Farēdūn in perpetuity"

The family members of Pāhlan Ānnā and Kākā Dhanpāl agreed that the three sons of Farēdūn Hōm should be equal partners. Hence, they came to be called Bhagariā or Bhagarsath 'co-sharers'. The priests who came to settle in Navsari after migrating from Sanjan and also the priests living in the area defined and fixed in the said agreement were known as members of the Bhagarsath Anjoman since then.

As Dr.Firoze M. Kotwal and "Atholan Tolani Bhagarsath Vanshvali" indicate, Bhagarsath Anjoman appointed the following fixed religious office to each stock:

The head of the Kākā Pahlān stock made the heir of a deceased person recite the formula of sōsh on the third day after death, in the presence of an assembly.

The head of the Kākā Dhanpāl stock acted as custodian of the consecrated bull's urine(nīrangdīn).

The head of the Āshā Farēdūn stock conducted the penitentiary prayer(patēt) in an assembly gathered to honour the departed soul on the third day after death.

The head of the Māhyār Farēdūn stock gave permission for initiations into priesthood, called Nāwar and Martab, and a member of his family was entitled to conduct the first day of the Nāwar ceremony.

The head of the Chāndā Farēdūn maintained records and preserved documents for the Anjoman's archives.

This fixed religious office was observed down to 1579 A.D. when the Parsis in Navsari appointed Meherji Rānā the first Vadā Dastur.

In 1672, the Bhagarsath Anjoman in Navsari decided that the Bhagarsath priests should officiate all the religious ceremonies in Navsari and in the neighbouring areas like Chaul, Kalyan, Bhimardi, and Thana. Against the decision the Behdīn in Navsari decided in 1673 that they should order a priest of their own choosing to conduct their religious ceremonies. The tension between the two sides led to the murder of two Bhagarsath priests in Tarota, and the retaliatory murder of 6 Behdīns. The Behdīn put 12 Bhagarsath priests in jail, whom Kunverji Nānabhāi Modi released.

In order to carry out their decision in 1673 the Behdīns came to side with Mīnōcheher Hōmji who at that time dissented from the Bhagarsath. Mīnōcheher Hōmji, with his three sons, became their family priests of the Behdīn. Meherji Chāndnā, Dādā Chānji and Pēshōtan Sōhrāb joined Mīnōcheher Hōmji and these four priests were called 'chahāro sāth(Guj.)'<sup>(7)</sup>

In 1731 the Bhagarsath priests got the permission from the then ruler of Navsari Gangāji Rāo and the Gujarat governor Pilāji Rāo Gaekwad that they should be entitled to perform the religious ceremonies within their jurisdiction. On April 16 in 1732, they accepted the offer of reconciliation from 'chahāro sāth' at the Vadi Dari Mihr. Dissatisfied with this, the Behdīns instigated the 'chahāro sāth' to break off the reconciliation in 1734. Then the Bhagarsath priests implored Gangāji Rāo to persuade the 'chahāro sāth' out of their trespass upon the Bhagarsath jurisdiction. The arbitration by Gangāji Rāo led the 'chahāro sāth' to be an independent priest group and so the Dari Mihr constructed for them by the Behdīn were officially admitted.

Some time after their appeasement, Sanjana priests, incited by the Behdīn, broke the reconciliation so that they came to perform religious ceremonies in their own house or for their own supporters at their request. The arbitration by Pilāji Rāo Gaekwad was favourable to the Bhagarsath priests, which made Sanjana priests leave Navsari with the Sacred Fire for Bulsār in 1740. Sanjana Priests did not settle down in Bulsār, but they finally established their Panthak in Udvada in 1742.

### III 5 pols and Panthaks

As has been described, the Parsis who belong to the Mobed are descended, as chronicled in the Gujarati historical documents, from those stocks which are the so-called Bhagariā, Sanjānā, Gōdāvra, Bharuchā, and Khambāta. For our study it would be of greatest help to go into detail of Bhagariā, which originated in Navsari.

Bhagariā is composed of these 5 pols(Guj. street, stock):<sup>(8)</sup>

① Kākā Pahlān

E.ShāpurShahriār E.Rāmyār E.Hōrmazdyār E.Mōbed E.Zarthōsht E.Kāmdīn  
E.Mōbad E.Kāmdīn E.Rānā E.Chāndnā E.Ānnā E.Pāhlan

② Kākā Dhanpāl

E.ShāpurShahriār E.Rāmyār E.Hōrmazdyār E.Mōbed E.Zarthōsht E.Kāmdīn  
E.Mōbad E.Lakhmīdhar E.Bāmā E.Lakhmīdhar E.Dhanpāl E.Kākā

③ Āshā Farēdūn

E.ShāpurShahriār E.Dhaval E.Nēryōsang E. Mōbad E.Khushmastā E.khujastā  
E.Bahmanyār E.Khūrshēd E.Bahmanyār E.Hōm E.Farēdūn E.Āshā

④ Māhyār Farēdūn

E.ShāpurShahriār E.Dhaval E.Nēryōsang E. Mōbad E.Khushmastā E.khujastā  
E.Bahmanyār E.Khūrshēd E.Bahmanyār E.Hōm E.Farēdūn E.Māhyār

⑤ Chāndā Farēdūn

E.ShāpurShahriār E.Dhaval E.Nēryōsang E. Mōbad E.Khushmastā E.khujastā  
E.Bahmanyār E.Khūrshēd E.Bahmanyār E.Hōm E.Farēdūn E.Chāndā

Kākā Pahlān and Kākā Dhanpāl were called Zarthōsht pols; Āshā Farēdūn, Māhiār Farēdūn and Chāndā Farēdūn, Hōm Bamaniār pols. They shared with one another death ceremonies, 4 days death ceremonies, public Jašans, Nāvans, Nirangdīngs, Varasyoji consecrations, Boi ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, and Navjots for the Behdīn.

“The Athornan Tolani Bhagarsath Vanshawali” showed the following division of months.<sup>(9)</sup>

Month	Varadar(keeper of the turn)	Samewala(assistant)
1	Kākā Pahlān	Āshā Farēdūn
2	Āshā Farēdūn	Kākā Dhanpāl

3	Kākā Dhanpāl	Māhiār Farēdūn
4	Māhiār Farēdūn	Kākā Pahlān
5	Kākā Pahlān	Chāndā Farēdūn
6	Chāndā Farēdūn	Kākā Dhanpāl
7	Kākā Dhanpāl	Āshā Farēdūn
8	Āshā Farēdūn	Kākā Pahlān
9	Kākā Pahlān	Māhiār Farēdūn
10	Māhiār Farēdūn	Kākā Dhanpāl
11	Kākā Dhanpāl	Chāndā Farēdūn
12	Chāndā Farēdūn	Kākā Pahlān
	5 Gatha days	

According to the above distributions, Kākā Pahlān and Kākā Dhanpāl were awarded three times of Varadar, and Āshā Farēdūn, Māhiār Farēdūn and Chāndā Farēdūn, two times of Varadar. The same is the case with Samewala. We can say that 12 months are first divided into two equal parts, 6 months for Zarthōsht pols and the other 6 months for Hōm Bamaniār pols and then each 6 months are again divided into two or three equal parts. The inequity of division here is caused by the genealogical factors of Zarthōsht and Hōm Bamaniār.

When priests from Kākā Pahlān were not available, those from Kākā Dhanpāl were asked for, and vice versa. If those two pols could not send the priests, then Hōm Bamaniār pols were to substitute for them and the other way round. When the priests of Āshā Farēdūn were not available, Māhiār and Chāndā Farēdūn had to be sent for. Āshā and Chāndā Farēdūn were to be sent for Māhiār Farēdūn, and Āshā and Māhiār Farēdūn had to help Chāndā Farēdūn.

The substitution for unavailable priests is also, as in the case of division of months, done on the ground of genealogical factors connected with 5 pols or Zarthōsht pols and Hōm Bamaniār pols.

In addition to the above division of months among the Mobed, "Athornan Tolani Bhagarsath Vanshavalī" showed the following division of months, days and even hours into much smaller sections.<sup>00</sup>

The document shows that the months are divided by five pols into five parts. Kākā

Pahlān and Kākā Dhanpāl are given three months each; Āshā Farēdūn, Māhiār Farēdūn and Chāndā Farēdūn, two months each. Five Gatha days are given to Rana Kamdin in Kākā Pahlān as Varadar as well as Samewala, and to Mobed Chāndā, Homa Chanda, and Rustom Chanda in Chāndā Farēdūn as Varadar. This means that five Gatha days are also divided by Zarthōst pols and Hōm Bamaniār pols.

Here we will proceed to describe the divisions of days and hours of month of Kākā Pahlān for our analysis. Three months (Farvardin, Amardad and Adar) of Varadar, another three months (Tir, Avan and Aspadad) and five Gatha days are divided to Kākā Pahlān of Zarthōst pol. Three Varadar months are divided into two equal parts (1st~15th days & half of five Gatha days and 16th~30th days & another half of five Gatha days), each of which Rana Kamdin and Mobed Kamdin share in an equal manner. Three Samewala days are also divided equally into two parts, the one half of which are given to Pahlān Anna, Shapur Chandana, Mobed Bahman, Asha Dahaiya and Jesang Dahaiya; the other half are given to Hiradada, Vaccha Jesang, Rana Jesang, Hamajiya Jesang, Mahiar Peshotan, Natha Hoshang, Asha Rustom, Sahiar Kamdin and Ram Kamdin. This divisions of months, days and hours are worked out according to the genealogical lines of Kākā Pahlān.

As described above, to divide months, days, and hours into smaller units among the Mobed is to divide the time into smaller units according to their genealogical lines. Each priest should follow this traditionally appointed assignment if he is to perform any religious ceremony or to do some Zoroastrian practice for the Behdīn. It is reasonable to assume that the greater part of Zoroastrian beliefs and practices have been maintained by the Parsis with their long genealogy in the core of culture.

#### IV Distributions of the various sacerdotal function offices and privileges among the Bhagarsath priests of Navsari

Now we will describe concretely how Zoroastrian religious ceremonies have been carried out on the basis of five genealogical pols or stocks in Navsari. The concrete description of divisions and distributions of Nāvar, Nīrangdīngs, consecration of Varsyoji and Boi ceremonies will clarify some aspects of historical development of the Parsi community and will contribute several new facts to the description of how Zoroastrian beliefs and practices have been maintained and conducted by Zoroastrian Parsis in Navsari.



1 Distributions of Nāvar ceremonies among the 5 pols.

To perform Nāvar ceremonies two priests with the barashnum from two different pols are required. If one priest is from Zarthōsht Mobed pol, the other should be from Hōm Bamaniār pol.

“Athoran Tolani Bhagarsath Vanshavali” recorded as below certain names of priests from each pol and the intervals of turns of share in Navars.<sup>40</sup>

Kākā Pahlān		Kākā Dhanpāl	
Names of priests	the intervals of turns	Names of priests	the intervals of turns
1 Pahlān Anna	24	1 Mahiar Asha	10
2 Hira Dada	48	2 Asdin Kaka	24 26
3 Mobed Bahman	12	3 Hira Narsang	30
4 Asha Rustom	8	4 Hamjiyar Kaka	24 26
5 Asha Dhaiya	24	5 Behram Asha	10
6 Mahiar Peshotan	24	6 Faredun Kaka	24 26
7 Shapur Chandna	24	7 Nagoj Narshang	30
8 Natha Hoshang	24	8 Aspandyar Kaka	24 26
9 Jashang Dhaiya	24	9 Chandna Kaka	24 26
10 Vaccha Jeshang	144	10 Dhanpal Narsang	30
11 Rana Jeshang	144		
12 Hamajiyar Jeshang	144		

Āshā Farēdūn		Māhiār Farēdūn	
1 Nagoj Asha	12	1 Nagoj Asdin	18
2 Rustom Behram	36	2 Rana Antia	18
3 Rustom Vaccha	72	3 Sahiar Hoshang	54
4 Dhanpal Dosa	36	4 Chanda Asdin	18
5 Rustom Hira	36	5 Chanda Adar	18
6 Mohbed Vaccha	72	6 Narsang Hoshang	54
7 Ashak Dosa	36	7 Chanda Hoshang	54

8 Sahiyar Avval	36	8 Vaccha Hoshang	54
9 Aspandiar Vaccha	72	9 Asha Hoshang	54
10 Sahiar Dosa	36	10 Bhaiya Hoshang	54
11 Chacha Vaccha	72		
12 Narshang Vaccha	72		
13 Chaiya Vaccha	72		

Chāndā Farēdūn

1 Khordhed Chanda	18
2 Manka Vika	27
3 Hamajiyar Rustom	54
4 Liba Dhanpal	18
5 Asha Vika	27
6 Kahna Rustom	54
7 Chanda Vika	27
8 Bahram Rustom	54
9 Pahlān Rustom	54
10 Chanda Rustom	54
11 Kamdin Rustom	54

In the above list of each pol, the turn of the next Nāvar comes after certain number of Nāvārs. For example, in Kākā Pahlān pol, the first turn comes to Pahlān Anna. If he has to perform a Nāvar ceremony again, his turn comes after 24 Nāvārs. The number 24 results from the following manner of rotations between Kākā Pahlān pol and Kākā Dhanpāl pol.

If one Nāvar is performed by Kākā Pahlān pol, another turn goes to the second pol of Kākā Dhanpāl. The third Nāvar is again performed by Kākā Pahlān pol, then the fourth one should be done by Kākā Dhanpāl pol. In this manner, 12 priests of Kākā Pahlān pol and another 12 priests of Kākā Dhanpāl pol perform 12 Nāvārs one by one, and the total number amounts to 24. Therefore after 24 Nāvārs, again the first partner of Kākā Pahlān pol takes the 25th Nāvar. The same calculations apply to each priest in each of the pols.

The differences of number in the intervals come from the size of each family

concerned. If a father has only one son, the son will share the rotations of Nāvar all for himself. If a father has four sons, they have to divide the rotations equally among them. The more members of the family, the fewer turn of Nāvārs for them.<sup>23</sup>

From the above description based on facts we can say that each Nāvar ceremony needs two priests; one from Zarthōst pol and another from Hōm Bamaniār pol. The turns of each Nāvar are decided respectively among the members of the two pols according to their genealogy. The turns of Nāvar are treated here as identical to property rights. They can be divided among the members of family.

Furthermore the document recorded the following complicated custom concerning how to perform Nāvar among the families.

If a Nāvar is to be performed in the same family, it is known as a 'bapuko' (paternal) Nāvar. If it is to be performed by the priest from another family, because of unavailability of family priests in that family, then it is known as 'rasuko' Nāvar. For example, from Kākā Dhanpāl pol, the Nāvar of Mobed Bahman is not performed by his family members because of unavailability of the priests from the same family, then the nearest relative of Mobed Bahman, namely, Chandna Rana and Rustom Rana are expected to perform the Nāvar, which is 'rasuko' Nāvar. In the case of 'rasuko' Nāvar, he who performs 'rasuko' Nāvar must give some share to 'bapuko' Nāvar. For instance, in the absence of Hira Dada, Natha Hoshang and Asha Rustom of Kākā Pahlān pol, if another priest performs the Nāvar, then these 3 priests will get two mohars, that is, 12 annas(75 paisa) and the officiating priest from the same pol will get one mohar(half of 75 paisa). The distribution will be 2 mohar to Kākā Dhanpāl, 1 mohar to Āshā Farēdūn and Māhiār Farēdūn, 2 mohar to Chāndā Farēdūn.<sup>24</sup>

As shown above, Nāvar ceremonies are as far as possible to be performed by the same family members. As the turns of Nāvar are regarded as a property right, a share is always to be given to 'bapuko' even when they do not perform the Nāvar ceremony itself.

Thus it can be claimed with considerable certainty that it is a matter of great significance to the Parsis who will officiate the religious ceremonies. A Parsi priest cannot simply perform any religious ceremony anytime or anywhere he likes among the Parsi community. The Behdīn cannot have their own religious ceremonies conducted by any Parsi priest they may choose, either. There is a historically fixed social custom followed by the Parsis and it is a noteworthy finding that the social custom is deeply related to genealogical factors.

## 2 Arrangement of performing of Nīrangdīn and Varasyo among the 5 pols

Just like Nāvar, Nīrangdīn and Varasyo are also performed by Zarthōst Mobed and Hōm Bamaniār pols. For a Nāvar ceremony, the first priest of Kākā Pahlān, namely Pahalan Anna goes together with the first priest of Āshā Farēdūn pol, namely, Nargoj Asha. For Nīrangdīn and Varasyo with Pahalan Anna, the first priest of Māhiār Farēdūn pol, namely Nargoj Asdin is given as a pair for the ceremony. The other partner priest is Nargoj Asha from Āshā Farēdūn pol.<sup>64</sup>

The reason for the above distribution is, as already has been referred to in the previous section, that in the 13th century of Sanvat year the five pols appointed some fixed religious office to each pol.

The arrangement was changed after Navsari Anjoman selected Dasturji Meherji Rānā as its first Dasturji in Sanvat 1636(=1580 A.D.). The starting of Patēt ceremony was entrusted to Dasturji Meherji Rānā, so the right of Patēt given to Āshā Farēdūn pol was stopped. Instead of this right of Patēt, Āshā Farēdūn pol was entrusted with half of the kotwali, namely the preservation of documents which had been conducted by Chāndā Farēdūn pol up to then. And Nāvar ceremony which had been done by Māhiār Farēdūn pol was entrusted to Āshā Farēdūn pol, including half of the kotwali work which remained in the hands of Chāndā Farēdūn pol.

Nīrangdīn and Varasyo have been conducted by Māhiār Farēdūn since Sanvat 1616(=1506 A.D.). The right of Nīrangdīn continued to this day but the right of Varasyo was given to Āshā Farēdūn pol in Sanvat 1801(1745 A.D.) when a new Varasyoji was consecrated due to the difference in calculation in Sanvat 1757(= 1701 A.D.).

The entry of Nāvar, Nīrangdīn and Varasyo has been continued from Sanvat 1616(=1506 A.D.). Though the entry of Nīrangdīn has been continued from Sanvat 1616(=1506 A.D.), the entry of Nāvar remains the same from Sanvat 1689(=1633 A.D.). The entry of Varasyo has been maintained since Sanvat 1737(=1681 A.D.).

The turns of share of Nīrangdīn and Varasyo were historically defined and are continued today according to the strict rules of the division.

## 3 Reciprocal succession for Ātash Bahrām Boi ceremonies among the 5 pols

For Boi ceremony at Ātash Bahrām, each pol is given one full month. But, every year, the month of Adar is entrusted to the descendants of Dasturji Sohrabji Rustamji Meherji Rānā. Except the month of Adar, the remaining 11 months are divided among

the five pols as below<sup>09</sup>.

1st month	Kākā Pahlān	7th month	Kākā Dhanpāl
2nd month	Āshā Farēdūn	8th month	Āshā Farēdūn
3rd month	Kākā Dhanpāl	9th month	Dasturji Sohrabji Meherji Rānā and his family
4th month	Māhiār Farēdūn	10th month	Kākā Pahlān
5th month	Kākā Pahlān	11th month	Māhiār Farēdūn
6th month	Chāndā Farēdūn	12th month	Kākā Dhanpāl

Here again the months, except the 9th month, are first divided into two equal parts, Zarthōst and Hōm Bamaniār pols, and then each pol in turn divides their months equally among their members. If they follow the above turns, next year the first month is given to Chāndā Farēdūn, who can share only one month in the above list. The following is the procedure for every month among each pol. Those priests who have passed the Barashnum in each pol get together on the last day (Aneran Roj) of the previous month in Vadī Dari Mihir. Among those who are prepared to pay more share to their partner priests, two of them take the turn for Ātash Bahrām Boi ceremonies. Those who take the turn of Boi ceremony in the particular month and agreed to pay the fixed amount of rupees to other partner priests of the same pol (assistant pol) will pay up to the 20th day of Behram Roj of every month to those partner priests who have the Barashnum. The expense of Anjoman is taken out first from this payment.<sup>09</sup>

The above passage suggests that the turns of Boi ceremony, unlike Nāvar, Nirangdīn and Varasyo, are divided with one month as the smallest unit. The way the members divide the given month into turns is also different from those in the case of Nāvar, Nirangdīn and Varasyo. But their traditional basic rule of dividing the months into two equal parts, shared by the Zarthōst pol and Hōm Bamaniār pol, is here again strictly honored by the Parsis.

Also it should be noted here that the Meherji Rānā family have enjoyed some exceptional privileges in connection with the divisions and distributions of turns or shares. Since Navsari Anjoman appointed Dasturji Meherji Rānā as its first Dasturji, the turn of Patēt ceremony has been entrusted to Dasturji Meherji Rānā and that, in the case of Boi ceremony at Ātash Bahram, the 9th month has been fully entrusted to them. The Parsis made these two exceptions, which in turn came to result in a

hierarchical organization among the Parsis with Vada Dasturji at the highest.

## V Conclusions

For further clarification of historical development of the Parsi community, we have offered a detailed description of historical development of Panthaks among the Bhagariā priests in Navsari, focusing on the divisions and distributions among 5 pols of Nāvar, Nīrangdīn, Varasyo, and Boi ceremonies. The following are the main results of our study with references to the Gujarati historical documents preserved in Navsari.

The Parsi community is composed of the Mobed (priests and their descendants) and the Behdīns (all laymen and their descendants). The Mobed have come down from the Panthaks which have been divided into the five genealogical pols or stocks. These five genealogical stocks have been separated into smaller lines which actually function as a social unit of Zoroastrian Parsi life in this world. What is more, we can say that in connection with Namgran and Muktaḍ, they exert influences on their life in the next world, too.

The Behdīn have been related to the Parsi community through their Panthaks which enable them to follow Zoroastrian beliefs and practices. The evidence shows that the Mobed, according to the agreement of Panthaks, divided the months, the days and the hours into far smaller parts in order to perform Zoroastrian religious practices. These religious practices include funeral ceremonies, public Jašans, Nāvārs, Nīrangdīngs, consecrations of Varasyoji, Boi ceremonies at Ātash Bahrām, and Navjots for the Behdīns.

Upon the basis of Panthaks, the Parsis have divided the days and even the hours, and their residence is also closely connected with their own Panthak. As was referred to in the previous sections, the Panthak of Bhagarsath Anjoman has been derived from the five genealogical pols or stocks. The social structure of the Parsis, from historical point of view, is mainly composed of Panthaks and genealogical factors.

The divisions of the share among the Parsi priests in their Panthaks are fixed in the case of Navjots and funeral ceremonies. The due order of their turn for Navjot are his or her uncle, uncle's son, uncle's younger brother when he has no son, and his or her father's uncle when the father did not have any brother. The Navjot of an engaged woman is expected to be performed by the future husband's uncle. But the right becomes null and void when he is made Palak to somebody. The funeral ceremonies are

as a general rule performed by his uncle when the dead is male, or by her husband's uncle when female. "Athoran Tolani Bhagarsath Vanshavalī", too, proves that these practices were carried out in the past.<sup>67</sup>

It is noteworthy that not only the sharing of turns but also the substitutes of unavailability priests are also fixed in a manner consistent with Zoroastrian Panthaks, to be more specific, Zarthōst pols and Hōm Bamaniār pols. These turns of share and the substitution, as the various numbers of the turns in the case of Nāvar show, have been treated as having succession to property among the Parsis.

Still today when the Parsis would like Nāvar, Martab, Jinderevan, Hamast, and Barashnum performed, they have to fill in the paper in which they must write down all the names related to their genealogical line<sup>68</sup>, which makes them conscious of their genealogical personal relationships as well as of the existence and function of Panthak.

Thus Zoroastrian Panthaks are still maintained in Navsari and function a great deal for Parsi socio-religious every day life. It is according to the Panthaks that such life rituals as birth, Navjot, marriage, funeral ceremonies, a great number of religious ceremonies in connection with the sacred fires, Parsi trust deeds, Palak(adoption), and foundation or maintenance of the sacred fires have been carried out by Zoroastrian Parsis in Navsari.

#### footnotes

1) "The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and others" provides the following evidence.

...May the lay leaders and behdins of India, and Changa Asha, chief of the town of Navsari, and further the athorans, high priests and herbads of Navsari, and also of Surat, Anklesar, Broach, and Cambay...abide with long life and health;...

(The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and others, 598ff.,276.)

2) "The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and others"

...Nariman Hoshang, who came to Yazd, didn't know Persian for the first year. He spoke a few words, but we did not fully understand their purpose. We said: 'If you want us to understand each other, stay here for the length of a year.' ...He lived in Yazd and did some trafficking in dates. He learnt some Persian, and then put some questions to us, saying that priestly functions and acts of worship were carried

on in Navsari and Surat, and that there was an Atash Bahram...

(The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and others, 598ff., 276.)

...that the head priests and wise dasturs and herbads of India are not familiar with the script [i.e. Pahlavi] in which are written the Zand of the Avesta and judicial decisions and rituals, and are quite unable to read it...

(The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and others, 598ff., 276.)

3) Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal 1990 A Brief History of the Parsi Priesthood. Indo-Iranian Journal 33. pp. 165-175

4) Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman 1929 Navsarinan pak atash beheram sahebnavan makanne lagto ahaval tatha teno avak javakta hisab. Bombay.

Income and Expenditure Account Book Related to New Building Sacred Atash Beheram Saheb of Navsari. pp. 1-5

5) *ibid.*, pp. 1-5

6) Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal, *op. cit.*,

E. Rustomji Jamaspji Dastur Meherji Rana 1894. atholan tolani Bhagarsath vanshavali. p. 217

7) Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal, *op. cit.*,

Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal referred to "the chahāro sāth" as follows.

① Mīnōcheher Hōmji

He came from Bajān family of the Chāndā Farēdūn stock and was a son-in-law to Manaji Kukaji Talati who stood against the Bhagarsath. His youngest son Adar conducted a Nāvar ceremony in a village of Bhagva Dandi near Navsari without any permission with a Sanjan priest named Jamasp Bhaiji of Bulsār. This was the immediate cause of expulsion of Mīnōcheher Hōmji and his three sons from the Bhagarsath Anjoman.

② Meherji Chāndnā

His surname was Kakalia and belonged to Kākā Pahlān. He joined Mīnōcheher Hōmji with his four sons in 1699.

③ Dādā Chānji

His surname was Dādāchānji and belonged to Āshā Farēdūn. With his seven sons he joined Mīnōcheher Hōmji.

④ Pēshōtan Sōhrāb

His surname was Rabādi and belonged to Āshā Farēdūn. He joined Mīnōcheher Hōmji with his two sons.



Around 1700, after the 'chahāro sāth' was composed, a Bhagarsath priest Kausji, who was the youngest son of Jamasp Bhaiji Sanjana and was made palak to his maternal grandfather Aspandiyar Ranji, seceded from the Bhagarsath and joined the 'chahāro sāth' under the name of Bhandari.

8)Rustom Jamasp Dastur MeherjiRana 1899 Athoran ni tolani Bhagarsath Vansavali

9)Rustomji Jamaspji Dastur MeherjiRana 1894. op.cit., p.195

10)ibid.,pp.196-203

11)ibid.,pp.205-206

12)ibid.,p.205

13)ibid.,pp.205-206

The Nāvar ceremony is performed by two pols and the ceremony takes 9 days. The share for one Nāvar was Rs.5 and ten and half kilos of wheat and another 4 annas. This share was divided among all the priests who have passed Barashnum ceremony. Out of the share given above, one had to give more money to those priests who performed the Nāvar. If the Nāvar ceremony was performed in the name of some Behdīn, then in the assembly Vada Dasturji got 8 annas (half the rupee) and the remaining three Dasturjis got quarter rupees(4 annas), again on the fourth day of the Nāvar when he returned home, first he went out to show respect to Vada Dasturji and paid one rupee to him. In the same way he showed respect to Kotwal and Hozdar family and paid one rupee to them because these two families were owner of ālāt. The sweepers and those who lit diva got one fourth more for each Nāvar.

14)ibid.,p.217

15)ibid.,p.217

16)ibid.,p.217

The following is the expense of Anjoman to be deducted every month from the Boi income. 2 Rs.were to be given to sweepers, 3 Rs.to the perosn who light the oil lamp, 3 Rs.to the servants of Vadi Dari Meher, 1 R.to the crier, 3 Rs. for the Boi ceremony of Desai Khurshedji, 1 R. to each and every mobed who attends Jašan ceremony in Vadi Dari Mihir.

17)ibid.,p.217

18)In an application form of 'Permission form for Nāvar, Martab, Jinderevan, Hamayast performed in the very old Dari Mihir of Bhagarsath Anjoman of Navsari', the following items are to be filled in.①Nāvar, Martab, Jinderevan, Hamayast, ② name, ③ age, ④ Jinderevan Anosheravan, ⑤ farmayasa, ⑥ name of Jinderevan,

Anosheravan, ⑦family priest, ⑧name of the pol, ⑨name of the officiating priest, ⑩date of taking Barashnum, ⑪date of the last day of Nāvar, Martab, ⑫English date.

In the second item of name, the Parsis write down as many names as possible in tracing their own genealogy. This second item as well as the eighth one will prove to them the pol they have been derived from.

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