

# **The wondrous life of our Master**

## **An account of the life of Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff and a history of the advent of the Zarathushtrian mystic revelation of Ilm-e-Khshnoom**

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### **Prelude**

It is easy to write about a person's life. However, it is extremely difficult to write about or try to explain the life and times of a phenomenon. This problem has plagued the biographers of various men, women, and children who lived a life so different from the humdrum of our existence that merely writing about them was sufficient for the biographer to be described variously as biased, committed, prejudiced, predisposed or worse, demented. The paradox facing the biographer is insurmountable. How can he write about a phenomenon – an occurrence that cannot be explained logically or scientifically, one that transcends the customary boundaries of our understanding and comprehension, without falling foul of those who refuse to believe such paranormal occurrences and who are quick to dub such writings and those who attempt them as round the bend

The above paradox has plagued this writer no end. As a student of philology and an accountant by profession, the first instinct was to disbelieve such instances of paranormal existence and to remain aloof from their 'weakening' influence. But after nearly two decades of study and introspection, of grappling with one's own conscience and the deemed public image, this writer has decided to take the plunge and write about a man whose life was so extraordinary as to put the demon of incredulity and suspicion into the minds of every seemingly rational and fair minded person. Yet like every other biographer placed in such a dilemma, this writer believes that his writing will do the unthinkable and perhaps surmount the mountains of incredulity, clear the haze surrounding the circumstances of the phenomenon, and finally do some justice to the *Urvan* or soul of the departed worthy. That this will also save the writer the ignominy of being branded a lunatic is a selfish but important criterion.

Keeping the above in mind, the writer has decided to serially recount the various known and disclosed experiences in the life of the phenomenon without attempting too much to justify or explain them rationally. If the narrative reads like a fairy tale, then maybe the sceptics will use it to put their children to sleep, although it is doubtful the children may be lulled to sleep after being read such an incredible account. If those intrigued wish to know more, there is plenty of information and excitement awaiting them. It is this writer's understanding and belief that a single life, without the intercession of some paranormal agency, is not sufficient to fully understand and explore this phenomenon and the source of his teachings. Nevertheless, it was the author's ardent desire, that the knowledge and experience of this phenomenon touch the lives of many more as it has touched his own, which finally drove him to write this narrative.

With these few words, this writer considers it his great fortune and good destiny to present here the life of the phenomenon called *Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff*.

### **General introduction**

It was around 10036 BC. The *Peshdadian* Monarch *Jamshyd* ruled the world – both seen and unseen. In his benevolent reign, there was no death, no hunger, and no pestilence. The material sciences advanced. Earth, man and time, all progressed. As part of his divine assignment, King *Jamshyd* selected certain spots of the Earth which were so exalted as to be in direct contact with the heavens above. He gave special attention to these areas, and with his immense spiritual prowess drew circuits around them such that no ordinary mortal may even realise their existence, let alone enter their pristine environs. Although he saw no need for the areas immediately, with his far sightedness he realised that someday they would be put to use. Thus was created the locale of *Firdaus* – truly a paradise on Earth, in and around the area of Mount *Demavand*, near the city of *Tehran* in *Iran*.

The years passed, and the movement of the planets exerted its varied influence on the earth and its citizens. The *Peshdadian* Dynasty was followed by the *Kyanian*, and it was in the reign of *Kai Gustasp* that the Prophet *Zarathushtra* descended on the earth in 7552 BC, established the *Zarathushtrian* faith and sowed the seeds for the birth of the other four major religions. Time respects none. Soon an emerging force in *India* vanquished the *Kyanian* dynasty, as *Lord Krishna* descended and established the *Hindu* faith in around 5423 BC. Within 100 years, this power too subsided and a new dynasty arose in *Iran*, one whose name

too is unknown in modern history. The *Huafritan* dynasty ruled Iran and the rest of the world for nearly 1620 years and was the golden age of the Zarathushtrian faith. As the planets changed their configuration, the *Huafritan* dynasty gave way to the *Kudarvan* dynasty stretching another 1630 years. As their power subsided, various small principalities fought with each other, and the Egyptian civilization reached its zenith.

Soon from the *Hyksos* tribe arose Abraham and laid the foundations of the Jewish faith in around 1375 BC. The seeds sown by Abraham were fructified under Prophet Moses in 840 BC. As events moved quickly, far away in India, the two great leaders, Lord *Mahavir* and *Gautama Buddha* emerged and established *Jainism* and *Buddhism*. In 558 BC *Kurush*, or *Cyrus II*, the Great established the mighty *Achaemenian* Empire, which was further strengthened by Darius the Great around 521 BC. This was soon laid to waste by the Greek Alexander the Accursed. As time passed, the *Parthians* established themselves in around 256 BC. A few years later as men fought over land and empire, three Zarathushtrian Magi saw the sign in the sky and hastened their caravan to that small manger in Bethlehem where was born Jesus Christ, with his message of peace, love and compassion. The world's fourth great faith was thus established.

In Iran meanwhile, the warring factions united to form the *Sassanian* Empire under *Ardeshir Papakan* in 226 AD. As the years passed, the monarchy changed hands from *Ardeshir* to *Shahpur I*. But even as the glory of the Sassanians grew, a new dragon was rearing its head in the form of *Mani*, the self-proclaimed prophet, who founded Manichaeism – an eclectic mix of the Zarathushtrian, Buddhist and Christian faiths. After being hounded out of Iran, *Mani* spread his message amongst the countries of Europe and Asia Minor. The throne now passed on to *Hormazd I* and then to *Behram I*, *Behram II*, *Behram III*, and *Shahpur II*, the Great.

The growing clout of the Christian faith now began to affect the Zarathushtrians of Iran, particularly in the Armenian parts of the empire. Given the sad state of the religion, many of the faithful began to cast doubts on their Prophet and His message. It is at such times that certain highly evolved souls, called *Rainidars* – the Restorers of the Faith, emerge amongst the faithful, and after proving their exalted state through the performance of miraculous feats, repair the disturbed state of the religion. So it was in the reign of *Shahpur II*, the Great that emerged the great *Rainidar Dastur Adurbad Mahrespand*. He passed the test of molten metal by pouring molten bronze on his chest and escaping unscathed. Thus proving his divine

stature, the wise Dastur started the process of cleansing the faith of the various malpractices that had crept in. Keeping in mind the calibre of souls that were to be born during his spiritual reign, Dastur Adurbad re-organised the Avesta prayers and also started the process of collecting and collating all the scattered fragments of the Avesta into a fresh set of 21 *Nasks*, called *Saoshyanta Manthra Spenta Nasks*. The Zarathushtrian faithful were thus re-energised by the appearance of the Rainidar, and the Zarathushtrian religion was refurbished.

The Sassanians continued their rule under *Artakshir II*, *Shahpur III*, *Behram IV*, *Yazdegard I*, *Behram V*, *Yazdegard II*, *Hormazd III*, *Piroj I*, and *Palash*. The project to collect the scattered remains of the Avesta and Pahlavi Nasks continued during this time. The monarchy passed onto *Kobad I*, *Jamasp* and *Kobad I* again. It was in the reign of *Kobad I* that another self-proclaimed Prophet *Mazdak* pronounced the second great heresy. The world's first communist, *Mazdak* preached common ownership of all goods and women. He advocated breaking of all rules of society with respect to seniority and merit. The preacher disparaged the essential doctrine of Zarathushtrianism, which was based on the evolution of different grades of souls. *Kobad* came under the influence of the communist and emptied the royal granaries. But the King's son, *Khusro* had more sense. Envisaging trouble in the future, *Khusro* publicly denounced *Mazdak* and defeated him in debate. *Mazdak* and his followers were put to death.

*In a separate incident whose date is not available, an advanced sage was saying his prayers in a small fire temple somewhere in Iran, when a group of disgruntled people decided to kill the holy man for some unknown reason. The sage immediately caught their evil thoughts and sent out a silent prayer for help. By some coincidence, this thought was picked up by an Iranian warrior, a Master of 30,000 soldiers, who happened to be passing by. Arriving in the nick of time, the brave warrior single-handedly managed to chase away the murderous thugs and saved the sage's life. As they stood facing each other, the blood stained warrior and the aged sage, both felt as though this was the beginning of a unique friendship which would transcend this life and extend in to the next. They parted, after a few words of thanks and gratitude, wondering when they would see each other again.*

It was 488 AD. A few years later, the wise *Khusro* ascended the throne as *Khusro I*, *Anosharavan*, more popularly known as *Noshirwan-e-Adil*, the Just. Despite his enlightened rule, the damage caused by *Mazdak* had taken its toll. The supreme advisors of the King were

the *Magi* – the most highly evolved of Zarathushtrian priests, who were in constant harmony with nature. These souls, not to be mistaken for common priests, were the descendants of the Prophet Zarathushtra and possessed intense wisdom and spiritual powers. When Mazdak pronounced his heretic doctrine, the King did not listen to his advisors and severe damage was done to the nation. These wise souls saw the future, and realised it was not bright both for them as well as for their beloved faith. In order to discharge their function as the custodians of the faith, it was evident that they would have to retire from public life.

They thus made preparations and in around 550 AD, the cream of the Zarathushtrian magi retired from public life to a secluded location near the Caspian Sea, called *Chaechast*. After about 50 years, in around 600 AD, a group from Chaechast left to reach that same place which had been made ready by the Peshdadian King Jamshyd nearly 10,000 years ago. Thus came the residents of Demavand. The Magavs of Demavand and Chaechast took with them the cream of Iranian civilization, which they had accumulated and treasured over the centuries and established these bastions of seclusion, where no normal man could go. They now continued their spiritual kinetics from these two locations. The head of these secluded bastions are called *Sraoshavarez* – The Co-Worker of Holy Sraosha. These most highly evolved souls guide the destinies of the Zarathushtrian faith and overlook their followers, wherever they may be on the Earth. The first such leader of Demavand in 600 AD was *Sraoshavarez Nauzer*.

After the departure of the Magavs, Iran faced a series of most dreadful epidemics in which a large part of the population died due to plague, cholera and influenza. Meanwhile, after the death of Khusro I a steady line of ineffectual Kings came to the throne. Weakened by inter-community marriages and busy in wining and fornication, those were dark days for the monarchy. The sun was setting on the Sassanian Empire. Another sad incident was the banishment from Iran of a very saintly and pious Magi, called *Dastur Dinyar* in unfortunate circumstances. There are no accidents in Nature, no coincidences. As the planets took their course, in 570 AD the Prophet of the fifth and last great faith – Muhammad was born at Mecca, where a few years later arrived Dastur Dinyar, guided by his destiny to train the young Muhammad into the mysteries of the universe.

As the last Zarathushtrian monarch Yazdegard III, son of Shaharyar ascended the throne in 632 AD, the influence of the Arabs was increasing under their newfound religious zeal. In a

series of battles, the mighty Sassanian Empire was defeated, both by its own weaknesses and by the play of the planets, which would just not allow an Iranian victory. Hounded by defeats at the battles of Qadisiyya in 636 and Nehavand in 641, the unfortunate emperor wandered for ten years from place to place, never giving up hope, or his practice of the Zarathushtrian faith. At last he went to Marv and took refuge in a flourmill. As Khusro, the miller inquired of him and offered some food, the devout Zarathushtrian king asked the miller to get the *Barsom* twigs, so that he could pray the *Baj* before taking food – a practice followed by priests and Kings. The suspicious miller realised who it was and informed the local chieftain. Greedy for the King's jewels, the crafty miller returned and killed the King, took off his robe and valuables and dumped the naked body into the river. It was only next day that the floating body was retrieved by the Christian monks nearby, washed and disposed off reverently. Such was the end of the Sassanian monarchy, and its last King. Truly the Zarathushtrian empire was now gone forever.

It was 688 AD. The remnants of the Zarathushtrian Empire now existed as small principalities in Tabaristan who called themselves Sipahbad – the commanders. But by 730 AD even they were finished. In this overall gloom, preparations were on for greater things. The Zarathushtrian faith could not be finished off so easily. The secluded Masters of the Zarathushtrian faith in Chaechast and Demavand were making preparations. From among them they selected a wise Magav, adept in all the sciences and a master of the Manthras. His name was Nairyosangh Dhaval. The wise Magav collected the best of Zarathushtrian stock, over 2000 of them, and under the guidance and directions of the Masters of Demavand and Chaechast, the group left the shores of Iran from the Port of Hormuz, in order to establish the foundation for the future Zarathushtrian empire. This group of prime Zarathushtrian followers landed on the shores of Diu and stayed there for 18 years, and from there sailed to Sanjan where they finally settled. These were not refugees, nor were they running away. They were the Protectors of the Faith. They were the chosen ones, who had consciously decided to give up their motherland and establish base in a sister country with long ties, in order to safeguard the spiritual institutions of their forefathers. They came with the sole motive of protecting, preserving and perpetuating their faith and religion, which was handed to them by the Prophet Zarathushtra many thousands of years ago, and which had seen great days of glory and grandeur. Now although they had no empire of their own, no King, they did not falter. Never one to look back, their sights were set firmly on the future, to that day when the Zarathushtrian monarchy would once again be established. For that to happen they knew that

the life-breath of the monarchy – their religion and all its long-standing practices and precepts needed to be safeguarded, without any dilution; their Manthras handed down without changing a single word. In order to remind future generations of their solemn duty, and in order to be one with nature and be able to catch the Divine Blessings from the 16 *Chakhras* or Energy Centres of the Earth as well as from the rotating heavens above, these pioneers, under the spiritual leadership of Dastur Nairyosangh Dhaval established the *Iranshah* – the Blazing Emperor of their hearts. Meanwhile the leadership of Demavand passed to the second *Sraoshavarez Marzban* and from him to the third *Sraoshavarez Kaaran*.

It was 1008 AD. As Iran suffered under the onslaught of religious zealots, the pioneers and their descendants continued to progress in India. In Demavand, the fourth *Sraoshavarez Khodadad* and the fifth *Sraoshavarez Saarvaar* guided the destinies of the Zarathushtrians in Iran and India. In Iran, the scattered remnants of the Avesta and Pahlavi Nasks were being reorganised and resurrected. Yet much was irretrievably lost to time.

As the year 1319 AD arrived, the Parsis in India maintained their low profile, served their adopted country well, and soon established a reputation for truth and fair dealing, which arose out of their practice of the Zarathushtrian religion. It was the dark ages in Iran as persecution continued. In Demavand, the sixth *Sraoshavarez Nauzer* and after him the seventh *Sraoshavarez Khudamurad* watched the play of the planets and continued their divine task of being the hidden bulwark of the Zarathushtrian faith, practicing their intense spiritual disciplines and preparing for the advent of the Promised One. Soon it was 1680 AD.

As the planets shifted their configurations, changes began happening speedily. The arrival of the western explorers to India was to change the face of history once again. The traders soon became invaders, and the suzerainty of India passed onto the British over a cup of tea. The Parsis now began spreading out towards other parts of Gujarat and Mumbai. With their honesty, they soon won the trust of the new rulers and were shortly in a position of great influence. Yet with advancing prosperity and Anglicisation, the revered practices of the Zarathushtrian faith began to be doubted. Those same old practices which had enabled the Parsis to survive, a mere handful in the severely dissolving sea of India over the many centuries were now put to the side. It became more important to ape the European tradition. Against the 10,000 year tradition of covering the head at all times, Parsis began doffing their caps at ladies, and removing them in the house. In place of the Baj before taking food, and

observing silence, Parsis began enjoying large banquets and mixed lunches. Gone were the venerable beards, and the knee length Sudreh. Both men and women gave up observing the strict laws of ritual purity around the house.

But the worst was yet to come. The invaders now became the scholars. The study of Avesta and Pahlavi scriptures commenced. The early savants made tremendous efforts to collate all the existing manuscripts and take out a standard version of the scriptures. These efforts deserve the highest praise. But soon problems arose. Ignoring the translations of the Pahlavi Masters, the long-standing traditions of the Parsis, as well as the internal evidence within the scriptures, some misguided so-called scholars now started conjecturing. Theories about the origin of the scriptures were concocted. Later Avesta and Younger Avesta became fashionable. Praising just the Gathas and running down of the *Vi-daeva-data*, the same law brought down by the Prophet Zarathushtra to control the rampant evil in His time became common. These translations, which did no justice to the scriptures, broke the faith of the religious minded Parsis, who for hundreds of years had steadfastly believed that all Manthras had beneficent powers, the translations being secondary. As this decline started, so did the decline in standards of morality and honesty. In Iran, the Dark Ages continued. In Demavand, the eighth *Sraoshavarez Nauzer* and after him the ninth *Sraoshavarez Marzban* took charge. As the Chief Custodian of the Zarathushtrian faith, Sraoshavarez Marzban began making preparations to stem the tide. The stage was thus set for the birth of an extraordinary person: Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff.

### **Birth and early life**

As the sun set on the dusty streets of Mumbai and the population lit their oil lamps and prepared to turn in for the night, on Tuesday, 3rd August, 1858, one year after the Great Indian Sepoy Mutiny, at 7:34 pm on the Parsi Roj Tir, Mah Behman, 1227 Yz. a boy was born to Dhunbaiji and Nowroji Peshotan Shroff, who they named Behram.

Behramshah was born into a well to do family who hailed from Surat, and hence were called Surti. His father ran a small money lending business, hence the surname was changed to Shroff (moneylender), although earlier they were professional priests. His grandfather, Peshotan was a minor partner in some business ventures with the first Parsi Baronet Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and also a qualified priest. His great grandfather was a senior Boywalla



priest at the Surat Atash Behram. Behramshah's mother was descended from the famous Tarachand family of Mumbai.

Thus Behramshah had an easy childhood. However, Behramshah had a very bad stammer which severely hampered his education and the attendant embarrassment and a general slow mind coupled with movements between Mumbai and Surat ensured that Behramshah did not study beyond the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in school. The speech defect also meant that Behramshah could not train to be a priest as the Avesta could not be mispronounced. Thus despite growing up in some comfort, Behramshah was severely handicapped in terms of education and general knowledge.

Early in his childhood, Behramshah lost his father and thereafter stayed alone with his mother and a sister. As he entered adolescence, there were severe family disputes in the house. Fed up by this constant bickering, Behramshah decided to leave his family and the house. One night, Behramshah put on one set of clothes over another, wore a couple of rings on his fingers, took some money and some bare necessities and left his house. Ustad Saheb used to recount to his close disciples later in his life that he never really knew where he was going. But some innate force was pulling him, leading him on to his ultimate destination and glorious destiny.

Thus Behramshah left Mumbai and travelled by train to Ahmedabad, and then to Kathiawad in west Gujarat, passing through Godhra and ultimately reaching Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province at the boundaries of the great British Empire, and the very edge of civilization. Peshawar was but a bustling jungle of caravan sarais and rough and rude traders, the home of the fierce *Pathans*, who never gave in to the British and a meeting place where goods from the East and West were traded, where fortunes were made and lives lost. In this dusty but lively mess landed up Behramshah. By some weird coincidence, a relative of Behramshah ran a small shop in Peshawar and he met the runaway boy and offered him a place to stay. The uncle gave a dire warning to the boy not to step out of the walls of the city lest he be kidnapped and the uncle have to free him through a hefty ransom. Meanwhile a telegram was dispatched to Behramshah's mother in Mumbai giving her the glad tidings, and the uncle's mind began scheming of ways to send the lad back home from that last outpost of civilization.

## **The first meeting**

Soon Behramshah settled down to a routine in Peshawar. Fond of open spaces and natural beauty, the lad would often wander outside the walls of the city, ignoring the warnings of his uncle. One evening, while doing so, Behramshah had the urge to answer a call of nature. After finishing the bodily function, Behramshah stood up and wiping his hands with the dry dust of the ground started the process of untying and re-tying the *Kusti* as a necessary corollary to the call of nature. When he finished, he was startled to see two very tall and well built Pathans watching his actions very intently. They gestured at him and asked him to come near them. Despite being in the typical Pathan dress, their faces were full of spiritual radiance and they exerted a calming influence on the boy's scared wits. Realising that there was no way he could escape them, Behramshah went up to them and soon they were speaking a curious mix of Urdu, Hindi and Gujarati. The two individuals indicated that they were part of a larger caravan which had pitched its tents some distance away and wondered if the boy would be happy to see their leader who was resting in the tent.

Despite being scared, and remembering the ominous warnings of his uncle, Behramshah was drawn to those two individuals and soon their charming manners and gentle speech won him over and the trio proceeded to the tent of the caravan. As Behramshah entered the tent, a wondrous sight greeted him. The tent was furnished with plain but rich carpets on which sat a group of most pleasant looking people. They had laid out dry fruits and various snacks and sweet drinks and seemed to be in the midst of a picnic. In the centre of the tent, sitting on a high chair, was a man so majestic and awe inspiring that Behramshah could not take his eyes off him. His face was engulfed with radiance and his eyes shone with spiritual bliss. Very kindly and in a most gentle voice, the leader introduced himself as Rashid Saheb and welcomed Behramshah to his tent. He asked Behramshah various questions about his home and the state of Parsis in Mumbai. He inquired as to whether he knew any prayers and who was the current High Priest or Dastur in Mumbai. Despite the radiance of Rashid Saheb, Behramshah was still very scared. Catching his thoughts, Rashid Saheb made a signal whereupon the other members in the tent loosened their Pathan dress to reveal that they were wearing the sacred Sudreh and Kusti without which no true Parsi can move around. When Behramshah realised that he was present in the midst of his fellow community members he felt very relieved, although he still desperately wanted to leave the tent and go home and

never comeback again. Once again sensing his thoughts, Rashid Saheb gave Behramshah two beautiful bags packed with dry fruits, asking him to come again the next day. Appearing to agree with Rashid Saheb, Behramshah was thankful that at last he was free to run away. The same two persons who had first met him escorted him till the city gates and a very relieved Behramshah reached the home of his uncle and related the amazing story over dinner.

The astonished uncle was convinced that Behramshah was about to be kidnapped and ordered the boy not to meet the group again. That night as Behramshah slept he dreamed that he was in a garden full of fruits and flowers and the gardener gave Behramshah all the fruits he could eat and treated him really well. Soon they came to a stream near the garden next to which there was a wall. The gardener sat on the wall and a second later jumped into the stream and disappeared, and Behramshah awoke with a start.

The next day Behramshah decided that he would not go to the tent of the strange persons and whiled away his day. Yet as the afternoon began to turn to evening a extraordinary attraction towards the tent arose in Behramshah. It seemed as though a powerful magnet was pulling at him and drawing him towards the tent of the mysterious Rashid Saheb. Soon he was walking towards the tent. At the city gates, he found the same two individuals waiting to escort him in to the presence of their leader. Rashid Saheb welcomed Behramshah back to the tent and spoke lovingly with him for a long time. He told Behramshah that they were residents of Iran and had come to trade in certain goods. Their business was almost over and Rashid Saheb wondered whether Behramshah would be interested in coming with them to Iran. The boy was so wonderstruck by the radiance of Rashid Saheb that he agreed to meet them the very next day and set off to Iran. He thus went back to his uncle and revealed his plans.

The uncle went into a state of panic and began thinking of ways to stop Behramshah's journey. He therefore went to the Post Office and soon came back to Behramshah with the sad news that a telegram had come from Surat indicating that Behramshah's mother was very ill and that he should immediately leave for Surat as the situation was very serious. Despite his fight, Behramshah's love for his mother was still intact and with a heavy heart he went to the tent of Rashid Saheb, explained the matter and expressed his inability to join the caravan to Iran.

Rashid Saheb closed his eyes for a second. He smiled at Behramshah and told him that today was his mother's birthday and she was sitting hale and hearty in Surat with his sister after having finished a lunch of Dhan-Dar and sweet curd. The amazed Behramshah realised that it was indeed his mother's birthday as per the Parsi calendar. Rashid Saheb explained that the telegram was a ruse to stop Behramshah from accompanying them to Iran. The furious lad marched off to his uncle, denounced the forgery, and announced his immediate departure. The startled uncle could not believe how his trick had been discovered and decided he was dealing with forces beyond his control. Behramshah left his clothes and the few possessions he had with his uncle and put on the Pathan clothes given by Rashid Saheb and soon joined the caravan.

### **Off to Iran**

At the given time, the tents were packed onto the horses and mules, and the whole group, led by the radiant Rashid Saheb began their slow but steady march towards the mountain ranges of Iran, with their prized possession – Behramshah, in tow. Starting from the bazaar in Peshawar, the caravan first headed north towards Kafirstan, marching towards Afghanistan and crossing the northern border of Afghanistan the caravan headed further north towards Khorasan. Arriving at Khorasan the caravan turned south towards Azerbaijan, finally reaching the plains of Mount Demavand north west of Iran after a somewhat circuitous journey. Here the caravan divided into two parts. One part took another route and went off to an undisclosed location. The other main part comprising Rashid Saheb, Behramshah and a few others walked a little higher, finally coming in front of a cliff face on Mount Demavand.

Here an old but very well built Mobed and a few others met them. In front of the astonished Behramshah, the old Mobed took out a few boulders from what seemed to be a mountain face without any breaks and a way opened up which was large enough for the people and the horses to walk through. The caravan entered the tunnel and walked for some time in complete darkness, Behramshah instinctively trusting Rashid Saheb to lead him to the right place. Soon they came to the end and Behramshah realised that they had stepped into a most beautiful valley. The atmosphere was distinctly different from the outside and there was a sense of peace and tranquillity, which Behramshah had never before felt in his life. Every leaf of the myriad trees and the very grass under his feet seemed to be humming the Celestial Song of Bliss, the air seemed to carry the sweet scent of Paradise, and the open, blue sky was bright

but not too hot. Behramshah inquired of Rashid Saheb as to what this place was, and he explained that this was the valley of *Firdaus*, near Mount Demavand in Iran, which was home to Rashid Saheb and nearly 2000 other Zarathushtrians.

Immediately on arrival, the members of the caravan went to meet and pay their respects to the supreme leader of Firdaus, the Sraoshavarez Marzban Saheb. Smiling at the thought of how Behramshah had been finally taken from Peshawar, Rashid Saheb presented Behramshah to the Sraoshavarez and the two met for the first time, in their current lives. *Unknown to Behram, but totally known to the Sraoshavarez, the scene enacted more than one thousand years ago, when a blood stained warrior stood face to face with an aged sage, whose life he had just saved, was now replayed: for the sage was now Sraoshavarez Marzban Saheb, whereas the warrior was but the young boy Behramshah.*

In this manner, over 10,000 years after the Peshdadian King Jamshyd built Firdaus; through the play of the planets and the passage of time; and in fulfilment of his glorious destiny, Behramshah entered the place, which was and remains out-of-bounds for most of us. One small piece in a giant jigsaw had finally fallen into place.

**Primary source:**

*“The History of the Ilm-e-Khshnoom movement”*: a series of articles in the Parsi Avaz weekly written by Jehangir S. Chiniwalla, 1950-51.