

## Welcome to Frashogard

It is the writer's good fortune to introduce to you this new publication *Frashogard* – the Journal of *Ilm-e-Khshnoom*. It was a hot October afternoon, when a vision passed across his closed eyes, of a publication, very similar to the one you hold. The initial reaction was to discard it as a fanciful wish. Yet, as the days passed, the thought strengthened in the mind, the idea germinated, and an initial discussion was started. Now, after several months of waiting as well as working, through bouts of doubt and belief, through various difficulties, the dream has finally crystallised into reality. *'Not even a leaf flutters without the will of the Lord'* – in the same manner, it is He who has brought this dream into existence, and for that the writer is eternally grateful.

The Pahlavi word *Frashogard* (Avesta *Frashokereti*), means 'making wonderful, renovation, salvation'. It refers to the far off event in time when all the creations of Ahura Mazda will be reunited with him. As Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote in his Eulogy:

That God, which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element  
*And One Far-Off divine Event,*  
To which the whole creation moves.

The name *Frashogard* is of course well known to those who are students of the Zoroastrian mystic revelation called *Ilm-e-Khshnoom*. In January 1907, *Ervad Phiroze S. Masani*, a gifted Parsi scholar, deeply influenced by the vegetarian and temperance movement, which was sweeping across the United States, started a society in Mumbai known as *The Parsi Vegetarian & Temperance Society*. The aims and objects of the Society stated, *inter alia*,

*"To help bring near the Millennium that Golden Age – (referred to in the Avesta as 'Frasho-kereti', i.e. Renovation), when health, humanity and harmony shall reign supreme on Earth; in Avesta parlance when Asha the Law of Order Divine shall be established in the world; when disease, distress and premature death shall be things of the past"*

*"To publish periodically an Organ of the Society, a copy of which shall be supplied free of cost to each member of the Society."*

Around the same time, a man emerged from Surat carrying with him an amazing message. This was *Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff*. In around 1875, the Ustad, then a lad of around 18, came into contact with a group of Zoroastrian sages in Peshawar. He was taken by them to Iran, in an area near *Mount Demavand*, which housed their sanctuary of about 2000 Zoroastrians. This community, which remains in seclusion and which is not accessible to outsiders, is led by a group of 72 Zoroastrian Sages, called the *Abed Saheb-e-Dilan* – the Masters of the Heart. Due to the existence of some past obligations, the lad of 18 stayed with these sages for a period of three years, and during that time was trained by them in various streams of knowledge. After his stay with the sages, the Ustad spent several years travelling all over Iran and India, till he finally came back to Surat and remained quiet for nearly 25 years, never revealing to anyone his most amazing experiences. Finally, in around 1906, the Ustad was guided by his hidden Masters to present before the Parsi community the Zoroastrian mystic revelation, called *Ilm-e-Khshnoom*. He started in Surat, where several community leaders were deeply influenced by his teachings.

In around 1909, Ervad Phiroze Masani came into contact with Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff. The Ustad had a profound impact on Ervad Masani, who found esoteric support for the issues of vegetarianism and temperance, which were so close to his heart. In July 1911, in pursuance of the stated goals of the Society, Ervad Phiroze Masani started the publication of a quarterly Gujarati magazine, which he named *Frashogard*. The first few issues of the magazine dealt mainly with issues of vegetarianism and temperance, bodily health, natural remedies, new scientific discoveries supporting vegetarianism and related topics. However, as Ustad Saheb started revealing more of the esoteric knowledge which he had acquired during his stay in Demavand, *Frashogard* magazine soon became the first Organ to publish the Ustad's teachings. In 1915, Ustad Saheb began revealing the true import of the word *Frashogard*, and under his guidance, a version of the picture that appears on the cover of this publication was first published as the frontispiece of *Frashogard* volume 5, number 1, and all issues thereafter. The publication was very well received within the community and the Society flourished. In 1917, the Society, along with its sibling, the *Zoroastrian Radih Society* bought a large tract of land in Jogeshwari, Mumbai for the establishment of a Fire Temple and an *Ideal Zoroastrian Colony*. The foundation for the Fire Temple was laid by the Ustad himself in 1923, but due to various reasons the work never reached completion.

In January 1923, Frashogard Volume 12, number 3-4, Ervad Masani first introduced a new writer before the community – *Dr. Framroze S. Chiniwalla*, who despite being an ophthalmic surgeon, was also a serious student of the Zoroastrian mystic revelation, and destined to be the person who would write most of the books of *Khshnoom*. His very first series of articles on Iranian history established Dr. Chiniwalla's reputation of having an amazing command over his subject and his later writings proved that this was not scholarly, but surely, inspired writing.

Ustad Saheb passed away on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1927. For the next one year, Ervad Phiroze Masani put in an astonishing amount of effort, which saw the light of the day as the *Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff Memorial Volume*, comprising Frashogard volumes 17 and 18 (1928-1929). This mammoth publication of over 750 pages included the personal testimonies of more than 30 persons who had come into contact with the Ustad, in addition to two long articles by Dr. Chiniwalla. The great effect that Ustad Saheb had on the lives of so many unknown persons was aptly demonstrated by some deeply moving articles in the volume as well as the streak of commonality which ran through them – *that this was an amazing man who strode like a colossus in the community - yet whose worth was not really appreciated during his life time.*

In 1932, the Parsi Vegetarian & Temperance Society completed its Silver Jubilee. On this occasion, Ervad Phiroze Masani came out with the *Parsi Vegetarian & Temperance Society Silver Jubilee memorial volume*, comprising Frashogard Volume 21, issues 1-4. Once again, in 1935, the sister society of the PVTs, known as the Zoroastrian Radih Society, completed its silver jubilee, which also coincided with the 1000-year celebrations of the Iranian poet Firdausi. Ervad Phiroze Masani commemorated these events with Frashogard volume 24, issues 1-4, titled as the *Zoroastrian Radih Society Silver Jubilee and the Firdausi Millennium Memorial volume*.

In July 1937, the Frashogard magazine completed 25 years of publication. This joyous event was commemorated by bringing out the *Frashogard Silver Jubilee Memorial Volume*, comprising Frashogard volume 26, issues 1-4. It was in this volume, that the frontispiece appearing on the cover of the magazine from 1915 was further explained through a masterful essay by Dr. Framroze Chiniwalla, along with two other detailed articles. In 1940, the special scheme of after-death ceremonies started by the PVTs for the benefit of its members

completed its silver jubilee, which was commemorated as *Frashogard Anusheh Ruvan Silver Jubilee Memorial Volume*, comprising Frashogard volume 30, issues 3-4. This volume contained Dr. Chiniwalla's translation of the *Fravardin Yasht*, along with two long essays on the philosophy of the *Fravashi* in the Zoroastrian mystic revelation.

The death of Ervad Phiroze Masani on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1943 marked the end of a life committed to the religion and its mystic revelation. The last issue of Frashogard, volume 32, issue 1-2, carried a pullout sheet bearing the news of the death of its Editor. An era of journalism ended.

Proving the dictum that nature abhors a vacuum, on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1947 – the 20<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of Ustad Saheb, *Jehangir Chiniwalla*, the younger brother of Dr. Framroze Chiniwalla, started the weekly newspaper *Parsi Avaz*. Every week, an 8-16 page tabloid size paper would now carry the writings of the Zoroastrian mystic revelation, led principally by Dr. Framroze Chiniwalla. This amazing saga continued for nearly 27 years, for one year after the death of Jehangirji Chiniwalla on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1973. The gap left by the demise of *Parsi Avaz* was filled by the commencement of another quarterly – *Dini Avaz*, in 1976, the *Parsi Pukar*, in July 1995, and in America, the *Mazdayasni Connection*.

In 2001, the Fire Temple whose foundation was laid by Ustad Saheb was finally consecrated as the *Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff Daremeher*, and a colony of nearly 280 apartments grew around the area now known as Behram Baug. In November 2003, this writer assumed charge and continues today as Head Priest of the Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff Daremeher. It is within the environs of this sanctified place that the dream of the hot October afternoon took place and events unfolded culminating in the issue of Frashogard in your hands.

The questions may well be asked: what is the necessity of bringing out yet another publication? Could not the cause be better served by merging all publications into one consolidated entity? In an age of diminishing readership, who is going to read this Journal? We have ourselves grappled with these questions. However, the more we have thought about it, the more convinced we have become about the need for such a publication. We make this assertion because we believe that there are several qualities that set us apart from the existing

publications, which we shall describe below, and which we believe form the core of our Editorial policy.

Firstly, *we are here to present Khshnoom. We are not here to defend Khshnoom.* We believe that the *Zoroastrian mystic revelation does not require any justification, defence, or proof.* Of those who will read this, some may believe, some may not. That is their personal destiny.

Secondly, as a corollary to what has been stated above, we shall not enter into correlations between what Khshnoom has revealed and what modern science discovers today. The assertions of Khshnoom are *divine revelation*, whereas the theories of modern science are the outcome of a human mind trying to place divinity within its three-dimensional world. We could not be bothered if some recent discovery comes close to what Khshnoom has revealed. We could not be bothered if a new archaeological dig, like the recent finding at Jiroft in Iran, lends some credence to the time line of Iranian history as revealed by Khshnoom. We distinguish ourselves from these issues, because *we believe we possess the truth, others are still trying hard to find it.*

Thirdly, we shall not enter into arguments with those who want scriptural evidence for what Khshnoom has revealed. To the question often put to us: ‘where is it written in the Avesta?’ we put forth a counter-question: ‘where is it *not* written in the Avesta?’ To our mind, it seems ridiculous to ask for scriptural references when 95% of the scriptures are lost. We speak from the authority of a mystic revelation. We cannot place ourselves on the level of a philologist trying to arrive at a logical conclusion from the imperfect grammatical study of the few extant manuscripts. In fact, we affirm that it is *only through the use of Khshnoom that the true beauty of Avesta philology can be understood.*

Fourthly, we believe that the way Ilm-e-Khshnoom has been presented to the English-speaking world so far leaves much to be desired. We believe in presenting facts with an academic rigour, in a structured and organised framework. We shall not be diverted from the main task at hand: *presenting Khshnoom in English.* We shall integrate the use of the numerous Khshnoom technical terms in a way that will not confuse the reader. Wherever possible, we shall simplify the explanations using charts and diagrams.

Fifthly, *we shall not enter into discussions around current community politics*. There are enough publications in that sphere. We cannot justify pulping trees to write personality based political journalism. Our view is very clear. The community is in crisis. *Nothing can save the community except divine intervention*. We believe that the time for such an intervention is drawing closer. The message of Ustad Saheb from the sages of Demavand is very clear: “do not give up your religion. Stick to its timeless traditions. Respect the spiritual institutions, which have been bequeathed in trust to you. Do this, and no harm shall come to the community.” We believe it is time for every Parsi *to stop talking about religion, and start practising it*.

Sixthly, we believe that *every individual has a right to hold a view, even if it is contrary to our own*. We shall not denigrate, run-down, insult or demean him for that. We believe in appreciating the other’s view, without diluting our own. We shall therefore, subject to Editorial review, print articles in Frashogard, which may not conform to what Khshnoom has revealed. And thereafter we shall present our own view on the topic, leaving readers to arrive at their own conclusions.

These are the guiding principles on which we have started Frashogard and this is what sets us apart from our peers.

The year 2006 will mark the centenary of the appearance of Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff in public. In the hundred years since his revelation, the Parsi community has gone through great upheavals. The community stands today like a worn-out person, bereft of her dignity and her grandeur. One by one, her glorious institutions are crumbling under the onslaught of its members, who, in their heady pursuit of materialism, have totally forgotten the true meaning of being Parsi. Yet in our hearts, there burns the *Eternal Flame of Optimism*. *We know that we are not alone. We know that there are great spiritual forces working in our favour. We are not afraid*. In our mind there is no doubt that from this decadence and decay there will rise forth a reawakening, a moral rearmament, a *Divine Spring of Spirituality*, which will be led by the appearance of the *Promised One*, a soul whose sheer lustre will banish the darkness from our hearts. This is the promise of our Master, Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff, this is the promise of the Abed Saheb-e-Dilan of Demavand, and this is the promise of Zarathushtra: *nothing shall harm us, do not be afraid. They also serve who stand and wait*.

As we begin *Frashogard – the Journal of Ilm-e-Khshnoom*, we offer our humble thanks to all those who have helped us; we thank even more those who have not helped us, for their denial has goaded us to strive even harder. Each one has played his part. For it is only right that we make the effort. The result is to be left upto the Lord. As Dr. Framroze Chiniwalla wrote in the introduction to his book *Nikiz-i-Veh Din*:

“From the strength of our faith, we have fashioned a small ship; and in this ship we have placed this effort (the book, *Frashogard*) of ours; and through our humble Mazdayasni thoughts, we have set it sail in the sea of Eternal Time. We have entrusted our effort to Destiny, who is the Master of the Ship. And it is our fervent hope that the Master of the Ship shall succeed in steering the craft to its ultimate destination – to reach the *Abed Saheb-e-Dilan* - the Masters of the Heart, to attract their merciful vision, to free us from this torment of intellectual inadequacy.”

Our homage to the Protectors of the Faith, who verily move this earth forward from breath to breath towards the ultimate salvation - *Frashogard*.

May they accept our humble offering!

Ervad Marzban J. Hathiram

Mumbai, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005

78<sup>th</sup> Baj of Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff