

Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 369: Homaji ni Baj - Shehenshahi Roj Gowad Mah Dae

Hello all Tele Class friends:

Homaji ni Baj - Roj Gavad Mah Dae

Roj Govad of Mah Dae, which is today, Wednesday 3rd June 2020 this year, is observed as Homaji ni Baj. Growing up in my little village Tarapore, being in a Panthaki home, we observed this day every year in solemn memory of Homaji. And then in our beloved school, MF Cama Athornan Institute, we learnt quite a bit about Homaji.

So you would ask who was Homaji and what this Baj is for? To answer that, we have to go back a few centuries.

I have read quite a bit about Homaji but two references about it stand out. They are:

1. Noshir H. Dadrawala – www.parsi-times.com Saturday May 30, 2020,
2. K. E. Eduljee - <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/parsi/surat3.htm#kabisa>

From these two and my recollections from two instances mentioned above and some other references I have read, I have put together an account of Homaji below.

I want to thank my very good friends Noshir Dadrawala and K. E. Eduljee for their good references about Homaji and the Parsi environment around that time.

In Sassanian times, our calendar was of 365 days and we did not add one day every four years (Leap Year) to be in sync with the seasons but added a one full month after every 120 years. Historians believe that after coming to Gujarat, the Parsis added one full month sometime during 1126 – 1129 to be in sync with the current season but did not add anytime afterwards. In contrast, our Iranian Humdins did not add any month at all after the Sassanian defeat in 7th century.

In the 1720s CE, **Jamasp Peshotan Velati**, an Iranian-Zoroastrian priest, visited India and during his discourses he and his Parsi hosts discovered that there was a month's difference between their two calendars followed by Zoroastrians in Iran and India. This caused some consternation amongst a group of Parsi priests in Surat, and since Iran was considered the source of all orthodoxy, their assumption was that the calendar followed by our Iranian Humdins is the correct calendar. These priests began to solicit community support for adopting the Iranian calendar which some Parsees of Surat formally adopted on June 6th, 1745 CE.

They called themselves *Kadmi* (*Kadimi*) or followers of the *Kadim* or the ancient calendar. Those who did not adopt the change called themselves *Shehenshahi* or those who followed the royal traditional calendar from the coronation of our last King Yazdagird III of the Sassanian dynasty.

Dispute over which calendar was accurate took an ugly turn and led to a lot of infighting. Both

groups not only argued verbally but often took to street fighting and rioting within Parsi *Mohallas (streets)*.

The calendar controversy flared up rather seriously in Bharuch in the year 1782. A lady from the *Kadmi* group, who was pregnant, falsely accused a pious and innocent *Shehenshahi* Humdin - Homa (son of Jamshed Zaahiaa, a weaver and well-known poet of Bharuch) of kicking her, which allegedly led to a miscarriage.

Homaji was first brought to trial before the *Nawab* (Ruler) of Bharuch and then to Bombay before the British Court. He pleaded innocence. However, a member of the Wadia family belonging to the *Kadmi* sect gave false testimony as a witness against Homaji. Based on the witness' false testimony, Homaji was sentenced to death.

The pious and innocent Homaji was hanged to death at the corner of Bazaar-gate in the Fort locality of Bombay, on *Roj Govad* of Mah Dae 1152 YZ (corresponding to 1783 CE).

Before he was hanged, Homaji declared that he was innocent of the charge brought against him and that his sentence was not just. Homaji is believed to have declared, that the person who had leveled false charges against him would be found dead on the fourth day (*Chahrum*) after his death. He also declared before he was hanged that all those who will remember him for his innocence and his sacrifice will forever receive his blessings.

Reportedly, the witness who bore false testimony was found dead on the fourth day after Homaji was hanged.

To this day, devout Parsis observe *Govad Roj of Dae Mah* as a solemn occasion to remember Homaji as pious and holy man. In the *Aafringaan* prayers, his name is invoked with reverence along with names of other pious persons as *Behdin Homa Behdin Jamshed*. And many places in India, Pakistan and North America, we perform a Jashan and a Baj in the memory of Homaji and so Mah Dae and Roj Gowad, today, is called the Homaji ni Baj (Baj of Homaji).

Commemorating Homaji's Memory:

Today, as a community, we do not distinguish a Kadmi from a Shehenshahi Humdin. We all pray at both *Kadmi* and *Shehenshahi Atash Bahrams* with equal respect and devotion in Mumbai and in Surat.

Therefore, the day of *Homaji's Baaj* (death anniversary) is not just a day to commemorate the memory of Homaji and his sacrifice. It is the day we should resolve to abstain from infighting as a community and falsely accusing those who either think, speak, or act differently. It matters not if one is traditional or liberal. What is important, is to stay united as a community and discover unity in our diversity.

(References:

1. Noshir H. Dadrawala – www.parsi-times.com Saturday May 30, 2020,
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With this in mind, let us remember the pious memory of Homaji today with the prayer:

Prayer Text	Translation
Ashaonaam vanghuhish suraao spentaao fravashayo yazamaide.	We worship the good, heroic and beneficent Fravashis of the righteous people.
Anusheh rawaan rawaani, Behdin Homa Behdin Jamshed aedar yaad baad	Here we revere the immortal soul of Behdin Homa, the son of Behdin Jamshed
Anusheh rawaan rawaani, Hamaa Asho Farohar aedar yaad baad	Here we revere the immortal souls of all righteous Farohars.

SPD Comments

1. My very good friends, Noshir Dadrawala and K. E. Edulje are our community's very good scholars.
2. Noshir Bhai has written many great articles about our religion, prayers and community affairs. He is also currently BPP Trustee.
3. K. E. Eduljee's very informative website: <http://www.heritageinstitute.com> is full of Zoroastrian religious subjects, history, customs, etc. and is worth looking into.

May the Flame of Fellowship, Love, Charity and Respect for all burn ever eternal in our hearts so we can do HIS work with humility, diligence, and eternal enthusiasm!

Atha Janyaat, Yatha Aafrinaamahi! (May it be so as we wish!)

In HIS Service 24/7!

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli