

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

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of the historical development of the Parsi community after the fifteenth century in Navsari with references to Gujarati historical documents, "Athoran Tolani Bhagarsath Vanshavali". 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 Navar, Nirangdin, Varsyoji, and Boi ceremonies. The following are the main results of our study.

The Parsis community is composed of the Mobed (priests and their descendants) and the Behdins (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 Behdin 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 unavailability 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 Behdin

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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 Parsis 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 Parsee 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 ‘bhagaria’ is, Dr.Firoze M.Kotwal argues, nufrom the priests' act of ‘bhagar kadhvi(Guj.). ‘bhagar kadhvi’ is ‘to take out the Bhagar or dron (Av.draonah-portion: sacred breads) in the consecration of sacred breads(dron) brought to the Vadi Dari-Mihir. Hence,Bhaagar Kadhnara or Bhagaria(Guj.) means those priets who act ‘bhagar kadhvi’<sup>3)</sup>. The Bhagaria or Bhagarsath priests and its descendants have long since existed in the core of Zoroastrian Parsiscommunity in Navsari.They have been, if we follow Max Meber's concept, the trager of Zoroastrian beliefs and practices as well as socio-economical 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 Gujatratt. In 12th century a number of Parsis 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., Zarthosht Mobad, grandson of Hormazdyar Ramyar, settled down in Navsari accompanied with his two sons, Kamdin and Mobad. Bahram Mobad, Zarthosht's younger brother, left Sanjan for Bharuch(or Broach) and Pahlan Mobad, grandson of Zarthosht Mobad, moved to Surat to be the ancestor of the Godavra 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>5)</sup>.

Because of the great increase of Parsis population in Navsari toward the end of 14th century the descendants of Kamdin Zarthosht were obliged to employ from Sanjan Hom Bahmanyar, who came to Navsari with his only son Faredun in order to help the descendents of Kamdin Zarthosht. Hom Bahmayar continued to tend the Sanjan Atas Bahram at that time, to which the descendants of his brother Hormazdyar Bahmanyar in Sanjan objected, accusing them of earning their reward in two places. They asked Faredun and his two sons, Asha and Mahyar, to serve either Navsari or Sanjan.

Faredun and his two sons, Asha and Mahyar decided finally to work only in Navsari, “provided that the descendents of Mobad Kmdin, headed by Pahlan Anna and Kaka Dhanpal, agreed to divide the share from the proceeds of ceremonies equally between themselves and the three sons of Faredun in perpetuity”

The family members of Pahlan Anna and Kaka Dhanpal agreed that the three sons of Faredun Hom should be equal partners. Hence, they came to be called Bhagararia or Bhagarsasth ‘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 Bhagarsasth Anjoman since then.

As Dr.Firoze M. Kotwal and “Atholan Tolani Bhagarsasth Vanshavali” indicates,<sup>6)</sup>

Bhagarsath Anjoman appointed the following fixed religious office to each stock:

The head of the Kaka Pahlan stock made the heir of a deceased person recite the formula of sosh on the third day after death, in the presence of an assembly.

The head of the Kaka Dhanpal stock acted as custodian of the consecrated bull's urine (nirangdin).

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

The head of the Mahyar Faredun stock gave permission for initiations into priesthood, called Nawar and Maratab, and a member of his family was entitled to conduct the first day of the Nawar ceremony.

The head of the Chanda Faredun maintained records and preserved documents for the Anjomans's archives.

This fixed religious office was observed down to 1579 A.D. when the Parsis in Navsari appointed Meherji Rana the first Vada 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 Behdinin, 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 Behdins. The Behdin put 12 Bhagarsath priests in jail, whom Kunverji Nanabhai Modi released.

In order to carry out their decision in 1673 the Behdins came to side with Minocheher Homji who at that time dissented from the Bhagarsath. Minocheher Homji, with his three sons, became their family priests of the Behdin. Meherji Chandna, Dada Chanji and Peshotan Sohrab joined Minocheher Homji and these four priests were called 'chaharo sath(Guj.)'<sup>7)</sup>

In 1731 the Bhagarsath priests got the permission from the then ruler of Navsari Gangaji Rao and the Gujarat governor Pilaji Rao 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 'chaharo sath' at the Vadi Dari Mihr. Dissatisfied with this, the Behdins instigated the 'chaharo sath' to break off the reconciliation in 1734. Then the Bhagarsath priests implored Gangaji Rao to persuade the 'chaharo sath' out of their trespass upon the Bhagarsath jurisdiction. The arbitration by Gangaji Rao led the 'chaharo sath' to be an independent priest group and so the Dari Mihr constructed for them by the Behdin were officially admitted.

Some time after their appeasement, Sanjana priests, incited by the Behdin, 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 Pilaji Rao Gaekwad was favourable to the Bhagarsath priests, which made Sanjana priests leave Navsari with the Sacred Fire for Bulsar in 1740. Sanjana Priests did not settle down in Bulsar, 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 Bhagaria, Sanjana, Godavra, Bharucha, and Khambata. For our study it would be of greatest help to go into detail of Bhagaria, which originated in Navsari.

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

① Kaka Pahlan

E.ShapurShahriar E.Ramyar E.Hormazdyar E.Mobed E.Zarthosht E.Kamdin  
E.Mobad E.Kamdin E.Rana E.Chandna E.Anna E.Pahlan;

② Kaka Dhanpal

E.ShapurShahriar E.Ramyar E.Hormazdyar E.Mobed E.Zarthosht E.Kamdin  
E.Mobad E.Lakhmidhar E.Bama E.Lakhmidhar E.Dhanpal E.Kaka

③ AshaFaredun

E.ShapurShahriar E.Dhaval E.Neryosang E. Mobad E.Khushmasta  
E.khujasta E.Bahmanyar E.Khurshed E.Bahmanyar E.Hom E.Faredun  
E.Asha

④ Mahyar Faredun

E.ShapurShahriar E.Dhaval E.Neryosang E. Mobad E.Khushmasta  
E.khujasta E.Bahmanyar E.Khurshed E.Bahmanyar E.Hom E.Faredun  
E.Mahyar

⑤ Chanda Faredun

E.ShapurShahriar E.Dhaval E.Neryosang E. Mobad E.Khushmasta  
E.khujasta E.Bahmanyar E.Khurshed E.Bahmanyar E.Hom E.Faredun  
E.Chanda

Kaka Pahlan and Kaka Dhanpal were called Zartosht pols; Asha Faredun, Mahiar Faredun and Chanda Faredun, Hom Bamaniar pols. They shared with one another death ceremonies, 4 days death ceremonies, public Jasans, Navars, Nirangdings, Varasyaji consecrations, Boi ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, and Navjots for the Behdin .

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

Month	Varadar(keeper of the turn)	Samewala(assistant)
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1	Kaka Pahlan	Asha Faredun
2	Ash a Faredun	Kaka Dhanpal
3	Kaka Dhanpal	Mahiar Faredun
4	Mahiar faredun	Kaka Pahlan
5	Kaka Pahlan	Chanda Faredun
6	Chanda Faredun	Kaka Dhanpal
7	Kaka Dhanpal	Asha Faredun
8	Asha Faredun	Kaka Pahlan
9	Kakak Pahlan	Mahiar Faredun
10	Mahiar Faredun	Kaka Dhanpal
11	Kaka Dhanpal	Chanda Faredun
12	Chanda Faredun	Kaka Pahlan
	5 Gatha days	

According to the above distributions, Kaka Pahlan and Kaka Dhanpal were awarded three times of Varadar, and Asha Faredun, Mahiar Faredun and Chanda Faredun, 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 Zartosht pols and the other 6 months for Hom Bamaniar 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 Zarthosht and Hom Bamaniar.

When priests from Kaka Pahlan were not available, those from Kaka Dhanpal were asked for, and vice versa. If those two pols could not send the priests, then Hom Bamaniar pols were to substitute for them and the other way round. When the priests of Asha Faredun were not available, Mahiar and Chanda Faredun had to be sent for. Asha and Chanda Faredun were to be sent for Mahiar Faredun, and Asha and Mahiar Faredun had to help Chanda Faredun.

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 Zarthosht pols and Hom Bamaniar pols.

In addition to the above division of months among the Mobed, "The Athornan Tolani Bhagarsath Vanshawali" showed the following division of months, days and even hours into much smaller sections<sup>10</sup>.

The document shows that the months are divided by five pols into five parts. Kaka Pahlan and Kaka Dhanpal are given three months each; Asha Faredun, Mahiar Faredun and Chanda Faredun, two months each. Five Gatha days are given to Rana Kamdin in Kaka Pahlan as Varadar as well as Samewala, and to Mobed Chanda,

Homa Chanda, and Rustom Chanda in Chanda Faredun as Varadar. This means that five Gatha days are also divided by Zarthost pols and Hom Bamaniar pols.

Here we will proceed to describe the divisions of days and hours of month of Kaka Pahlan 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 Kaka Pahlan of Zarthost 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 Pahlan 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 Kaka Pahlan.

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 Behdin. 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 privilages 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 Navar, Nirangdings, consecration of Varsyaji and Boi ceremonies will clarify some aspects of historical development of the Parsis community and will contribute several new facts to the discription of how Zoroastrian beliefs and practices have been maintained and conducted by Zoroastrian Parsis in Navsari.

##### **1 Distributions of Navar ceremonies among the 5 pols.**

To perform Navar ceremonies two priests with the barashnum from two different pols are required. If one priest is from Zarthosht Mobed pol, the other should be from Hom Bamaniar 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>11)</sup>.

### Kaka Pahlan

Name of  
priests

the intervals  
of turns

1	Pahlan Anna	24
2	Hira Dada	48
3	Mobed Bahman	12
4	Asha Rustom	8
5	Asha Dhaiya	24
6	Mahiar Peshotan	24
7	Shapur Chandna	24
8	Natha Hoshang	24
9	Jashang Dhaiya	24
10	Vaccha Jeshang	144
11	Rana Jeshang	144
12	Hamajiyar Jeshang	144

### Kaka Dhanpal

Name of  
priests

the intervals  
of turns

1	Mahiar Asha	10
2	Asdin Kaka	24 26
3	Hira Narsang	30
4	Hamjiyar Kaka	24 26
5	Behram Asha	10
6	Faredun Kaka	24 26
7	Nagoj Narshang	30
8	Aspandiyar Kaka	24 26
9	Chandna Kaka	24 26
10	Dhanpal Narsang	30

### Asha Faredun

1	Nagoj Asha	12
2	Rustom Behram	36
3	Rustom Vaccha	72
4	Dhanpal Dosa	36
5	Rustom Hira	36
6	Mohbed Vaccha	72
7	Ashak Dosa	36
8	Sahiyar Avval	36
9	Aspandiyar Vaccha	72
10	Sahiar Dosa	36
11	Chacha Vaccha	72
12	Narshang Vaccha	72
13	Chaiya Vaccha	72

### Mahiar Faredun

1	Nagoj Asdin	18
2	Rana Antia	18
3	Sahiar Hoshang	54
4	Chanda Asdin	18
5	Chanda Adar	18
6	Narsang Hoshang	54
7	Chanda Hoshang	54
8	Vaccha Hoshang	54
9	Asha Hoshang	54
10	Bhaiya Hoshang	54

### Chanda Faredun

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	Pahlan Rustom	54
10	Chanda Rustom	54
11	Kamdin Rustom	54

In the above list of each pol, the turn of the next Navar comes after certain number of Navars. For example, in Kaka Pahlan pol, the first turn comes to Pahlan Anna. If he has to perform a Navar ceremony again, his turn comes after 24 Navars. The number 24 results from the following manner of rotations between Kaka Pahlan pol and Kaka Dhanpal pol.

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

The differences of number in the intervals comes from the size of each family concerned. If a father has only one son, the son will share the rotations of Navar 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 Navars for them<sup>12</sup>.

From the above description based on facts we can say that each Navar ceremony needs two priests; one from Zarhost pol and another from Hom Bamaniar pol. The turns of each Navar are decided respectively among the members of the two pols according to their genealogy. The turns of Navar 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 Navar among the families.

If a Navar is to be performed in the same family, it is known as a 'bapuko' (paternal) Navar. 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' Navar. For example, from Kaka Dhanpal pol, the Navar 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 Navar, which is 'rasuko' Navar. In the case of 'rasuko' Navar,

he who performs 'rasuko' Navar must give some share to 'bapuko' Navar. For instance, in the absence of Hira Dada, Natha Hoshangand Asha Rustom of Kaka Pahlan pol, if another priest performs the Navar, 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 Kaka Dhanpal, 1 mohar to Asha Faredun and Mahiar Faredun, 2 mohar to Chanda Faredun<sup>13</sup>).

As shown above, Navar ceremonies are as far as possible to be performed by the same family members. As the turns of Navar are regarded as a property right, a share is always to be given to 'bapuko' even when they do not perform the Navar 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 Behdin 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 Nirangdin and Varasyo among the 5 pols**

Just like Navar, Nirangdin and Varasyo are also performed by Zarhost Mobed and Hom Bamaniar pols. For a Navar ceremony, the first priest of Kaka Pahlan, namely Pahalan Anna goes together with the first priest of Asha Faredun pol, namely, Nargoj Asha. For Nirangdin and Varasyo with Pahalan Anna, the first priest of Mahiar Faredun pol, namely Nargoj Asdin is given as a pair for the ceremony. The other partner priest is Nargoj Asha from Asha Faredun pol<sup>14</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 Anjuman selected Dasturji Meherji Rana as its first Dasturji in Sanvat 1636(=1580 A.D.). The starting of Patet ceremony was entrusted to Dasturji Meherji Rana, so the right of Patet given to Asha Faredun pol was stopped. Instead of this right of Patet, Asha Faredun pol was entrusted with half of the kotwali, namely the preservation of documents which had been conducted by Chanda Faredun pol up to then. And Navar ceremony which had been done by Mahiar Faredun pol was entrusted to Asha Faredun pol, including half of the kotwali work which remained in the hands of Chanda Faredun pol.

Ninrangdin and Varasyo have been conducted by Mahiar Faredun since Sanvat 1616(=1506A.D.). The right of Nirangdin continued to this day but the right of Varasyo was given to Asha Faredun pol in Sanvat 1801(1745 A.D.) when a new Varasyaji was

consecrated due to the difference in calculation in Sanvat 1757(= 1701 A.D.).

The entry of Navar, Nrangdin and Varasyo has been continued from Sanvat 1616(=1506 A.D.). Though the entry of Nirangdin has been continued from Sanvat 1616(=1506 A.D.), the entry of Navar 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 Nirangdin and Varasyo were historically defined and are continued today according to the strict rules of the division.

### 3 Reciprocal succession for Atash Bahram Boi ceremonies among the 5 pols

For Boi ceremony at Atash Bahram, each pol is given one full month. But, every year, the month of Adar is entrusted to the descendants of Dasturji Sohrabji Rustamji Meherji Rnana. Except the month of Adar, the remaining 11 months are divided among the five pols as below<sup>15)</sup>.

1st month	Kaka Pahlan	7th month	Kaka Dhanpal
2nd month	Asha Faredun	8th month	Asha Faredun
3rd month	Kaka Dhanpal	9th month	Dasturji Sohrabji Meherji Rana and his family
4th month	Mahiar Faredun	10th month	Kaka Pahlan
5th month	Kaka Pahlan	11th month	Mahiyar Faredun
6th month	Chanda Faredun	12th month	Kaka Dhanpal

Here again the months, except the 9th month, are first divided into two equal parts, Zarhost and Hom Bamaniar 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 Chanda Faredun, 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 Vadi Dari Mihir. Among those who are prepared to pay more share to their partner priests, two of them take the turn for Atash Bahram 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 has the Barashnum. The expense of Anjoman is taken out first from this payment<sup>16)</sup>.

The above passage suggests that the turns of Boi ceremony, unlike Navar, Nirangdin and Varsyo, 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 Navar, Nirangdin and Varsyo. But their traditional basic rule of dividing the months into two equal parts, shared by the Zarhost pol and Hom Bamaniar pol, is here again strictly

honored by the Parsis.

Also it should be noted here that the Meherji Rana family have enjoyed some exceptional privileges in connection with the divisions and distributions of turns or shares. Since Navsari Anjuman appointed Dasturji Meherji Rana as its first Dasturji, the turn of Patet ceremony has been entrusted to Dasturji Meherji Rana and that, in the case of Boi ceremony at Atash 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 Parsis community, we have 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 Navar, Nirangdin, Varsyo, and Boi ceremonies. The following are the main results of our study with reference to the Gujrati historical documents preserved in Navsari.

The Parsis community is composed of the Mobed (priests and their descendants) and the Behdins (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 Muktdad, they exert influences on their life in the next world, too.

The Behdin 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 Jashans, Navars, Nirangdings, consecrations of Varsyaji, Boi ceremonies at Atash Bahram, and Navjots for the Behdins.

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 Anjuman 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 Vanshawali", too, proved that these practices were carried out in the past<sup>17)</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, Zarthost pols and Hom Bamanar pols. These turns of share and the replacements, as the various numbers of the turns in the case of Navar shows, have been treated as having succession to property among the Parsis.

Still today when the Parsis would like Navar, 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>18)</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. Kotowal 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 navan 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. Kotowal., *op.cit.*, E. Rustomji Jamaspji Dastur Meherji Rana 1894. atholan tolani Bhagarsath vanshawali. p.217
  - 7) Dr. Firoze M. Kotowal., *op.cit.*, Dr. Firoze M. Kotowal referred to "the chaharo sath" as follows.
    - ① Minocheher Homji  
He came from Bajan family of the Chanda Faredun stock and was a son-in-law to Manaji Kukaji Talati who stood against the Bhagarsath. His youngest son Adar conducted a navar ceremony in a village of Bhagva Dandi near Navsari without any permission with a Sanjan priest named Jamasp Bhaiji of Bulsar. This was the immediate cause of expulsion of Minocheher Homji and his three sons from the Bhagarsath Anjoman.
    - ② Meherji Chandna  
His surname was Kakalia and belonged to Kaka Pahlan. He joined Minocheher Homji with his four sons in 1699.
    - ③ Dada Chanji  
His surname was Dadachanji and belonged to Asha Faredun. With his seven sons he joined Minocheher Homji.
    - ④ Peshotan Sohrab  
His surname was Rabadi and belonged Asha Faredun. He joined Minocheher Homji with his two sons.
- Around 1700, after the 'chaharo sath' 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 'chaharo sath' under the name of Bhandari.
- 8) Rustomji Jamasp Dastur Meherji Rana 1899 Athoran ni tolani Bhagarsath Vansavali
  - 9) Rustomji Jamaspji Dastur Meherji Rana 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 Navar ceremony is performed by two pols and the ceremony takes 9 days. The share for one navar 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 Navar. If the Navar ceremony was performed in the name of some Behdin, 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 Navar 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 alat. The sweepers and those who lit diva got one fourth more for each Navar.

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 person 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 Jashan ceremony in Vadi Dari Mihir.

17) *ibid.*,p.217

18) In an application form of 'Permission form for Navar, Martab, Jinderevan, Hamayast performed in the very old Dari Mihir of Bhagarsath Anjoman of Navsari', the following items are to be filled in.①Navar, Martab, Jinderevan, Hamayast, ② name, ③age, ④Jinderevan Anosheravan, ⑤farmayasna, ⑥name of Jinderevan, Anosheravan, ⑦family priest, ⑧name of the pol, ⑨name of the officiating priest, ⑩date of taking Barashnum, ⑪date of the last day of Navar, 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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