

Ervad Gadrj Dinshawji Sidhwa

26 March 1970

6. Farvardin 1349

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Dear Mr. Sidhwa —

Happy Zoroaster's Birthday!
Greetings! I should like first of all to thank you ^{again} ^{so} very much for your kindness and hospitality to me when I was in Karachi. One sad event occurred after I left you — I lost my camera and in it the roll of film I had taken while in Pakistan; so I'm afraid I will not be able to send you any record of my visit. I was, as you can imagine, quite upset about the loss both of the camera, and of that particular roll of film; but perhaps it will serve a useful purpose in adding an additional ^{to me} ^{to} ^{return} ^{to} ^{Karachi} ^{soon}.

In the meantime I wonder if we might not continue our conversation by mail. ~~to start with~~ To start with, I have 3 questions having to do with (1) ~~the~~ current community statistics; (2) the history in the Rivayats, (3) ^{ritual} and (4) cosmology.

If so could they be made available to me?

(1) Does the Parsee community keep statistics of the following sorts, and if so could they be made available to me? — (a) number of ~~births~~ ^{births} and deaths ~~per~~ year by year since, say, 1945 or the last 10 years; (b) number of deaths year by year by cause of death, and by age; (c) number of people by occupation, or if that is not available number of fathers of ~~the~~ ^{Parsee} students in the ~~Parsee~~ Parsee High Schools by occupation. Are there welfare records (such as those published by Desai and Bulsara for Bombay)? — number of people receiving what kind of charity; number of persons in orphanages; number of charity housing units.

(2) When I delivered your greetings to Mr. Sorushian in Kirman, he discussed among other things the migrations referred to in the Rivayats; ~~he said~~ as I recall he said that in 927 A.C. there was a mass migration of 3 thousand Zoroastrians from Khorassan to Kirman, but the Rivayats also say that in 850 A.C. there were only 100 Zoroastrians in Kirman. Are you familiar with these references, and can you tell me more about what is known of these migrations?

3) At the time of Me Ruz, the Iranian Zoroastrians of Yazd make pilgrimages to a number of sites (Beti, P.S., Chah Chak Kuh, etc.); similar pilgrimages ~~are~~ ^{made} by Bombay Parsees to Govan. You said something, but you did not elaborate, about the ^{moon} of Zoroastrian belief not being the same moon as that which the Apollo ^{astronauts} landed on. In Christian gnosticism the moon and the sun are symbols of the light of mystic understanding or of God; and

Dear Don & Lissie

Would you believe I have actually made it to Yazd

further the "horns" of the ~~moon~~ crescent moon are represented as the mystic horn of the unicorn (of which the Bundahish also speaks) ^{as a good creature despite the portrayal in Sassanian reliefs of Ahriman with a uni-horn} this horn of unicorn supposedly also is used in making a true chalice for the use of Christian ritual which latter shape is that of the vessel of wisdom (the ^{uni-}horn thus representing both sides of fertility: male and female). Did you have something similar in mind or did you mean something quite different?

Secondly along this line, can you tell me what the symbolism of the mirror is? I have noticed in many Iranian Zoroastrian homes, nicely ~~carved~~ etched portraits of Zoroaster in a mirror - all of these seem to come from India. There is the custom of greeting a visitor with rose water and a mirror. Again my main source of speculation is Christian gnosticism where the mirror is supposed to catch light (of God) and reflect thus his wisdom.

Finally: what is the prevailing attitude of Zoroastrians towards theosophy which seems to be heir to several mystical traditions? I just read Anne Besant's article on Zoroastrianism.

Thirdly, I remember seeing in your copy of J. J. Modi's Parse Customs and Ceremonies a piece of literature from the Theosophical Society, and I have just read Anne Besant's article on Zoroastrianism. What is your attitude towards the Theosophists?

Again thank you very much for making my brief trip to Karachi such a delightful one.

With best wishes also to your wife and children,