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SEPERATION IN THE ZOROASTRIAN SOCIETY OF IRAN DURING THE QAJAR PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

One of the major problems of the Zoroastrian community during the Qajar period was their tendency towards the ideas and teachings of the emerging Baha'i Faith. The educated and enlightened minority of Zoroastrian of Iran, and some Indian Parsees and supported by the British government, influenced by the lifestyle and teachings of Zoroastrians in India had big tendency to carry out extensive social and religious reforms in the Zoroastrian community of Iran. At the same time, the newly emerging Baha'i Faith succeeded in attracting a part of the Zoroastrian community of Iran, in particular the same intellectual minority, by promoting the reformist and partisan slogans. The current paper tries to investigate the causes of this incident and its consequences among the Zoroastrian community. It seems that the social and religious pressure created on the Zoroastrians by the traditional Iranian and Zoroastrian communities attracted the Zoroastrians to the secular and libertarian slogans of the Baha'i missionaries. Consequently, the support of the enlightened minority of Zoroastrian thought, and in particular the representatives of the Indian Parsees in Iran led to widespread conflicts among the Zoroastrian community of Iran, which gradually, with the constitutional revolution and the opening up of the social and political space of the country intensified the conflicts that in turn led to killing of some and escape of some others.

Keywords: Qajar, Zoroastrians, The Baha'i Faith, Indian Parsees.

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest problems facing Zoroastrian community in Iran during the Qajar period was the tendency toward Baha'i faith among part of the community and the support of the intellectuals of the Zoroastrian community. This issue, which has been aroused since the decades before the Constitutional Revolution and on Nasser's reign since the presence of Manekji in Iran, intensified during the constitutional time and through the widening of the country's intellectual and political atmosphere.

Kent Julien who had experienced these days, believed that Islam, contrary to appearance, was backward in the part of the Qajar period as a result of the religious fanatic pressures, and had suffered superstition and weakness. So that every any doctrine and creed, though absent-minded, was easy to find followers among the people, and the Baha'i faith is a prominent example (Kent Julien, 1999: 99).

Obviously, the traditional Iranian government faced with many problems by the emergence of new religions such as the Baha'i faith. Bernard Lewis, a well-known Islamic scholar, believes that the great problem of Islamic societies with monotheistic religions such as the Baha'i faith

was that they could not suppress and reject them, like the religions of a Polytheism, and or tolerate them like Christianity and Judaism, that are welcomed in the Quran, because this was contrary to the belief in the humbleness of the Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet (Lewis, 1984: 21). Hence, the government and traditional Qajar community exerted much pressure on the Baha'i faith followers. On the other hand, the religious pressure on the Zoroastrian /due to the belief in dualism religion, on them. And it seems that the same thing made the two creed more close.

The arrival of representatives of the Indian Parsees in Iran, gradually formed the circle of contacts between the Baha'i faith followers and Zoroastrians of Iran. and the representatives of the Indian Parsees, in addition to the Zoroastrians, established close relations with the Zoroastrians converted to the Baha'i faith and the Baha'i community of Iran, because the Zoroastrian community of Iran had felt the danger of collapse and dissolution among Muslims in the past, now was be subjected to destruction by another religion due to their tendency towards Baha'ism. This process continued to a large extent that a large proportion of the Baha'i faith followers at the same period were among the Zoroastrian community (Raine, 1978: 302). Rambo believes that people who convert to a religion often experience a 7-step process: 1. Context: With cultural, social and religious components. 2. Crisis: The gap between the individual and his community. 3. Question: Unanswered questions due to the pressures on the individual. 4. Exposure: The familiarity and relationship between a person and a new religion. 5. Engagement: Acceptance of new beliefs and thoughts by that person. 6. Commitment: New obligations created in the form of his new religious identity. 7. The Outcome (Karami Pour, 2013, 112-113; Rambo, 1993: 18).

Studying the social status of Zoroastrians in the Qajar period, it is clear that the context of this process has been completely provided for Zoroastrians in Iran. Social, cultural and religious pressures were notoriously imposed not only by the central government, but also by the elders of the traditional Zoroastrian community, as these elders disagreed with any innovations in the religion and lifestyle of the people. These pressures and lack of response to the needs and questions of Zoroastrians have created a crisis within the Zoroastrian community and marginalized a large part of the emerging Zoroastrian intellectuals. Under such circumstances, the emergence of a new ritual with equality slogans led to the proximity of a part of the Zoroastrian community which were under pressures who were supported by the Indian Parsees and their representatives in Iran.

Representatives of Indian Parsees in Iran and their Relations with the Baha'is

The first representative of the Indian Parsees Society of India, Maneckji Limji Hataria, arrived in Iran to reform the social and livelihood conditions of Zoroastrians in 1851. In addition to paying financial contributions and implementing major reforms within the Zoroastrian community of Iran, he supported the Baha'is and Zoroastrians, who converted to Baha'ism, so that he was suspected to deliberately tried to induce the Zoroastrians of Iran to the Baha'i faith instead of Islam, which has never been documented in any way and has not been substantiated by evidence. Evidently, Maneckji established a very friendly relationship with Hossein Ali Nouri, known as Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i faith. The close friendly relationship between the two is quite evident in a letter written by Baha'u'llah in 1879 to Maneckji in reply to his letter. Baha'u'llah letter to Maneckji begins with the phrase: "I, the prisoner of the time, received your



letter in jail. It brought joy and added to friendship and renewed the memory of the old days "(Jorabchi: 244-247).

Keikhosrow Ji:

The second representative of the Indian Parsees Society in Iran was Keikhosrow Ji. Koche Boyuki. The process of association between Zoroastrians of Iran and the Baha'i community during the Keikhosrow Ji period intensified the internal conflicts in the Zoroastrian community, which eventually resulted in his death (Fazil Mazandarani: vol. 8: pp. 934-935) and Abbas Efendi (Abdu'l-Bahá) issued a letter in his mourm and sought forgiveness for him (Abdu'l-Baha, 1954: 26).

Ardeshir Reporter:

Ardeshir Reporter arrived in Iran on behalf of the Indian Parsees Society of India, following Keikhosrow J. Because of his libertarian and modernist look, he popenly supported Zoroastrians who had converted to the Baha'i faith, and this made the internal situation of Iran's Zoroastrian community, especially Yazd, more disturbed. Master Khodabakhsh, master Javanmard and loyal Kimurs formed the main circle of his followers, and their responsibility was to teach Zoroastrian children at the Keikhosrowi Yazd school. These individuals, and in particular the master Khodabakhsh, were supported by the Indian Parsees Society of India, and their aim was to create a new intellectual atmosphere among Zoroastrian children and to reconcile their views with open-minded perspectives. It was the Persian of India. And, of course, they were largely successful in this regard, as most Zoroastrian names of the late Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties were some of their disciples (Raeis, 470).

Relations of the Zoroastrian Elders of Iran with the Baha'is during the Constitutional Days:

The main players of the Zoroastrian community during the constitutional period were three individuals: 1. Ardeshir Reporter, the representative of Indian Parsees in Iran, who was fully supported by the United Kingdom and was the political figure of Zoroastrian community in Iran. 2. Arbab Jamshid Jamshidian, a famous merchant and first Zoroastrian representative in the National Assembly, which was considered an economic side of Iran's Zoroastrian community. 3. Arbab Keikhosrow Shahrokh, the second to eleventh the National Assembly Zoroastrian representative, which played a fundamental role in the social developments of the Zoroastrians, and was considered as the cultural and social side of the Zoroastrian power triangle.

During the Constitutional Revolution in Tehran, the Baha'i faith followers succeeded in establishing a great relationship with Zarathustra's famous merchant Arbab Jamshid Jamshidian and the Zoroastrian representative during the first term of the National Assembly, so that Abbas Effendi, due to his support of the Baha'i faith followers, and the Baha'i community, always supported him, and these supports continued even after his bankruptcy (Abdu'l-Baha, 1954: 37-38, 40-44, 49, 54-57).

So, as it turned out, the Bahá'is during the constitutional days had two great supporters among the Zoroastrian community in Iran. Arbab Jamshid, a representative of Zoroastrians in the first parliament, and the famous Zoroastrian businessman and Ardeshir Reporter, whose support was more visible in Yazd. It may be argued that only Arbab Keikhosrow Shahrokh did not have a very favorable relationship with the Baha'i community among the three major Zoroastrian politicians during the constitutional period, and it is interesting to note that the letters and writings that remained of Abdu'l-Baha has fully praised Arbab Jamshid and Ardeshir, but when



it comes to Arbab Keikhosrow, it is often critical, and later the Baha'is consider the death of the son of Keikhosrow due to this divine punishment (Niko, 2011: 336-338; Abdu'l-Baha, ibid: 93).

The conflict in the pyramid of the Zoroastrian community of Iran over the issue of Baha'ism:

As stated in the beginning of this paper, with the advent of the new Baha'i Faith in Iran, the Indian Parsees as supporters of the Zoroastrians of Iran tried to establish better conditions for the Indian Parsees in Iran by establishing a link between these two beliefs and thoughts, but this relatively large support led to a number of violent clashes within Iran's Zoroastrian community brought about a profound impact on the social life of this community at the end of the Qajar period. During the constitutional days, the Zoroastrians were the only religious minority in Iran who, through the money and gifts of the Arbab Jamshid, had the right to represent the first assembly of the National Assembly. Although gradually Arbab Jamshid left the Zoroastrian community due to economic conflicts, it a kind of power conflict between Arbab Keikhosrow (Zoroastrian representative in the second to eleventh legislatures) and Ardeshir (Indian Parsees representative in Iran) for power that resulted in the conversion of a part of the educated Zoroastrians to the Baha'i faith by the support of Ardeshir.

Ardeshir was not trusted by a large part of the power of the traditional Iranian Zoroastrian community due to the kind of modernist views and protections that the British government had asserted and was supported more by the intellectuals of this community (Rasouli, 2003: 146-148). His support for the Zoroastrian community who followed the Baha'i faith caused many conflicts between him and the leaders of the Zoroastrian community in Iran and even he was rejected by them. He demonstrated his political vision before the Constitutional Movement with membership in the National Association, which, according to Malekzadeh, was the main core of the Iranian constitutional revolution, (Malikzadeh, 2004: 237-239). After the end of the first parliament and the withdrawal of Arbab Jamshid from the second round of representation, he was very interested in entering the second parliament as the representative of the Zoroastrian community, but because he was non-Iranian, the Zoroastrians opposed this, and Arbab Shahrokh was selected as a representative to the parliament (Rasouli, 2003: 146), which may be the reason for the hidden conflicts of the two.

Ardeshir gradually increased its influence on Zoroastrian associations, especially in Yazd, as part of his supporters represented the Zoroastrian community associations. These interventions sparked a large part of the Zoroastrian community in Iran, causing conflicts between Ardeshir and Arbab Keikhosrow. According to Arbab Keikhosrow memoirs and the remaining documents, from the days of the British Consulate supported Ardeshir and closed the Zoroastrian Association in 1956 (Shahrokh, 2003: 35-36; Iran National Documentation Organization, document ID: 6062/293). This was a sign of British government's strong support for Ardeshir and their influence and power in Iran, making the relationship between the British government and Arbab Keikhosrow not so convenient and desirable (Shahrokh, ibid: 100).

Even threatening letters attributed to Ardeshir and his wife, Shirin, were sent to Arbab Keikhosrow Shahrokh in the meantime, so that Tehran Police and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs opened up to these quarrels. (National Documentation Organization of Iran, Document ID: 5919/360).

Ardeshir involvement in the Zoroastrian affairs and his support for the closure of the Zoroastrian Association of Yazd resulted in the sending of many protest letters from various cities of Iran to Tehran and from the Iranian Foreign Ministry to the Indian Parsees, which, in turn, was an



objection to interference. All letters were in opposition to Ardeshir involvement in political, social and religious affairs of Zoroastrians and the request to send another representative from the Indian Parsees to Iran (Iran National Documentation Organization, document ID: 5962606; Research Institute for Contemporary History, Document No.: 17089 -17090; Same, document number: 17084; same; document number: 17082 n). With all this, he was again redefined on June 27, 1919/1987, as the representative of the Indian Parsees in Iran (Institute for Contemporary History, 1919, document number: 1631/16).

Ardeshir Reporter considered the crimes against him by Arbab Keikhosrow Shahrok due to his jealousy of Ardeshir's position as the representative of the Indian Parsees Association in Iran (Kamare-ie, 2003: J 2/1482).

Baha'ism and internal conflicts of the Zoroastrian community:

Gradually some Iranian Zoroastrians tended toward Baha'ism, and some figures in the Zoroastrian community, especially in the cities of Yazd and Tehran, had intimate relations with Abbas Effendi and other Baha'is. Little conflict has been reported in Tehran, because of the lower population of Zoroastrians and the moderation of them, but Yazd had suffered conflicts after the presence of Arbab Keikhosrow, and this issue intensified every day. Kerman's atmosphere was better than Yazd, but it was somewhat turbulent.

Siavash Sefidvash, a Yazd Baha'i Zoroastrian, wrote a publication in support of Baha'ism, which intensified conflicts with the traditional Yazd community, which prohibited visiting and socializing, and even did not attend any of Zoroastrian priests at the memorial ceremony of his father. (Siavash Sefidvash: 90-100).

The priests of Yazd not only refused to attend the religious ceremonies of the Bahais Zoroastrians, they also did not allow the use of their catacombs for their dead, so Siavash and other Yazd cults built an independent cemetery named Golestan Javid. The permission to bury their dead was taken from the orders of the Kerman authorities and the Nasiriyya Association of Yazd, where the Baha'is were involved, and even dedicated the cemetery to gain the support of the Muslims. Although the cemetery was also destroyed by the Zoroastrian fanatics of Yazd (ibid: 106-109, 111-115, 122-123; Fazil Mazandarani, dateless: vol 8: 934-938)

On the other hand, fanatic and radical Zoroastrians of Yazd formed an association called the Yazd Right Followers Society, which in the first act assassinated Master Khodabakhsh, the largest supporters of the Yazd Aheba (Shahmardan, 1984: 603-604). Master Khodabakhsh was a member of Zoroastrian community, who was assassinated by Bahra'i Zoroastrians at the age of fifty-five near the Keikhosrow school in Yazd (Fazel Mazandarani: 971-972). The interesting point about his death is that some Zoroastrian writers did not have much interest in discussing how and why he was killed, for example. the Zoroastrian Youth Organization magazine called his death an unexpected event (Shahrivini, 1946: 5).

Master Khodabakhsh killer was a Zoroastrian police from Kerman called Fereydoon who never received a retaliation for his crime. After being arrested, he was transferred to Qom and escaped from there, and even his mother's letter of eviction was not in effect. (National Documentation Organization of Iran, Document ID: 6042/293). Siavash Sefidvash believes that with the support of the Zoroastrian authorities and the bribes they paid, and most of all, the support of the Keikhosrow Shahrok Zoroastrian's representative in the parliament helped the killer to feel impunity (Sefidvash: 127-128).



However, with the approaching end of the Qajar period, and especially after the coup by Reza Khan, it seems that the internal conflicts in the Zoroastrian community in Iran have gradually been eliminated due to the government's view of power and sovereignty. Contrary to the Qajar period, when religious discrimination was legitimate and led to many conflicts and violence, during these days, there was a tendency to treat all religions and citizens as equal. Although these changes were not due to Reza Shah's libertarian and egalitarian sense, it was more than his desire to put all Iranians on a level against a powerful government (Pahlavi dynasty and religious forces, narrated by Cambridge history, 1992: 41-42).

CONCLUSION:

The disturbing intellectual and social situation of the Zoroastrian community during the Qajar period has led Zoroastrians of Iran to face discrepancy and conflicts to deal with social problems during this time, with Indian Parsees community in Iran and the British government interfering in their social affairs. In the issue of Baha'ism, despite the apparent involvement of Ardeshir Reporter, the Iranian Zoroastrian community did not have the ability to counteract and prevent his activities in Iran, and even his conflicts with Zoroastrian leaders led to the involvement of the British Consulate and the closing of the Zoroastrian Association's Office in Yazd. The peak of these conflicts was after the Constitutional Revolution, and it is well worth seeing the relative backing of the British and Indian Parsees from the followed the Baha'i faith Zoroastrians. On the other hand, the Baha'is of Iran were able to establish good relations with a wide range of intellectuals and elders of the Zoroastrian community, so that Arbab Keikhosrow Shahrokh was one of the only Zoroastrian intellectuals to oppose them. The intense conflicts between Zoroastrians led to the formation of an extremist group called the Yazd Right Followers Society, which eliminated some of the close figures of Baha'is, such as Master Khodabakhsh. Eventually, the conflicts between these two groups subsided by the end of Qajar regime and Reza Khan's coup.

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