

Thread of Religion Running Through The Tapestry of Society

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All of them mingle together beautifully yet maintaining their originality. Let me share with you a short story to make my point clearer. And also the effect of religious believes on society. The Parses came to India about 1,200 years ago, seeking refuge from religious persecution in their native Persia which had been conquered by the Arabs.

Upon landing on the shores of Gujarat, they pleaded with the king for refuge. But the then king of Gujarat sent a bowl full of milk to the brim, indicating that there is no place left for anyone, and he fears a spill over in the community. To satisfy the king's doubts about the intentions of the refugees, the priest took the bowl of milk filled to the brim and added some sugar to it. While doing so he assured the king that just as the sugar blended into the milk without displacing any of it so too would he and his people blend into and sweeten the land of Gujarat.

The king, apparently persuaded by this, gave Parsis permission to settle in Gujarat. I don't know how far this story is true, but this is a fact that Parsis and Gujarati have so many things in common. They adopted the language and Gujarati culture You can know the difference only by their unique way of dressing up. Parsi women adopted local sari but they leave the loose end of it (pullo) longer, thus, keeping their identity.

They adopted local food habits and festivals; retaining their own. They added their own stitch craft and designs to the already vibrant thread work of Gujarat. But they maintained their religious believes. They strongly opposed the conversion because they believe that Zoroastrianism is an ethnic religion and it is decided by birth. They argue that Zoroastrians left Iran to preserve their religion and to preserve the purity of their blood and race. To marry into other faiths is to betray our ancestors.

Though there are many instances of marriages out side the community, but they are not accepted by Zoroastrianism. They are denied the right to enter 'The Fire Temple. They are denied the last rites at The Tower of Silence. In light of such believes there is no wonder that today Parsi community is facing extinction. Only hands full of Parsi are left in the world over. Followers of the religion constitute one of the world's smallest communities.

Every society has some norms which are implemented for the well being of its members. We all must adhere to these norms. But they should keep pace with changing times otherwise we will have cases of rebellion leading to destruction of society.

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Balkan Churches

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