

Acceptance – Never Ever.

CONVERSION IN ZOROASTRIANISM: A MYTH EXPLODED

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In sacred Memory of My Parents,
Khan sahib Aspandiar Rustom Irani

AND

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this little book, which tries to answer the million dollar question, mainly for the Parsee and Irani Zoroastrians settled abroad whether "To Accept' or not to 'Accept' aliens in the Zoroastrian Religion", is to bring about some sort of a consensus in thought, to throw a tiny ray of light in the darkness that engulfs our minds, because of the confusion created by a welter of suggestions, theories and opinions expressed by Dasturs, scholars and students of the Zoroastrian Religion, both in India and abroad.

An attempt is made here to sift through the corn and chaff that have been served to us through the years, so that we need not continue to be confused about what the Zoroastrian doctrines, tenets, tradition and history have to say on this very vital issue.

The most important factor weighing with us is that polemics of all kinds should be avoided. Instead, we should ponder the facts given herein dispassionately, without any pre-conceived notions and prejudices.

You will at once agree that whatever notions or beliefs we may be having, we all agree on at least some of the fundamental, basic facts about our religion, like Ahura Mazda is our supreme lord, Prophet Zarathushtra is the only messenger of God for us; the Mazdayasni Zarthoshti Religion is the "greatest, best and the most exalted," there is no accident or chance in nature, because of divine Law or order (Asha), etc.

So starting from these premises on which we all agree, lets try to embark on a fascinating and romantic adventure, that will culminate in our experiencing the splendorous Glory of our Priceless Heritage.

Before you turn the pages, please try to clear your mind of all that you may have read or heard so far on the subject. For, only then will you be able to appreciate the subtle nuances of what the ancient Avesta and Pahlavi sages wanted us to know.

We regret that in the absence of diacritical marks, the transliteration of some of the Avesta, Pahlavi and Pazend words had to be rendered with the addition of extra vowels.

The booklet is not comprehensive and cannot claim to have tackled all the points pertinent to the subject. It is essentially meant for the lay Zoroastrian, who is bombarded with all sorts of exhortations and lectures from all sides, and, in the process, is hopelessly fuddled. Students of Zoroastrian Religion and history may also find in it, some food for cogent thought.

Discerning readers may notice that certain relatively minor aspects of the conversion controversy have not been touched upon in this small book. For instance at times, some excerpts from the Rivayats are cited by interested persons in favour of "conversion". But there is nothing specific or categorical in the Rivayats that would justify "conversion". So also, the other staple of the conversion-enthusiasts, namely, Bishop Elisaeus's "History of Vartan", has been ignored, as it was the Christians of Armenia who forcefully converted the Zoroastrians and not the Sassanian monarchs.

We have tried to keep the book restricted to as few pages as possible so that busy Zoroastrians somewhere in the world, would not get tired or bored reading it.

Here's hoping that this little book will help lay the spectre of unnecessary and avoidable controversy on the subject for good !

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PREAMBLE

It is indeed a sad fact that we Zoroastrians have reached a state, which necessitates producing a book on 'Conversion' or 'Proselytisation'. It is at times like these, when the Parsee faith is shaken and the demons of Westernisation, Rationalism and Materialism have crept into our veins, and cooled off our Kyanian fervour, that many of us keep moving away from the hub of Zoroastrianism to a life of creature comforts. They would prefer to have a "religion", that suits their lifestyles:

It cannot be gainsaid that in almost every third family, a Zoroastrian boy or girl marries a non-Zoroastrian. In order to keep up with the next-door Jamasjis or Framjis, both father and mother proudly leave their homes for work every day, and leave their children of impressionable ages at the mercy of servants and ayahs or maids. Where is then any time left for "Religion" when both the parents are involved in mad rat race?

Yet, by the principle of duality, there is some aching void in them somewhere, which cries out for some poor substitute for "Religion", which may produce instant results or miracles: Thus, short-cuts are readily sought and you find even hard-boiled Parsee Zoroastrians chasing mere shadows, in the form of "babas" and "bawas" :

One of the major causes of the rapid decline of intellectual faith in our religion is the total dependence on philological translations, most of which are devoid of the essence and spirit of the Zoroastrian Religion. One should hasten to add that in the last two centuries of philological studies of Avesta and Pahlavi languages some scholars both Western and Parsee, have rendered yeomen services in trying to interpret the religion, to the best of their ability. But the unfortunate fact also remains that many others have only distorted the facts and truths, in trying to unravel the abstruse technicalities and mysteries of the Zoroastrian doctrines and canons. The author has ably tackled this vital aspect in Chapter 12 of this booklet.

The Avesta abounds in allegories, just as the Bible is full of parables. These allegories have to be penetrated into and the hidden meanings unearthed, otherwise we have just the superficial, dry, drab translations which, many times, do not make any sense. There is that classic anecdote of two Iranians philologists, one a staunch vegetarian, and the other a confirmed non-veg. They could never come to any agreement regarding the meaning of an Avestic word. While the former insisted it meant, "sweet yogurt", the inveterate meat-eater was adamant, it meant "tender veal" !

Yet another cause of the confusion in the minds of many Zoroastrians regarding their Religion is that, they are saddled with unauthorised translations by those who have never ever seen the Avesta or Pahlavi script Thus, we have the dime-a-dozen interpreters, who may have read just one book, say, Dr. Dhalla's, and pronto ! They think they are qualified and competent enough to read or write long-winding papers on the history and doctrines of our Religion ! **These are the people who have caused the greatest harm to our co-religionists.** They neither have any genuine faith in their religion nor are they, even to a small extent, the practitioners of this glorious Religion.

Summing up, every Zoroastrian needs to ponder the following points: Faith in our Religion has shaken because of, (a) lack of the right kind of religious education; (b) craze for the study of the English language, to the point of adopting it as one's mother tongue, and the close contacts of

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Zoroastrian children with children of other faiths in schools and colleges; (c) quick results and material favours sought by impatient Zoroastrians, which drive them to babas and fake godmen; (d) our forgetting the "Declaration of Faith" that we recite after tying the Kushti, and the pertinent words therein, "Mazeeshtacha, vaheeshtacha sraeshtacha, yaa Ahurish Zarathushtrish..." (e) The unfortunate ridiculing of our rituals, traditions, etc. by some academic students of Zoroastrianism; (f) The thoughtless borrowing of alien concepts and beliefs of many of the Western scholars by some Parsee savants; (g) The dangerous practice of jumping on the bandwagon of scholarship, after reading a couple of books on Zoroastrianism.

This small book is published with the hope that Zoroastrians, the world over, will eschew for all time to come the dangerous, anti-Zoroastrian doctrine of 'conversion'.

- PUBLISHER.

Chapter 1

"WHERE IS IT STATED ?"

Many times, when we are told, "Do this", "Don't do that" in matters religious and spiritual, we feel like questioning, "Where is it stated in the Avesta?" "On what authority do you say so?" And if we do not get a satisfactory answer, we tend to cock a snook at such admonitions.

However, the unfortunate fact is that today we have only about 1/21 part of the entire Zoroastrian scriptures left with us! But Nature has been kind to us in a way, in that, we do have a summary of original 21 Nasks or encyclopaedic volumes in the Pahlavi text, called Dinkard. This gives us an idea of the extent of the original Scriptures composed by Prophet Zarathushtra himself.

The summary shows that, (a) the Vendidad is the original whole **Nask** composed by the Prophet himself; (b) the **Yashts** - at least most of them - have their origin in the Nask called **Baghan Yasht**, and (c) the **Yasna** (which includes the Gathas, the **Visperad** and the Haptanghaiti (Haptan Yasht) have been taken from the most important Nask called **Stot Yasht**.

Thus, what is important for us to remember, right in beginning, is that, the **Gathas**, the **Vendidad**, the **Visperad**, the Yashts etc., were all composed during the time of Prophet Zarathushtra.

Yet, you may have come across many scholars who have argued that the **Gathas** alone are the original compositions of the Prophet and the rest of the Avesta came much later. For example, they say that the language and the dialect as well as the style of the Gathas are different from the other Avesta.

But this argument does not hold any water, because if we take just the **Stot Yasht**, we find that it contains 22 chapters of the Gathas in poetic meter and 11 chapters of the other Avesta in prose! Again, we can ask ourselves a simple question: Was Prophet Zarathushtra incapable of composing the Universal Truths and Laws of Nature in prose? Why, even in the 5 Gathas themselves, we find different lengths of stanzas and different numbers of lines in each stanza !

Moreover, where style is concerned, the Gathas also contain dialogues between Ahura Mazda and Amesha Spentas, between Zarathushtra and his disciples, between **Geush Urva** and **Geush Tashan**. In the Gathas, the Prophet addresses himself in the 1st person, 2nd person and 3rd person. So you see, there is no substance whatsoever in the belief among many Zoroastrians, that only the Gathas constitute the kernel of the Zoroastrian Scriptures. There is nothing like the "Earlier" and "Later" Avesta or the "Older" and "Younger" Avesta.

Yes, one point needs to be explained. Whatever extant Avesta we have is not the same as composed by Zarathushtra. Since the Prophet lived thousands of years ago, it is just not possible for his original compositions to come down to us in the same form and style. So according to Nature's plan, from time to time, through the millennia that have followed the Prophet, Saviours or **Saoshyants** as they are called in the Gathas, or Raenidars in Pahlavi, are sent by Ahura Mazda, to repair and revamp the Religion and the Scriptures, which are afflicted by the ravages and vicissitudes of time. These **Saoshyants**, who are very highly evolved souls, alone possess the Divine Right and Authority to recompose the ravaged scriptures, according to the needs of the time in which they will be used.

Thus, our present-day scriptures have been restructured by the last Saoshyant of the Sassanian times, Dastur Adarbad Marespand, who proved the supremacy of the Zoroastrian Religion by pouring gallons of molten brass on his bare chest without even being singed ! It was he who recomposed the scriptures, including the Gathas that we recite today. All these Raenidars based their compositions on the 21 **Nasks** of Prophet Zarathushtra.

Chapter 2

NATURE'S BLUEPRINT: AS DELINEATED IN OUR RELIGION

Many of you must have heard of the Avesta word, **Ahunavar** or **Ahunavairya**. Literally, it means "the plan or blueprint of Ahu." This plan of Lord Almighty is that of Cosmogogenesis or how the Universe was created. The word **Ahunavar** also indicates the most primeval Avesta prayer, **Yatha Ahu Vairyo**. Notice the last two of the three words – **Ahu Vairyo**. **These two meanings of Ahunavar are very closely connected.**

Chapter 19 of the **Yasna** text gives the paraphrase and the inner import of the **Yatha Ahu Vairyo** formula. In the 14th paragraph of this chapter, two very pertinent Avesta words occur – **Pancha tkaesha = five faiths or creeds or religions**. And, thereafter, in the 16th paragraph, we have the words, **Pancha Ratu, meaning the five leaders.**

Thus, in the latter part of Yasna 19.14, it is very categorically stated that, "All the **manthra** (prayers, formulae), which admonish, and which give protection are the words of Ahura Mazda. There are 5 faiths or religions, which enlighten."

So, what have you noticed? That the Plan or Blueprint - the creation of the Universe - includes the propagation and unfoldment of the 5 Faiths or Religions !

In other words, we can very safely conclude that, (a) the Religions of this world which is a part of the Universe, are given by Ahura Mazda and are not man-made; and (b) that these major religions are exactly five in number.

We also know from World History that these religions are (i) Zoroastrianism, (ii) Hinduism, (iii) Judaism, (iv) Christianity, and (v) Islam - in that order of chronology. All the others are offshoots of one of these major religions.

This scheme of Nature is based on the fundamental divine Law of **Asha**. Anyone, who even slightly upsets this basic Law and Order of Nature, is responsible for creating a disorder, that is, he commits a sin, because he goes against the Plan of Ahura !

The five Religions are brought by their founders **at the appropriate time and at the appointed places only**. It is not a mere coincidence that all these religions were founded on the continent of Asia.

In our "Introduction", we had said that, in Nature, everything works by design. There is no accident. The same is true of man's birth. **A man is born in a certain family, in a specific religion according to the Plan and Will of God. Any tampering with this Plan amounts to committing a Mortal sin !**

Chapter 3

LIFE AND TIMES BEFORE THE PROPHET

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that much of our muddled thinking about conversion, mixed-marriages, etc., arises because we are not sure what were the circumstances and conditions before the world's **first** Prophet Zarathushtra came on the scene, thousands of years ago!

What was the world like then? Were there only pagans and heathens, idol-worshippers and primitive tribesmen, as most of us are brought up to believe? Were there animal and human sacrifices to propitiate hungry gods?

It is a pity that many of us Zoroastrians, who are bred on the Western system of education are inclined to believe what the European historians and writers have said through the centuries. We forget that today's highly industrialised countries of the Western Hemisphere were in the Dark Ages then ! So naturally, those living there today believe that the whole world was steeped in the darkness of ignorance!

But that was definitely not so, because in Nature, there is always the Law of Duality functioning, according to which, every single creation, except the Lord Himself, Who alone is in unity, has a dual nature or aspect.

So, what was the state of affairs before the advent of Prophet Zarathushtra? The first point to be borne in mind is that Zoroaster was the **first** Prophet of the world to bring a Revealed Religion. Secondly, for millennia before Zoroaster, there were on earth two classes of people - one belonging to the white side of the Nature and the other who leaned towards the dark Side.

The former has been called in the Avesta the **Poiryo-tkaesha**, "the first or advanced ones in practices of devotion." The term is applied throughout the Avesta only to saintly Souls advanced in spirituality. They were the ones who expedited their spiritual progress by following "**dataaish paირyaish Ahurahya**" = "the original first laws of Ahura." Even Prophet Zarathushtra himself has been called a **Paირyo-tkaesha** in the **Fravardin Yasht**. These **Yazdan-parast** (Worshippers of God) **Paირyo-tkaeshi** souls were also classified as the **Mazdayasnis**.

Zoroastrian tradition and the Avesta **Yashts** are replete with the specific missions of the illustrious saintly kings from Gayomard, Hoshang, Tehmurasp, Jamshid, Fredun, etc., to Kaikobad, Kaikaus, Kaikhushru, and the saintly paladins like Kersasp, Rustom, Faramarz, Aspandiar, etc., all of whom belonged to the **Paირyo-tkaesha** class.

The second section of people inhabiting the earth at that time comprised what has been called the **Devyasnis** or the **Daeva-worshippers**. The Avesta word **Daeva** has as its root **dub** = to deceive. Where there is deceit there is ignorance. In other words, if one is ignorant one can be deceived. The ignorance of the **Daevas** related to the non-comprehension of all the laws and Truths of Nature. And because the **Daevas** themselves were deceived by their false or half baked knowledge they were expert in deceiving others !!

These **Daevas** had tremendous materialistic powers of destruction and annihilation. Men who leaned towards these **Daevas** were known as the **Daevayasnis**. They were thus in the opposite camp to the spiritually advanced **Mazdayasnis**.

There used to be constant, long-drawn wars between the **Mazdayasnis** and the **Daevayasnis**, which took epic proportions as described in Firdausi's **Shah Nameh**. The **Mazdayasnis** were on the side of **Spenta Mainyu** and the **Daevayasnis** on that of **Angra Mainyu**.

Even today, when you recite your **Kusti** prayer, in the **Jasa-mey-avangahe-Mazda**, you first say that you are a **Mazdayasni (Mazdayasno ahmi - "I am a Mazdayasni")** and immediately thereafter, you declare that you are a **Mazdayasno Zarathushtrish**. This itself indicates that (a) before Zarathushtra, there were the Mazdayasnis and (b) **only a person born a Mazdayasni, can, after his Navjote ceremony is performed, style himself a Zarathoshti !**

Many of you must have noticed that **most of the foreign scholars** of our religion either thoroughly ignore the **Paairyō-tkaeshi** souls before Zarathushtra or run them down and hopelessly confound the **Mazdayasnis** and **Daevayasnis** ! It is because of this confusion and mix-up that many Zoroastrians today, unfortunately, and very wrongly, believe that the pre-Zarathushtrian times were steeped in darkness, with primitive cults, pagan forms of worship, blood sacrifice, etc.!

Chapter 4

THE PROPHET COMETH

With severe clashes between the two warring camps of the Mazda-worshippers and the Daeva-worshippers continuing for a long time, it seemed to be a never-ending affair. Their respective strengths waxed and waned according to the passage of time.

But finally a time came when the **Daevayasnis**, whose materialistic ideas and culture had made inroads into the purity and spirituality of the **Mazdayasnis**, began to gain an upper hand. The mighty, spiritually advanced **Mazdayasni** kings and paladins could barely contain them.

It was then that, according to Gatha Ahunavaiti (Yasna 29.1) "**Geush Urva gerezda...**" - the Soul of the Evanescent World roared that..." It wanted a powerful Saviour from Mazda !

Thus at the appropriate time Holy Prophet Zarathustra is sent to the earth to fulfill certain missions, which is pertinent for our purpose.

That mission was to **put on the right track** of Zoroastrianism all those **Paoiryotkaesh** people of Iran and its environs; he was their true guide. He expounded the entire Law of Nature to them, pointed out the straight path, which helped to accelerate the attainment of the goal of highest spiritual progress.

Again, those **Mazdayasnis** who had slipped into **Daevayasni**, and had become **dregvant**, did not believe the Prophet. So Zarathushtra warned them that as a **Ratu** (chief) of the Lord, he would drill sense into them. (A **dregvant** is one who belongs to the Dark Side of Nature, who can take the human form, stalk the earth and entice and mislead the **Mazdayasnis**).

Prophet Zarathushtra was the first-ever Messenger of God to reveal His message. There was no prophet nor any form of established, organised religion in the world, as we know it today, like Christianity, Judaism, Islam etc. It is, therefore, sheer stupidity and a betrayal of our gross ignorance to even think that, Zoroaster converted the people of "primitive faith" to his own faith. **THERE WAS NO OTHER FAITH TO CONVERT FROM.**

The adoption of the Zoroastrian Religion by King Vishtaspa and other Paoiryotkaesha souls of the time was never "conversion" or "change from one religion to another", as understood at present! It was only the weeding out of evil and wickedness that had gripped many of the Mazdayasnis. Zarathushtra's religion was a superstructure built on the foundation of the Mazdayasni Deen.

Chapter 5

THE "UNIVERSALITY" OF THE ZOROASTRIAN RELIGION

Is the Zoroastrian Religion a universal religion? If the answer is "yes", it could be followed and practised by any person in the world. Is that so?

The answer in the affirmative to our question is correct. Our Religion is a universal religion. But its universality has to be understood in two ways: -

(1) The 21 **Nasks** of the Prophet covered all the laws and truths obtaining in all the planes and dimensions of the universe. As one of our scholars, Ervad Phiroze S. Masani very aptly put it: "Zoroastrian Law is universal in as much as it the law which teaches all the laws of life for the emancipation of the soul out of the physical vesture, which imprisons it and dwarfs its power and it is the Law which is the Greatest, the Best, the most Excellent of all the laws that were ever taught about the evolution of the soul" (**Yasna Ha 12**).

In **Fargard** (Chapter) 5 of the **Vendidad**, the **universal character** of the Religion is picturesquely depicted. There it is stated that the **Mazdayasnan** law as taught by Zarathushtra is greater in size, beauty and excellence than any other Law just as the 'sea of Vourukasha' is greater than all other 'seas' or just as a big tree covers all the smaller ones, or just as the sky covers the entire earth round."

Thus, in one sense, the universality of the Zoroastrian Religion is to be understood from the point of view of its all-encompassing vastness and greatness.

(2) The second way in which the "universal" aspect is to be viewed is from the standpoint of its **universal efficacy** resulting from the observance of all its tenets by its adherents. The laws and canons inculcated in the 21 **Nasks** by the Prophet are the original Laws of Nature in obedience to which the multifarious activities in Nature are carried on. When a Zoroastrian attunes himself with Nature, that is, remains parallel with the functions of Nature, he observes all the laws and disciplines of his religion. **The effect of this extends all over the earth as it rotates on its axis and revolves in space.** As you must have guessed, the "Law of Vibrations" (**Staota**) is at the root of it all.

To illustrate, a consecrated Atash Behram or an Adaran has the powerful propensity to spread the holy, benevolent currents and forces of Nature that it is capable of attracting, all round, spreading over vast areas. These blessed currents benefit not only the Zoroastrians but all others living in that area, **provided the Fire Temple's purity and sanctity are properly preserved.** Thus, it is the nature of the observance of the tenets of the Zoroastrian Religion and **not** the mere number of nominal adherents that marks it out as universal **in its effect.**

This universal character of the Zoroastrian Religion can by no stretch of imagination be taken to imply proselytism or conversion of any person from another faith.

Chapter 6

"FREEDOM OF CHOICE" - THE MOST POISONOUS DOGMA

If there is one aspect or one dogma that has created the greatest confusion in the minds of the rank and file of our co-religionists, it is the wrong and distorted interpretation of **Yasna Ha 30.2 (Gatha Ahunavaiti)** by most of the non-Zoroastrian scholars and even by some of the Zoroastrian scholars, who are active preachers of proselytism. The result is given an unbridled licence to those Zoroastrians who want to do and act according to the dictates of their wayward minds !

So vicious, poisonous and infectious is this dogma, this unadulterated myth, a figment of some heterodox's imagination, that it has caught on only with the 20th century Zoroastrians, like the bubonic plague! Its effects are infinitely worse and disastrous than any decapitating disease that might afflict one's mind or body !

We shall therefore, have to consider somewhat in details the translation of this stanza. But before we do that, lets ask ourselves two common sensed questions. Lets keep aside for the time being **Yasna 30.2**.

The first question is: Can a Prophet, who is a Messenger of God, who as Ahura Mazda Himself says is "aevo" = the only one, the exception "who has heard My Commandments" - can such a Prophet who brings the Message of God, who comes specially to show the true and only path, ever tell his listeners, "you should think before you believe me"?

The second question is: As we have already seen in Chapter 3, the condition prevailing just before the advent of Prophet Zarathushtra was such that **Geush Urva** herself had to plead for a soul that would be strong enough to destroy the forces of the Dark Side, which were getting more and more powerful. The **Paouryo-tkaesh** paladins and kings were finding it difficult to keep them in check. Would the Prophet then call such people, who tormented even **Geush Urva**, as those with the "best ears" and "illumined minds"? That tantamounts to giving them a licence to commit sin !

Again, still before actually taking up the controversial stanza, just ponder dear readers ! The faculties and the capacity to think of any human being, even a genius, is so hopelessly limited, that he is not able to comprehend even today, a title of either the micro-cosmic or the macro-cosmic world. There are layers and layers of **druj** on his senses, his mind is virtually a slave to his inner enemies like the various passions (anger, jealousy, greed, lust, etc.), to such a limited, polluted mind, a Prophet of the caliber of Zarathushtra would give such supreme importance? If that were so, man would be as omniscient as Ahura Mazda and there was no need for the **Vakshoor-e-Vakshooran** to come, for whose birth, Nature had to make preparations 9 generations earlier !!!

Have we modern Zoroastrians lost all sense of reasoning and proportion that we go on glibly gabbling about "Freedom of Choice" or "Freedom of Will," where religious and spiritual matters are concerned?

Coming to the Gathas, what is not realised by most students of the Zoroastrian Religion and of the Avesta and Pahlavi languages is that through the 17 Chapters of the 5 Gathas, there is a common thread running, which links not only one Gatha with one another, but each strophe of Gatha with the next strophe. Thus, there is a sequence, a concatenation of events, episodes and happenings, which have a link and which, if seen in the right perspective, presents a magnificent scenario.

For our purpose, therefore, we have to consider the background to **Yasna 30.2**. The very first stanza of **Gatha Ahunavaiti, Yasna 28.1** talks of **Khshnevishaa Geushcha Urvaanem**, i.e. how to bring about the rejoicing and ecstasy of **Geush Urva** (the Soul of the Evanescent World). **This stanza keeps recurring at the end of every Ha or chapter of the Ahunavaiti Gatha**. This joy of **Geush Urva** will be initially brought about by Prophet Zarathushtra, that is, he will be the one who will lessen the load of the forces of the Dark Side on the earth.

Then in the same **Yasna Ha 28**, in strophes 7 and 8, we are told that Prophet Zarathushtra's mission of relieving the pressure on **Geush Urva**, "will be continued by king Vishtaspa, who has been made the Spiritual Lord, and by Frashoshtra. Again in **Yasna 28.8**, Zarathushtra says that, I wish (pray) that for Farshoshtra (**and for my other disciples (maibyaa)**), Thou (Ahura Mazda will obtain for ever that (intensity) of Vohumana, and may be liked by You."

Thus, in **Yasna 28.9**, there is an assurance that the **holy and pious followers** of Prophet Zarathushtra - the Din Dasturs – will lessen the load of **Geush Urva**. **They are the warriors, the fighters, on behalf of the white side of Nature**.

Finally in **Yasna 28.11**, there is a fervent desire that may such **pious** souls continue to relieve **Geush Urva** of her load for ever !

From here, for our purpose, we take a small jump to the last stanza of the next chapter of **Gatha Ahunavaiti, Yasna Ha 29.10**. There, Zarathushtra, and his disciples who toil a great deal to bring about brotherhood in mankind, are wished complete success in their difficult mission !

Yasna 30.1 continues from there. In it, we are told, that more of such disciples and pious devotees are required for the purpose. **The experiment to create such disciples begins here**. They are **"ishento"**, i.e. candidates for such a mission. They are also **"veedushey"**, i.e. spiritually intelligent or qualified for the mission. Yet, for such an immense mission (of reducing **Geush Urva's load**), they have yet to gain more spiritual knowledge and practice. Thus, Prophet Zarathushtra tells such candidates, "You, who are spiritually intelligent (evolved) candidates, I will show you the path to enter the depths of Nature." That path consists of: (a) **Staotaacha Ahurai** = To know the mysteries of Ahura, the path of **Staota Yasna**, viz., Science of Vibratory Colours in Nature, from which all cosmic vibrations emanate; (b) **Yasnyachaa Vangheush Manangho** = the **Yasna** or ritual performed with the benevolent **gospandi** mind; and (c) **Hu-maanzdraa Ashaa** = to be adept in special **Manthra** to achieve **Ashoi**. After the initiate is well-versed in all these, he will know other things that are required for the above mentioned mission, because, such an initiate will have increased the **raye** (light or consciousness) of his soul. He will then experience immortal bliss and permanent peace of mind. Such an initiate is now an enlightened **Ashavan**.

(Here, the words, **Ashoi** and **Ashavan** require some explanation. Many of us naively believe that **Ashoi** - from **Asha** - means, "righteousness" or "truthfulness". That is only the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Frankly, there is hardly any English word which conveys the exact meaning of **Ashoi** and **Ashavan** - one who practises **Ashoi**. The nearest equivalent that one can give is, "piety" or "holiness", which can only be achieved through rigorous practice of the various spiritual disciplines and exercises (**tariqat**) prescribed by the Prophet.

Thus, such an **Ashavan**, without losing heart or courage (against Ahriman and his hordes) will carry out his mission of being a co-worker of **Geush Urva**, with enthusiasm. **WHAT KIND OF**

A MAN WOULD SUCH AN ASHAVAN BE? WHAT WOULD BE HIS QUALIFICATIONS? AND WHAT IS HE CAPABLE OF DOING ?

The answers to these questions are provided in the next stanza **Yasna 30.2**, the bone of contention among philologists and scholars, the "causa causans" of the anti-Zoroastrian idea of "Freedom of Choice" and of course, the topic of our present chapter !

The text of **Yasna 30.2** is as follows:

Sraotaa geushaish vahishtaa, avaenataa
Soochaa mananghaa,
Aavarenao Veechithayhaa narem narem
Khakhyaai tanuyey,
Paraa mazay yaaongho ahmai nay
Sazdyai baodanto paiti.

Literal Translation: "With many ears, hear the best, with an illumined mind, see (ponder), every man (initiate) for his own body should select the faith (belief) for such a person, the great events that occur from the dimmest past to the most distant future - he will be wise by them through us."

To expatriate on some of the operative and pertinent words in this vital stanza :-

Geushaish Vahishtaa - "With **many** ears" - note that here the plural and not the dual number is used. "Many ears", therefore, refer to the Receiving Points, the psychic centres or plexuses in one's etheric body. These are to be developed to an extent when one can hear only the "best" i.e. one's psychic centers should be in complete harmony with Nature's intricate machinery!

Soocha Mananghaa: **Soochaa** = "Illumined", "enlightened." Only an illumined mind can see the truths and secrets of Nature through the thick veils which hide them. In the esoteric sense, it means the opening of the "Third Eye."

Aavarenao = "faith", "belief", "trust." Whatever is told by the Prophet is accepted with implicit faith and total belief.

Veechithayaa = selected, chosen (by the conscience), because here, it is the implicit faith that is to be selected, according to **Khakhyaai Tanuyey:** "For one's own body", i.e. in accordance with the passions which are left over in the physical body - to overcome those passions.

Thus, in this stanza, Prophet Zarathushtra talks of his initiates, who are on their way to becoming **Ashavans**, who possess the three traits mentioned in **Yasna 30.1**, and who, therefore, have "ears" that can "hear" the best and who can "see" with their illumined minds. With such "ears" and "minds", the initiate can know the mysteries of all the 7 aeons - they are aware of the major events that take place right from the beginning of creation ! **These then are the "haavisht", the disciples of the Prophet, who are alone competent and qualified to help lift the load on "Geush Urva."**

How can one possess **Geushaish Vahishtaa** and **Soochaa Mananghaa**? By selecting that part of the belief or faith (here, in the sense of spiritual disciplines given by the Prophet) as is necessary for him according to the quantum of passions in his body, which are to be eliminated.

There is, therefore, not a shadow of doubt that (a) "ears" that hear the best and illumined minds that can "see" can be attained only by those who follow the path laid down by Prophet Zarathushtra. The "choice", if any, therefore is inescapable; and (b) only after such a path is followed, that one is on the way of becoming an **Ashavan** - a true disciple of Prophet Zarathushtra.

It will, therefore, be evident even to a goon, that there isn't the remotest idea, or even any inference of any "freedom of choice" in matters religious or spiritual. If the Prophet had propagated such a dangerous doctrine, and permitted people to act according to their whims and fancies, there was no need, in the first place for him to come. And secondly, an ordinary human being, even if endowed with extraordinary common sense, simply cannot fathom the mysteries of Nature, without the development of the "many ears" (plexuses) and minus an "illumined mind", which would help him actually "see" the events.

Chapter 7

BRIEF EXAMINATION OF SOME OF THE OFT-MENTIONED QUOTATIONS FROM RELIGIOUS TEXTS TO JUSTIFY CONVERSION

The **Gathas**: Besides **Yasna 30.2** analysed in the last chapter, there are some other Gathic stanzas, which are often wrongly cited by the 20th century protagonists of proselytisation. We shall consider some of the oft-quoted ones.

Yasna Ha 28.7: In the last line of this strophe occur three words, **Manthra Sreveemaa raadao**, which literally mean, "may we hear such Manthra"! Some scholars translate these words as, "may we chant these Manthras for hearing!" The queer interpretation, in parenthesis, by some of these scholars, is, ("may we declare them **to the world !**") or ("may we spread far **and wide**, Your Holy Word !"). That this spreading in "the world" or "far and wide", is a pure figment of fancy of these writers, is evident to any person even devoid of common sense! **The ruddy trouble with such translators is that they sit down to translate with an "idee fixe", a rigid preconceived notion, that proselytisation is a part of the Zoroastrian doctrine !**

Yasna 30.11: Once again, three words, **daregem dregvodebyo rusho**, this time occurring in the 2nd line of this stanza are taken to mean, "to the **dravands** (those who do not listen to Zarathushtra's commandments), there is long-lasting pain and anguish, and to the **Ashavans** (those who have listened to the preachings of Zarathushtra) benefit and gain." [This last is a part of the 3rd line of this stanza].

Where on earth is here even the slightest hint of conversion? But, those interpreters, who see conversion even in their plates of soup, the word "**dregvodebyo**", meaning "dravands", is viciously distorted to mean, "those who are followers of other religions" ! ? The word "dravand" simply means, one who is not righteous and holy, or one who is away from **Ashoi** and practises falsehood. In this line, it is clearly implied that those who practise falsehood, should be put on the path of righteousness. Do those who see conversion here imply that all other religions preach falsehood to their followers?

Let it be said emphatically that even today, many of the followers of Prophet Zarathushtra **do not** follow the Zoroastrian tenets and doctrines, and are, therefore, pure and simple **dravands !**

Yasna Ha 31.3: One word that has caused real havoc in the minds of proponents of proselytism, is the last one in the stanza, **Vauraya**. They translate it to mean, "I-may-ever-convert." What Avestic root do they derive this from? **Var**, Sansk. **Vri** = "to turn" (according to these translators). But this root **Var** meaning "to turn", is attested neither in Avesta nor in Sanskrit ! Both Ervad Kanga in his "Avesta Dictionary" and Prof. Bartholomae in his "Altiranisches Woerterbuch" have exhaustively treated this Avesta root in various forms, but neither has assigned it the meaning, "to turn"!

The same root occurs in Old Persian, with the meaning, "to believe", "to put faith in", "to convince". In Pahlavi, we have **varravastan** = "to believe", **vavar** = "belief".

Thus, the Gathic word **Vauraya**, is used in the sense of "to ensure that one will believe and put faith in", **but there is definitely no suggestion whatsoever of "changing" one's faith !**

Yasna Ha 45.5: One word, **maretakeibyō** has here caused a good deal of unwarranted confusion. It means, "for men". From this, those obsessed with conversion, jump to the conclusion that the Zoroastrian religion is meant "for all mankind". The simple, incontrovertible fact is that, as already pointed out in Chapters 3 and 4 of this monograph, during Zarthustra's time, there was no other organised religion. There were only the Mazdayasnis, among some of whom, the doctrines of the Daevayasni cult had penetrated. The evidence for this can still be obtained from the **Zamyad Yasht** and **Dinkard**. Even the late K. R. Cama, the doyen, nay the founder, of the Iranian philological school in India, has categorically asserted in the first edition of his **Zarthosht-nama**, that before the advent of Zarathushtra, there was only the **Mazdayasni Deen**.

Those who glibly talk of conversion, whenever such words or expressions like, "all men" or "far and wide", etc. occur, should show that there were other organised religions in the world at that time. **The onus of proof is on them !**

The above are just a few, samples from the Gathas of passages, which are trotted out ad **nauseam** by the protagonists of conversion, although each of them has been repeatedly shown, word by word, not to contain even an iota of the concept of proselytisation.

Let's consider some passages from other texts, which are thrown at us, as supporting conversion.

One of the commonest passages quoted for this purpose is taken from paragraph 94 of the **Fravardin Yasht** : It is the famous **Ushta-no Zaato Athrava Yo Spitamo Zarathushtro** paragraph. Therein further, it is stated: **Ida apaanm yazaitey vanguhi Daena Mazdayasnish veespaish avi Karshwaan yaaish hapta.** = "Here, hereafter, the benevolent **Mazdayasni Daena** will spread over all the **Keshvars**, which are seven."

This paragraph as well as its preceding paragraph (93) are in the form of a reply to **Yasna Ha 29**, where **Geush Urva** roars that atrocities are being perpetrated on earth by the Dark Forces, and, therefore, a Saviour is desperately needed. Ardibehesht Amshaspand tells her that Holy Zarathushtra will come down on earth for that mission at the appointed time. Remember that at that time the whole world was under the sway of the wicked forces, and therefore, Zarathushtra, was to be a Saviour for it. So, in the Fravardin Yasht, paragraphs 93 and 94, **Geush Urva** is full of joy and the entire Creation shouts with ecstasy, "Hail ! That an Athravan, Spitama Zarathushtra is born for us !" Now, from the 7 **Keshvars**, the Dark Forces, the **Devs** and the demons will be exorcised, and the pristine pure **Mazdayasni Deen** will once again flourish in them." The real significance and purport of this and similar sentences elsewhere in the Avesta is lost on many of our scholars, because the two pertinent and operative terms therein, (i) **Mazdayasni Daena** and (ii) **Hafta Keshvar** are not properly understood by them. They wrongly interpret this to mean that with the spread of the **Mazdayasni Deen**, other religions will be driven back and perhaps removed from the face of the earth. Thus, conversion to the **Mazdayasni Deen** is propagated by them !

The first simple fact that they forget is that the **Mazdayasni Deen** should not always be confounded with the Zarthoshti Deen. **Mazdayasni Deen** is the mother of all other **Deen**, including the Zarthoshti Deen.

What is the **Mazdayasni Deen**? The very word **Daena** in Avesta (**Deen** in Pahlavi) means, in the original sense "conscience". **The supreme knowledge and wisdom in the conscience of Mazda, therefore, is the Mazdayasni Deen!** Thus, this encompasses all the truths, mysteries and wisdom that

are there in the Universe. **Mazdayasni Deen** in its pristine sense is not just the 'religion' of the Zoroastrians on earth. In *Visperad*, **Karta** 7, para. 2 she is referred to as **Astaad Yazat**. (**Arshtaatem yazamaidey vangbaveem fraadat gaethaam vareydat gaetbaam savo gaethaam yaam daenaam Mazdayasneem** = "That **Mazdayasni Deen**, which is **Astaad Yazat**, i.e. it is a living, throbbing entity (**Kehrp of Astaad Yazad**), is the protector, benefactor, while going through the material world, and one that takes towards permanent salvation, for the entire Universe".

Again in *Visperad*, **Karta** 12.2-3, some more universal attributes of the holy **Mazdayasni Deen** are given.

In the **Ashi Yasht**, paragraph 16, it is said, "**Pita te yo Ahuro Mazdao, yo mazishto Yazatanaam, yo vahishto Yazatanaam**" = "Of thou Ashishvangh, Ahura Mazda, who is the greatest of all Yazatas, the best of all **Yazatas** is the father." "**Maata Armaitish braata te yo vanghush Sraosho ashyo, Rashnushcha berejo amavao, Meethrascha Vouru-gaoyaoitish yo baevare spasano hazanghara gaosho**" = "Armaiti is the mother of Ashishvangh; thy, Ashi's brother is benevolent, holy Sarosh, brave, courageous Rashnu, Meher Yazad, who tills the vast land to raise the crop of **Gava**, who is ten thousand times the supervisor and who has ten thousand ears." "**Khangha Daena Mazdayesnish**" = "Thou Ashi's sister is the **Mazdayasni Deen**." Thus, here the **Mazdayasni Daena** is categorically described as a living **Yazatic** force.

Last, but not the least, in our daily **Khorshed** and **Meher Nyaishes**, we pray, "**Daenaam vanghuim Mazdayasnim Yazamaidey**" = "We attune ourselves to the benevolent **Mazdayasni Deen**. It is common knowledge that wherever the Avesta word, "**Yazamaidey**" = (a) we attune ourselves to or (b) as philologists are apt to translate, "We revere or worship", occurs, it is always applied to some Divine/Cosmic Force or being operating in Nature, to whom we are supposed to attune ourselves. In this case, it's the **Mazdayasni Daena** !

The above is the original meaning of **Mazdayasni Deen**. In its narrower sense on earth, it has been compared to the trunk of a tree. From the centre of this trunk, the main stem or branch that emerges is the **Zarthoshti Deen** (Zoroastrian Religion). The other four branches of this trunk are the four other religions of the world, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which appear in this world at their appointed time, after Prophet Zarathushtra has laid the foundation for their coming !

In Avesta, these later religions have been called, **apara-tkaesha**. As long as all these five (including Zoroastrian) religions or branches of the tree keep themselves free from the pollution of the **Daevas** (dark forces of Nature or the Blacks), they are known as **apara-tkaesha**.

If, however, **daevaparasti** contaminates them, they are known as "**aka- Deen**" and their followers are called **dravand** or **dregvant**.

(ii) There remains to be considered the other expression, **Haft Keshvar**. At the end of every **Nyaish** and **Yasht**, there is a reference to **Haft Keshvar Zamin** = seven **Keshvars**. The term **Keshvar** is referred to in Avesta as **Karshvare**. **Karshvare** is derived from **Karesh** = to draw the circle. Thus, it implies a circular region. The names of the seven **Keshvars** are enumerated in **Meher Yasht, 15**.

Now, almost all philologists erroneously believe these **Karshvares** to be the divisions of the earth or the seven continents of the world. First of all, which country or region or continent of the known material world is "circular"? Secondly, the term **Karshvare** is so derived because of the

seven, the six super-ethereal **Keshvars** are fiery orbs, where reside emancipated and saintly souls. The seventh is the terrestrial **Keshvar, Khanirath Bami**. According to **Bundahishn 11.1** and **Yasna 11.7**, the **Khanirath Bami** is centrally located. In the latter, it is referred to as “**Mademe Thrishvey**” = the central one-third. Though the **Khanirath Bami** is terrestrial, still it being located on the top of the earthy globe - the whole ice-bound Arctic region - is circular in its latitudinal belt, unlike the countries (or continents) of the known material world.

Thus, the terrestrial **Khanirath Bami** is entirely different from the other six **Keshvars** located in far super-ethereal heights. The lowest of the six ultra physical **Keshvars** is the **Vouru-Bareshti** in the North West direction. The next higher is **Vouru-Zareshti** in the North-East. Above this, in the West is **Arezahi** and in the East, **Savahi**. Lastly, are **Keshvars Frada-Dafshu**, in the South-West and **Vida-Dafshu**, the topmost, in the South-East. Thus, these six **Keshvars** are arranged in tiers. The directions are supposed to be from the centre of the earthy globe.

Diagrammatically, the 6 **Keshvars** can be shown as under :-



The joint magnetism from the far heights of the 6 **Keshvars** in six different angles around the **Khanirath Bami**, keeps the earthy globe always in its position in the cosmos. Hence it is stated in our religious texts that **Khanirath Bami** is centrally located.

One writer has aptly likened the six **Keshvars** "to a six-armed expanded umbrella of a parachute, the outer ends of the six arms representing the 6 **Keshvars**, and the pendant earthy globe as the parachutist".

All these details we had to go into, because most of the Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian Scholars today do not comprehend the true significance of terms like **Mazdayasni Deen** and **Haft**

Keshvar, because of their antiquated system of bare linguistic study lit Avesta-Pahlavi- Pazend, which hardly captures the essence or spirit of the Zoroastrian Religion.

**Yasna 41.6: Athaurunaamchaa paitee ajaanthrem yazamaidey yoi yeyaan dooraat asho-
isho dakhyunaam.** This line occurs in **Yasna Haptanghaiti (Haptan Yasht) Karda 8.** The translation runs thus “We attune ourselves to the Athornaans, who go far and wide, wishing that may **Ashoi** be established; may such (**Athornaans**) succeed in their task and return!”

This “establishing” or “spreading” of **Ashoi** is construed to mean “spreading of religion” (!) by the advocates of conversion. Not even a little reflection is necessary to show how hollow and unsustainable is this claim ! Here, "establishing **Ashoi**" simply indicates that wherever disorder (**aka**) prevailed, order (**asha**) was to be established. The holy **athravans** of yore would go to those places where disorder prevailed, that is where the Daevayasnis held sway, and restore order, that is bring them back to the **Mazdayasni** fold an extension of the mission carried out by Prophet Zarathushtra on a much bigger scale !

One can multiply many such examples from the Gathas, the other Avesta and Pazend texts, which have been cited from time to time, purporting to show that Conversion is advocated in our Scriptures. But each and every one of these has not the smallest toe to stand upon. In fact, each of these has already been dealt with in details, dissected and analysed by some true scholars, whose works are mentioned in the "References" section at the end of this booklet. **There is no new evidence furnished by any scholar or student of the Zoroastrian Religion, living or dead, which can even remotely point to proselytism. And if somebody comes up with what he/she claims to be new, rest-assured it's "deja vu" or a concoction of his/her not-so-fertile imagination.**

Finally, there are many misguided Zoroastrian proponents of proselytism, who swear by the Report of the 11-member "Expert Committee" appointed in 1903 to go into the "Juddin" question, because this committee had opined, among other things, that the Zoroastrian religion did not prohibit conversion.

But what most of us don't know is that the late Dr. Behramgore Anklesaria, the son of Ervad Tehmuras D. Anklesaria, a staunch advocate of proselytism, had made a very pertinent remark in the meeting of the "Committee For Research in the Zoroastrian Religion", held on the 17th February, 1917. He said that the Expert Committee on the 'Juddin' question was provided with translations of the Scriptures by Drs. Spiegel, Darmesteter, West, Ervad Kavasji Kanga, etc. At that time the late Seth (Khurshedji R.) Cama had stated that, "proper results cannot be obtained by relying on these volumes of translations. For this, purpose, every member of the Expert Committee should himself independently go into the details of every paragraph and come to a final conclusion. Then only will it achieve adequate weightage". Yet, (according to Behramgore) the Committee relied only on the above translations.

(From the minutes in Gujarati of the "Committee for Research in the Zoroastrian Religion", pg. 185).

Chapter 8

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE REFUTES CONVERSION

It's a pity that some latter-day Parsee charlatans, who don the garb of scholarship, tell us that it is only after coming to India that the Parsees refused to accept converts to their religion, because, as Justice Beaman summed up, "Those who reached India were a scattered remnant. They were only too glad to receive an asylum to be allowed to live in peace and profess their ancient faith. In such circumstances, the idea of proselytism was impolitic and impracticable. They had enough to do to preserve their own faith, their own little society, against the impact of great surrounding forces, religious and social".

This, at best, is a good surmise. No one, not even the best of Iranian scholars, whether Oriental or Western, has adduced any evidence in the last 200 years that in ancient Zoroastrian Iran, conversion or proselytism was common or rampant. How could they, when the Zoroastrian Religion, based on the Divine law of Asha, forbade conversion? And it should be remembered that the history of Zoroastrian Iran straddled a period of thousands of years !

On the contrary, it can be easily proved that the mighty powerful Iranian Zoroastrian Kings and paladins never resorted to conversion of non-Zoroastrians, either by force or persuasion. Just two examples will suffice. One is the famous instance of King Cyrus the great of the Achaemenian Empire.

The Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar (604-562 B.C.) had united the countries of the Assyrians, the Aramaics and the Phoenecians, living in ancient Mesopotamia. He had conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the city, demolished the famous Temple of Solomon and kept the Jews in captivity in Babylonia. The last Babylonian king was Nabunaid, who was an ally of Croesus, the king of Lydia. Nabunaid, however, was not popular in his country. When Cyrus marched into Babylonia, people opposed Nabunaid, opened the city gates, and received Cyrus as their deliverer (539 B. C.).

If Cyrus wanted, he could have easily subjugated the conquered people. Instead, he allowed them to rule their countries, and follow their religion. Cyrus not only delivered the Jews from captivity in Babylon, but even helped them to rebuild the Temple of Solomon. For this act of magnanimity, Cyrus is considered a Messiah, "the anointed of the Lord" (Isaiah 45.1). Incidentally, references to Cyrus in this vein, can be found besides Isaiah, in the Old Testament, in Ezra 1.1-2; Ezra 6.3-4 and Ezra 6.14-15.

Again, it is historically recorded that both during the Achaemenian times and in the preceding period of the Medians, there were many idol-worshipping faiths and cults practised by the non-Zoroastrian people. However, what's noteworthy is that, each community considered the other community's cult and idols superior to its own! The result was that they would fight among themselves to borrow such cults of the others ! They never went to war trying to impose or force their faith on others, i.e. they never tried to convert others to their faith ! Such evidence is to be found in some of the extant Assyrian records. Thus, there was always an attraction between faith and faith, cult and cult and not antagonism or hatred between them. It was only after Judaism found its proper roots and entrenched itself in certain parts of the world that, for the first time, wars were fought between the Greeks and the Jews, each considering his creed to be superior to the other ! One such example is given above, when the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Jews and held them in captivity till the Achaemenian Zoroastrian king, Cyrus, delivered them from captivity.

It is also a known fact that the Achaemenian Zoroastrian kings were so tolerant of and respectful to the religions of their subjects, that not only did they help them rebuild their temples or synagogues, but they even dismounted from their steeds, every time they passed a place of worship of their subjects, and walked that distance! To even remotely think that such patient, tolerant and just monarchs might have practised proselytism, is to indulge in defamation of the worst kind of our worthy and exalted ancestors, before whom all our ha'penny tu'penny historians and savants of today would pale into insignificance !

The other example, showing the tolerance and large-heartedness of the Iranian kings towards the religions of others comes from the Sassanian times.

For this purpose, a brief historical background of the times is necessary. During the Arshkanian rule, Armenia, which was a part of the Zoroastrian Empire, found itself under the sway of the Christian missionaries.

How did this happen? After Alexander the Greek's conquest of Iran, Greek and Macedonian chiefs and generals ruled over parts of Iran for about 80 years. The Arshkanians or Parthians then overran their empire circa 250 B.C. The kingdom was founded by Arsaces or Arshak, a resident of the province of Parthia in North-Eastern Iran. The Arshkanians ruled from 250 B.C. to about 226 A.C. - 476 years (approximately)

The main bone of contention between the Arshkanians and the Romans, who were always at war with one another, was Armenia. The see-saw battles between the two powers went on for a long time. What is important for us is that the Parthian monarchs were, like their predecessors, the Achaemenians, broadminded and tolerant. Though their religion was Iranian and Zoroastrian in origin, they dealt with defeated countries and war prisoners with leniency. The conquered countries were under Parthian Satraps, but the people were allowed to govern their countries and to follow their religions.

Thus, in Armenia, the Romans were permitted to practise Christianity, without hindrance from the Zoroastrians. Yet, gradually, the missionary zeal of the Christians took over and Zoroastrian Armenia turned into Christian Armenia, so much so, that the Viceroys of the Arshkanian kings, themselves began to embrace Christianity ! It is these very Mazdayasnan converts who first sowed the seeds of devastation and ruin of Iran.

In the Sassanian times, during the reign of Shahpur I, parts of India, China, Russia, Arabia, Egypt, Syria, etc., all came once again under Iranian suzerainty; they all joined the Iranian federation, but the Armenians and other erstwhile Mazdayasnans converted to Christianity did not take part in such a peaceful federation.

This example has been somewhat dwelt upon at length mainly to show that if proselytism was the order of the day, Zoroastrian kings of Parthia and Sassan, like the Achaemenian kings, had plenty of opportunity and power to convert vast numbers of humanity to Zoroastrianism, yet they never did that, but, instead, helped their conquered subjects to freely profess their own religions !

Incidentally, there is hardly any tangible example in these thousands of years of Iranian history of the common people, the masses, even taking non-Zoroastrian spouses. There were some alien marriages during the Sassanian period, but they were exceptions and took place only among the royalty for political reasons and exigencies.

Perhaps the only historical example of Iranian Zoroastrian women being forced to marry aliens was after the downfall of the Achaemenian Empire, when the Macedonian conqueror, Alexander, compelled these women to marry his soldiers, because he felt that the fusion of the two worlds, Iran and Greece would be beneficial to his people, on account of the exalted and highly advanced nature of the culture and civilisation of Zoroastrian Iran.

Among the Sassanian kings, Khosro I (Noshirwan-e-Adil) and Khosro II (Khusru Parvez) did marry alien princesses to gain political advantages. For instance, when Khosro II was defeated by his own commander, Behram Chaubin he turned to his erstwhile arch-enemy the Roman Emperor, Maurice, for help ! The latter did help him by sending military and financial help, but only if Khosro married his daughter, Maria!

The result of such inter-marriages, as late Iranian history clearly shows; was one of the major causes of the downfall of the Sassanian Empire. The rapid decline of this mighty Empire set in during the last days of the reign of Noshirwan-e-Adil. His own son, Anoshzad, born of his Christian wife, rose in rebellion against him, at the instigation of his mother ! That was the beginning of the end of the Empire.

After the death of Khosro II, there was complete chaos in the royal family. The princes instigated and actively supported by their mothers of foreign extraction and foreign faith played havoc..... in state affairs.

As the famous historian, Edward G. Browne says in his "A year among the Persians", published a 100 years ago: "Their (the Zoroastrians') religion has prevented them from intermarrying with Turks, Arabs and other non-Aryans, and they consequently represent the purest Persian type, which in physical beauty can hardly be surpassed".

Chapter 9

PARSEES - THE TRUE FOLLOWERS OF THE ZOROASTRIAN RELIGION

It has become quite fashionable these days on the part of some Parsees themselves to run down and belittle the genesis of their own ancestors! For instance, it is loosely and thoughtlessly bandied about that the term "Parsee" originated only after the advent of the Zoroastrians in India, about 1200 years ago. That because they came from the province of Pars, the Hindus in India began to call them "Parsees". All this, because they want to show that Parsees alone need not necessarily be Zoroastrians.

Such surmises and conjectures are at best, half truths. They betray not only the naivety of the writers but a lack of scholarship and knowledge about the history of the Iranian Parsees.

The term 'Parsee' does literally mean "a resident of Pars". But that's not all. A "Parsaa Mard" in ancient Iran meant one who was a pious, saintly man. His genes had the stamp of *airi* (righteousness, piety) deeply impressed on them. Present linguistic evidence indicates that the word **paarsa, pars**, occurs as *parsua* in an Assyrian inscription of the 8th century B.C. ! 200 years later, a resident of Pars, Cyrus, rose to power in his home province, which he later extended to the whole of Iran. Thus, the ancient Greek writers called not only the people of Pars but the whole of Iran, 'Persis,' from which Greek term are derived english 'Persia' and 'Persian'.

The people of Pars were truly *sui generis*. The great Darius Hystaspes (521-436 B.C.) wrote this famous line in the inscription at "Naqsh-i-Rustam": *paarsa paarsahya puthra ariya ariyachithra =* "(I am) a Parsee, the son of a Parsee, an Aryan, of Aryan lineage".

This at once gives the lie to the belief that Parsee was only an ethnic term and had nothing to do with the Zoroastrian religion, because it is one of the fundamental tenets of the Zoroastrian religion that the *chithra* = "the seed" of a Zoroastrian has to be kept pure and righteous (*airi*); he has at all cost to preserve his *tokham* and *bunyad* (genes).

Pars was the only province in Iran, which successfully resisted all attempts by foreign invaders to subjugate it by means of their culture and ideologies. During the Greek conquests, it refused to be hellenised. The Parthians were greatly influenced by the Greeks and later by the Romans, but not the kings of Pars under the Parthians.

Hellenic polytheism could not take root in Parsis during the sovereignty of the Macedonians, because the traditions and the religion of Zoroaster were supreme in it. "There is hardly any doubt that in these times the true form of Zoroastrianism and the sacred books of the Avesta were preserved in Persis, whereas everywhere in Parthia Zoroastrianism degenerated and mixed with other cults and other ideas".

Prof. A. V. William Jackson, the guru of Dr. M. N. Dhalla, has said in his "Persia Past and Present", "In general, the inhabitants of Farsistan, the original Persis, have remained freest from foreign element and have preserved more nearly the Persian type of DariusPurest of all, perhaps, though in number, are the Zoroastrians who have maintained the old Iranian Religion and have never intermarried with alien races".

Yet another proof that the term "Parsee" was used not only in the ethnic sense but in the religious sense in ancient Iran, i.e. before the Zoroastrians emigrated to India, is to be found in the Pahlavi texts, Karnaamak i Artakshir i Papakan ("A History of Ardeshir Papak", the founder of the Sassanian Empire - 226-242 A.D.) and Drakht-i-Asurik ("The Assyrian Tree"). In the former text, Artakshir has been categorically referred to as, Khvataye Parsikan = the King of the Parsees".

“After the downfall of the Sassanian Empire and the Arab conquest of Iran, the term 'Parsi' was used for those residents of Iran who remained faithful to their ancestral faith, namely Zoroastrian Religion. The term was specially used for the Zoroastrians of Iran to distinguish them from those Iranians who discarded their ancestral faith and embraced Islam" Dastur Dr. H.K. Mirza.

Thus, no amount of dialectical chicanery on the part of some Parsee intellectuals can erase the inexorable facts of history and religious, semi-religious texts that Only a Maazdayasni, born of both Parsee parents can be a practising Zoroastrian. It is, therefore, stupid to talk of a "Christian Parsi" or a "French Zoroastrian" ! In other words, the Zoroastrian Religion has been, for millennia, the exclusive preserve of the Parsees, who include the Irani Zoroastrians.

A short note here on that cause celebre, Petit vs. Jeejeebhoy will not be out of place. This notorious suit, that has proved to be the harbinger of the veritable ruin of the Parse community, has been often cited by those who advocate conversion or "mixed" marriages or Juddin Navjotes and by those who vainly labour to show the difference between a "Parsee" and a "Zoroastrian". And yet, the historic judgement of Davar J. and Beaman J. does not at all deal with the last two factors, and negatives the first factor !

In "The Parsi Panchayat Case", there were only two issues before the Court: (1) Whether the defendants were properly appointed trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat; and (2) whether the French wife of Mr. Tata was entitled to the religious institutions and funds managed by the Trustees. There was no third issue. The answer to the second issue was given in the negative !

All the other statements and the opinions of the two learned judges were mere obiter dicta. Such judicial pronouncements do not have the binding force of law. They are not at all legal propositions.

In this chapter, the point emphasised is that the term "Parsee" has been used thousands of years before our ancestors landed in India and that whatever has been stated in the Davar - Beaman judgment regarding the difference between a "Parsee" and a "Zoroastrian" is mere obiter dicta. The opinion expressed in the suit that "Parsee" is only an ethnic term and not a religious one is the result of the woefully poor evidence then submitted by the defendants in the Court !

Chapter 10

MIXED MARRAIGES – FIRST COUSIN OF CONVERSION

(Constituents Of A Valid Marriage)

While "conversion" entails changing from one religion to the other, that is, in our case, making someone give up his religion to embrace the Zoroastrian Religion - an act totally alien to and against the Laws of Nature, as we have already seen in details in the previous chapters, marriage of a Zoroastrian with a non-Zoroastrian is equally against the canons and tenets of our Religion.

What is marriage? Can a union between a Zoroastrian and a non- Zoroastrian, even if approved or endorsed by the secular laws of any country, be deemed a "marriage" from the religious viewpoint? These and allied questions will be answered in this chapter.

Even from the fragmentary state of the extant Zoroastrian Scriptures and literature, it can be inferred that there can be no "marriage" between a Zoroastrian and an alien. The Zoroastrian Religion contemplates and recognises only that union as "marriage", in which both the spouses are born Parsee Zoroastrians and profess the Mazdayasni Zarthoshti Religion.

According to the religion, marriage is not only a contract but a sacrament. Such a sacrament can only be conferred by qualified Parsee priests, when both the parties to the marriage are Parsee Zoroastrians.

The male as well as the female Zoroastrian partners in marriage have first to undergo a purificatory ceremony, known as **Nahan**. The consecrated urine of the **Varasiaji** (the consecrated white bull), which works like a "talisman" is administered as a drink in this **Nahan** ceremony by qualified priests.

While sipping such **Nirang**, both the male and female partners have to recite certain sacred chants. Again, bull's urine (**Taro**) is applied on the body before the ablution. This is the first part of the marriage ceremony, in which the purification of the physical and the **ultra-physical (subtle)** bodies of the parties to the marriage takes place.

After the **Nahan** rite, the second part of the marriage ceremony, namely the **Asheerwad** (Benedictions) ceremony is performed. This ceremony is performed by qualified priests in the presence of a fire and two witnesses. **In this Asheerwad, it is categorically stated that this ceremony is being performed according to the canons of the Mazdayasni Religion.** The Pazend words are, **Awar Daad-u-Aaeene-Din-e Mazdayasni**, i.e. "according to the law and customs of the Mazdayasni Religion".

The **Asheerwad** ceremony has got two important Avesta passages in the midst of other sacred Pazend **Manthra**. These two Avestic passages form the most important part of the Asheerwad ceremony. These passages are very important, powerful Nirangs (Incantations), which are recited to shower special blessings to unite the souls and the bodies of the parties in holy matrimony.

After this ceremony, when the parties to the marriage co-habit, the offspring inherits the best qualities of both the father and the mother.

A "marriage", therefore, for a Mazdayasni Zoroastrian, is only that which is contracted with another Mazdayasni Zoroastrian. A Parsee Zoroastrian, therefore, simply **cannot** marry a non-Zoroastrian and the so-called civil marriages or unions of Zoroastrians with non-Zoroastrians under any secular law, are merely contracts, **and are contrary to the canon law of the Zoroastrian Religion. Such mixed marriages are regarded as sinful because the law of "Asha" is flouted and the spiritual salvation of the souls of the parties to such marriage and of the souls of the progeny thereof is deterred.**

There is still another question to be considered. What about the progenies of a Zoroastrian male, who has merely signed on the dotted line to yoke himself with a non-Zoroastrian female and then live as "husband" and "wife"? The answer to that is vividly given in the **Vendidad**. In Chapter (fargard) 18, paragraphs 62 and 63, it has been emphatically stated that such a relationship tantamounts to sinful adultery! **A Mazdayasni Zoroastrian, therefore, ceases to be a Zoroastrian, after "marriage" with an alien. A Zoroastrian "marrying" an alien spurns the command of his Religion regarding marriage and he or she cannot practise the Zoroastrian Religion thereafter.**

Thus, it is very important that as far as the question of marriage is concerned, the Zoroastrian Religion does not distinguish between a man and a woman. They both flout the Divine Law and Order (Law of Asha) and are unfit in Nature to practise the tenets and doctrines of the Zoroastrian Religion, if they marry non-Zoroastrians.

It, therefore, automatically follows from this, that the offspring of such an illegal and invalid union between a Zoroastrian and a non-Zoroastrian is not a born Mazdayasni, whose Navjote can be performed to make it a Mazdayasni Zarthoshti !

The ancient Iranian Zoroastrians were very very particular and careful about preserving and protecting the purity of their genes and their lineage - a subject which requires some detailed treatment in the next chapter.

But before we conclude this chapter, a word about what our Pazend Prayer, **Patet Pashemani** has to say about the sins committed by a Zoroastrian entering into wedlock with a non-Zoroastrian. One is the sin of **Gunah-e-Ravani** and the other is the sin of **Doodey Vahaan-vasovasni**. The former is a "sin relating to the soul", of contracting inter-religious "marriage", as the progress of such a soul is deterred by such "marriage". The latter is a sin relating to the ancestral family of the person contracting such a "marriage", as the lineage of the person going for such a union is snapped !

Chapter 11

THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF GENES AND LINEAGE IN THE RELIGION

The principle that every human being is born with his faith is underlined in **Gatha Ahunavaiti (Yasna Ha 31-11)**. In other words, the faith ordained for him by nature is embedded in his genes. The ancient Iranians, therefore, laid great stress by the preservation and protection of what in Avesta is known as **Chithra** (lit “seed”) and in Pahalvi as **tokhma** or **Bun(ak)**.

The Pahalvi **Dinkard** lays great stress on the preservation of the originality, continuing and purity of the male seed and of female ova. In book VI, the following passage is found on the preservation of the purity of seed, which is said to carry with it the religious faith also :-

“You must know that one who is of Mazdayasnian religion is said to be of the Mazdayasnian religion by virtue of one continuing the thought (or faith) of the Mazdayasnian religion. This means that just as every species is known by its name on account of the seed within it, in the same way a religious person is said to belong to the Mazdayasnian Religion, on account of his leading himself by the original connected thought (faith) of the Religion.”

Another beautiful passage from **Dinkard** states: “Now wisdom consists in taking a wife, regarding her as beautiful from the standpoint of spiritual benefit and not considering her to be ugly from without. Among several people, a Marital union from amongst themselves is not practiced from this point of view, but they do it in an awkward manner just as it comes to their mind. Hence, in accordance with what wisdom we have received from the creator, we give birth only to children fit for receiving spiritual rewards, and for this reason, **WE ARE THE PRESERVERS INTACT OF SEED (tokhmak- paasban) and we keep the procreative power in the naturally sound condition (gohar-duresttar), and continue the origin of species pure (chigunih-aviztar), and keep our thoughts supremely great (mithro-avar)**”.

Finally in the second book of **Dinkard**, the evil effects of inter-marriage is stated as follows: “**just as the offspring born of a fleet Arab horse and a country mare are neither fleet-runners like the Arab horse nor long-standing like the country one, so is the mule born by the union of a horse and an ass an unworthy creature, and does not resemble either of the two, and in this way, the seed is cut off, and the generation does not proceed further; for this reason a good deal of benefit accrues from the preservation of the seed essentials**”.

Then there is that famous Pazend **Setayesh**, called **Chithrem Buyaat**. In the Avesta fragment in this prayer, three technical terms are used. They are, **Chithra** - the original seed of the ancestors (**Chithrem buyaat ahmi nmaaney**); **Pithva** – the nourishment of the original seed (**Pithvem buyaat ahmi nmaaney**); and **Tokhma Pithva** – the seed of the descendants that remains alive with the nourishment derived from the day-to-day practice of the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion, out of the fullness of faith in the Zoroastrian Religion (**Tokhma pithvem buyaat ahmi nmaaney**).

Chapter 12

PITFALLS OF PHILOLOGY

Did you know that we have neither the Avesta nor the Pahlavi grammar today? And yet, many Iranian philologists strut about as if there is no knowledge of the Zoroastrian Religion beyond the pale of modern philological study ! Their complacency and even arrogance are owing to their naive belief that the application of Sanskrit grammar for the Avesta, and Arabic grammar for Pahlavi is the right way of translating the highly technical Avesta and the highly cryptic Pahlavi languages.

The result is, vague speculations and wild conjectures that, in turn, produce as many translations as there are translators ! For instance, of the 21 word **Yatha Ahu Vairyo** alone, there are nearly 100 translations ! Which will you accept? In other words, will the Zoroastrians of the world stubbornly cling to the crust and not bother to delve into the kernel? For those, whose answer is in the affirmative, there is no hope, for they will continue to wallow in the mire of senseless, inane controversies created by both the Iranian philologists of the West and of India. The latter, through the years, have been deluded by the feeling of respect for the Western school of Iranologists.

For the rest, there is hope. No one will deny that our knowledge derived from the tangible, visible and known is hopelessly limited. It is, therefore, necessary to at least attempt to tap the intangible, invisible and the unknown. For, "he who remains on the shore will never foretaste the secrets of the high seas."

For this purpose, we have to stop being blind and deaf to the spiritual meaning of the ancient writings. We should not forget that there are a myriad things in question that cannot be perceived by the organ of ordinary knowledge, that it can neither be proved nor disputed by means of ordinary argumentation.

The ancient Scriptures are Divinely inspired. And the world of Inspiration is not the physical world, but the inner world of spirit. **The Sacred Books, therefore, are not of human origin.** It then follows that they cannot come under the ordinary methods of analysis, criticism and judgement. The nature of the Scriptures cannot be understood as long as they are regarded as of **human** origin and having no "understandings".

It was left to Max Muller, one of the greatest of all investigators of the world-scriptures to lament, "I confess it has been for many years a problem to me, **how the Sacred Books of the East** should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful and true, **contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial and silly, but even hideous and repellent. This is a fact and must be accounted for in some way or other**". S. B. E., Vol. I. xii. (Emphasis ours).

What the great German orientalist meant, namely that a metaphorical language underlay all sacred scriptures of the world, was echoed towards the evening of his life by that doyen of Iranian philology and the founder of the school of philology in India, Mr. K.R. Cama. He used to tell his students to the effect that, "we have, through the science of linguistics, touched only the tip of the iceberg. There are many mysteries in the Avesta scriptures and Pahlavi literature which still remain to be unraveled....."

The purpose of mentioning all this is to reiterate the fact that Avesta abounds in allegory, symbolism, metonymy, etc. Thus, literal translations, however expertly effected turn out to be of a

husky nature, since they do not convey the lofty inner meaning of a word or a passage. For example, simple-looking Avestic words like, **gao** or **gava** or **geush**, **aspa**, **ushtra**, **nmaana**, **veesa**, **zantu**, **chakhra**, etc. etc. do not just have their literal respective meanings of "cow" or "bull" or "ox", "horse", "camel", "house", "street", "town", "wheel", etc., which as Max Muller complained, rendered the translations, "unmeaning, artificial and silly".

As the late Ervad P.S. Masani very rightly pointed out, "The western scholars, when they began their philological barebone study of Avesta, did not know that Avesta was **Raazeng** or 'mystic words' and **Guzraa Senghaaongo** = 'the hidden words', as depicted in the Gathas (**Yasna** 50.6 and **Yasna** 48.3). Being totally ignorant of the Laws of Staota (vibratory colours), according to which the entire Avesta Scriptures have been composed from the 21 **Nasks** of Zoroaster, these western scholars paid heed only to grammar and style as in the case of any modern ordinary language".

It is interesting to note that while with the introduction of philological study, the knowledge of Avesta and Pahlavi books, **which was mostly confined to the devout Dasturs in olden days and hence unsullied**", was acquired by a good number of Bombay Parsees, **it also brought about disastrous results, in that the faith of the Zoroastrians in their religion was rudely shaken, the bitter fruits of which we taste even today.**

There arose a revolutionary class of Parsee Avesta Pahlavi students possessing brilliant academic degrees, which borrowed on a large scale the erroneous ideas of the Christian scholars from the West and propagated all kinds of scepticism against all Avestic scriptures except the Gathas ! **So intoxicated were some of the Parsee philological scholars with the translations of Avesta effected by their Western gurus, that they "accepted as heavenly truths all the offensive, misconceived and unwarranted criticisms against their own holy faith, and drank, and (still) drink deep from the cups of faith-shattering poison, as nectar"**.

Then, there are and were also those Parsee writers who borrow(ed) and accept(ed) as Gospel what early Greek and other writers, **thoroughly unacquainted with Avesta and Pahlavi, with Zoroastrian principles, prayers and rituals**, have dished out !

They forgot (and forget) that the great Dasturs of the Sassanian times, Adarbad Mahrespand, Arda Viraf, Tansar, Adar Frobak, etc., who have obliged us, through their indefatigable labours, by bequeathing some outlines of the main clues to the understanding of the ancient Zoroastrian Religion of the 21 Nasks, "were far superior to us in their mental, spiritual and devotional qualifications for the genuine interpretation of Zoroastrian Scriptures". These Pahlavi Dasturs were sincere in their faithful renderings and did not speculate or indulge in cynicism, skepticism and even ridicule of the doctrines, canons and ritualistic and other mandates of Prophet Zarathushtra.

Latter-day Western and Parsee scholars forget that a tradition of mystical techniques and esoteric practices has existed since the earliest times in Iran. In fact, it was this Zoroastrian mysticism that was diverted into the Persian form of Sufism, after the Muslim invasion of Iran. Thus, when the ancient Zoroastrians talked of Keshvars, mountains or rivers, they are **not** meant to be taken in the framework of positive geography. They are not merely geographical features, but are psycho-cosmic aspects. The cartographical method of the ancient Iranians was quite different from merely reproducing the outlines of continents !

It is the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of the Avesta and Pahlavi-Pazend works by some naive Western and Parsee philological scholars in the past that first raised the spectre of "Conversion" or "Proselytisation" among the Zoroastrians.

As Edward Rice aptly summarises, it is in his "**Eastern Definitions**", "**the return to original sources, and the mordenising movements were not entirely beneficial to the (Parsee) community as a whole.** The Parsees were soon divided over basic issues into **reformists and conservatists, a split that has been deepened today by the rejection of younger Parsees of ancient rituals and rites, such as exposing the dead in the Towers of Silence**". Again, "**much of the doctrine is highly esoteric, it's origins, development, and interpretation lost in antiquity**". "**Western scholars, many of whom have been extremely fascinated by Zoroastrianism, often tend to interpret it in terms of their own disciplines and interests**".

Here, Rice gives the examples of Nyberg who referred "to the Prophet himself as a 'psychopomp'- i.e. a form of Shaman" and of Zaehner, who in his, "The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism" read "The Prophet in the light of seeming but not always consistent, parallels to postexilic Judaism and to Christianity."

Readers, therefore, are requested to be wary of superficial translations done even today, particularly by foreign scholars, be they Christians or Muslims, as "they have become more immersed in the problems of linguistics than of interpretation and doctrine" (Edward Rice, q.v.)

(Concluded)

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