

PHILOLOGY AND THE RESULT OF AVESTA STUDIES

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Many scholars seem to believe that there can be no knowledge of the Zoroastrian religion beyond the pale of the modern philological study of Avesta regarded as an ordinary language of every day social intercourse. The philological study is not the exclusive vehicle of understanding the salient features and the essential spirit of Zoroastrianism. Philology has proved to be a very feeble attempt at reading the meaning of Avesta words and sentences with the help of grammar fabricated in pursuance of the sister-language Sanskrit. Philology has not given the meanings of Avesta words and phrases in one way, but there are as many renderings as there are philologists or perhaps more. The philologists seem to forget that Avesta is teeming with technical terms to so great an extent that even the prefixes and

suffixes and other terminations and post-positions have their own specified concepts and connotations under different contexts. Avesta is based entirely on the Laws of "Staota" or Vibration — colours, and being colour-language of the most abstruse type, it cannot be properly deciphered except by the rules of Staota-Yacna.

It is very ridiculous to speak of the new era of the critical study of Avesta despite sheer ignorance of the basic rules of Staota overpowering the critics themselves. The Dasturs of the Sassanian times such as Adarbad Mahrespand, Arda Viraf, and Tansar, and Adar Frobak who have by their indefatigable labours obliged ourselves their posterity with the bequest of some outlines of the main clues to the understanding of the Zoroastrian Religion of the 21 Nasks,

were in all certainty superior to us in their mental, spiritual and devotional qualifications for the genuine interpretation of Zoroastrian scriptures. They had some glimpses of the glorious treasure of the 21 Nasks of Zoroaster, and owing to their genuine faith and strict observance of the Khoreh laws of Ashoi, they were able to employ a considerable amount of knowledge of Staota-laws in their interpretations of Avesta and Pahlavi. This is at least convincing to us that the Pahlavi interpreters of Avesta have not dared to speculate as the scientific philologists have done upon the subject-matter of Zoroastrian teachings. The Pahlavi Dasturs have been sincere in their faithful renderings and have not employed cynicism, agnosticism and ridicule of the ritualistic and other mandates of Zoroaster. They have not excluded Vendidad yacna, Yashts etc., from the edifice of the original Zoroastrian scriptures. They have not given any different dates of the composition of the various components of Avesta Scriptures. As the first outcome of their study they have never divided Avesta into periods as the new thought school of modern upstarts have done. The Pahlavi Dasturs never tried to dislocate the ignorant coreligionists from the joints of faith in their religious mandates by declaring that Zoroaster had given only the Gathas and that the other Avesta contained an unintelligible mass of practices which had been pre-Zoroastrian, which had been abolished by Zoroaster, and which had been restored by the duping clergy long after Zoroaster. The Pahlavi Dasturs never stigmatised a belief in the 21 Nasks of Zoroaster being the original source of all Avesta Scriptures as a false belief of the masses. We do not understand at all why some writer pays undue respects to the so-called scientific method of speculative system of Avesta studies with the most improper invective hurled against the pious Pahlavi school of Zoroastrian scriptures. The writer has the audacity even to say that the Indians hailed the Gathas as the only self-sufficient Zoroastrian religion, and that they learnt parrot-wise that

the pristine purity of the Gathas was rendered nugatory by the circumvention of the other Avesta. Is this not complete credulity and blind belief? Are not the rationalistic Indian students of Avesta ashamed of being led away by the fashionable fascination of the outcome of Western system of Avesta studies? We have seen within the last many years of this linguistic science of Avesta studies that it has produced absurd, weird and ridiculous renderings of most of the Avesta texts, and that it has thus completely failed to fulfil the expectations of the Parsi community. Instead of teaching faith, decorum and veneration for the world's greatest prophet and his religion, it has persuaded, nay even prevailed upon, the Young generation to choose and accept a queer form of religion of physical ease and materialistic gain and comfort at the irreparable loss of spiritual advancement and happiness. Those who have gone through the philological translations of Gathas, Vendidad, Yashts, Yacna etc., frankly admit that instead of strengthening their respect and faith for the Zoroastrian religion, they are inclined to be unbelievers and cynical sceptics after a reading of the speculations of Avesta philologists. This is because philology merely presents stray husks of the various nuts and fruits of Zoroastrian scriptures in the absence of knowledge of the Laws of Staota which alone can supply the respective kernel relating to the various subjects. Hence we see that philology upto now has been made an abuse of, but we must remember that the abuse of a thing does not take away its use. Philology is badly in need of the supplementary help of the "Khshnoom" line of study of Zoroastrian scriptures, and when once the kernel of the entire systematic crop of Zoroastrian knowledge has been supplied from the deep sub-strata of "Khshnoom," the husks presented by philology will have their own utility of preserving the kernel to some extent against the destructive effect of time.

In fact to judge impartially the religious education of the Indian Parsis is a disgrace to

the intellectual enlightenment in other respects of secular branches of knowledge. A Parsi doctor, a lawyer, an engineer, an economist, a politician an educationist, a public speaker, nay a journalist, without some degree of essential knowledge of the religion in which he is born is entirely useless to the community from the point of view of the Spiritual Upliftment of the Community in its grand march towards "Garomana," its own native abode. Learning for the sake of earning money, and living for the sake of enjoying worldliness to the full, do not imply the object of man's life on earth. Life for the sake of the Soul, body for the soul, learning for the soul's progress, earning money for the soul's good, — in fact all

the activities of our life ought to be guided by the underlying motive of the betterment of the Soul. It is vain boast to say that the Indian Parsis are better off in religious training than their Iranian co-religionists, without a statistical inquiry having been made. Under the present circumstances it must be plainly admitted that the Indian Parsis including even the handful of so-called Avesta students are as ignorant of the most elementary principles of Zoroastrianism as the unfortunate Iranian Co-religionists. The present condition of the Avesta scriptures as we have seen, does not allow us in the first place to have a camera obscura view of the Zoroastrian Religion as a whole.....