

# Understanding The Zoroastrian Religion



## SHOULD WE PRESERVE Our Spiritual Disciplines, “Yoga”s and Institutions?

### Pointers from Science of Yesterday and To-day

“Hm! So you are an orthodox”.  
“I see! You are a reformist”.

These sentences very often crop up whenever Parsis discuss some point relating to the Zoroastrian Religion. The words “orthodox” and “reformist” are current in our community since about nine decades. When a word is that much over-worked and is used to brand each other, it is bound to have a chequered and multi-coloured career and to assume meanings never dreamt of by the poor dictionary writer.

And now one another word is in the offing “ultra-orthodox”.

I am tempted to add many variations, like “neo-reformist”, or let us say, “ultra-reformist” or still better, “infra-reformist” or “pseudo-reformist”. Personally I am inclined to coin “ultra-orthodox reformist” and apply it truly and correctly to some, whose business presently is to say anything about the Zoroastrian Religion, as if it is a matter of old women's gossips!

#### THE SPECIAL MEANINGS

But let us confine ourselves for the present to

the two words ‘orthodox’ and ‘reformist’. Have they, after about a century long usage, acquired some workable impression? It seems, they have. There is some picture of a Parsi associated with each of these words. And that is: an orthodox Parsi wants to stick to all the spiritual, yogic and divine institutions of the Zoroastrian Religion, like Sudresh Kushti, Manthra prayers, Atash Behram and Agiari, Yasna ceremonies, Dokhmas.

A reformist Parsi contends that all these institutions are out-dated; they must be curtailed shortened, minimised or still better discarded by calling them ‘humbug’ or ‘nonsense’; that the true essence of Zoroastrianism is its ethics tersely described in 3 words, Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni-goods thoughts, words and deeds; all the rest of the Zoroastrian practices are useless. And that the only true writings of the Zoroastrian Religion are the Gathas; the rest of the Avesta is non-Zoroastrian!

The orthodox view is that Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni is indeed the ethics of Zoroastrianism, but it is inseparable from the other disciplines, yogas, practices and institutions which are handed over to us from generations and for the preser-

vation of which our forefathers became refugees. They are, therefore, to be preserved at any cost; without them the ethics and morality of the community will remain only in words and not in life and practice. And further, these institutions have profound spiritual significance; they are the means of evolution of the soul and they help a Parsi to march nearer to God.

This quarrel going on for decades, provides an absorbing drama full of characters, some serious and some ridiculous, and incidents, some tragic and some funny. You cannot escape this drama if you desire to have some understanding of the Zoroastrian Religion and the religious and social problems of our community. And it is easier (and more entertaining) to understand anything by going through the arguments and quarrels of the two opposing sides.

And if that is the mode to be adopted, it will not be possible to avoid respectful references to the personalities involved on both sides.

The greatest exponent and champion of the 'reformist' movement (in the special acquired sense stated above) was the late Dr. Maneckji N. Dhalla, whose birthday centenary was recently publicised.

### DR. DHALLA

A very pleasing face with a moderately grown beard, a mild look with a tinge of revolt and conflict in the corner, a sweet and deep non-metallic voice, the stream of words flowing steadily in well-formed, almost poetic sentences, clad in the orthodox traditional dress of a Dastoor with "Jamo" (a full length Dagi extending to the toes) and 'Pichhodi' (a broad white band round the waist) – such was this leader of the "reformists." (I must here repeat in a lawyer's language that the word "reformist" unless repugnant to the context (or repulsive to somebody) shall hereinafter and hereinafter have the same meaning as is ascribed to it in the preceding paragraphs).

### THE YOUNG ORTHODOX

In the earlier years of his life, Dr. Dhalla was a highly orthodox young man. He believed wholeheartedly in Avesta Prayers and used to recite them for hours. He used to chant the special Baj while taking meals. He was very fond of ceremonies and believed that by getting them performed, he would get blessings from God. He even dreamt of having a separate room in his home where a 'Mobed' would perform many many ceremonies. ('Atma-Katha', Autobiography of Dr. Dhalla. Also "Rast Rahabar" of 21-11-1942). He even wrote a Gujarati book "Ravan ni Rahbari" (meaning Guide-path for the Soul), setting out in it his highly orthodox views.

### THE HYPNOTISED 'REFORMIST'!

But the youth went to America for higher education and there, dazzled by the material splendor of the western life and the then thought, he changed his views and had a complete transition from the 'orthodox' to the 'reformist'. And then his revolt began. He set aside his "Ravan ni Rahbari" and wrote a big red impressive looking American published volume 'Zoroastrian Theology'. In it, he set forth his then newly acquired views, in the guise of expounding Zoroastrian writings.

### THE DOGMATIC

In that book he put forth among others the following propositions:

1. Only Gathas were given by Zarathushtra Himself; the rest of the Avesta was written much later.
2. Rituals and ceremonies were not taught by the Prophet, because "Gathas are silent about them".
3. The practice of proselytism was advocated in the Zoroastrian scriptures and non-Zoroastrians could be admitted into Zoroastrian commu-

nity, simply by putting on them Sudreh and Kushti.

4. Avesta-prayers had no efficacy; it was meaningless to recite them.

5. Zoroaster was "an ordinary common sense man" or "a common sense thinker" or "a common sense practical man". He was a mere "historical personage in the Gathas"; only in "later Avesta" and Pahlvi writings, he becomes a superhuman, miracle-performing myth.



How could this happen? What was there in the Western life and thought which hypnotised this man out of his spiritual thinking? The answer to this question is clearly indicated in his writings and speeches.

### **DARWINIAN EVOLUTION AND PROGRESSIVE CIVILISATION**

In his Autobiography, Dr. Dhalla stated to the effect that the theory of evolution put forth by Darwin and the theory of human progressive civilisation propounded by Herbert Spencer brought a revolution in his thoughts and prompted him to discard his pre-American views,

Now what was the Darwinian Evolution? It theorised that various animals on this earth come into being by a process of accidents and struggle for existence. Amoeba was the first simplest animal. At some point of time the necessity of getting food forced it to develop new organs and thus a new animal came forth. The process went on repeating until the intelligent scientific animal - man - appeared.

The force behind this process was mainly the need to obtain food and females for mating. Animals with physically more powerful organs could survive; the others vanished. The whole procedure, in short, was based on struggles,

fight and wars. And the object was food and female! That is the Darwinian Evolution which induced Dr. Dhalla to 'reform his religion'!

Now can any religion be based on this theory? If fight for food and female is the law of nature, why should not man follow the same course? All this talk of there being a God and you should love your neighbour, are unnatural and unscientific. The law of nature is that if your neighbour has more food and if you love his wife, you must kill him, rob his food and entice away his 'female'!

It was this theory which brought two bloody wars on this 'scientific' mankind in a span of 50 years. It was this theory, which led people towards atheism. It propounded brazen-facedly that the Universe had no God and no good in it.

The other theory which hypnotised Dr. Dhalla was the theory of "progressive human civilisation".

What was that theory? It was a sweeping generalisation that mankind progresses with time; the quantum of progress is simply proportional to the flow of time. 19th century man had progressed and advanced more than the 12th century man simply because 19 is greater than 12

### **PROGRESS - WHAT, WHENCE AND WHITHER ?**

But mind! The 'progress' and 'advancement' boasted by this theory had nothing to do with **spiritual** progress or advancement of **the soul**. It was exactly the other way round. The progress meant such material progress which was in its very nature non-spiritual and non-religious. This so called advancement of human civilisation was not based on any religious or moral disciplines; it was founded on physical pleasures and intellectual pride, which all Religions have defined as spiritual enemies of man. All the then progress of science was, on the one hand, to provide

man with more and more bodily comforts and sensual pleasures and, on the other hand, to induce a devilish pride in him that he had "understood" all nature around him and he was now the master of the Universe having almost conquered all its mysteries. That was the definition and description of progress in the 19th century and it was this that swept away the young Dr. Dhalla to his "reformist" views on Zoroastrian religion.

### NO GOD

But, as it must have already occurred to you, how can any religion be based on the theory of such non-religious progress? Even the religion of Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni alone cannot survive on this theory. The most fundamental Truth taught by all Religions that "God exists" cannot also survive, because all the explanations and theories about nature, as given and put forth by the then science, had no place for this 'superstitious monster' - God! Science gave simple and God-less explanations of all the mysteries of nature. It claimed to have found out a God-less universe. This 'progress' was thus a direct and powerful supporter of atheism. It was during the later half of the 19th century that tremendous amount of literature on atheism poured out. The Churches had a very hard time. The very existence of religion was threatened. George Bernard Shaw (who believed in God, but a "trial and error God") was induced to brand these times as "an infidel half century". It was he who tried to shake off the idea of that 'progress' from the immature mind of the people, and who pointed out that all this boasting of progress was an illusion and was driving mankind to disaster.

### AND NO 'GOOD'!

In this onslaught, no moral values could also survive. Good thoughts, words and deeds were good to talk about; but what is 'good' could not be prescribed; it could be anybody's wish.

The concept of good became relative. If this master animal, man, has understood all mysteries of nature, and has found out a God-less universe, why bother about morals? Why not drown ourselves in all the physical and sensual pleasures which our science had so amply provided and was providing more and more?

Thus Dr. Dhalla's attempt to 'reform' Zoroastrian Religion by cutting down its spiritual disciplines and practices and only preserving the simple religion with a God and good thoughts, words and deeds, was a huge and monstrous illusion. It was religion with its God and good trying to rest its feet on atheism having no God and no good! It was a patient trying to survive by inhaling a gas known to him to be poisonous!!

### SIMILAR PRESENT-DAY TALKATIVES

And please do not think that this is a matter of the past and I am writing this just for historical interest. Even to-day we have in our

*With Best Compliments from :*

**Framroze,  
Cama & Co.**

*Sales Office :* Phone : 26 30 08  
Taj Building, 201, Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji Road,  
BOMBAY-400 001.

*Branch*  
1/125, M. G. Road, SECUNDERABAD.  
Phone : 75914

community: several talkatives, whose logic is exactly similar to Dr. Dhalla's. They talk of 'progress of the 20th century'; they talk of 'modern science'; they talk in the same vein of discarding disciplines and adopting a 'simple' religion of God and the good. Their position is further precarious because they do not know A B C of modern science. Their reliance is on the 19th century science and the then idea of progress. That is why they are tempted to revive the out-dated and self destroying hazy notions put forward by Dr. Dhalla decades back. They are blissfully unaware that even at that time Dr. Dhalla's views had become old fashioned. Mankind was revising radically its old pet theories of science and its old pet concepts of progress. Two bloody wars with devastating weapons of destruction presented by the same science were trying to thrust some sense in the minds of humans and to shatter their illusion of 'progress'. And Dr. Dhalla's ideas then several years out of date have to-day become several decades out of date! That is why I am tempted to call these "moderns" of our community 'ultra-orthodox reformists'. **Their 'reforms' are now out-dated by modern science.** Their reliance on the 19th century science and ideas are hopelessly old fashioned. If you are in touch with what is happening in the world of science, you will not hesitate to name the views of these talkatives as 'old fossils'.

In this Journal, we are presenting before you what science is doing and finding to-day, and how it is now completely covered in mysteries upon mysteries, atom-bombs, biological warfare and trip to the moon and the mars notwithstanding.

### **'REFORMISTS' OUTDATED BY MODERN SCIENCE**

To-day the God-less barrier is shattered. **The discoveries and findings of modern science in all its branches bring forth more and more facts, which provide greater and greater support for all the spiritual disci-**

**plines, yogas, institutions, practices and exercises taught in Zoroastrian Religion and preserved by the Zoroastrians so long and so far.** And therefore the 'orthodox' of to-day who desires to preserve all these, is now 'ultra-reformist', if you like. His reform consists in reforming those old fossils by drawing them out of their orthodox outdated view that in this age of modern science, the Zoroastrian spiritual disciplines and institutions cannot survive. We want them, first, to read modern science; second to go deep into the Zoroastrian Science behind those disciplines and institutions; and third to practice some of the Zoroastrian Yogas like wearing Sudreh Kushti, performing Kushti, reciting Manthra prayers and adopt Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni by being honest in their talks and writings—not only to the community but also to themselves.

### **MISGUIDING STYLE OF DR. DHALLA**

But let us go back to "Zoroastrian Theology". The style of this book was peculiar and cunningly misleading. The author had formulated certain set views based on the two atheistic theories of Darwinian evolution and material 'progress'. Having formed the views, he attempted to present them as if they were derived from Zoroastrian writings. A sentence is written putting forth a particular proposition and in the foot note to it, some reference of some Zoroastrian writing is given. If you go to examine the reference in the original text, you will be startled to find that the sentence was a misquotation or a huge distortion!

**Ervad Phiroze Shapurji Masani** a brilliant scholar of Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian Science wrote a book "**Zoroastrianism—Ancient and Modern**", setting out therein all the trickeries of Dr. Dhalla's "Zoroastrian Theology"

### **DOUBTS PRESENTED AS DOGMA**

Each proposition in "Zoroastrian Theology" was advanced with bias and dogmatism. For instance,

It stated that only Gathas were given by Zarathushtra; the rest of the Avesta was written much later. Now this is a point where any given two scholars would differ. There is enough internal evidence to show that 21 'nasks' were written in the times of Zarathushtra and taken 'on record' by the King Vishtasp, and the so called later Avesta was contained in those Nasks. This has been pointed out by eminent Western Scholars like West and Darmesteter. The argument that the language of non-gathic writings is different than Gathas and therefore they are separated by a large period of time, is also refuted or at least doubted by scholars (e.g. Gieger), Wordsworth's poems and a criminal code could be written in the same decade, but the language of the two would differ as if they are centuries apart. Kathiawari Gujarati is far different to-day than Parsi Gujarati.

The point is that this bogey of 'later' Avesta is not free from doubt amongst scholars. Would it be then honest to present it as if it is an established truth?

#### MANTHRA PRAYERS AND TONOSCOPE

About Avesta prayers, it was said that it had no efficacy; merely reciting them was no prayer. Even at the time when Dr. Dhalla was saying this, physics was finding out waves and vibrations without a medium. A complicated branch of mathematics-wave mechanics-was being formulated. Non-material waves can exist; they can condense down to form material waves and even material particles. The law of vibrations appears to be a fundamental law of the Creation. The spoken word seems to have far more significance than ever thought of in older scientific circles. To-day science has collected several facts which indicate that **words have shapes**. Since last 12 years Hans Jenny, a Swiss scientist is experimenting with an instrument called "**tonoscope**" which converts sounds into visible three dimensional patterns in physical material. His article

"Visualising Sound" had appeared in Science Journal of June 1968. A London group of observers have noticed that the visible patterns formed by tonoscope are most outstanding when mantras and Manthras like "Ashem Vohu" are chanted in the machine! We will place before you in this Journal such startling materials, by and by. At present suffice it to say that **the proposition that Avesta prayer has no spiritual effects is unscientific and dogmatic.**

#### ZARATHUSHTRA DEGRADED

The most glaring instance of this "reformist" dogmatism was the statement that Zoroaster was "a common sense practical man". Right from Gathas to Shahnamah of Firdausi, there is overwhelming evidence to establish that Zarathushtra was not an ordinary human being. He was a most advanced Divine Soul of the rank of Yazata, sent to the earth and mankind as a direct Prophet of Ahura Mazda. Dr. Dhalla discarded all this evidence in a feat of his reformist fad and blasphemed the Prophet! May God forgive him!! He was of so excellent a character that God must have forgiven him. Let us rectify in our minds one 'Ashem Vohu,' with a fervent prayer that may he progress on and on in the spiritual world!!

We shall deal with the 'reformist' senility and dogmatism further on.

(To be continued)

K. N. DASTOOR



#### TRUTH

*Tell the truth, and so puzzle and confound your adversaries.*

*- Henry Wotton*

*(That can well be a statement of our policy).*

*- Editor*

# Understanding The Zoroastrian Religion

Are the sacred writings other than 'Gathas' non-Zoroastrian?

Is there any rational and reasonable basis for the belief that only 'Gathas' were written in Zarathushtra's time?

## (2)

"Inherent in you are the faults of the flesh. They tempt you towards sins, and lead you away from the path of God. Fight them, aspire to conquer them, and for that, learn to control the mind". This is the great lesson all prophets and sages and saints have taught to us.

We know that mind is the source of all our thoughts, words and deeds, good or evil. But what is mind? How does it function? Where is it in us?

We are given an impression that it is in our heads. A most complicated organ—brain is there and it is the mind's functionary or emissary.

But brain is another mystery. It is said to be "the darkest continent of the 20th century"; and that for two reasons: the first is that it works day and night in a dark chamber within your head; and second, that much about it is wrapped in an unknown-unexplored darkness.

### A. GHOST?

We have thus two mysterious things—mind and brain. There is a third and still

deeper mystery; what is the relation between the two? How does the mind 'direct' the brain to act? Brain is a system composed of "ten thousand million neurons" says Sir John Eccles, a great Australian neurophysiologist, (Neurons mean nerve-cells). He adds that they are "momentarily poised close to a just-threshold level of excitability". They are ever ready to be excited but something is required to excite them. There is such 'something' in us, but what is it we do not know. It may be that mysterious monster 'mind'. The brain, says Eccles, "is the kind of machine that a ghost could operate, if by 'ghost' we mean in the first place an 'agent' whose action has escaped detection even by the most delicate instruments" (1). He means, 'mind' is that ghost. /

A ghost operating some machine in ever darkest chamber—really a ghostly affair! And we all live and do everything by that! No doubt our attempt to understand the ghost and its agent fails, because all our understandings come from that very ghost and he may be chary in allowing us to under-

stand its real self.

Whatever may be our 'scientific' attempts to understand mind, all great Religions have taught us certain basic Truths about how this ghost of a mind functions, and what we have to do about it. Mind, they teach, is an apparent reflection of certain forces and energies deep within us. These forces are two-fold, or in other words, these energies flow in two different directions. One tends the minds towards God, humanity and the Path leading towards God and humanity. The other directs the mind towards evil and away from the Path of God. In an ordinary human, the latter force is more powerful. It is for him to go against this force, by trying to direct his thoughts towards God and Religion. Because mind is a controllable thing. If you earnestly try to bend it towards God and the Good, the good forces within will help.

### WHY RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINES AND EXERCISES ?

But that is not easy. The tendency of a

#### THE UNSTEADY INTELLIGENCE

**When the mind of a person encourages any of the wandering carnal senses, that sense drags away his intelligence like the wind dragging away a boat in water. Therefore Oh Mahabaaho (Arjun)! that person's intelligence becomes steady whose senses have become free of passions and are in his complete control.**

— Lord Krishna  
Gita Ch. 2-67, 68.

normal human mind is stronger towards evil, and it is a strenuous exertion not to allow it to be drifted away in the strong currents of evil. That is why all Religions have given certain spiritual disciplines, 'Yogas', exercises and institutions. They are meant, devised and prescribed to keep the mind inclined towards the Good and God.

For Zarathushtrians, Sudreh-Kushti and Manthra-prayers are two of several such spiritual exercises and disciplines. They are to be performed in a certain prescribed way and with certain thoughts passing in the mind. They are the great purifying agents for the mind. (Every Kushti done properly in its actions and thoughts, is a "Barashnoom", a spiritual bath to our whole being).

"The tongue should speak only the truth and the Manthra" is another such spiritual exercise (2). Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni is another.

### THE MIND THAT DECEIVES

The ghost-mind - has some deceiving characteristics. When it desires to lead its human keeper towards the wrong way, it induces in him all sorts of arguments and excuses. A killer is made to think he is killing for "the good" of the society. A liar is consoled by the thought that after all he is doing it for some 'good'. The sexual sinner is made to argue; what is wrong in it? Why should I not enjoy the physical pleasures when I am gifted with them by nature herself? A man who wants to flout the Orders of his own Prophet, would say 'Oh! that is quite old and orthodox and outdated!' A Parsi who is too inert and lazy to appreciate the spiritual value of the Zoroastrian disciplines, Yogas, exercises and institutions and to act on them would

take refuge in: "Oh! that is all external! Zarathustra did not teach all this. Some priests have fooled us in doing them".

### STUDY MODERN SCIENCE

This is actually happening in our Community since the beginning of this century. Time to time somebody pompously turns up and shouts: "Do away with these nonsenses: Follow the pure Religion". They are the victims of that great treacherous ghost-mind. That ghost, in its usual way, sweeps them away from the right path and they then close their eyes towards the truth as shining as the mid-day sun. They would talk of modern science, but never care to see that the most modern discoveries of science have started showing us in a very faint way the great spiritual truths and wisdom behind all our religious practices, traditions, discip-

lines, and Yogas. To-day, if you desire to appreciate the Zoroastrian Religion with all its existing institutions, go to most modern sciences like nuclear physics astrophysics, biology, and ESP. (This humble Dini Avaz will from time to time give you some idea about the truth of this proposition.)

### THE GRAND EXCUSE

To ignore modern science while trying to dabble in Zoroastrian Religion is the sin of omission induced by a tricky mind. But there is a sin of commission also prevalent amongst us, which tries to find excuses for ignoring and discarding our religious disciplines. One of such grand excuses is that: Only some portion of the Gathas are the writings of Zarathushtra; all other Avesta writings – like Vendidad, Yasna, Visparad, Yashts, Niyaisht etc –learn-

edly termed 'later Avesta'—were written much after Zarathushtra. And the Gathas do not teach any "external thing" like Sudreh – Kushti or Manthra – prayers, or Yasna-ceremonies or Fire-temples or Dokhmas. Gathas teach "pure regilton". All the other writings are impure and defiled and all external rituals and ceremonies have no significance; they were devised by "later priests" for professional interests.

The late Dr. Dhalla was the champion of this theory, and he called himself 'a reformist'. His satellites are still there with us and go on singing the same off-tune song.

What reasons and arguments are advanced for this escapist theory?

### POETRY AND PROSE

The first argument is that Gathas are in verse, while non-gathic writings are in prose. This means, Zarathushtra was a poet; so He was incapable of writing prose; or He perhaps thought it below His dignity to do so! If you are a poet, please take care not to write any prose, because after a few thousand years, the then learned savants will say, you were not and could not be the author of that prose! Macaulay wrote some good poetry and some better prose in a flowery style and drafted some laws in very stony legal language. In 3020 A. D. the pundits will perhaps declare in a very pompous heavy technical language that poet Macaulay was different from that dry lawyer who drafted Indian Penal Code. (This is on a conjecture that the word 'Penal' will by then be transformed to 'Senite' by substitution of 's' by 'p' and other linguistic fluctuations by then invented). As a poet, you cannot write even a letter in prose. If you wrote some good letters in poetry to your girl-friend when

she was a beautiful spinster, then it is neither capable of nor permissible for you to write a letter in prose to the same lady, now your wife, with some of her previous poetry-inspiring beauty damaged.

### ARGUMENTS IN A CIRCLE

But there are some real beauty points in these poetry-prose argument about the Zoroastrian writings. For instance, Dr. Dhalla, the great champion of that theory, used the term 'poet' for the writers of Ram Yashta, Zamyad Yashta, and Homa Yashta in his 'Zoroastrian Theology' (3). He did not say that these yashts were poetries and therefore must have been written by Zarathushtra Himself. He said, they were not written by Him, because they were Yashts and not Gathas! But that is just a merry-go-round. There must be something different in the Gathic and non-Gathic poetries, indicating their alleged different times. But no such poetic differences are shown. Are we to conjecture that the two poetries have different meters and therefore they belong to different ages?

But that way, as the late Ervad Phiroze Masani pointed out, the Gathas, as poetry, have no uniform meter (4). There are different lengths of lines, different number of words in one line, different number of lines in one stanza and different rhyme and rhythm in different stanzas. Should we then say: as poet Zarathushtra could not write prose, so He could not write poetry in different meters; therefore only one particular meter should be considered as that of Zarathushtra and all others of those poor creatures: "later priests"!

In fact, this theory and its other ingredients have led these "Doctors of Theology"

to say that **only some portion of Gathas** are written by Zarathushtra!! So, discard disciplines, throw away non-Gathic Avesta, eliminate some portion of Gathas and what remains is this Great Religion of Zarathushtra!! Why not eliminate that remainder also on the ground that it was written in primitive times, and is out of date and out of tune with our 'progressive' and 'scientific' times? It is very easy to find flimsy arguments and excuses to eliminate and cut down a thing. It is difficult to be able to see the common thread or current running in it. That requires not an escapist tendency but painstaking effort, and truth cannot be reached without pain.

Although 'writers' of Yashta and non-Gathic Avesta are very often referred to

### THE WHIM!

**One such pet theory (of the self-styled) reformers is this : The Gathas constitute the earliest and most reliable Scriptures, all other Avesta is later and younger. Anything in the latter that is not found in the Gathas may thus be challenged-if it does not suit the whims of the heterodox. It is very conveniently forgotten that the Gathas are a small portion of the Avesta literature containing hymns and cannot therefore be expected to embody either a complete philosophy or an exhaustive ritual; nay being mere hymns cannot legitimately be expected to deal with these subjects at all.**

**JEHANGIR J. VIMADALAL** in Introduction to Phiroze Masani's "Zoroastrianism; Ancient and Modern" (p. vi-vii.)

by the theorists, nobody has found out who were they and what were their names and when did they write. Only vague and arbitrary statements are made that they were "later" priests and wrote their Avesta 'later' than Zarathushtra. (I do not know why on this theory, they can be only 'priests' and not non-priestly Zoroastrians or even non-Zoroastrians).

### 'LINGUISTIC' DIFFERENCES?

The second argument for the belief that non-Gathic writing were written much latter than Gathas, is that the Avesta of the two is different. This is what is known as the linguistic basis of that theory.

No doubt Gathas have long accents and syllables, while non-Gathic writings sound different. But can we be so sure about the two being separated in point of time? Could they not be languages of the same times but spoken or written in different places? There is a very significant proverb in Gujarati: "The dialect changes every twelve miles" (5). This can be a complete answer to the argument of time-separation. To-day Gujarati of Kathiawar is very much different from Gujarati of Surat. The words having the same meaning are, though slightly comparable, differ in many ways. It can be space-separation. We cannot be dogmatic about time-separation merely because of comparable linguistic differences.

That of course is an argument of a laymen like me, who has no good fortune to have a deep study of science and art of languages. But the same argument is advanced by a renowned scholar and author of the Western studies of Zoroastrianism, **Dr. Wilhelm Geiger**. In his "Civilisation of The Ancient Iranians" (translated by Dastur Darab Peshotan Sanjana) Dr. Geiger says:

“Although (the Gathas) bear(s) many marks of great antiquity, still it is not quite free from later and more polished forms of expression. **Again the language of the Gathas is essentially a distinct dialect, the difference of which from that of the rest of the Avesta may be easily explained by its having belonged to a different country**” (6).

In an objective impassioned manner Dr. Geiger says that space-separation can account for the difference in the languages of Gathic and non-Gathic writings.

Again, the difference may be due to the subject matters of the writings. Wordworth's poems and Stephen's Law of Evidence were written in the same period of time, but the languages are entirely different. One is anxious to use literary and figurative language; other is anxious to avoid any poetic expression to make the meaning as clear and unambiguous as possible. If Gatha's theme is philosophical and devotional and Vendidad's theme is the laws of practical day-to-day living, the languages would be very much divergent. To convey the same meaning, entirely different expressions and words would be used.

### THE CONTENTS THEORY

I must state, in all fairness, that Geiger does believe that Gathas are older in point of time, but he does not found this belief on the linguistic differences; these according to him, can be space-separated. His belief about the antiquity of Gathas is based on their own contents.

And that takes us to the third argument that: a comparison of the contents of Gathas and those of non-Gathic writings indicate that the latter were written much after Gathas.

Here again we are on very soft and even treacherous ground. There is no uniformity about the contents of Gathas in the modern linguistic studies of Zoroastrianism. There are as many translations as there are savants and pundits and each is so much divergent from another that the contents are not even reasonably ascertainable! What can be the message of one particular stanza is anybody's guess. And those translations which are stated to be authentic do not contain much of a divine message or much of a religious philosophy even! The whole difficulty is that in order to decipher the sublime message of the Gathas, or of any Avesta writing, certain words are to be taken in their **technical** sense. Nobody need scratch his nose for this. Avesta is the Science of all sciences; and any science, whether wordly or spiritual, must have, and always has, its own technical terms, which have meanings quite different from the dictionary. “Equity of Redemption” is a special technical term of the law of property. “Work” has a special meaning in Physics. “Relativity” of Eienstien is a big monster compared to its ordinary meaning. ‘Horse-power’ has a very remote indication of a real horse; in Physics, it is a measure of ‘work done. So, ‘Geush-urva’ in Gathas has very remote connection with cattle; its principal meaning is entirely different. It is a technical term used for certain living conscious Force or Energy in Nature, which has a special relation with our mother-earth(7). But if you read it merely as cattle, Gathas would be said to be belonging to “the cattle age” and that would take the bottom out of its real esoteric technical meaning! The savants would run to say that this is a very old poetry written when man was a primitive agriculturist with cattle as his most important possession! And if non-Gathic

Avesta does not talk much about the cattle, it must have passed the primitive stage and must therefore be later in point of time. This may lead some stronger escapist to discard the whole of the Gathas on the ground of their cattle-primitiveness and antiquity. Such are the feats of frightful speculations which arise from the lack of knowledge of the technical meanings of words. And if you desire to know the technical meanings of Avesta, Paharvi and Pazend terms, words and expressions, have an impartial look to the Mystic Science of Zoroastrianism-Ilm-e-Khsnoom. You will have a clear and consistent picture of the Truths taught by Zarathushtra and His Disciples of different times-'Soshyant's. You will have most pleasant and reviving shocks when you will find that the Religion of Zarathushtra explains all sciences and secrets of nature—from speck of dust to Ahura. The stream flows by your side, plunge in and have a deep drink.

To go back to the artificial Gathic non-Gathic distinction, we see that the contents-divergence theory is equally bad, if not worse than, the time-separation theory or the prose-poetry theory.

### SUPPRESSING MATERIAL EVIDENCE

There is a fourth hollow pillar on which the slogan 'discard non-Gathic Avesta' is based. That is a conspiracy of silence on powerful, direct and convincing evidence in the Zoroastrian writings themselves to show that Gathas are not the only writings of Zarathushtra. They are less than 1/21st part of the His Holy writings. 21 Holy Books called 'Nask's were written in His time. Gathas form a part of one of the Nasks. Vendidad is another Nask. We have the names of these 21 Nasks, and a summary

of their subject matters and contents. They have a certain classification. And above, all there are references and writings to show that the 21 Nasks were taken on the Royal Record by the King Vishtasp.

I shall place before you this evidence in the next issue.



### REFERENCES

1. The Neurophysiological Basis of Mind by J. C. Eccles (Oxford ; The Clarendon Press 1953).
2. The Para : "Haoma yo gava Barasmana... .....Vaghzibio" in Khorshed Niyalsh-16. It occurs in all 'Niyalsh's and most of the Yashta's.
3. Pages 133, 142, 120.
4. Zoroastrianism, Ancient and Modern by Ervad Phiroze Masani (1917) - Page 22.
5. "આર ગાઉએ બોલી બહાચ".
6. Civilisation of the Ancient Iranians - by Dr. Wilhem Geiger - Translated by Dastur Darab Pashotan Sanjana.
7. Gatha Ha 29 - by Dr. F. S. Chiniwala - Commentary on Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3. Mother - earth: Scientific researchers have come across evidence to show that in spite of different seasons and climate conditions in its different parts, the earth has a **personality** of its own. It is the sum total of all that is on it and around it and all that is happening on it and around it. A recent BBC science broadcast revealed that this personality is even named as 'Gaya' and that the recent activities of pollution and destruction, which the man on earth is carrying on may give rise to a sharp reaction from 'Gaya'. The pollution is not only in the air, water and ground, but also in the thoughts, words and deeds of humans on this earth. Mother-earth may react sharply or may cry for a Saviour, as in Gatha Ha 29-1.

(To be Continued)

- K. N. DASTOOR

# Understanding the Zoroastrian Religion

## Gathas are as much part of the 21 Zarathusthrian Nasks as the other Sacred Scriptures. Evidence from the Pahalvi Writings.

(3)

Like all other Religions, Zarathustrian Religion has its own sacred Scriptures and Writings mainly in the Avesta language. They are classified as under:

1. Kohrdeh Avesta: This is our prayer-book containing Kushti prayer, Sarosh Baj, 5 'Gah's, 5 'Niyaish's and several 'Yasht's. Each prayer is composed mainly in Avesta language.
2. Yasna: This consists of 72 chapters in Avesta, of which 17 consist of the five 'Gatha's.
3. Vispered: This is another marathon Avesta composition of 23 chapters.
4. Vendidad: This consists of 22 chapters in Avesta.

The striking feature of these Scriptures is that they are not merely to be read to understand its contents. They are used as 'Manthric' compositions, the chanting of which has certain spiritual effects within and without the chanter. Nos. 2, 3 and 4 are used in the major ceremonies, performed in our 'Agiary's. For instance 72 chapters of Yasna are recited during the 'Yazashney' ceremony. The 'Vendidad' ceremony uses all the three — Yasna, Vispered and Vendiad in a set and prescribed order.

Except a few repeated Pazend passages (1) occurring in "Khordesh - Avesta" prayers (no. 1 above), all the four above are in the Avesta language.

The questions arise: What is the source of all these Avesta writings (nos. 1 to 4 above)? Who wrote them? How have they come to us in the present form? Are they all the Avesta, or is there anything missing?

Before getting an answer to these questions, let me say something about:

### The Pahalvi Writings

The term "Pahalvi" is generally applied to the language of Iran during the Parthian and Sasanian Periods and of the Zoroastrians in Iran upto the end of the 9th century" (2). The Parthian Period was between 250 B.C. to 226 A.C. and the Sasanian between 226 to 641 A.C. (3).

We have quite a number of Pahalvi writings. They contain various topics relating to the Zoroastrian Religion, like the spiritual and moral truths and teachings, the life and miracles of Prophet Zarathushtra, the events of Creation, the place of man in the Creation, the quality and properties of

'Zarathushtrian Daena' and numerous others, several of them going deep into the Mystic Science of the Religion.

The most important feature of these Pahalvi writings, for our present purpose, is that they contain cogent references to the sacred Scriptures of the Religion, **as coming down from the times of Zarathushtra.** It is obvious that such references provide powerful evidence about the past and present extant of our Sacred Books.

The evidence makes it quite clear:

1. that the original Zoroastrian Scriptures comprised **twenty-one 'Nask's** or Sacred Books, which were written by, or at least during the time of, the Prophet Zarathushtra ;and
2. that the Avesta sacred Writings we have in the present times are the parts and portions of, or derived from, the said 21 Nasks.

#### **The Pahalvi Book — "Dinkard"**

There is a large Pahalvi Book called Dinkard containing a variety of religious, mystic, spiritual and moral topics. The translation of this book is a gigantic task. Apart from its huge volume, the reading itself presents tremendous difficulties. Pahalvi script contains only 12 primary letters and most of them are polyphonous; that is, one letter can be read in more than one ways! Just imagine what stress and strain would be involved in **reading** each line of a voluminous book in such a language and then translating it. There were, however, two Dastoor — father and son — who achieved the almost impossible task of translating the book — Dastoor Pesho'anji B. Sajana and Dastoor Darab Peshotan Sanjana. Some portions of the book are translated by other scholars also.

The noted Western savant Dr. E. W. West has translated Book VIII of Dinkard in the well-known series "Sacred Books of the East."

Dinkard states in no uncertain terms that Zarathustrian Sacred Books consisted of 21 Nasks. Each Nask has a name. All the twenty-one are divided into three classes of seven Nasks each. A summary of the contents of most of the Nasks is also given.

The unique feature of the Nasks as stated in Dinkard and other Pahalvi writings is that each Nask corresponds to one particular word of the prayer: "Yatha Ahu Vairyo . . . Vastarem" — also known as "Ahunavar." This prayer has 3 lines and 21 words and each word is associated with one Nask. Thus for instance the word 'Yatha' in that prayer corresponds to, or is the other name of, "Sudgar" Nask; "Ahu of "Varshamansar" Nask; "Vairyo" of "Bhagha" Nask; . . . . . Angheush of "Spend" Nask; "Mazdai" of "Bhaghan Y a s h t" Nask; . . . . . "Dregubyo" of "Javid-Shida-dad" Nask also known as "**Vendidad**"; . . . . . "Vastarem" of "Satud Yasht" (4).

The summary of contents of the 21 Nasks as given in Dinkard, shows without any doubt that most of the Avesta scriptures and writings we have in the present times, are from the original 21 Nasks written by, or in the time of Zarathushtra.

The Nask named as "Satud Yasht", corresponding to the last word 'Vastarem' of Ahunavar prayer, is stated to have contained 33 chapters. They include more than half of the Avesta Text of the 'Yasna' (No. 2 on page 12). It begins with Yasna Ha (Chapter) 14 and ends with Ha 58. **These Ha's include the five Gathas.** This Nask excludes Ha's 19, 20, 21;

52, 56, 57 of the *Yasna* text. It contains passages from *Visperad Karda* 5-24 (5).

The Nask, *Baghan Yasht* (corresponding to 'Mazdai' of *Ahunavar*) contains several of our 'Yasht's. The *Javid-Shida-Dad Nask* is the *Vendidad* we have (no. 4 on page 12).

What does the Zoroastrian studies emanating from the western countries say about the Nasks and their authenticity? The following statement of the indefatigable *Dastoorji Darab Peshotan Sanjana* puts the matter in a nut-shell:

"We learn from the Sassanian tomes that the original *Parsee Scriptures* comprised twenty-one Nasks or sacred books, whereof two have been preserved almost in their entirety, and four have been partially transmitted to the present time; viz., (1) the *Vendidad*; (2) the *Stut Yasht* (*Staotayesnya*), which seems to have included the known books of the *Yasna* and the *Visparad*; (3) the discovered fragments of the *Husparam Nask* in the *Airpatastan* and the *Nirangistan*; (4) the *Bagan Yasht*; (5) the *Hadokht*; and (6) the *Vishtasp-Saste*. Of the twenty-one Nasks nineteen had been found out, collected and revised, by the order of the State, by *Dasturan Dastur Adarbad Maraspend*, in the time of *Shahpuhr II* of the Sassanian dynasty (A.D. 309-379). Two of the Nasks, namely the *Nadar* and the *Vashtak*, had been wholly lost or destroyed before the Sassanian epoch began.

"From the analysis of these twenty-one Nasks, given in the eighth book of the *Pahlvi Dinkard*, which is deciphered and made intelligible to scholars by the indefatigable labour and intelligence of *Shams-ul-Ulama Dastur Dr. Peshotanji Behramji Sanjana* and *Dr. E. W. West*, it is not difficult to

form an adequate idea regarding the whole extent of the primitive Zoroastrian literature. The authenticity of this *Pahlavi* analysis is confirmed by *Mr. Darmesteter*, who observes in '*Annales du Musee Guimet*' that the numerous unedited fragments of the *Avesta* of which a large portion may be identified without any difficulty or uncertainty, with such and such passages analysed by the *Dinkard*, prove that the literature described by the *Dinkard* is a literature, real and authentic, and that the very sample of the analysis of the *Vendidad* and the *Nirangistan*, proves to us the general fidelity of this analysis. In his Introduction to the *Pahlavi Texts*, Part IV, *Dr. West*, too, remarks that the writer of the analysis had entirely relied upon the *Avesta* texts and their *Pahlavi* version."

— **Pahlvi Text of the Vendidad**  
— **Introduction: p. iii-iv.**

This evidence thus falsifies the pet theory of some escapist Parsis that *Gathas* (or only some portion of *Gathas*) are written by *Zarathushtra* and the remaining *Avesta* was written by some imaginary persons described as "the priests of the later period." **All our Avesta, other than 'Gatha's, are as much the part and portion of, or derived from the 21 Nasks written in Zarathushtra's times, as the 'Gatha's themselves.**

There is nothing like "Gathic *Avesta*" and "later *Avesta*." The distinction is artificial. It is ridiculous to say that the two must be separated in time because one is poetry and other is prose. The linguistic differences can well be explained on the basis of subject matter; a poetry and a law book would widely differ in their language even if written on the same day. The

same language can show many differences at different places and it is a wild jump to believe that such differences can be explained only by time separation. (6).

The fragments of the 21 Nasks left with us, contain compact and consistent Truths in Nature. There is no divergence or no inconsistency in them. To understand and appreciate these Truths and their Divine Message to Mankind, it is essential to know the inner esoteric and often technical meanings of Avesta words. Zoroastrian Religion is the Science of the Soul (Urvan). It goes deep into the Origin of Creation and explains each element of Nature including a speck of dust, matter, water, fire, earth; an animal, a man, a Saint; the Cosmic Geogrphy of the infinite dimensional Cosmos; the divine, spiritual, ultra-physical and physical energies, forces, waves and vibrations throbbing and whirling in the Cosmos; the divine, the absolute

and the relative Time; in short the whole Machinery of the Great Designer and the infinite number of masks "worn by the Great Face behind."

(To be continued)

—K. N. DASTOOR.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

(Numbers below correspond to the bracketted numbers in the article)

1. 'Pazend', if taken as a language. is a form of Pahalvi written in the Avesta script. The Pazend compositions are 'Manthric' i.e. they can be recited as 'Manthra' like the Avesta prayers; e.g. "Ahura Mazda Khoda-e" occuring in Kushti prayer is in Pazend; so also the prayer: Doa-nam-Setayashney.
2. "Outlines of Parsi History" by Hormazdyar Dastur Kayoji Mirza page 282 (1974).
3. Ibid pages 109 and 125.
4. Dinkard: Book VIII—Introduction. Darat Dastur Peshotanji Sanjana's Series: Vol XV: English Translation pages 1 to 3, Gujarati translation pages 1 to 9 (1916).
5. Zoroastrianism, Ancient and Modern by Phiroze Masani; page 5 ((1917).
6. Dini Avaz: Vol, I No. 3 page 5- 6. (April-May 1976).

# Understanding The Zoroastrian Religion

Are the Non-Gathic Scriptures  
Divergent from the 'Gatha's?

**"No", says BAHERAMGORE ANKLESARIA Emphatically**

**(4)**

The Zoroastrian Religion, as it exists amongst us, the Parsis of India, consists of the following main components:

1. Its Sacred Scriptures and Writings;
2. Its Spiritual Institutions;
3. Its Exposition of the Natural Law governing the spiritual evolution of the Creation and Man; theology and philosophy;
4. Its Moral and Ethical Teachings;
5. The Life-story of the Prophet Zarathushtra and His Miracles;
6. The intensive Current of Devotion and Love flowing in the hearts of the Parsis towards the Prophet Zarathushtra.

## THE SACRED SCRIPTURES AND WRITINGS

These are mainly in three languages (i) Avesta, (ii) Pazend and (iii) Pahalvi.

The first two are not only Writings containing the Teachings of the Zarathushtrian Religion, but are also used as 'Manthra's or 'Mantra's in the

Prayers, Ceremonies and Spiritual Exercises. Manthra means a composition of Words having definite vibratory effects in Nature and in Man.

The Pahalvi Writings are mostly commentaries on and elaboration of the Avesta Writings.

The main Avesta Scriptures are: (i) 72 chapters of 'Yazashney' or 'Yasna', which include 17 chapters consisting of the five 'Gatha's; (ii) Vendidad, having 22 chapters; (iii) Visparat, having 23 chapters; (iv) 22 'Yasht's and fragments of a few more; (v) 'Khorde Avesta' (meaning the smaller or select Avesta), the daily prayer Book, containing 5 'Gah's and 5 'Niyash's; a few of the 22 'Yasht's are also included in this prayer Book.

There is evidence to show that all the Avesta Scriptures mainly consist of, and are derived from, 21 'Nask's written in the time of Zarathushtra. There is a theory and an almost dogmatic belief that only 'Gatha's are written by Zarathushtra. Some go to the extent of even saying that only some portions of the 'Gatha's were written by Him! This topic has been already treated in the Issues Nos. 3 and 4 of Vol. I of this humble 'Dini Avaz' and I do not propose to repeat it.

But there is one vital point to consider here. If the Avesta Writings are accepted as the Sacred Religious Scriptures of the Zarathushtrian Religion, it matters little whether only some of them were written by Zarathushtra (or in His time) and the others after Him. If the contents of all the Writings present a consistent picture, a common Zarathushtrian would not bother about the alleged distinction between Gathic Writings and post-Gathic Writings (as they are called).

But, here, the theories of quite a number of Western Scholars have rushed into the area of speculative fancies. They tried to propound that the Avesta Writings other than 'Gatha's did not constitute pure Zoroastrianism; they only revived what Zarathushtra had abolished; they were against the spirit of the 'Gatha's. For instance, Zarathushtra abolished the then rampant belief in "many Gods" and taught that there is only "One God"; but the non-Gathic writings later on revived the idea of many Gods by infusing the concepts of 'Yazata's and their worships. All these the spiritual institutions like Yasna ceremonies or Khordeh Avesta prayers were, according to these theorists, the revival of anti - Zoroastrianism!! This theory was quite handy and convenient to those Parsis, who were too lazy to infuse in their personal lives the spiritual and even moral practices of their Religion, and wanted to escape from them.

But is there any sense in these theories? Assuming, for the sake of argument, that there is a time lag between the Gathic and non-Gathic Writings, do their contents really depict these escapist theories? Are the

two Writings so divergent as to justify the throwing away of the non-Gathic?

And here I am going to present before my readers, some quotations from a highly studious and authentic article written by a Parsi scholar, professor and teacher, belonging to the priestly class. His name is Baheramgore Anklesaria. About the depth of his scholarship, there are no two opinions amongst the scholars and students of Zoroastrianism. He had not confined himself, like many Western and Parsi scholars, only to the Avesta. He was considered to be the present-time master of the Pahalvi language and writings. His life-time study of the Zoroastrian Writings culminated in an excellent article published in the "Iran League Quarterly". The article starts in Vol. I, Nos. 1-2 (April-July 1930) and continues in the subsequent issues. It bears the simple title "Zoroastrian Religions Literature" and is a masterly treatise on the origin and authenticity of all the Scriptures, Gathic and non-Gathic.

#### **DEVELOPMENT OF GATHIC TRUTHS IN NON-GATHIC WRITINGS**

**Baheramgore propounds with the deepest scholarly insight and with the help of overwhelming material that the non-Gathic Writings do not contain anything contrary to the Gathas but they develop and unfold in a beautiful way the Ideas and Ideals, the Teachings and the Truths, embodied in the Gathas. He says:**

"Very few Iranists have ever carefully studied the question of the evolution of the later Zoroastrian thought in post-Gathic literature, which emanated from the

inspired hymns of the holy prophet Zarathushtra. **The learned Orientalists, Parsi or non-Parsi, being innocent of the traditions embedded in Pahlavi writings, have never been able to conceive the process of unfoldment of Gathic thought in the later Avestan writings, wherein they see nothing but a resuscitation of the pre-Gathic mode of worship and religion, reintroducing the 'devas' of the Vedic Pantheon under a new name, the 'Yazatas'. This immature judgment, howsoever incorrect it could be, has been pounced upon by the learned and the unlearned of the Zoroastrian community, who have become Doctors of Zoroastrian Theology, without ever reading a page of the original sacred writings, to prove the deterioration of the creed of Zarathustra in the later Avestan writings.'** (page 87 - *ibid*)

Baheramgore makes out two important points in the above passage: (i) that Gathic thought has evolved and has been unfolded in the non-Gathic Writings; (ii) that this truth is not conceived by the Orientalists because of their ignorance of Pahlavi Writings. (His reference to those "who have become the Doctors of Zoroastrian Theology without ever reading a page of the original sacred writings", is obviously directed to Dr. Dhalla. Beware! The newly-born Parsi newspapermen, whose knowledge of Religion is confined to a few quotations from Dr. Dhalla! See Dini Avaz: Vol. I-no-2.)

Baheramgore Anklesaria emphasises with scholarly vehemence that without making a special study of Pahlavi and Persian writings, it is not

possible to render justice to the Avesta Writings. He says that even the eminent savants like Haug, Spiegel, Justi, Wilhelm, Westergard, Geldner, West, Darmesteter, Harlez, Bartholomae and Geiger, "have at times done disservice to the sacred writings of Zarathushtra owing to their inability to comprehend the idioms and grammar of the Iranian languages". (page 86 *ibid*)

### THE SPIRIT OF 'GATHA'S FAITHFULLY FOLLOWED IN NON-GATHIC SCRIPTURES

With profound scholarship, Baheramgore could appreciate the beautiful link between the Gathic and non-Gathic Writings. For instance,

"The phrase 'Khshnaothra yasnai-cha vahmai-cha khshnaothrai-cha fra-sastayae-cha,' so often found as a standard formula in later Avestan literature is simply a representation of the ideals of the Gathas closely studied by a Zoroastrian community of poets who gave expression to their inspiration in poetic effusion, **following the spirit, to the very letter, of their holy prophet.**

The poets of the Gathas offer their 'khshnaothra' (= "propitiation", "joy") to 'Geus urvan' (= "the soul of the universe"), to 'ranoibya' (= "the workers for truth"), to men, and to Ahura Mazda. (Yasna Ha: 28, 1; 30,5: 31, 3; 45,9.)

What have the poets of the later Avestan literature done? If Zarathushtra and his contemporary disciples who wrote the Gathas propitiated God and "the

soul of the universe" and expected man to please "the workers for truth", the later poets, following in the footsteps of the holy prophet and his apostles, propitiated Ahura Mazda the Creator, the Amesha spentas (= "the Immortal Beneficent-beings"), the Yazatas' (= "the Beings-worth of-adoration- and- fervent- esteem"), the 'Ratus' (= "the Chiefs of the human, animal and nature kingdoms") and adored, esteemed and paid homage to anything and everything, any being and every being, that was worthy of reverence, for the benefits, the being or the thing gave to humanity and the animal kingdom. It was a pure imitation, an unfoldment, a development of the Gatha revelation, extremely rational and most effectively elevating the great community of old to the ideal essentially of monotheism, a community whose religious ideals can even be found portrayed in later inspired writings of other religious communities . . . . .

"The spirit of the Gatha hymns was followed to the very letter, nay some of the beautiful stanzas are quoted by the poets of the later Avesta or placed in other words therein. No honest scholar, savant or orientalist, can ever prove that the later poets, whilst offering their 'yasna', "fervent esteem," to the 'Amesha spentas' and 'Yazatas', to holy men and women worthy of reverence, to the beneficent animals, to all the good creatures and creation of God, had left off monotheism, belief in Ahura Mazda as the Creator of the Amesha spentas and

the Yazatas, of men and animals, of the entire creation. There is not any place, any text, any chapter of the later Avestan texts, where we do not find mention of Ahura Mazda as being the Creator of all and sundry, of spirit and matter, of the waters, the earth, the trees, of the beneficent animals and men, of the sky, the sun, the moon and the stars. (Iran League Quarterly Vol I, no-6- July 1931 - pages 361-2-3).

Observe this great savant's vehemence, his sincerity, his legitimate contempt for the ignorant babblers!! The late Dr. Jamshedji Unwalla, another renowned scholar had suggested that Baheramgore's said article must be printed in thousands and distributed amongst the Parsis!



It is therefore, no use trying to run away from the non-Gathic Avesta. It is a grand development of the 'Gatha's. Gathas contain small points condensing tremendous amount of energy; the non-Gathic Scriptures unfold, each such condensed point into a flood of energy. In doing that, they elaborate and elevate the Gathas.

It is thus a huge folly to say that Gathic religion is monotheistic and non-Gathic is polytheistic, that Gathas propound one God and other Writings many Gods by referring to 'Yazata's and 'Amesha-spenta's. Ahura Mazda is the fountain source of Divine Light. The Light emanates and flows further, and forms channels and sub-channels. Each such channel and sub-channel is a divine ray, throbbing and shining with His divine consciousness. In our Avesta prayers, we try to catch deep  
(Contd on Page 16)

**(Understanding the Zoroastrian Religion Contd. from page 4)**

within ourselves, the divine channel of a Yazata to attune our whole being with it and to be one with Ahura Mazda, through one of His 'Yazata's. That is not many-godliness!! That way, God is in all men, animals, trees, plants and even dust grains. All Religions declare this Truth. But does that mean that by believing God to be in billions of humans and multi-billions of sand grains, we have adopted a "billion-theistic" Religion?

The lesson of this discussion is then that we have to look to all Avesta Writings, whether Gathic or non-Gathic, with reverence. Nothing from them is to be discarded as being allegedly non-Zoroastrian. All of them constitute one single beautiful divine edifice of our Sacred Scriptures. We have to try to interpret them harmoniously, to find out how one clarifies or expands the other.

The other lesson is that in interpreting the Avesta Scriptures, we have to take the active help of the commentaries written in Pahalvi language. It is the universal opinion of all Pahalvi Scholars that **Pahalvi is the key to Avesta**. Only those scholars who had not or could not study the Pahalvi language and its intricacies, try to ignore it. It is one of the most difficult languages to decipher. Its script contains only 12 primary letters and most of them are polyphonous; that is, one letter can be read in more than one ways! This means one word of a few letters can be read and translated in several ways!

(To be continued)

