

WESTERN STUDY OF OUR RELIGION – A FAITHKILLER

by : *Candour*

One of the messages which this humble Parsi Pukar desires to convey to the Parsi Community is that the Western scholastic studies have miserably failed to understand and explain our divine Religion, the Daena of Asho Zarathushtra, and its spiritual Institutions. The very foundations of the Western studies are delusive, unreliable, uncertain, full of wild guesses and conjectures and completely devoid of the devotional, spiritual and mystical essence which is the most essential requirement of any Religion.

Sri Aurobindo on European Scholars

As the modern Sage Sri Aurobindo has pointed out : "grammarians, etymologists, scholastic conjectures will not open to us the sealed chamber" of the ancient wisdom contained in a holy Scripture. That wisdom and knowledge can never fit into the materialistically oriented guessworks of "19th century European scholarship", where the basic thinking is that Religion is "a mass of superstitions" and grows "out of primitive barbarism"; and where a holy Scripture is regarded as "a part of ancient superstitions ideas and a primitive error". Sri Aurobindo's words apply more strongly to all the scholastic studies of the Parsi Religion, from 18th century to the present day.

Following are some of the pet theories and wild paradigms of the Westerly studies. They are not only erroneous and untrue but have resulted in shattering the faith of many Parsis and leading them to a falsely glittering form of atheism.

Zarathushtra, A Mythical Name, says Max Muller

1. Max Muller, the acclaimed Western scholar of Eastern Sacred Books wrote in his "Collected Works" Vol. V 1914 – Longmans:- "But among critical scholars Zarathushtra has been long recognised as a purely mythical name and all that tradition tells us about him is now acknowledged to be of very late origin.

So dear Parsis! Why do you believe a purely mythical figure to be your Prophet and spiritual guide? Be "scholarly" and forget Him!

Gatha, Not Zoroaster's, says Max Muller

2. Max Muller says on the same page that "we have no longer any right to call Zoroaster as the Author, still less the writer of the Avesta, not even of its most ancient parts, the so-called Gathas, which if Prof. Darmesteter is right *would in their present form not be older than the first century of our era.* "

So dear old Gatha-alone-cult walas! Why are you breaking your heads on the 45 "translations" of the Gatha? Your Gatha colloquiums are grand exercise in huge futility, dealing with a 1st century writing, fraudulently assigned to purely mythical writer!

Bisection to trisection

3. One other famous paradigm of the Western Studies is the bisection of Avesta into (i) Gathic and (ii) "Later" or "Younger" or non-Gathic. Gathic is genuine Zoroastrianism; the other 'Later' Avesta is not only non-genuine but contrary to the original teachings of the Prophet; so says this lethal paradigm. It propounds that the later priests revived what the Prophet had discarded. For instance the Prophet advocated ONE God, rejecting all other gods or devils which were believed in his days. The later priests, prompted by selfish interest, brought them back and thus defiled the genuine teachings of the Prophet.

The great scholar Bartholomae states

".... the successors of Zarathustra, in the office of both priests and teachers, in their concern for the expansion and solidification of the Zarathushtrian Religion, and not to an inconsiderable extent *in personal interest*, were compelled to make concessions to popular feeling, at first only by tacit toleration but subsequently by formal recognition, so that in *the end quite a number of things came to be included in the articles of faith which the original doctrine did not contain or ordain, but which it has once expressly rejected and even combated.*" ("Zarathushtra, His Life and Doctrine" by Bartholomae, in "Indo Iranian Studies"

published in 1925 in honour of Dastur Darab Peshotan Sanjana. Translation by Dr. V.S. Sukthankar).

By "the original doctrine" Bartholomae means the Gathas. He says that the non-Gathic writings contain things which Zarathushtra rejected and even combated! This he wrote in 1918, but the paradigm has stuck till the present day. In an article : "Zoroaster's Own Contribution" published in the journal: "Near Eastern Studies (January 1964) a modern Western Scholar, Ilya Gershevitch (an elderly gentleman with a romantic tinge) says:

"In the younger Avesta even statements which flatly contradict the prophet's own doctrines are blandly introduced with the prefatory remark, "Thus said Ahura Mazda to Zarathushtra", as if the authors meant to forestall any objections to what they were about to state."

Those crafty 'Later' Priests!

Reading both the above scholars together, we see that according to them, the later priests and officials of our religion were induced by self interest to accept and propagate such teachings which were in direct opposition and flat contradiction to Zarathushtra's original teachings! *They were so unscrupulous, crafty and deceptive as to present non - Zarathushtrian doctrines with the preamble : "Mraot Ahurahe Mazdao, Spitamai Zarathushtraï",* (So spoke Ahura Mazda to Spitama Zarathushtra) as if they were words of Ahura Mazda spoken to Zarathushtra! These later Avesta scripture writers were thus downright liars. They lied in the holy names of Ahura Mazda and Zarathushtra! It will be interesting to know what the present day scholar Dastoor has to say on this, since most of their priesthood depends upon the non-gathic scriptures and traditions. And what has a faithful Parsi to do, when most of his prayers and even Sudreh-Kushti are in non-gathic Avesta and non-gathic traditions? "Paresat Zarathushthro Ahurem Mazdam ..." and "Mraot Ahurahe Mazdao" occur in Avan Niyash, Ahura Mazda Yashta, Ardibaheshta Yashta and several other Yashtas. They are, according to the Western paradigm, a tissue of lies; selfish, crafty lies! Should we recite them and term them as our prayers?

Gershevitch's above article reads at several places as an indictment of the so-called priests of the later Avesta. The paradigm has stuck so fast that a modern "Encyclopedia of Religions" (1987) (Macmillan) sings the same song, and refers to a suggestion by Gershevitch that "the religion contained in the Gathas be called "Zarathushtrianism"; the contents of the younger Avesta be called "Zarathushtricism"; and the religion of Sasanid period be called "Zoroastrianism". The bisection has thus developed into a trisection!

We may add a fourth category: "Upside-down Dastoorism", born in. 1.994.

A Few More

Following are the bare outlines of some other virulent paradigms pompously presented to us by the high-brows of the west:

4. The word "Khaetvodath" means next of kin marriages - marriages between brother and sister, father and daughter, mother and son-which were in vogue amongst our Iranian ancestors. (Are we a misbegotten race?)
5. "Haoma" was an intoxicant which Zoroaster discarded, but those crafty 'later priests' brought it back. (Haoma water from yazashney ceremony, a dope?)
6. Vendidad is a hotchpotch of primitive and antiquated laws and customs (our Vendidad and Nirangdin ceremony, a midnight farce?)

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