

REVEREND DOCTOR OTOMAN ZAR'ADUSHT HANISH AND HIS MAZDAZNAN MOVEMENT.

Born in Russia and Taken to a Secret Fold of Zarthoshti Saints!

This earth is our temporary abode, a kind of motel or dharam-shaalaa, which we have to vacate at our scheduled time. We have no idea whatsoever why we are here and where we are going. For the answers to these questions we have to look to the saints and sages and Prophets and Avataars. There is no other way. These holy men and women of God can reveal to us, to a limited extent, the secret of birth, life and death. They, however, impose a condition. You must remember, they say, that the Truth of God lies beyond your limited thinking power and your experiences of day-to-day life on this earth. This is a FACT of nature.

Once you are convinced of this Truth, you will then be led to another Truth, namely that our Ruvaan (soul) was once with Ahuramazda; it was separated from Him; and it is now going back to Him. The birth and life on this earth is a part of the long journey to Him. It is a station on the path where our Ruvaan takes a physical body with five senses and limited intelligence. And those God-men teach us how to live that bodily life on the earth.

Ahura is anxious to draw all humans and whole creation to Him. This is another way of saying that He loves every particle of His Creation including the humans. As a powerful expression of His love, He sends His Prophets and Avataars. They teach the humans how to tread the path of life, walk towards Ahura and go nearer and nearer to Him every moment of our life.

The Zarthoshti Din declares that Ahuramazda has a Divine Plan of different Religions. (Gatha 31-11). Every human is given a particular Religion according to his or her own physical, mental and spiritual constitution. Every Religion can lead to salvation i.e. the meeting with God. (Gatha 34-13).

On this Divine Principle, Prophets and Avataars arrive and show the respective Paths to different groups of humanity. Our Din says that there are in the first place certain major paths i.e. Religions and each has various sub-paths. Each is a grand river with different channels ultimately meeting the main river, and all the major rivers ultimately meet the Infinite Sea of God.

This very Plan suggests that all the Religions and their respective branches are in a Divine Brotherhood with each other and each is anxious to lead to God not only its own followers but also those of other Religions. This explains the presence of Swami Vivekanand and Swami Yoganand, Dalai Lama and Sogyal Ronpoche, Hazrat Inayat Khan and Hazrat Vilayat Khan in the West, where most people's Religion of birth is Christian. The teachings of other Religions often elaborate and explain the teachings of one's own Religion and make him or her its better follower.

We also observe that some Saints having spiritual powers arrive from time to time to guide a particular group of persons. Ram Krishna Paramhans, Raman Maharshi, Sai Baba, Madame Blavtsky were amongst them. Their main task is to attract selected people and teach them by various means and methods to follow their own Religion whatever it be. These Saints do not have the stature and mission of a Prophet who establishes a Religion, yet they have demonstrable spiritual power. Their mission is to inspire faith in God and teach their devotees the spiritual way of life and the manner of living it in the midst of the worldly turmoils and troubles, whatever be the Religion they follow and live with.

One of such Saints was Reverend Doctor Otoman Zaradusht Hanish, who originated what is known as the Mazdaznan Movement.

You may be surprised to read the words "Zaradusht" and "Mazdaznan". Sounds quite Zarthoshti! 'Zaradusht' is near to Zarathushtra and 'Mazdaznan' to Mazda-yasni! Who was he?

Not much is known about his personal life, although his movement has spread out and still continue. Mazdaznan Movement has certain spiritual principles, which come very near to the doctrines taught to us in

the Zarthoshti Din. How is that?

The meager facts known about Dr. Hanish (as he is generally known) are that he was born somewhere in the South of Russia on 19th December 1844. He died on 29th February 1936. One Professor Ardeshir Sorabji Wadia of Poona, who had come into close contact with Dr. Hanish has written:

"He was born somewhere in the south of Russia and by some chance as a child of 3 or 4 come into the hands of the secret fold of Zoroastrians in the highlands of Iran. These people trained him up in the secret of its ancient lore, and when 17 or 18 they sent him abroad to preach their doctrines to the outer world. That's all I know about his life."

The above words were written by Prof. Wadia in a letter he addressed to **Nanabhoy F. Mama, a great Khshnoom - lover. Nanabhoy was the author of the famous booklet on Baheramshah Shroff's life, titled "A Mazdaznan Mystic", "Life sketch of the late Baheramshah Navroji Shroff, the 20th Century Exponent of Zarathoshti Elm-e-Khshnoom (i.e. Esoterism of Zoroastrianism)".** He took the word "Mazdaznan" from Dr. Hanish's Mazdaznan Movement, of which he was a great admirer. Nanabhoy wrote an excellent article on Dr. Hanish and the Movement in Frashogard, the famous organ of Ilm-e-Khshnoom, - Silver Jubilee Volume (1-7-1936 to 3-06-1937, Vol. 26 Nos. 1 to 4 consolidated) page 301.

Prof. Wadia's above quoted words are preceded by the following:

"I know very little about the life of Dr. Hanish for the simple reason that he himself kept it a sealed book. Even his most intimate associates, like Col. Gault could not tell me much about it."

Therefore, there is no information how Dr. Hanish came to be "into the hands of the secret fold of some Zarthoshti holy-men, and how he was trained by them. He is said to be with them from his age of 3 or 4 to 17 or 18, that is, for about **14 long years!** His life-story is comparable with Ustad Saheb Baharamshahji's; he was with the Saheb-Delaan Sahebs of Demavand for about three and a half years only. Baheramshahji had revealed many things about his sojourn with 'Saheb-Delaans'. Dr. Hanish preferred to keep his experiences a sealed book. The indications are that the secret place of the Zarthoshti Holy Saints where Dr. Hanish was taken was different from Baheramshah's. Baheramshahji has revealed that such secret abodes of Saints are several on our earth; they have different spiritual statures and functions. There are such Saints in secluded unobservable places belonging to different Religions. There are orbits of Christian Saints in the Alps mountains. There is one of Hindu Saints on the banks of Narmada river. There is one fold of higher statured Zarthoshti 'Ashavan's somewhere about the Lake of "Chaechest" in Iran.

No doubt, Dr. Hanish had been with some clan of Zarthoshti Saints. The word "Mazdaznan", the name he gave to his movement itself suggests this. He introduced before his followers what he named "Mazdaznan Confession". It is amazing to see the Zarthoshti Khshnoomic teachings and truths in this beautiful "Confession". There is then a Prayer exercise, where certain passages are to be spoken in one breath and in different musical notes. It is again astonishing to see the Zarthoshti doctrines and preachings in the prayers. They refer to "the world sustaining Sun" and beseech Him to lead to the path of Realisation and Illumination; which is the divine thought in Khorshed Niyash and "Oos Moi Ujareshvaa Ahura," a passage in Atash Niyash. Mazdaznan Prayer invokes Zarathushtra by His Holy Name, refers to the power of holy spells, and uses the expression "Zaota"! Look at the following sentence in the Mazdaznan Confessions :

"I declare with Our Father of the pure faith through the reality of His Holy One Zarathushtra, to stand for Good Thought, Good Word, Good Deed."

Vah Vah! The reality of Asho Zarathushtra is expressed in Good Thought, Word and Deed! And see the capital 'G' in 'Good' and capital T, 'W' and 'O' in Thought, Word and Deed! Dr. Hanish seems to be aware of Humata Hukhta, Havrashta - the Thought, Word, Deed of 'Yazata's and their Mithra, Manthra, Yasna.

There is another surprise in the Mazdaznan Confession. Its last para is the replica of a passage in the

"Tao Ahmi Namaaney" Prayer, Yazashney Ha 60, (same as Afringan-e-Daham, also called "Avesta Tandarosti") Read it :

"May Mazda be rejoiced and His Associates continue to be victorious. May obstinacy in this home be destroyed through the Virtue of Obedience, discord by Peace, avarice by Generosity, vanity by Wisdom, false witness by Truthfulness, that the Immortals may long bless it with maintenance and friendly help; never the Splendour of Prosperity or Progeny be distinguished that we may shine with purity and see Thee face to face, O Mazda, attaining attributes leading unto worlds without end. May Peace come to one and all, and may there be given to this country purity, dominion, profit, majesty, and splendour. This is my wish. Be it so."

The Avesta prayer "Tao Ahmi Namaaney" is a beautiful package of blessings which the devotee asks from Ahuramazda and His Ameshaspendas and 'Yazata's. The very first line in the passage from Mazdaznan Confession is a transformation of Khsnaoitra Ahurahey Mazdaao. There are then five pairs of opposites, corresponding to the pairs in Avesta, Tao Ahmi Namaaney' Prayer. Just compare:

Avesta : Vainit Ahmi Namaaney
Sraosho Asrushtim

Translation : In this house, may the divine Energy of Sroash i.e. of obedience overpower the evil energy of disobedience.

Maz Confession: May obstinacy in this home be destroyed through the virtue of Obedience.

This reads like a simplified 'Taavil' of the Avesta line. Sarosh is the Yazat of divine obedience and his adversary is 'A-sraosh' or 'Aeyshma', the force of disobedience. The prayer is : let the disobedience towards Ahuramazda lurking in my house (i.e. within my own self) be destroyed by the Sarosh in me.

Avesta : "Aakhshtish Anaakhshtim"

Translation : Peace and harmony (shall overpower) discords and disputes.

Maz. Confession: Discord (be destroyed) by peace.

Avesta : "Raitish Araaitim"

Translation : Truth (shall overpower) the untruth.

Maz. Confession: (this line is missing)

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Avesta : Armaitish Taromaitim

Translation : Armaiti - (Perfect Wisdom, Khaaksaari, extreme humility) (shall overpower) pride, ego.

Maz. Confession : Vanity by Wisdom.

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Avesta : "Arshukhdo Vaaksh, Mithaokhstem Vaachim."

Translation : Speech that speaks right (shall overpower) the tongue of falsehood.

Maz. Confession : False witness by Truthfulness.

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Mazdaznan Confession has another line: (May) avarice (be destroyed) by Generosity.

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Is it not enlightening to find another passage from "Tao Ahmi Namaney" Prayer on the door of a room in Swami Yoganand's Ashram at Encinitas (California)? (Parsi Pukar : Sept. Oct. 1999). And is it not wonderful that till lately, the International Headquarters of Mazdaznan Movement was also in Encinitas? It seems, the breeze of Encinitas spreads out on its wings the Prayer, Tao Ahmi Namaney!

The rest of the paragraph from Maz. Confession is also a paraphrased version of Tao Ahmi Namaney.

I'll tell you little more about Dr. Otoman Zardusht Hanish and his Mazdanan Thought and teachings.

(To be continued)

Cherag

A SUFI SAINT ON MANTHRA PRAYERS

"As to the power of the word, a new idea has been coming.... that the repetition of a certain word or phrase is of great help in curing oneself of certain illnesses. Psychology in the western world is discovering this to-day. But what about the **Buddhists**, who for so many centuries have repeated the different mantrams sitting in their temples repeating two thousand, three thousands times a day? What about the **Hindus**, who have preserved their age-old sacred mantrams and chants?What about the **Jewish people**, who still preserve the sacred songs that they have inherited from the prophets of Ben Israel? What about the **Muslims** who for ages have repeated the Quran every day for so many hours and who still continue to repeat the verses of the same book to-day? And think of the secret there is behind the repetitions of the **Catholic mystics!**

The **Zoroastrians, the Parsees**, whose religion dates from perhaps eight thousand years ago, have still maintained their sacred words, and they chant their prayers several times a day, repeating the same words every day....

..... If it were, as it is sometimes called, a religious fanaticism, then nobody could continue these repetitions, as **no intoxication can continue longer than its influence lasts**; then it goes and the person is disillusioned."

- **Hazrat Inayat Khan** in "*The Music of Life*" (Omega - 1983)

Chapter 33, pgs. 237-8.)

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