

THE FIVE GATHA'S AND ILM-E-KHSHNOOM

The Gujarati Translations of the Gatha's rendered by Dr. Faramroz Chiniwalla.
The Paradigms of the Western Studies of our Religion.

by : K. N. Dastoor

(Editorial Note : In this series of articles, Ervad K.N. Dastoor intends to give a glimpse of the marathon and monumental work done by Dr. Faramroz Chiniwalla in the field of the translation of the Gathas. His first publication in the field was "Ha 28, Ahunvad Gatha" - 1939. Thereafter, Ha 29 and Ha 30 were published in 1940 and 1941 respectively. He followed an unique pattern in presenting his translations. Each passage of the Ha was first translated word-by-word showing the meaning of each word by numbers. This was followed by the detailed grammar and connotation of the important words in the passage, then the Pahalvi translation and explanation, then the Khshnoomic 'tavil' of the mystical contents, and finally the three different versions of the passage as contained in the three Nasks set out in the Pahalvi Dinkard, Sudkar Nask, Vrasht Mansra Nask and Baga Nask, and their relations to the content of the passage. Dr. Chiniwalla had written out these renderings for all the five Gathas during his life time. Of them, Gatha Vahishtoishtha, Gatha Spentomad and Gatha Vohu-Khshathra were published after his death by "Ilm-e-Khshnoom felavnari committee" in 1978, 1984 and 1989 respectively. All these follow the same general pattern as aforesaid. It is indeed a work without parallel and throws tremendous light on the Divine Scriptures.

In his first book on the Gathas Ha 28, Dr. Chiniwalla states that unless the Western Study of the Gatha's is made to be founded on the Zarathushtrian mystical science, Khshnoom, confusion on their meaning and content will continue. In fact, the confusion has been aggra-

vated, with the new translations by more modern western scholars like Hambach, Insler and others, particularly when they declare that the foundations of the translations by the older scholars like Bartholomae were "unsound in many respects!"

In this series, K.N. Dastoor will present the English translation or version of some of Dr. Chiniwalla's Gujarati renderings from the above referred publications. But before that Dastoor, in his Long Introduction, gives you an idea, starting from this issue, about some of the damaging paradigms of the Western studies and how without the Khshnoomic translations, the Gathas are thoroughly misunderstood.

K.N. Dastoor was groomed in Khshnoom as also in the Western studies by his uncle Ervad Rustom Dinshah Dastoor Maherjirana, (well known as 'Bapaji) who taught university students in Mulla Firoz Madresa, and was the teacher of some of the present day scholars. K.N. Dastoor was in close contact with Dr. Chiniwalla and his brother Jahangir Chiniwalla, Advocate and is a life long student of Khshnoom).

INTRODUCTION

The Western Studies of the Zarathushtrian Religion have generated two almost inflexible postulates; first, that the Avesta, as a language, of which the five Gathas are composed, is much earlier than the Avesta of the other Holy Scriptures like Vendidad, Visperad, Yazashney (in its non-Gathic Ha's) and Khordeh Avesta; and second, that only the Gathas contain the pristine message of Zarathushtra and not the

non Gathic writing, which are then named "Later" or "younger" Avesta. Following is a passage from the entry titled "Zoroastrianism" in the latest "Encyclopedia of Religions" (1987- Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, Editor in Chief: Mircea Eliade) which tersely enunciates the first of the two postulates:

"The Avesta, a collection of texts gathered in writing during the fourth or the sixth centuries CE, has survived only in part and it presents a heterogeneous picture. In addition to the Gathas attributed to Zarathushtra himself, we find texts with very diverse structures and goals, dating from many different periods and handed down orally for many centuries, perhaps even a thousand years, or more" (Vol. 16 - page 579- the author of the entry : Gherardo Gnoli).

The evidence for the above proposition is historical, geographical, linguistic and what is termed as "internal", which means the evidence based on the meaning of the contents of the Gathic and non-Gathic scriptures. The reasons falling under each of the former three categories are such that each by itself is not sufficient even to indicate reasonably the separation of the two types of scriptures in points of time, much less what periods of time. Cumulative reasons from all the three categories are required to have a reasonable guess about the correctness of the time-separation; but some of those cumulative reasons tend to cancel each other. To add to the confusion, many reasons are just guesses, conjectures, speculations and surmises of different scholars. Wilhelm Geiger says that the linguistic difference between the Gathic and the non-Gathic writings " may be easily explained by their having belonged to a different country." It can be separation not in time but in space. Martin Haug (1878) says that the Gathic and non-Gathic Avesta " represent one and the same language,

with such changes as may have been brought about within the space of one or two centuries". (Essays on Parsis : Essay I - II). Compare this with, "many centuries, perhaps even a thousand years or more" of Gnoli in the quotation from the Encyclopedia, above wherein the word 'perhaps' adds tremendously to the already existing doubt regarding the alleged time-separation.

Our own experience about the idiosyncrasy of any modern language or dialect is quite in variance with this high-brow scholarship. The Gujarati proverb : 'a dialect changes every twelve miles.' expresses our experience very ably. Bernard Shaw wrote his great drama "Pygmalion", (the parent of the great film "My fair lady".) wherein a professor could tell in which street of the city a person resided, just from the dialect he uttered. There was no separation in time, and the space separation was very short! There is even a possibility of no separation either in time or in space, or even in the person writing. It was Macaulay who wrote

Press where ye see my white plume shine,
admit the ranks of war and be your oriflamme
today the helmet of Navarre.

And it was the same Macaulay who while drafting the Indian Penal Code wrote :

"Whoever by force compels, or by any deceitful means induces any person to go from any place, is said to abduct that person."

It is probable that after a thousand years the linguistic scholars may pompously conclude from the language and wordings of the above two passages that they are separate in time by few centuries! Some very eminent amongst them may adduce learned reasons for the proposition that "Navarre" in the above poem is the corrupt form of 'Navsari' which was a town in Goojjuraat (the then name for the ancient State of Gujarat)..... The situation is comparable to

the Gatha's and the Vendidad. Gatha is poetry, Vendidad, the legal code.

But forget the historical, geographical and linguistic evidence. Rely more on 'internal' evidence. Ask : what is the meaning of the contents of the Gathic and non-Gathic Scriptures and you will then find that the two are manifestly separated in time. The thoughts, ideas and concepts are grossly different. They change their colour and contour radically as you go from Gathas to the 'younger' Avestan writings. This reason is advocated to be the most effective one in support of the time separation.

Now there is a condition precedent to this. The veracity of the contents transformation can be tested if and only if you are sure about the meanings of both the types of scriptures. The question is: are we sure?

The answer to this question offered by the Western study of Zoroastrianism {as they call it} is in such an emphatic 'no' that any person trying sincerely to understand our Religion finds himself or herself at sixes and sevens. Has the west given us lucid and consistent translations of the Gathas on which we can rely and ponder?

An inquiry into this question converges with a probe into the veracity or otherwise of the second postulatory presumption gifted to us by the West, namely, that only the Gathas contain the pristine and genuine message of Zarathustra, and not the non-Gathic scriptures. We will first elaborate this paradigm as propounded by the scholars and then deal with the existing translations of the Gathas.

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 com-

elled 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 says:

"In the younger Avesta even statements which flatly contradict the prophet's own doctrine 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." (page 14)

Reading both the above scholars together, we see that according to them, the latter 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. Zarathushtra", (So spoke Ahura Mazda to Spitma 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! I do not know what the present day scholar Das-toors have to say on this, since most of their priesthood depends upon the non-gathic scriptures. And what has a faithful Parsi to do, when most of his prayers and even Sudreh-kuishti are in non-gathic avesta and non-gathic traditions? "Thus spoke Ahura Mazda, Oh Lord Omniscient, Spirit most Beneficent, Holy Creator of the Corporeal World, Pure One" ("Paresat Zarathushtra Ahurem Mazdam- - -"), occur in Ava Niyash, Ahura Mazda Yashta, Ardibaheshta Yashta and several other Yashta's. 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. This has been done even by Parsi scholars like Dr. Taraporewalla. The Paradigm has stuck so fast that the above referred "Encyclopedia of Religions"(1987) sings the same song, and refers to a suggestion by Gershevitch that "the religion contained in the Gathas -- be called "Zarathushtrianism", that the contents of the younger Avesta be called "Zarathushtricism" and that the religion of Sasanid period be called "Zoroastrianism"

Our religious life in India, our Manthra prayers, Yasna ceremonies, Fire temples, Dokhma's, even Sudreh kushti and our moral code are all based and structured not on the Gatha's but on the non-Gathic scriptures and traditions. Any other community would have strongly condemned the western studies for attacking the very foundation of our religious and cultural life. What did we do, instead? Lured by the glamour of the West and prompted by our lethargy and ignorance, we not only did nothing but even encouraged the Western studies. To this day we point out a finger of awe

to the foreign degree holders in that field. It is a painfully amazing sight to find the Parsi scholars themselves being swept away by the poisonous currents of the West. We expect them to come out with strong arguments based on their own study against this fragmentation of our Religion. But very few did that openly; none does it today.

One of such few scholars who resisted this western sweep was Baheramgore Anklesaria. He wrote a series of articles under the title "Zoroastrian Religious Literature" in the 1930-32 issues of "Iran League Quarterly". It is a memorable piece of work. Several years of brilliant and studious scholarship has been poured into these articles. Although Baheramgore is inclined, rather hesitatingly, to accept the time separation between the Gathic and Non-Gathic Scriptures, the thesis he has convincingly built up is that the Gathic teachings and the Gathic thought have been imitated, unfolded, developed and elevated in the non-Gathic writings. And, mind, this is not just a Parsi scholar carried away by his sentiments. Deep study and profound reasons for this thesis emanate from every page. He first traces" a brief history of the Zoroastrian literature as once existed, and the remnant of it surviving after the various ravages and depredations, which it has undergone". (Ibid April - July 1930, page 90). He quotes from Paharvi writings and gives an able summary of the history of our scriptures spread from the times of the King Vistasp to about 931 A.C., and further on to the enshrining of 'Airan Sah' (at present radiating from Udwarda). He then proceeds to fire a volley of invaluable data, materials, evidence, and arguments for his main thesis. It is a wealth of materials from the Gathic and non-gathic Avesta, and Paharvi, Pazend and Persian writings, all stored at one place along with their philosophical, doctrinal and theological interpretations and explanations. Every page roars with the message: Don't think that younger

Avesta contradicts or combats the Gathic doctrines; it imitates them, develops them, and elevates them. Baheramgore enunciates that notorious western paradigm thus:

"Time and again, in season and out of season, it is being asserted by friend and foe, that the later Avestan literature represents that form of religion of the followers of Zarathustra, which had detracted from the lofty ideal of the worship of one God, Ahura Mazda, and taken to the worship of many minor gods similar to the gods of the Hindu Pantheon, that these gods were invoked and are invoked for help by Zoroastrians, ancient and modern, and propitiated with material oblations, for fear lest they would do harm to and spoil the cause of their invocers, if not properly appeased. Living in the twentieth century, we have in our midst, brains and thinkers, who wish to do away with the later Avestan literature as it is thought to be a later excrescence out of the indigenous Zoroastrian literature; and just for the moment, one does not understand why, all the arms and arrows, are concentrated towards the Yasts, which are even termed un-Zoroastrian."

And who are doing this? Those who have not carefully studied or even read a single page of the original sacred writings or are incapable of conceiving the process of unfoldment of the Gathic thought in the non-gathic scriptures.

"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 Zarathustra. 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 judgement, howsoever incorrect it could be, has been pounced upon by the learned and 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."

Baheramgore then proceeds to establish how the concept of Ameshaspenta's and Yazata's is nothing but a pure imitation, an unfoldment, a development of the Gatha revelation extremely rational----."The unfoldment is not just confined to this concept of Yazata's, several other Gathic thoughts are poetically elevated in the non-gathic scriptures. For instance, the very sentence, which in the jaundiced eyes of the Westeners appear to be a falsehood and craftiness of the so called 'later' priests is shown by Baheramgore to be a standard poetic formula derived from 19 words of the Gatha's, which he studiously enumerates. The sentence is: Paresat Zarthushtro Ahurem Mazdan, Ahura Mazda Mainyo Spenishta Datare gaetha-nam Astavaitinam Ashaum"(referred to above). This is an invocation to Ahura Mazda poetically extracted from 19 epithets to Ahura Mazda given in the Gathas like 'Mainyu' (spirit, spiritual) Vispanam Datarem" (creator of all, 'Vidvao'(knowing) 'Hazaosha'(friend, well wisher) 'Zatha pta Ashahya' (begetter and father of the Holy Order in the universe) and 14 others.

Baheramgor does not hesitate to state that the scholars like "Haug and Spiegel,; Justi and Wilhelm, Westergard, Geldner and Andreas, West and 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". This is really bearding the lion in his own den! Dr. Jamshedji Unwala, another reputed Parsi scholar, has profusely praised Baheramgor for his aforesaid articles in the Iran League Quarterly and suggested that they should be reprinted in thousands of copies and distributed freely among the Parsi youth before they completely lose their faith in the sacred Avestan lore and ancient Zoroastrian traditions--"

After quoting Baheramgor's words (quoted above), Dr. Unwala states, "all honour to the sacred memory of our long regretted Baheramgor Anklesaria for bringing this fact boldly before the Parsis"

In profoundly respectful agreement with Dr. Jamshedji Unwala, I may extend his suggestion further that Baheramgor's aforesaid articles should be reprinted as a standard book and adopted as a text for the students of our

religion here and abroad; and the attention of the Western scholastic community should be manifestly drawn to the paradigm breaking materials presented by this unassuming but profound scholar of Avesta scriptures and Pahalvi writings. And further the present day few and farlon scholars should gather more and more materials and data in support of Baheramgor's studious thesis and conclusions, if they have the courage and capacity to do so. I was told by my revered teacher, Bapaji that Baheramgor's studious and painstaking scholarship, and particularly his knowledge of the Pahalvi language and Pahalvi texts and grammar were unsurpassed and unparalleled. I stop here today with an Ashem mithra for Baheramgor. We will now probe further in the questions: has the Western scholarship, whether in the West or in India, given us any lucid, consistent, dependable and coherent translations of the Gathas? If not why not? What is missing?

The Amazing Uncertainties of the Western Gathic Translations

by K. N. Dastoor

(2) The Five Gatha's and Khshnoom

That there is a time separation between the Gatha's and the non-Gathic Scriptures, and that, of the two, only the Gatha's contain the genuine message of Zarathushtra are the two rigid paradigms of the Western studies.

When it is contended that of the two elements in a proposition, one is genuine and the other is not, the presumption is that the contents and the meanings of both are quite clear and there is no confusion whatsoever about them. But can this be said about the Gathic-non-Gathic paradigm?

The answer to this question is in a bewildering negative. The contents of the Gatha's as displayed by the Western studies are baffling, perplexing and even confusing. "When the translations of Moulton, Darmesteter, Haug and Spiegel, for instance, are compared, it is sometimes quite a task to recognise the same passage so variously translated". So says a writer J.W. Waterhouse, who intended to give to the lay reader an idea of "Zoroastrianism" in a book bearing that title, in the series "Great Religions of the East" (1934 - page 51). He is quite right. There are as many translations as there are translators, and each in confounding variance with the other. Waterhouse names only four scholars; there are numerous others. The Westerners: Haug, Guthrie, Justi, Harlez, Bartholomae, Mills; the Parsis: Kavasji Kanga, Baheramgore Anklesaria,

Khodabux Poonager, Irach Taraporewala, all of the older generations; and the newer Gathic scholars who have translated full or part of the Gatha's: Hinz (1961), Lommel (1971), Nyberg Guillemin, Lentz, Schmid, Boyce, Kulper, Humbach (1959) Insler (1975), a formidable list indeed! (And mind! they are all argumentative to each other).

Why so many translations? It is a phenomenon peculiar to the Zarathushtrian Scripture. Hardly any Scripture of the other major religions has this experience. There may be numerous commentaries and interpretations of Bhagwad Gita, but the base translation is the same for all. There may be a variation in presentation or an extended version of the original, but not a discord or a full divergence, as is found in the translations of the Gatha's. For instance, the famous promise of Lord Krishna in Gita IV - 7, that when 'dharma' declines and 'adharma' prevails, "I take Birth", is translated by Swami Chidbhavananda as "I embody myself" (Ramkrishna Tapovanam, Trichi), Swami Vireswarananda as "I manifest myself" (Ramkrishna Math, Madras) and by Aurobindo as "I loose myself forth into birth" (Aurobindo Ashram). There is no violence to the original idea in all the three versions; they support each other beautifully: He manifests Himself in human body and looses Himself into birth - a beautiful musical structure, three notes enhancing the effect of each, and not an

off-note discordance as is found in the Gathic translations.

The Vocabulary

For rendering a translation, two main ingredients are required to be thoroughly understood: the vocabulary and the grammar of the language proposed to be translated. The Western Studies have evolved a vocabulary of the Avesta, on the basis of a "science" called comparative philology. This science purports to deal with the transmission or transmutation and formation of one language from another by comparison of the words and assigning the etymological roots to them. It has formulated numerous rules for the purpose. But their application to Avesta, and particularly the Gathic Avesta, presents difficulties, insurmountable. To render a translation of the Gatha's is, as the renowned scholar Bartholomae put it, "The severest task in Aryan Philology". Another eminent scholar Dr. Mills wrote in his Preface to "The Zend Avesta, Part III in the famous series 'The Sacred Books of the East': "The language of the Gatha's requires also the study of a severe comparative philology and that to an unusual if not unequalled extent". These are the indirect proclamations of the glorious perplexities and uncertainties involved in the application of philological science to the Gatha's. If the rules are clear and certain, their application would not be a severe, unusual and unequalled task. But the difficulty is that they are neither clear nor consistent. The rules themselves get disturbed when applied to particular words, like an electron being disturbed by the very act of observing it. They cry for their own modifications during the course of their applications.

The situation is not improving

With the passage of time, it is aggravating. After the lapse of two centuries and seven decades since the first work on the Western study of Parsi scriptures was published by Thomas Hyde ("Historia religionis veterum Persarum eorumque Magorum" - 1700) Hanns Peter Schmidt, a renowned contemporary savant writes in his article "Old and New Perspectives in the study of the Gatha's of Zarathushtra", published in Vol. 21, No 2, April 1979, of the Indo Iranian Journal :

"The Vocabulary of the Gatha's contains many hapex legomena and rare words whose meaning cannot be established by a methodical procedure. Mostly we depend on guesses and possible etymologies. But in cases where the attestation is abundant or we have Vedic counterparts, much remains doubtful and requires re-examination" (p. 95).

"Hapex Legomena" means "a rare word, form or phrase; more strictly, "one only once recorded" from "Greek hapex = Once, & Legomenon = said" (Webster's Universal Dictionary). The Gatha's have words which occur only once or rarely, and there is no "methodical procedure" to ascribe a meaning to them. Mark the words, "guesses", and "etymologies," which are possible," - that is uncertain and more than one. Even the ground which we may think to be solid, is in fact shaky and doubtful. This applies equally or a fortiori to the words occurring more than once. Significantly, Schmidt's above article is a learned review of Insler's latest translation of the Gatha's in the series 'Acta Iranica', Vol I, The Gatha's of

Zarathushtra (1975). This article of just 29 pages is sufficient to reveal what a Himalayan task it is to translate the Gatha's and what tremendous uncertainty prevails in the translations and how the difficulties are so insurmountable as to destroy all hopes for one standard translation or at least a few harmonious translations.

The task of deriving a meaning of a word from its supposed root is a perplexing intellectual exercise full of riddles and pitfalls and every translator carries it out in his own individual, personal, subjective way. In the result one single word has such divergent meaning, that one could be chalk and the others may well be cheese, or cheek or cheque or charity or chancery! A host of examples of this extraordinary situation can be given. This one will give you an idea. The word 'Aodereshcha' occurs in Vohu Khshathra Gatha (Yasna 51), 12th stanza. Look at the array of meanings: Moulten and Guthrie : 'Cold'; Harlez : 'destroys'; Mills : 'abdominal part', or 'bosom'; Puneger : 'quarrel'; Taraporewala : 'fervour' (for 'aoderesh' only, 'cha' being separated and meant 'and'). Baheramgore Anklesaria : 'Odras' i.e. 'the wanderers with triumphant strength'; Insler and Boyce: 'Cold',

Just imagine: cold, strong wanderers, quarrel, abdominal part.... meanings of one poor word in Gatha IV. meanings of one poor word in the Gatha IV.

The Grammar and Syntax

The second ingredient of a language relevant to the task of translating it is its grammar. Has Avesta a grammar of its own? One of the founder scholars of the western studies, Martin Haug grieved at "the want of grammatical studies among the ancient Persians" and the nonexist-

ence, amongst the ancient Mobeds and Dasturs, of the astute Avesta grammarians "like Panini, Katyana and Patanjali" of the classical Sanskrit. Western Scholars had therefore to seek active help from the Sanskrit language to formulate a reasonable sound structure of the Avesta grammar. Ervad Kavasji Kanga, in the very first paragraph of his "A Practical Grammar of the Avesta Language" (1891) expresses the situation very succinctly :

"Avesta, the ancient and sacred language of the Parsis, bears a close affinity to Sanskrit, the classical and learned mother tongue of the Hindus. It is a branch of the great Aryan Stock of Languages called by Philologists Indo-European. Comparative Philology has proved beyond doubt that it is a genuine sister of Sanskrit".

But it is to be noted that the basis of the Avesta grammar is proclaimed to be the Vedic Sanskrit, which is older than the classical Sanskrit extending to the present day. Right from Haug to Insler, a time gap of almost a century, the help of the Vedic grammar and particularly the Rigveda is copiously taken in deciphering the Avesta as a language, its grammar and its vocabulary. "The most striking feature perceptible when comparing both Avesta dialects with Sanskrit is, that they are related closely to the Vedic form of Sanskrit, but not to the classical", said Haug in 1876 ("Essays on the Religion of Parsis", Essay II, 1). And in 1975 Insler in his 'Gathas' mentions that the grammatical forms in the Gathas have been "puzzled out" through the help of the Rigveda, which has also provided "the source for establishing much of the fundamental vocabulary" of the Gathas. (pages 1,2).

One important component of the grammatical structure of a language is "Syntax". It means a systematic statement of the rules governing the grammatical arrangement of words and elements in a sentence; (It deals with relation of words in a sentence in gender, number, person or case and the influence of a word on the construction of the sentence.) (The common non-scholarly reader may not bother about what this means).

We then ask the eternal question. Is there any reasonable certainty about the rules of grammar and syntax? And we get the eternal answer: no please! Again, the latest translator Insler says to the effect that without a certainty in syntax, "there is no assurance that the translation of a given passage approaches the intentions originally formulated by the prophet"; and further that "We are faced with the realization that much of our knowledge of these poems is highly doubtful". (Ibid - Introduction).

Realise this ye Parsis, who go on chanting their favorite 'mantra' that only Gatha is the true Zoroastrianism!

Let us have an example of the grammar-syntax-confusion. Yasna 30-7 (i.e. the 7th stanza of the third 'Ha' of the Gatha Ahunvad) has a verb "Jasat", meaning "arrived" or "came". The grammatical question that arises is: what could be the subject of this verb: "Jasat". There are four words in the stanza namely, "Khshathra" "Manangaha Vohu", "Ashacha", and "Armaiti", which could be the subject of the verb. Moulton takes the first three as the subject; Spiegel, "Khshathra". Kanga, Armaiti; Mills in his SBE Volume, Armaiti and in his massive volume on 'Gathas', "helper" as inherently hidden or understood (i.e. not physically present); Guthrie takes

"Ahura Mazda" as hidden; so also Insler. So there are at least seven answers to the question "who came?" And each answer will shape the meaning of the rest of the stanza! So, what is the original thought supposed to have been expressed by the Prophet, when there are seven grossly divergent translations depending on the conflicting thoughts in the seven minds of seven translators?

And to add insult to the injury, one of the Western paradigms advocated by several scholars is, in Insler's words: "There can be only one correct interpretation of each line for us as there was for the man who first formulated by them". (Gathas page 3). And Schmidt whole heartedly supports this notion, and adds a further slippery ground by saying "excepting of course the possible intentional ambiguities" (Ibid: Indo Iranian Journal, April 1979). So here are 20th century humans trying to probe, through their supposedly highly intellectual equipments, the spiritual or mystical mind of a God's Prophet as supposed to have been operated thousands of years ago, and to find out His "intentional ambiguities" and His "intellectual evolution". More about this paradigm later; but please don't forget the seven divergent translations of one and the same line from seven translators. (Sounds like "7 brides for 7 brothers").

(To be continued).

The general assumption that we know everything that's possible to know, and that everything beyond our present scientific knowledge is simply nonexistent, or we would already know it, is incorrect. Fifty or a hundred years from now, scientist will be laughing at a lot of our present theories, just as we now laugh at some of the theories of a century ago.

THE FIVE GATHAS AND KSHNOOM (3)

The Paradigms, Guesses and Conjectures of the Western Gathic Translations.

K.N. Dastoor

Let us continue our westward voyage in the stormy ocean of the Gathic uncertainties.

The vocabulary, the grammar and the syntax are the main tools for understanding and translating a language. We have seen that a tremendous amount of uncertainty prevails in applying these tools to the Gathas. But there is one another ingredient in the Gathic translations which not only surpasses the uncertainties of the three tools but back-shows numerous others on each of them. This can be dubbed as "paradigm-induced guesses" and calls for a diversion.

I have used the word paradigm often in this series. You might have thought that the word meant a proposition or postulate or presumption or assumption which the western studies have arrived at or conceived or modelled or believed as a truism. That is not quite incorrect. However, I am using the word in the sense nearing to that which the historian of physical sciences, Thomas Kuhn, used it in his famous book "The Structure of Scientific Revolution" (1962-1970).

Paradigms in Physical Sciences

Kuhn traced out the historical path by which a physical science, like chemistry or physics or astronomy develops and arrives at certain notions and beliefs which are taken as truisms or realities actually existing in nature. The members of a scientific community, say, the physicists, are professionally initiated by the text-books and teachers of their times. They thoroughly imbibe all the theories and practices then prevalent. For a time, certain models or pictures are taken as true and real; the professionals in the line would find more and more 'confirmations'

and 'proofs' for them, and carry them forward without disturbing the basics of the theory. A paradigm is then established. That theory, the scientists declare, truly explains the reality in nature. The world is seen through the spectacles of the paradigm.

But, as Kuhn points out, somewhere along the way these spectacles had already started developing very tiny cracks, first too tiny to be noticed, but later becoming dimly visible. A few scientists try to raise their fingers against the well-set theory by demonstrating that not all the facts and observations are covered and explained by the theory and that it has a few anomalies too glaring to be ignored. But those become voices in wilderness. The champions of the theory, who have believed in it right from their training period and are nurtured in it throughout their lives, give a stiff resistance against these voices.

This can well be termed as "paradigm-resistance". It is a strong tendency of the human mind to cling to what it has already accepted and to resist seriously any ideas which are contrary to or inconsistent with it. This arises out of the two frailties of the mind: one is ego and the other is intellectual laziness. The first shouts frowningly: What? were we fools to believe in this theory for so long a time? Do you know how much labour has been put in to arrive at and develop it? And the second says with a ridiculing smile: Oh! There is nothing in it, we need not try to understand or even give a look to the new ideas; they are too absurd to deserve our attention. Here, the mind does not want to disturb its habitual state of comfort and equilibrium.

But in the world of physical sciences that will not do. A time comes when a scientist suddenly pops up and explodes a revolution on the scientific community. Mostly he is a younger scientist not too egoistic or too lazy to oppose the paradigm. He breaks the spectacles and substitutes a new one. Opposition does spring up but his reasoning is too convincing to be ignored. At last the scientific community accepts him. Science now sees the world entirely differently. What to the previous paradigm appeared to be a duck now seems to be a rabbit. A paradigm shift has occurred. For a number of years it will remain in vogue until another paradigm break arrives. Kuhn has given many fascinating examples of this paradigm operation in its various stages.

Paradigms in the Western Gathic Studies

You may be wondering why this diversion to physical sciences. The reason is that Kuhn's analysis upto the point of paradigm resistance applies wonderfully well to the western study of the Zarathustrian Religion. Since last two centuries, the Western Scholars have built up and developed certain set paradigms. Whosoever takes up this field of study is nurtured, right from his student life, into these paradigms. They pour down from all the sections of his brain. He then just refuses even to give a faint look to the revolution in the human scientific thought which is capable of breaking his pet paradigms at a slight touch.

The western nurtured scholars then go on applying the paradigms to the Gathic translations. Each translator applies a few (out of several) chosen paradigms to his translation to such an extent that they have a powerful backward influence on his vocabulary, grammar and syntax. In the result the uncertainties multiply geometrically, and we get those several translations which are most confusingly divergent to each other.

Thus to the three ingredients of the glo-

rious uncertainties viz. vocabulary, grammar and syntax, a fourth more damaging one is added: 'paradigm induced guesses' (I'll call it 'pig' for short, without meaning the slightest disrespect either to the scholars or to the admirable animal of that name).

"Seven Seals" of Insler

The most remarkable part of this pig phenomenon is that every translator declares his dissatisfaction to the translations of all his predecessors, and therefore proceeds to burden the camel with one more. He thinks his 'new' translation removes much confusion. In fact, it adds to it immensely and stupendously. The later the translation, greater the confusion, and that not only in the poor mind of the readers but also in the erudite mind of the translator himself!

Thus one of the latest translators, Insler (1975) declares in the very first sentence of the introduction to his 'new' translation that the Gatha is a "text bound with Seven Seals" and proceeds to elaborate half a dozen obstacles in the way of a translation. "Thus to any one struggling with these lyrics, the gathas truly appear to be a book of riddles" says he and "we are faced with the realisation that much of our knowledge of these poems is highly doubtful". If after dozens of translators the latest ones are still struggling in the dense forest of riddles, doubts and anomalies, better they give up this lines of study and do something more useful to humanity and more lucrative to themselves. When, at one stage in twenties physics was passing through its amazing uncertainty, Wolfgang Pauli, one of the giants of the quantum theory and a noble prize winner said, "At the moment physics is again terribly confused. In any case it is too difficult for me, and I wish I had been a movie comedian or something of the sort and had never heard of physics". (Quoted by Kuhn). But physics could break its paradigm; Pauli himself was one of the breakers.

But Gathic studies have not broken their paradigms although decades after decades have rolled by. The reason is the incapacity of these studies to accept a revolution, due to rigid paradigm resistance. The wild 'Pig's (I mean paradigm induced guesses) are running pell mell and helter skelter so much so that when the guesses refuse to fit in, they go to the extent of altering the text of the Gathas (Imagine a scholar doing so to the Holy Quran). Thus on page 26 of his book, Insler gives four footnotes setting out his own changes in the text of Yasna Ha 28-, 9, 10 and 11. Read 'this' for 'that' and omit 'that'. In 28-9 he says "Omit Mazda"i (Sometimes God is a real nuisance. "We don't need the hypothesis of God" said La Place to Napoleon. What is Mazda doing in 28-9? He confuses the stanza by his smoky presence. So Omit Him!)

"Childish", Sir?

Another such scholar, disappointed with his predecessors, was Dr. I.J.S. Taraporewalla. In his Introduction to his 'new' translation "The Divine songs of Zarathushtra", (1951) while tracing how he arrived at the idea of translating the Gathas a new and on a line quite different from the "older generation of scholars," he says :-

"The turning point came one day — when I was a student at the University of Cambridge. I was talking to Professor E.G. Brown (the famous Persian scholar) — He had also read most of the earlier (Zoroastrian) literature, of course in translations, for he had scant knowledge of the original languages. But he told me frankly that he was not at all impressed by this ancient literature: and he made a remark which gave me a rude shock - "I think all this is very childish". (Introduction P.x.)

The remark led Dr. Taraporewalla to get at the then translations, which, in his mind,

confirmed Dr. Brown's view that "much of it was childish' He thereupon became a student of the giants in the line: Bartholomae and Geldner. He is all praises for them, but

"—none of the translations I had read (including that of Bartholomae himself) had satisfied me. I had made up my mind to make a translation of my own (ibid p xi).

And he toiled for twenty five long years and presented in 1951 a new translation based on certain guiding principles, one of which was that the vedic literature of India was nearest to the Gathas and that it was "utterly wrong to read the ideas of Later Zoroastrian Theology" into the Gathas". Now, this is the Pig phenomenon in full swing. All the previous translations were "childish" based on some pre-conceived notions. Here is the new one, the translator says, based on hitherto unapplied principles and furthermore he had added a "Free English Rendering" expressing the thought behind the stanza. But the curious situation is that he himself is paradigm-stuck. He adheres to the famous paradigm that non Gathic scriptures have defiled and even rejected the Gathic message, and therefore they should be scrupulously avoided in translating the Gathas. "It would not be correct", Dr Taraporewalla says, "to understand a word from the Gathas in the sense it had acquired in the Later Zoroastrian Literature". This almost conveys: Mind! not a word from the non-gathic literature! so Mary Boyce, the alleged traditionalist from the west is induced to write:

"Although in general Taraporewalla rejected European translations as too literal, he adopted unquestioningly the European assumption that 'it would of course be utterly wrong to read the ideas of later Zoroastrian Theology into the Gathas (pxii) and this assumption allowed his second

rendering to be almost as free and subjective as those of the occultists".

"By the 'second rendering' Boyce means that 'free rendering' of Dr Taraporewalla which is purported to be expressing 'the thought underlying each verse'"

The "Progress-paradigm" of Mary Boyce

But the situation goes curiously. Mary Boyce is herself stuck with another deadlier European paradigm that Zarathushtra belonged to an ignorant, antique and undeveloped age; that today's humanity is intellectually far advanced than His times, and that He had several notions about the world which have proved wrong today due to the advent of modern science. Boyce reads this paradigm in the Gathas. Read her learned lines.

"Zarathushtra himself evidently accepted the common ancient opinion that the sky so mysteriously not falling (Gatha-Yasna 44-4) was of a hard substance i.e. stone (Gatha-yasna 30-5); and thus a link existed between Khshathra, Lord of the stone sky, and stone weapons in the hands of the Ashavan men as they exercised power (Khshathra) in defence of the right. This link continued when stone weapons gave way generally to bronze ones; for Iranian scholars priests then defined the substance of the sky more precisely as rock crystal (the crystal spheres of the Greeks) which they classified among metals". (Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism (1984 p. 14)

Ye Parsist Here is your prophet asking a childish question (remember Prof Brown to Dr. Taraporewalla): Why does the sky not fall? And he believed that the sky was made up of stones! And here is your Religion from the ignorant age of bronze weapons and stone-weapons!! 'Ashvan's were the fighters using those weapons should you not

think $E=mc^2$ is far more advanced and it would be more reasonable to accept Einstein as a prophet than Zoroaster?

But the situation now becomes curiously and curiously. Boyce is supposed to be a traditionalist, Stone age paradigm notwithstanding. She says, the west is now reversing from its "19th century assumptions" ('Zoroastrians' (1979 page 225) i.e. they are dropping that taboo of discarding the non-gathic scriptures, Pahalvi literature and the ritualistic background in trying to understand the contents of the Gathas. But this is wishful thinking generated from her stance as a traditionalist. The west has not dropped the paradigm. Insler sticks to it in his 1975 translation. He mourns "the literary isolation of the text" of the Gathas and says, "there exists no early analytical commentaries of the Zoroastrian tradition which could present in detail the meaning of the prophet's message" Schmidt in his review of Insler in Indo Iranian Journal (vol. 21, No 2, 1979) comments that Insler should have stated "what the reflexes of Gathic interpretation in the later Avesta, the Pahalvi translation and other Pahalvi scriptures can contribute, or why they should be completely disregarded". In effect Schmidt suggests to give good reasons for the view that Gathas are isolated. Insler purports to emphasize the moral and ethical character of the Gathas, which according to him is "seriously neglected in recent misplaced fascination with the ritualistic background of the exalted lyrics". And Schmidt says in his review "obviously these remarks are directed against the stance taken by Hambach (1959), Mole (1963) and Boyce (1969, 1970, 1975)" Thus Boyce's view to the effect that the west has given up those 19th century assumption of discarding later Avesta, Pahalvi writings and ritualistic background, is not correct. She has not brought forth a paradigm break for the reason that the European paradigm of the Bronze age and Stone-age has stuck to

her and will not drop off. The article on "Zoroastrianism" by Gnoli in the latest "Encyclopedia of Religion" 1987 (Editor in Chief Mircea Eliade, Macmillan Publishing co. New York) does not look upon Boyce's ritualistic divergence with sympathy (page 586, 2nd column). These divergences are within the ambit of the western paradigm and do not constitute a Kuhn type revolution. Such revolutions are known to break the orthodox assumptions violently. No western scholar has done it. The only purpose these apparent scholastic differences serve is to keep the march of these studies going on. Without them, all the alleged researches would stop and the Zoroastrian study departments in the Universities would come to a halt!

That is how the professional caravan marches on. New students arrive, imbibe the paradigms, find some faults, make new translations, make the confusion worse founded and thus justify their scholarly existence. But how long, oh Lord, how long? Already, the number of students in the line have fast diminished in India as also abroad. Last year, those in charge of the so called Zoroastrian Department in the Columbia University (Dr. Dhalla's mentor) were circulating a letter for the signatures of Parsis in America addressed to the University authorities, entreating them for the continuance of the Department which was facing an imminent closedown due to the want of students. But why should any student select a line which thrives on confusion and uncertainties? And why should a Parsi student deliberately take a line which kills his faith on the basis of confusion?

The basic paradigm of this confusion is the 19th century scientific thought that the modern human brain is capable of understanding the whole universe, that Religion is mostly the superstition of primitive man, and the modern man is marching towards per-

fection through his intellect. Scriptures are therefore to be read as a history of the progressing human thought, like, how the primitive 'holy-men' (Ashavan) fought with stone weapons which were later converted to bronze weapons, and how some childish questions are asked in the Gathas. The ludicrous situation, however, is that today, at the end of the 20th century, the concepts of the physical sciences, which were at the basis of the aforesaid 19th century thought are all exploded. More about this, later.

Today Mysticism has entered modern science and yet, the Gathic paradigms continue.

SEEMING BALL OF FIRE IN PROPHET'S HAND

Regarding this seeming ball of fire in the Prophet's hand, it must be stated that there was no material ball of fire of any kind held by the Prophet in his hand, nor was there any shining chemical composition applied on the palm to hoodwink people. The fact is that the Prophet's body being composed of the subtle element of fire, it (body) was transparent, and had no shadow. This fiery element related to the creative fire-energy called Adar-Burzin-Meher of two grades operating in the planetary world, the higher on the heaven of the Sun, and the lower on that of the Moon. The current of this Adar-Burzin-Meher was constantly circulating in his body, and was flowing as aura through his right hand, which gave the appearance of the Prophet holding a ball of fire in his hand.

Firdousi rightly refers to the fire-energy in his Shah Nameh as under :

"Ke mehr burzin bi dood bood
Munauvar na az hizamo ood bood"

(translation) this fire Mehr Bruzin was without smoke, and was bright without wood and incense.

The Five Gatha's and Khshnoom

Western Materialism, Not Equipped to Understand the Sacred Scriptures.

by K. N. Dastoor

Sri Aurobindo's Assessment of the European Scholars.

Max Muller's Bewilderment at the Sense and Non-sense of the Eastern Religious Scriptures.

After more than two centuries of intense exertions, the Western Studies have admittedly failed to provide a lucid, coherent, consistent, intelligible and meaningful translation of the Gathas. There are as many divergent translations as there are translators. Each of them claims to be an improvement on its predecessors but in effect aggravates the already existing confusion. All of them are in violent contradiction to each other. One of the latest translator Insler (1975) declares in no uncertain terms : "We are faced with the realization that much of our knowledge of these poems (Gathas) is HIGHLY DOUBTFUL". Mary Boyce, a supposedly tradition respecting scholar says about the Gathas in her "Zoroastrians" (1987) : "Many Zoroastrians, in a literate age, long for simple, noble, lucid scripture on which to base a unified faith, and this is a longing which seems doomed to remain unfulfilled, because of the immense antiquity of their tradition."

We have seen in the previous issues of this journal that the Western based translations of the Gathas have the undercurrent of certain rigid paradigms running through them, and it is those paradigms which have greatly contributed to the confusing situation (and which, accord-

ing to Boyce, is irremediable). They are :

1. Gathic Avesta language is much earlier than the non-Gathic Avesta.
2. Only the Gathas contain the genuine message of the Prophet.
3. The writers of non-Gathic Avesta were so unscrupulous, crafty and deceptive as to bring back to the Religion those doctrines which the Prophet rejected and even combated. (See the quotations of Bartholomae (1918) and Gershevitch (1964) in the Jan-Feb. 1992 issue of Dini Avaz).
4. Each passage of the Gatha has only one meaning.

All the four paradigms have no solid foundation; they are all based on wild guessworks and conjectures. Nos. 1 and 2 cancel each other. When the contents of the Gathas are bristling with glorious uncertainties, is it scientific to say that they only contain the genuine message of the Prophet? If anything, they generate genuine confusion due to the violently divergent translations. No. 4 is rendered ridiculous when even one word is translated in 7 ways, as we have seen.

With these paradigms of high scholarship, most of the Gathic translators refuse to be helped by the non-Gathic Avesta and the Pahalvi translations and interpretations. Most of those who have taken the help of Pahalvi writings, have done so with an air of superiority: their eyes were more

eager to find out the mistakes of the Pahlavi writers than to try to grasp their elucidations and expositions like the air of a modern scientist occasionally getting some help from a primitive jungle-man. Only a few of the translators were respectful to the Pahlavi writers; Ervad Kavasji Kanga and Beheramgore Anklesaria were the eminent two of them. (Kangaji's Gujarati translation of the Gathas (1895) is well known. Beheramgore's translation was published in 1953 by Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha).

What Content ?

Pick up any one of the several Western oriented translations of the Gathas and try to follow the contents. The impression you will gather is that here is some stray thoughts of some primitive thinker, who was aware of the existence of God and who had some moral preaching to offer. He seems to talk of 'good mind' or 'good thinking' or righteousness or truth, but does not seem to have defined what is good and what is evil, or what is true and what is false. He refers to several combats between good and evil, but we do not get what he actually conveys about the combat. He refers to enemies but does not seem to clarify which enemies he is talking about. Sometimes he names some of them (Like 'Bendva' (Ha 49 - 1), but we keep wondering who that could be. The scholars propound all kinds of wild guesses. He was a border chief who proved himself very formidable to Zarathushtra who therefore, begs for his death, says Mills. Bartholomae almost agrees. Hung just fires that Bendva is Pandoo (of Mahabharata? - well he was not a bad man!) Just said he was 'Bhindu' - All wild guesses!

What Childish Questions!

Further on, the Gathas ask all sorts of haphazard and random questions in Ha-44. Some of them are really childish. Like "who supports the earth and sky from falling downwards?" (44-4). Which craftsman has made light and darkness? (Ha 44-5) who expands and contracts the moon? (44-3) who created morning, noon and night? (44-5). Some of the questions are bad physics and bad astronomy. Some questions do indicate that there must be some deeper thought beneath; but no Western Scholar is able to uncover it. One of the questions sounds ridiculous: "When shall I get ten pregnant mares and one camel?" (44-18). Some scholars say, Zarathushtra wants wealth; in 'those' days there was no money, but animals constituted wealth. A normal Intelligent and inquisitive Parsi may well ask "Is this our holy scripture?" To riggle out of the situation Insler says, this is a metaphor for a group of the Prophet's disciples, who had "aspa" (horse) or "ushtra" (camel) at the end of their names like Vishtaspa, Jamaspa, Frashostra. (Insler's Gathas - p.251), We just wonder which is more ridiculous: the original question or this scholarly solution? Why should there be ten mares and one camel and not one mare and ten camels? And why not cows and bulls?..... No doubt Professor Brown told Taraporewala, "I think all this is very childish", which goaded the latter to work for 25 years to write out his own new translation, which in turn was branded by Mary Boyce as: "as free and subjective as those of the occultists". What a mess?

Baffling, Isn't it?

Now, this is not just a Gathic phenomenon. Most of the sacred Scriptures of all

the great Religions are observed by the Western world as being at times very beautiful and good and even profound and at the same time very childish and preposterous. This perplexing situation is expressed by Max Muller, the Editor of the famous series "Sacred Books of the East" in the following words:-

"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 the other". S. B. E. Vol. I, XII

Poor fellow! In spite of decades of toils and troubles, Max Muller is boggled at the "hideous and repellent" contents of the sacred scriptures! Why?

Revelation, not Literature!

To an Eastern mind nurtured in Religion and Religious practices, Scriptures are not ordinary literature; it is God's Word revealed through the Prophets, 'Avatar's, saints and sages; and what the Western material mind finds nonsensical in them has a profound spiritual and mystical meaning. Since the mystical world is beyond the senses and understanding of the common non-saintly people, the scriptures express the mystical truths in day to day language of the common man, which requires special knowledge and practice to unearth them. The West did not understand this, and tried to interpret the sacred writings with its narrow materialistic vision, thereby reducing the sublime to ridicule. This state of affairs is very succinctly expressed by the great mystic of

our times Sri Aurobindo, with reference to 'Veda's, the sacred scriptures of the Hindus :

"The European scholars went on to make their own etymological explanation of the words, or build up their own conjectural meanings of the Vedic Verses and gave a new presentation often arbitrary and imaginative. What they sought for in the Veda was the early history of India, its society, institutions, customs, a civilization-picture of the times". "Hymns to the Mystic Fire" Aurobind Ashram (1946-71-85) (Foreword) (1985 Edition page 2)

Substitute 'Gatha' for the Veda and 'Iran' for 'India'; and the sage's words fit in and apply admirably. Sri Aurobindo points out that without grasping the mystical element and without the capacity to probe into the 'Veiled truth behind things' "the Veda must remain for ever a sealed book; grammarians, etymologists, scholastic conjectures will not open to us the sealed chamber". (Remember : Insler's seven seals?) The same applies to the Gathas, a *fortiori* since Vedic Sanskrit as a language is in a better condition than Avesta. The Gatha is a Book of Mantra's inspired from the highest hidden planes of consciousness in Nature. The very first stanza of the Gatha : *yanim mano ...* reveals that the Truths propounded in the Gathas are inspired by the highest Divine Light of Ahura Mazda and are placed forth before the Creation by the Ameshaspenta's, the spectrum of His Light. The Gathas contain the Secrets of Creation, of the existence of the humans on the earth and their ultimate goal. These are too profound to be fully comprehensible by the non-saintly mind, much much less by a mind nurtured in naked

materialism.

Underneath the rigid paradigms of the Western Studies of the Zarathushtrian Religion and the fiasco of the Gathic translations lies the paradigm of all paradigms, namely, the materialistic and mechanical view of the universe and man, which thrived in the 19th century. We shall have a swift view of this grandfather paradigm later. In the meantime just have a look at the most piercing description of the Western off-track in its understanding of the Sacred Scriptures, again in the words of Sri Aurobindo :-

"The nineteenth century European scholarship writing in a period of mate-

rialistic rationalism regarded the history of the race as a development out of primitive barbarism or semi-barbarism, a crude social life and religion and a mass of superstitions, by the growth of outward civilized institutions, manners and habits through the development of intellect and reason, art, philosophy and science and a clearer and sounder, more matter of fact intelligence. The ancient idea about the Veda could not fit into this picture, it was regarded as a part of ancient superstitious ideas and a primitive error". Sri Aurobindo (ibid-page 7)

Again substitute Gatha for the veda and the picture is complete.

(To be continued)

The Five Gathas and Ilm-e-Khshnoom

The Faithless Paradigms of 19th Century Materialism imbibed in the Western Studies.

By : K. N. Dastoor

We have now arrived at the grandfather paradigm of the Western studies of the Zarathushtrian Religion. That is: the mechanical and material interpretation of the universe and man, shortly materialism, which originated in the middle of the of the 17th Century and reached its climax in the last decade of the 19th Century. The thorny weeds of the Western scholarship have grown and multiplied on this soil of materialism and has sucked in all its poison of faithlessness. This grim and ghastly reality has been ignored by most of the Parsis, commoners and scholars alike, who are luringly carried away by the high-brow scholarship.

Let us have a swift excursion in the jungle of those weeds.

Just before the dawn of materialism the West had a synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology originated by St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in the 13th Century. It affirmed that man could understand the world around him, but not just through reason and intellect. Faith was also necessary, because there was soul within man and God existed; Lord Jesus Christ was His incarnation in human form. Morality and ethics were the language of God to be followed by man. Nature had a plan and a purpose; philosophy and science should aim at understanding the meaning and significance of the mysteries of nature and living in harmony with it.

But a tiny nucleus of the gathering storm of atheism was forming in the far horizons. Reason itself defied a few of the theological dogmas. For instance, the Biblical declaration that the earth was at the centre of the universe was not correct. So said Copernicus in 1543. He was followed by Kepler (1571-1630) and Galileo (1564-1642) who both propounded that mathematics was the key to the universe. Reality was in quantification and measurement and not in such qualitative experiences like tastes, odorous and colours.

Then arrived Bacon who, being a prosecutor of witches, declared that nature was a slave to man, who can 'torture' out her secrets by the force of his intellect and logic (1624). Descartes (1595-1650) propounded that the universe was just a machine working on a set of immutable laws derivable by mathematics. Science consisted in arriving at these laws. Nature was nothing but matter in motion.

And then the apple fell (so it is said) before Newton and came the most crucial day in the history of modern human thought: 24th April, 1686. Newton presented his famous paper, shortly called the 'Principia', before the Royal Society of London (established in 1660 for "the improvement of Natural knowledge").

The fire ball of materialism started rolling down with accelerating velocity

and by the last year of the 19th Century all that was divine and noble in the human nature was in huge flames.

What was this universe and what was man according to the 'new' thought? Universe was just a collection of chunks of matter moving in absolute space and absolute time. Matter consisted of 92 kinds of basic unbreakable and indivisible particles called atoms. The stars above and the pieces of matter below were composed of these atoms and worked on the same laws of motion. Different kinds of atoms combined with each other specially and electrically to form molecules. Originally the earth had nothing but these lifeless atoms and molecules. One fine day some atoms and molecules by some accident combined in a mass, which suddenly showed the sign of 'life'. The first living 'cell' was formed; matter was transformed to 'life'; but, don't worry, those cells were also obeying mechanical laws, which could be called chemical laws.

This single-cell animal then 'evolved' further into different species, and thus after a long journey, a jumping monkey arrived through fishes, birds and mammals and then became tail-less to make the highest evolved molecular machine called MAN. No design or plan or a maker of any plan was required for this immense journey. It just happened through the survival of the fittest, that is to say, those species could survive who were strong enough to kill and to carry away "the neighbour's wife".

All along this intellectual voyage, one concept was mercilessly assaulted and shattered to pieces - namely the concept

of God. "We don't need that hypothesis", a scientist, Laplace, told Napoleon, and from that point the Western thought became Godless. When everything was a machine working on set immutable mathematical laws, where is the need for a Maker or Creator or Planner? Right from atoms to man, everything was a machine. Even the brain of that highest creature - man, which found out or "tortured out" the mechanistic secret of nature was itself a molecular machine.

The above is a very very short narration of the mechanistic interpretation of the universe and man, spreading over a period between 1600 and 1900. Newton, Darwin and Freud were its eminent pillars. Newton made the matter Godless, Darwin made the huge variety of life on the earth a Godless process, and Freud made the human mind a Godless machine.

Four tributaries streamed down from this river of materialism:-

1. The Universe was Godless.

Break it down!

2. Everything worked on machine like laws. To understand a machine you must understand its component parts; to understand them you must break the machine and study each of its parts. Once you understand the parts, you understand the machine. This was the right and the only way to "torture out" the nature's secret. Some people call this the philosophy of fragmentation.

Out There !

3. Man was the highest product of the

universe. He had a superior machine, the brain, which could think out what was "out there".

Oh! Progress and Progress!

4. 19th Century man was the climax of "progress". The primitive man was a wild jungle-man, superstitious, ignorant, alarmed of the forces of nature. Slowly, he started understanding the secrets of nature. He used stone weapons and then bronze weapons. Till 15th century he was groping in the dark. Then the light of his intellect flashed and by the 19th century, he was the master. All his thinking in the past was now surpassed. Through his fiercely active brain he, the 19th century man, was on the top of progress and would establish a paradise on earth very shortly. (Alas! How explosively this illusion was to be shattered by 1990! Nuclear bombs, greenhouse effect, ecological disasters, ———and "Aids"!! What progress! What Paradise!).

The above four paradigms fell like a huge swarm of locusts on every branch of knowledge which thrived in the 19th Century. Commerce, economics and politics were not spared. Cut throat competition was the nature's law, namely, survival of the fittest. Amassing wealth by any means was justified, so said Adam Smith. Love, beauty, morals, ethics, devotion and faith were not scientific propositions. The feeling of beauty, or love of a mother for her child, or the throbbing of the heart at the thought of Jesus Christ, were all physical movements of atoms in the brain. They were pathological

disturbances. Even the cruelty, criminality and insanity were abnormal atomic disturbances in the atom-house of the human animal.

The Tornado!

Alas! The Western study of the Zarathushtrian Religion was swept away in the poisonous currents of these paradigms of materialism. 65 years after Newton's apple, Anquetil Duperron was in India studying the Parsis and their scriptures, and published in 1771 his two volumes with a 54- words long title. A violent controversy started amongst the European scholars of the Oriental studies. First, the authenticity of the Parsi scriptures as revealed by Anquetil was questioned. There was then a hot dispute about the language of the scriptures. The so called science of philology came to the rescue. Avesta was declared the sister of Sanskrit. It could be translated by the help of Sanskrit etymologies and grammar. The grammar of Avesta was evolved wholly based on Sanskrit. And then the controversy changed its course. What about Pahlavi writings? Are we to ignore them? Some said yes very emphatically. Pahlavi writers had gone astray. Others said that the Pahlavi writings were of great help in following Avesta. This battle of methods continues till today! As we have seen, Boyce calls herself traditionalist depending on Pahlavi as also on "ritualistic background". Insler, Smchidt, Gnoli cry : No Pahlavi! No non-Gothic Avesta even! Only Vedic Sanskrit.

In the last century Darmesteter and then Geldner had suggested compromise. Follow Vedic Sanskrit, but also look to Pahlavi. No doubt the European scholars

exerted and laboured very hard in evolving the grammar of Avesta and Pahlavi, and in collecting the texts. But when it came to translating and interpreting the texts, what they presented was not religion, but only history, geography and philology. All their internal controversies were confined to the methods and means of studying Avesta. But the four materialistic paradigms were ever running underneath all these high flown studies. All the scholars were nurtured in the 'scientific' thoughts of the 18th -19th centuries, and all therefore believed that the past humans were primitive and the present are fast progressing; that today's scientists, savants and scholars know much more about the universe, man and nature than all the past humanity. Remember, Boyce on Zarathushtra's alleged belief of the sky being supported by stones? They could therefore study any religion and its scriptures with the high-brow air of "higher criticism". Since the scientific method consisted in understanding the parts to understand the whole, religion was to be fragmented historically and understood geographically, in an "objective" way. Hence the fragmentation of Gathic from non-Gathic Avesta. Even the concept of God was to be seen historically. It had originated from the fear of the primitive man for nature and its components, like sun, flood, winds, earthquakes. As the primitive man advanced, the fear complex was transferred to a mysterious being, God. That concept has such and such a form in Hinduism and such and such, in Zoroastrianism. But if you ask a pointed question to these scholars: "Apart from the historical "thought", is God a reality in nature?", you will never get an answer.

The scholars would almost say "That is not our subject." And that is true. It is not their subject. Whether religions propound the truths in nature, whether they are the description of what exists in nature, are the questions the western study have never answered and cannot answer. It can give you a long lecture on the historical evolution of certain religious thought and its geographical journeys, or on the high philology or grammar or etymology of a word in a scripture peppered with some wild guesses. But if you ask, are they realities? The answer will be tactfully avoided through some technical jargon. Zarathushtra abolished the idea of many Gods and introduced the idea of one God, and the crafty priests after Him reinstated the idea of many Gods, the scholars would declare confidently as a matter of history. But what is the Truth - not about the history, but about the existence? Are there in fact and truth many Gods? Some mystics of India, Persia and China have declared that God is in every grain of all things. There are then as many Gods as the grains of sand on all the seashores of the world plus as many as there are stars in the sky plus as many as there are atoms in one grain of salt! Are they declaring a reality? No answer from the West! And their silence speaks volumes. They themselves are not sure on the questions whether God exists or whether morality leads to salvation or, for that matter, what is salvation and even what is morality! 19th century materialism is inherently present in all their studies and therefore the most fundamental aspects of any Religion, namely faith and devotion, yogic and spiritual disciplines and exercises, are conspicuously absent.

Even God is there on sufferance. Faith has to go beyond the intellect; in the West the "scientific" intellect is supreme. Devotion has to shed tears of separation; in the West that is a pathological disturbance. Indian mystics may declare that the mountain is beneath the blade of grass and nobody sees the mountain, (Narsinh Mehta, the saint of Gujarat) or that the infinite Lord of the whole universe resides underneath a grain of wheat (saint Tukaram of Maharashtra). The western scholars would just stare in the air with an airily contemptuous smile. This is not consistent, with their training and even culture. To their scientific minds, the part cannot contain the whole. They are therefore most eminently disqualified to study Religion as a Reality - a mystic Reality, which exists in the heart of man and God ("Daena"), a Reality which prescribes a path towards God. Talking of a path, the western scholar would rush to the nearest geographical map of the high-ways!

The fiasco of the Gathic translations arise out of these faithless paradigms of the 19th century materialism. They have to fit in their scholarship within its framework. All the particular paradigms about our Religion which the West has floated, have these materialistic philosophies at their root. The alleged division of Avesta as former and latter, the alleged one God versus many Gods, the alleged craftiness of the later priests, the alleged 'interpolation' and "corruption" of the Avesta scriptures, the alleged uselessness of the non-Gathic scriptures and Pahlavi writings, the alleged primitiveness of the rituals, the alleged 'ashavan's fighting with stone weapons and bronze weapons (Boyce), the alleged

childish questions asked by Zarathushtra, the alleged stark ignorance of Pahlavi writers, the alleged miseries of the Prophet, the alleged supremacy of intellect taught by Him, even the alleged "seven seals" on the Gathas (Insler), and the alleged childishness of the Gathas are all the weeds on the poisonous soil of 19th century materialism. All this is anything but Religion. The spiritual institutions and the devotional convictions, which the Parsis and their ancestors preserved and maintained for centuries after centuries were all reduced to bare and lifeless history and geography within just one hundred years! The special composition of Sudreh Kushti, the extraordinary procedures for concentrating holy Fires or Dokhams, the efficacy of Manthra Prayers and a host of other limbs of the Parsi Life have no explanation or even a place in the Western studies. The sacred Texts are reduced to primitive babbles. There is blissful ignorance about the fact that the scriptures are sealed chambers containing profound truths far beyond the ordinary man's intellect; and as Sri Aurobindo says: **"grammarians, etymologists, scholastic conjectures will not open to us the sealed chamber."**

(To be continued)

Who is God ?

God is the shortest distance between zero and infinity, in either direction.

Alfred Jarry

* * * * *

If God lived on earth, people would break out all His windows.

Hasidic Saying

The Five Gathas and Ilm-e-Khshnoom.

Conspicuous Absence of Faith, Devotion and Mysticism in the Western Studies

by K.N. Dastoor

Faith, devotion and mysticism are the most essential ingredients of any Religion. Faith is the sure and steadfast belief in the unknowable and the unknown. Devotion is the undaunted love and attraction - an intense heart throb - for the Prophet of one's Religion, like, say, Jesus or Zarathushtra, or the Divine Person associated with it, like Rama or Krishna. Mysticism is an acute awareness that nature has a vast expansion beyond the world of our day-to-day experience, and God, Ishwara, Allah, Ahura is the origin and the ultimate mystic existence.

All the three ingredients are conspicuously missing in the West oriented studies of our Religion. The obvious reason is that they are founded on the 19th century materialism. God is there on sufferance. All that He does is to provide some high scholarly materials, mostly historical and geographical, for a high brow debate on the question of one God Versus two Gods or many Gods, a barren bookish quarrel on numbers. Nowhere an answer is found to the most basic question of the reality of His existence or His numerous manifestations.

A large number of people have directly experienced the presence of several white Gods and black Gods. Our country vibrates with their existence. Shiva, Ganesh, Durga and a host of others, who have influenced the spiritual life of lakhs of people cannot just be brushed aside because the laboratories of the 19th century science could not find them and the scholars do not believe in them. As to black Gods, Sri Aurobindo has very aptly named them as "hostile forces". In "Letters on yoga", a whole section covering about 43 pages is devoted to "Opposition of Hostile Forces", where Sri Aurobindo gives first hand information about them. "Wherever yoga or yagna is done, there the hostile Forces

gather together to stop it by any means". (Page 1731). So, the white Gods do exist, and the black Gods do exist, and one God also exists and so also several Gods. And He exists under a grain of wheat and below the blade of grass; and "no larger than a thumb, dwells, in the heart of all" (Upnishad - Svetasvatara 3:11,13). These are the pronouncements of direct spiritual experience and not a quarrel of historical jargons. Such mystical experience cannot fit in the framework of the 19th century materialism, which believes that the human intellect is capable of comprehending the whole Nature through the tools of logic, laboratory and mathematics. All the messengers of God have pointed out that this is not so. What we call intellect is not only incapable of grasping the Truth, but it often obstructs the Truth. Hence, the whole edifice of trying to understand Religion built by the western studies is bound to crumble at the slightest touch of spirituality.

The west declares with much scholarly pomp that Zarathushtra fought against the alleged concept of many Gods, and some of the scholars even say that they were Hindu Gods or Hindu Kings. For instance, Haug equated "Bendra" of Gatha 49-1, with 'Pandoo' of Mahabharata I Mills equated him with a 'bothering border chief'. There is another wild-guess cracker which perhaps surpasses all. Vendidad, Pargard 19-1 refers to a daeva, named "Booiti". On this, Darmesteter, another 19th Century scholar, takes three jumps. He first equates the word with "Budasp"; then he says it is a corruption off "Bodhisatva", and then takes a third powerful jump that Bultl is thus a personification of Buddhism! (Quoted by Darab Dastur Sanjana in Dinkard Vol XIV, page 12 (English Section). So, Buddhism, a noble, non-violent, compassionate, merciful Religion is equalised with the demon of death attacking Zarathushtra under the

orders of Angramini!

The whole western theory of one, two, three — many Gods is in a mess. Monotheism, Dualism, Polytheism are all decorous names flowing from an arduous attempt to bring down mystical Truths to the level of the materialistic reasoning. Again, as Sri Aurobindo points out :

“People now-a-days seek the explanation for every thing in their ignorant reason, their surface experience, and in outside happenings. They do not see the hidden forces and inner causes which were well known and visualised in the traditional Indian and Yogic knowledge”. (page 1742, Letters on Yoga).

In the result, they try to sniff out some alleged conceptual differences amongst different Religions, or between the different periods of the same Religion. This lethal tendency is also an off-shoot of the 19th century materialism, one of whose muddy foundations was fragmentation and evasion of any search for harmony. The studies have never tried to harmonise the different Truths expressed in different words in different Religions, about God, as is so wonderfully and beautifully done by Father Bede Griffiths in his “A New Vision of Reality” (Indus 1992). But then, the Reverend Father had to leave the west and live in a fragile Ashram near Tiruchirapalli (south India) to appreciate the melodies and the harmony of different Religions. And he has not touched the Zarathushtrian Religion in his book, because its mystical and spiritual side has never been put forward by the western studies, and the Parsi scholars have just luringly followed the high brow westerners.

The Rocky Soil Of Faithlessness

How can such rocky soil of materialism grow a single green plant of Faith? There is a divine Reality behind faith. We are all marching towards God. “Nearer to Thee, my Lord!” - is our prayer at every moment of our life on this tiny planet. The journey has a path, the path is prescribed by Religion - 'Dharma'. Our mind and our capacity to experience Nature are limited.

Only the prescriptions of the 'Dharma' will lead us further and expand our consciousness. We have to follow the procedures of life as prescribed in the Dharma of our birth. We have to adopt the 'good' and discard the "evil", both as defined by the Daenaa (i.e. Dharma). When the Daenaa ordains to speak the truth, that is not by way of a social discipline; it is a spiritual exercise, a yoga. When a parsi is ordered to wear Sudreh-Kushti, it is not by way of just an identity symbol; it is a spiritual exercise, a yoga, the divine food for the Ruvaan (soul) - to march towards Ahura Mazda. How it is so and what it does to us is not for us to comprehend at the present stage. That is Faith.

Primitive and Pastoral

Where is the faith in the western high-browism? From the day one, our Scriptures were called childish. Anquetil Duperron's books (1771) were branded by William Jones as full of silly tales, absurd rules and laws, and grotesque gods and demons; they could not be the genuine books of Zoroaster, he said in a pungent Voltarian style. During the scholarly storm that followed, Anquetil's texts were found to be genuinely Parsi Zoroastrian, and a lot of materials were fired in defence of their authenticity and their contents. But the barren translations flowing from grammatical, etymological and philological exertions, influenced by the then rising materialism, did not bring out the spiritual mystical, and devotional contents of the scriptures. Thus, the authenticity was established, but so far as the contents were concerned, they were at the most, transformed from "childish" to "primitive", not a very distinctive transformation - say, from cast iron to wrought iron. This was the result of the progress paradigm. Primitive people would surely talk childish, looked from our 'progressive' view point. If progress goes forward with time, then Gathas, being older than the non Gathic scriptures, should be more primitive. But here the western studies declare that Zarathushtra was a little advanced primitive and tried to abolish the many-Gods concept, but his successors, those

crafty priests, brought it back, in order to survive and continue their priest craft, or rather witch craft. (See here Darwin's aftermath ? Survival of the fittest in the struggle for existencel) Present day Priests are continuing the craft —. Some of them are westerly scholars!!

But the continuation of the older priest craft did not render Zarathushtra's times or teachings less primitive. He could not find out what 19th Century humans discovered and invented. He thought that the sky was supported by stones (Boyce). He belonged to pastoral times (Boyce). He might be a little more advanced than his bretheren in thinking out one God against n Gods (where n tends to infinity); but that did not preclude Him from belonging to a primitive agricultural, pastoral and herds men society. See, what Mills, one of the last century translators of the Gathas say in his Introduction to S.B.E. Vol 31 (Part III) wherein his translation is published :

"Here, it must be noted, that the population among whom these hymns were composed were chiefly agriculturists and herdsmen. Circumstances which affected their interests as such were of course paramount with them, and as their land and cattle represented their most valuable property, whatever threatened them was the most of all things to be dreaded. Accordingly rapine, and the raid, whether coming from Turanlans or Daeva worshippers were regarded as the most terrible of visitations."

Take it, ye Parsis! these are your Gathas flowing from an agriculturist and herdsman, who teaches his bretheren to fight all attacks on their land and cattle, whether from the historical and geographical neighbours or from more wild, barbaric, ferocious and savage worshippers of n gods! Thus, 'Daeva's were not the hostile forces who obstructed any 'yoga' or 'yagna' as the 20th Century yogi Sri Aurobindo cautioned. They could be any "border chiefs harrassing Zoroaster". They could well be some Hindu Daeva's like Indra or Varun II or Bodhisatva II What a fine specimen in the wild zoo of the

western studies!!

But here we are faced with another dilemma. The 20th century scholars discard their last century bretheren so far as their translations go. The latter were not 'Daeva's, but they were treading on very feeble and fragile grounds. As Hanns Peter Schmidt says in Indo Iranian Journal, Vol 21, No.2, April 1979, page 83 :-

"For more than half a century Gathic studies were under the spell of an 'authoritative' translation, that of Bartholomae (1905). It is true that his views on matters of interpretation were not unanimously accepted, but as far as the basic grammatical, syntactic, and semantic matters are concerned, his translation was challenged rarely and then only in details. Accordingly, little progress was achieved until Hambach (1959) showed how unsound the foundations of Bartholomae's translation were in many respects. ——— It is only with Insler's work that Hambach's pioneering effort is taken up and pushed further."

So, all those intellectual storms of the 19th century were in vain. The foundations were unsound. At this rate, we may be sure, the scholars of the 21st century will declare Hambach, Insler and Schmit as ill-founded. (Some have already done so). For them all these are just academic somersaults meant to keep their professional caravan marching on. But what about we, the Parsis, for whom the Scriptures are holy 'manthra's and prescriptions for life? If like equity, Scriptures are to vary with the foot or fad of the scholars, then every translation is an exercise in futility, both for the scholar and the layman. When several Parsi wiseacres declare, "We rely only on Gatha", a layman may well ask: "Whose translation you rely on?" For, every translation is in violent contrast with every other.

What then happens to our faith ? If uncertainty is a certain phenomenon in understanding the scriptures, how do we go about the spiritual disciplines and Tarikat's ordained for us? The western studies have never given any answer to a host of questions

like : Why 72 threads in Kushti? Why 1128 yazasheny's and vendidaad's while consecrating the holy Fire of an Atash Baheram; why 3 'Ashem Vohu's before the Fraraaney Mazdaysno — passage in every prayer? Why 2 Yatha Ahu Vairyo's before "yasnemcha" — in all prayers? what and why are the various shapes of the utensils used in Yazashney ceremony? and so on ad infinitum.

These questions, like every element of our Religion, are directly concerned with mysticism, the science of the unknowable. All Religions are founded on the great Truth that Nature does not come to an end where our senses cease to register it. We, the non-saintly people have a highly limited apparatus for experiencing the world around us. It is a world highly specialised for us. 20th century physics has proved this. Nature is full of events and existences, which are beyond our capacity to comprehend. Sudreh kushti, with its special designs and rules, Manthra Prayers with their vibrational efficacy, Yasna- "Kriyakarma", with their highly intricate procedures, Dokhma with its mystical architecture, are all the subject

matters of the science of mysticism. They relate to things and phenomena beyond us. Even the moral code is a mystical and spiritual exercise. Religion is an infinitely vast garden of spirituality, not a narrow and barren desert of wild guesses and conjectures, as the western study is.

Devotion? —Blank!

Spirituality means faith in mysticism, and that cannot be born without an ardent devotion to God and His Messengers. The western studies are hopelessly devoid of devotion. That is very natural because where is the place for devotion in the 19th century materialism, with its unbreakable atom, survival of the fittest, paradigm of progress and primitiveness of all Religions?

Is there any authentic source which presents the mystical aspects of the holy scriptures and spiritual disciplines of our Daenaa, and infuses faith and devotion in the Parsis ?

Yes! There is I Ilm-e-khshnoom.

The Five Gathas and Ilm-e-Khsnoom

Life Scientists unaware of Life, and Religious "Scientists" unaware of Religion!

- by K. N. Dastoor

An earnest biologist W. S. Beck in his book "Modern Science and the Nature of Life" recounted a revealing incident :

"I was present at a meeting of one of the most distinguished of bio-chemistry departments. We were having tea.... The discussion was interrupted by a message from a local

science of Life", yet the biologists, the purported scientists of life, do not know what life is! They could be, as Beck points out, taxonomists, botanists, bacteriologists and biochemists (a new species : genetic engineers), but to the question what is life, they have no answer!

WE ARE EIGHTEEN

Dear Subscribers, Donors, Advertisers and Well-wishers,

By the blessing of Ahurmazda and His Amshaspandas, Prophets Zarathushtra, Murabi Sahibs of Demavand and Ustad sahib Behramshah, this religious journal "Dini-Avaz" completes its Seventeenth year and enters the Eighteen. We have endeavoured to spread the pristin pure teaching of Zarathusti-Din - " Khshnoom " by publishing this "Dini-Avaz" and holding various meetings when situations so demanded to uphold orthodoxy.

Dini-Avaz yearly Subscription still is pegged at Rs. 15/- only, although annual cost of printing Journal comes to Rs. 30/-, due to increase in printing prices. This year we are in loss of over Rs. 10,000/-. Which we have tried to tide over, with the help of our well-wishers.

A big thank you to all our Donors, and our helpful workers like Villoo and Kersas Engineer, G. Forbes, N. Patel, R. Patel, K. Fitter, A. Doctor, and of course you one and all.

Yours truly

For Dini - Avaz Committee

Curset Patel

philosophical society asking if the department would provide a speaker to participate in a forthcoming symposium on the nature of life. All assembled understood biochemistry, and heredity and genes and enzymes, but no one felt he had anything to say about life. The request was politely declined." (page 130 - 1957 N. Y. : Harcourt) (Quoted in "The New Biology" by Augros and Staneiu - New Science Library 1988 - p. 18).

Biology, by etymology, means "the

James Lovelock, was a consultant in an official team working on plans for the investigation of Life on the planet mars. When he tried to find out from the books of science as to what is life, and what is its real character and definition,

"I was surprised to find how Little had been written about the nature of life itself.... In the whole vast encyclopedia of facts, the crux of the matter, life itself, was almost totally ignored." ("Gaia, a New Look at Life on Earth" - 1979).

The situation is very similar to the Western Studies of our Religion. The most fundamental and the most dominant subject matter of any Religion is the existence of God. In the Western Studies there is no answer to the question : Does God exist in fact, in truth and in reality? Zoroaster talks of one God, the scholars would say; and therefore, it is monotheism quite contrary to polytheism. But, sirs, ism's apart, does He really exist? And if so, in what way, where, how and why? "That" they would almost say "is not our subject". All that they can provide are extensive materials about the alleged history of the alleged concepts of God at different times and different places, starting from primitive man's 'fear'. How far Zoroaster's talk about "One God" should be taken as a truism, particularly when you, sirs and madames, pompously declare that He Lived in a primitive farmers' and shepherds' society, and believed that the sky was supported by stones, (Boyce on Gatha 44 - 4) and asked all kinds of trifling and even foolish and childish questions (Ha-44) and begged to Ahura Mazda for ten pregnant mares and one camel on the one hand (44 - 18) and for his adversary's death on the other (49 - 1)? How can the testimony of such a witness be accepted as true? But it is not a question of truth; this is just the history of human thought and not a revelation of the Reality. The 'truth' as understood, mis-understood or not understood by the 19th century materialism is in violent contrast with any kind of spiritual revelation, and the Western Study relying wholly on that materialism is in severe opposition to any such revelation, mysticism, faith and devotion. It is therefore, anything but Religion. Like biology, the science of Life itself being ignorant of the meaning of Life, these studies though called religious totally ignore the real meaning and crux of Religion.

Fragmentation, not Harmony.

The comparison between the two is relevant from another angle. One of the killing methodologies of the 19th century materialism is fragmentation. To understand a thing, break it into its parts and the truth about the thing will be arrived at. If you want to know the 'reality' about a flower, break it, from petals to molecules to atoms. All kinds of quantitative equations would be written, say, about the colour frequency of the petals, the molecular composition of the substances within, the weights of each petal etc. But there will be no explanation about how the beauty of the flower inspires poetry or devotion. Oh! That is not the reality; it is only a pathological disturbance in the off-track brain of the poet or the devotee.

This fragmentation mania is the foundation of all the material sciences and all branches of the learned learnings based on them - the Western Studies glaringly included. Everything is to be broken, analysed, differentiated, distinguished, and fragmented. Such and such a thought is different from such and such. This Hindu thought is divergent from that Islam, Buddhism is in opposition to vedantism. We have seen how 'Booiti' Daeva, the demon of death is compared to Bodhistva by Darmesteter! The fragmentation Obsession is so rampant that the Gathas are declared to be contrasting or even combating the non-Gathic Scriptures. The egocentric tendency of every scholar to give his own highly divergent translation is an offshoot of this fragmentation mania. Everything is different from everything else. Like 'the survival of the fittest', everybody is fighting with everybody else. That is utter Godlessness in the name of Religious studies. Forgive them oh Lord Zarathushtra! They know not what they are pretending to study!

(To be Continued)

The Five Gathas and Ilm-e-Khshnoom.

K. R. Kama's Views about Baheramshah Shroff.
Marathon Writings of Dr. Faramroz Chiniwalla.

- by K. N. Dastoor

Extensive and adequate materials are presented in this series to establish, beyond any shadow of doubt, the following propositions :-

1. The Western studies have admittedly failed to provide any clear, coherent, consistent and meaningful translation of the Gatha's. (Mary Boyce - 1987) The present day scholars assert that the past translations had unsound foundations. (Schmidt-1979). Each translator thinks that all the preceding translations were faulty and so proceeds to give his own. (Dr. Taraporewalla, expressly-1951). The very existence of the numerous conflicting translations certifies the Western confusion. The Parsis, for whom the Gatha's are their Holy Scriptures, cannot place any confidence on this ever marching caravan of conflicts, contradictions and confusions.

2. The Western studies are nurtured in the 19th century materialism. Alom is the final existence; human intellect is supremely capable of comprehending all nature; life is the survival of the fittest; the present day humans are on the elevating peak of progress; Religion arises out of fear; physical sciences will ultimately explain the whole nature; all the mystic and spiritual talks are the relies of the primitive humans; The Western translations of the Gatha's (and for that matter of the holy scriptures of any Religion) are, therefore, devoid of any faith, devotion and mysticism which are the most essential ingredients of any Religion.

3. For the West Zarathushtra was an ordinary human being, slightly more intelligent than the humans of his times, but surely less knowledgeable than the scholars themselves; and asking all sorts of primitive questions and prone to all the human infirmities like disappointments, frustrations, irritations.

4. The scholarly conflicts and contradictions are simmerings within the close circuit of the 19th century materialism. The situation is like the insects imprisoned in a close box and bickering amongst themselves, entirely unaware of the huge world lying outside the box.

5. The Western study is amazingly oblivious

of the bizzare situation that the tower of the 19th century materialism is demolished to pieces; Common sense has collapsed in modern science; the egoistic thinking that the human intellect is supreme has been shattered; the god of science is in the process of being dethroned; the physical sciences are knocking the door of mysticism. The whole edifice of the western study has fallen to the ground and yet weirdly enough it still relies on its antiquated notions.

The Only Key : Ilm-e-Khshnoom.

Any person, who has intense love for truth; who is prepared to go wherever the facts and the truth lead him; who has the strength and courage to abandon his pre-conceived notions on truth's demand; who is prepared to exert sincerely to investigate and find out the truth; who is not deterred if his mental equilibrium of comfort and convenience is disturbed by the truth; and who decides by the truth and not by his self-interest or vested interests, is BOUND, at the end of his exploration, to arrive at the firm TRUTH that Ilm-e-Khshnoom is the key and the only master-key to understand the Religion of Zarathushtra in all its extant scriptures and writings, and all its spiritual and yogic practices, disciplines and tarikat's.

Most of the Parsis are hazily aware of the existence of "something" called Ilm-e-Khshnoom. There is some miracle attributed to it they think, where somebody had come into contact with some Holy 'Abed's or Zarathushtrian Saints; but it is something beyond us, too difficult to understand. The present day Parsi scholars nurtured in the Western studies have no strength and courage to look straight towards Khshnoom because of their ego or obstinacy or mental laziness or fear of upsetting their preconceived paradigms or even self-interest. Khshnoom can upset their apple cart, they inherently apprehend. But that is NOT the way towards the TRUTH.

What is Ilm-e-Khshnoom?

One Baheramshah Navroji Shroff brought this

name amongst the Parsis of India. He said that at his young age of about 18 years he was taken to a secret and secluded place in the Iranian mountains of Daemaavand where he stayed for about three and a half years (1875-78 approximately) amongst a small group of people leading a strict and highly spiritually oriented Zarathushtrian life. The leaders of the group were a few very highly advanced 'Aabed's i.e. the holy saints, called 'Saheb- Dilan'. The mystical and esoteric knowledge contained in the Religion of Zarathushtra was imparted to a certain degree on Baheram Shah by the Saints, after getting him passed through certain spiritual exercises. "Ilm-e-Khshnoom" was the name, current amongst those Saints for the Zarathushtrian Divine Knowledge.

For more than two decades Baheramshah did not reveal the miracle of his life to the Parsi public. Somewhere in the year 1905-06, he narrated it to a small assembly of young Parsi boys at Surat. The news about his extraordinary experience trickled in the Parsi community and after a most exerting persuasion of his disciple Manchershah Palonji Kekobad, he agreed, most reluctantly, to go to Bombay to propagate Ilm-e-Khshnoom, the mystic science of the Zarathushtrian Religion. It was difficult for the Parsis, nurtured in the 19th century materialism, to believe in the truth of his miracle. However a band of sincere disciples made strenuous efforts to spread the knowledge brought by him from the amazing source. Ervad Phiroz Masani, an eminent scholar of the Western studies, made the propagation of Ilm-e-Khshnoom a mission for life. He published a magazine called "Frashogard" for about three decades. Dr. Faramroz Chiniwalla, an ophthalmic surgeon by vocation but a saint in his daily life, was authorized by Baheramshah himself to write books on Khshnoom, and for more than half a century he wrote an amazingly tremendous amount on this genuine and divinely sent key to the Religion of Zarathushtra. He was very ably supported by his younger brother Jehangirji Chiniwalla Advocate, who not only spread Ilm-e-Khshnoom from public platforms but published a weekly magazine "Parsi Avaz" for a period of 27 years (1947-1974) until his dying moment.

Evidence of 36 Eminent Witnesses

Was Baheramshah's miracle true? Did it really happen? Did he really know the mystical science?

Was he not induced by a publicity craze or other selfish motives to fabricate the story? This humble writer does not intend in this series to set out the vast amount of materials and data which establish beyond any shadow of doubt that his miracle did happen; that he did provide an authentic and genuine key, and the only key, to the understanding of our Religion; that his presentation of the matters of Religion was bewilderingly beautiful in spite of the fact that his worldly education has not gone beyond the Gujarati fourth standard; that the scholars like Khurshedji Cama, Khodabux Poonegar, Sohrab Bulsara, Rustomji Dastoor (Bapaji) and several others were astounded at the meanings and interpretations of the Avesta, Paharvi and Pazend words and expressions which Baheramshah revealed; that he was amazingly well versed not only on all the matters of Parsi Religion and Scriptures and the 'tarikats' of life, but had enormous knowledge of several other subjects like astrology, and eastern medical sciences; and that the mystical science and art of the Zarathushtrian Religion revealed by him has been duly, properly and truly written down by his saintly disciple Dr. Faramroz Chiniwalla in more than 30,000 pages of books and articles, large and small. The materials and data establishing all these truths are recorded at several places, the best of which is "Baheramshah Shroff Memorial Volume" published in 1930, three years after his death (which occurred on 7th July, 1927). That volume contains articles from the various personalities who had come in direct contact with Baheramshah, like - to mention a few - solicitor, Jehangir Vimadali; Advocate, Kharshedji Suntoke; Scholars Khodabux Poonegar and Sohrab Bulsara; Doctor, Sola Hakim; the great Karachi figure, Jamshed Mehta; and several of the public and private disciples. Each of them has revealed one or the other facet of Baharemashah's mystical personality. To disbelieve in the miracle of his life and teaching is to reject the testimony of more than three dozens Parsis of high eminence and keen intellect.

Khodabux Poonegar, a Western trained scholar of distinguished calibre was a colleague-in-studies of K. R. Kama, the pioneer of the Western oriented scholarship in India. Khodabux has, on page 150-1 of "Baheramshah Shroff Memorial Volume" said :

"Several days before the death of (Sheth)

Kamaji I was afforded a pleasant opportunity of coming in close contact with him in connection with a certain service to be rendered to the Avesta literature. At that time I was amazed to observe on numerous occasions that Mr. (Baheramshah) Sharaf's teachings had (a marked) effect on Sheth Kamaji. Kamaji used to memories Mr. (Baheramshah) Sharaf's thoughts, a sort of analyzed them, and imbibed them in his own views..... Kamaji used to talk to me with great zeal about Mr. Sharaf's teachings. No, not only that, but he used to speak unhesitatingly about several of the words and views (of Baheramshah) thus : "We the students of Avesta do not just understand the real crux about this; only what Baheramshah explains is befittingly correct ("barobar")".

At page 253 of the Memorial Volume, Manchershah Palonji Kekobad, a close disciple of Baheramshah and once the Headmaster of Surat Mission School, writes:

"Baheramshahji then was made to come to Bombay. His preliminary lectures were delivered. As expected, there was opposition from some directions but in one of the lectures the late Kamaji was the president. He admitted that this was surely Zoroastrian philosophy, but the technical terms are absolutely novel, and therefore as we hear him more and more, we shall understand. In the same meeting one Avesta Scholar said, "But where does he have the knowledge of Avesta Pahalvi?" Kamaji's reply is remembered by many : "Brother! what more have you done except to translate words? Where are we able to offer explanations of the mysterious writings? I feel that this man has something which we do not have. Let us wait and see".

Remember! These are the words of Kharshedji Kama, who was the pioneer of the Western Studies in India. He admits in no uncertain terms that the Western Scholars have just translated words without explaining the mysteries hidden in the scriptures. The words

were true, when he uttered them and today they are fearfully and convincingly proved to be true. We have seen in this series the fiasco of the Gathic translations.

It is recorded that Jehangirji Vimadalal requested Baheramshah to prepare an authentic translation of the Scriptures containing the mystical science of the Religion, for which he would provide a couple of Avesta Pahalvi Scholars to help Baheramshah in writing out. But Baheramshah said that all Scriptures would be Khshnoom- ically translated after him.

That prophecy has come out to be true. Baheramshahji's disciple Dr. Faramroz Chiniwalla has translated and explained in Gujarati all the Scriptures with the help of the master-key, Ilm-e-Khshnoom. Large bulk has been already published during and after his life-time. The rest is periodically published even today. The published translations and "taavil" (i.e. the mystical explanations - as would have been relished by Kamaji) are of Gatha : Ha's 28, 29, 30; and the whole of the Gatha's Spentomad, Vohukhshathra, and Vahishtoishtha; a large part of Khordeh Avesta; Yazashney, Vendidad. In addition, Dr. Faramroz Chiniwalla has published large books called 'Nikiz's containing the mystical truths about Zarathushtra, Pre-cosmogogenesis, Cosmogogenesis, the Earth and the Humans; and numerous other books, booklets and articles.

What are the first Principles on which these marathon Khshnoomic writings are founded?

Firstly, the ordinary non-saintly human being is not capable of experiencing and understanding the whole of Nature and Ahura Mazda's Creation. The ordinary human being experiences the world surrounding him through his five senses and intellect; but they have a limit or barrier, beyond which they cannot penetrate. Nature and Creation ('Srushti') extends way beyond this intellectual barrier. Religion is a divine Science which emanates from beyond this barrier. "Mysticism" is another word for this divine Science. No Religion can be without mysticism. Each Religion reveals glimpse of the Truths lying beyond the intellectual barrier. The mysticism contained in the Religion of Zarathushtra has two names : Khshnoom (Gath 48-12, 53-2) and Chisti (Gatha 47-2, 51-21; also 30-9, 48-6; 47-2, 51-21).

Secondly, the subject matter of this mystical science is the origin, the beginning, the purpose and the finale of the Creation, all of which include

the 'Ruvaan' (roughly, 'Soul'), and its divisions, from that of the Ahura Mazda's divine channels, 'Yazata's, to the humans, animals, vegetation and matter found on this earth.

Thirdly, while narrating the glimpses from behind the intellectual barrier, Khshnoom goes on prescribing the duties and work to be performed and carried out during our life on this earth, and in so doing elaborates and explains the mysteries behind our religions disciplines and institutions like Sudreh-Kushti, Manthra-prayers, Meher-Patet (i.e. the divine code of morals), Kriya-kaam, Atash-Kadeh, Dokhma, "Boonak Pasbaani" (i.e. the preservation and protection of the racial gene).

Fourthly, IIm-e-Khshnoom reveals the Divine Plan of Ahura Mazda in sending different Religions ('Daenaao') to the mankind

and how they are inter linked and inter connected in a Divine Brotherhood; why there are more Religions than one and how each of them is related to the birth of a human; and how they lead to "Mookti". (Gatha 31-11, 34-13, 46-6, 49-9; 44-11, 49-5, 51-13).

Fifthly, all that is glimpsed in IIm-e-Khshnoom is directly or indirectly (more directly than indirectly) supported by the evidences, corroborations and substantiations from the extant holy Scriptures and other Religious Writings like Pahalvi, Pazend, Persian.

The translations rendered by Dr. Faramoz Chiniwalla will surely reveal this to any person who is an impartial seeker of truth, without being self-opinionated or selfishly motivated.

(To be Continued)

The Five Gatha and Ilm - e - Khshnoom.

What is a Holy Scripture? — Sri Aurobindo's Answer.

The Six Characteristics of the Khshnoomic Translations.

— by K. N. Dastoor

The five main First Principles on which, the Khshnoomic translations, interpretations, and writings are founded are : (i) the existence of an intellectual barrier for an ordinary non-saintly human; (ii) the Truths about Cosmogogenesis and all the elements of Creation, from Ahura Mazda to a speck of dust; (iii) the practice of "Dharma" i.e. "Daena" in day to day life based on the aforesaid Truths, (iv) the Divine Plan and Brotherhood of different Religions; (v) the evidence of all the above in the Holy Scriptures and other writings in Pahlavi, Pazend, Persian.

The supreme mistake of the Western study is to construe any Holy Scripture as ordinary literature, and its author, whoever he may be, as an ordinary human being expressing his mentally constructed thoughts in the language of his times. It is thus seen to be containing some good and some nonsense, as Max Muller wondered. The alleged good is to be interpreted historically, geographically, philologically and "critically". The alleged nonsense is either to be discarded or to be explained away as arising from the primitive ignorance of the author. But that is exactly what it is NOT. The great modern Indian Saint Sri Aurobindo has given an excellent definition of the Hindu Holy Scripture, 'Veda;' it applies to any Holy Scripture of whatever Religion and a fortiori to all Avesta Scriptures including the Gatha :

"In ancient times the Veda was revered as a **sacred book** of wisdom, a great mass of inspired poetry, the work of Rishis, Seers and Sages who received in their **illuminated minds** rather than mentally constructed a great, universal, eternal and impersonal **Truth** which they embodied in **Mantras**, revealed verses of power, not of an ordinary but of a **divine Inspiration** and source."

This is the very first sentence of Sri Aurobindo's own forward to his Book "Hymns to the Mystic Fire" - (Page 1). He points out that a Scripture is a holy work of Divine inspiration; its author has received the Truth in his illumined mind; he has embodied the Truth in Mantras which are "revealed verses of power"; his source is not worldly; it is divine; his work is therefore, to be **revered** and not to be subjected to the so called "higher criticism", which is a pompous phrase emanating from the 19th century materialism.

A scripture sets out in Mantric language the Truths which are beyond the intellectual barrier of a non-saintly human. It reveals that the world of our day to day experience is a reflection of the reality lying beyond the barrier, and prescribes the code of conduct for the humans on earth, in the light of that reality. "Always speak the truth" is not a dictate of social necessity; it is a spiritual exercise. "Resist the evil within you" is a command for marching towards God.

Not Primitive but Mystical

Since the subject matter of a scripture lies beyond the ordinary human experience, it uses allegories, analogies, figures, parables, symbols and such other means to bring down the reality to as much comprehensible a level as possible. This is an extremely difficult task, since the events and existences beyond the barrier are not only invisible but are also in huge variance with what we call our "common sense". Common sense is founded on our day to day experience, whilst scriptural sense is far beyond it. For instance, some unseen and unknown events happen at dawn, which are described in Veda as luminous cow-herds being rescued from the dark caves. At each dawn certain part of the dark hostile forces are converted to light, and the

shining forces of 'gava' i.e. the 'cow' of divine Goodness are liberated. The same event is described in "Hoshbaam" and "Ooshahin Gah", but in quite different fashions. Cow in a holy scripture has thus a mystic significance. But if you read it as an ordinary literature, you will interpret it as an animal used by the primitive agricultural men, nomads, shepherds and crude farmers. As Sri Aurobindo points out (ibid page 10) :-

"Many of the lines, many hymns even of the Veda bear on their face a mystic meaning; they are evidently an occult form of speech, have an inner meaning."

Sri Aurobindo has given numerous examples of the words and expressions from the Hindu Holy Scriptures, which have mystical, inner and esoteric meanings. Horse, Ghee ("clarified butter"), River, Water, 'Agni', food, 'Yagna', dawn ('Usha') - each have a profound mystical meaning. His very first chapter of the aforesaid book has the title "The Doctrine of the Mystics". Those Parsi alleged intellectuals who swear by Sri Aurobindo but read 'common sense' in the Parsi Scriptures, should read this chapter and the whole book, if they can.

What applies to the Veda apply more strongly to the Gatha, and all the Holy Scriptures of the Zarthoshti Daena. They do contain the words, phrases, enunciations, symbols, figures, allegories, parables and such other expressions, which, if taken on their face values, sound absurd and non-sensical. A key is required to unlock their inner mystical and esoteric meanings. **Ilm-e-Khshnoom is THAT key and the only one.**

Thus is it not something ludicrously stupid when the author of the Gatha is stated to ask God : " How shall I be qualified for the prize of ten pregnant mares and one camel?" The explanations of the Western scholars are more absurd than this apparent absurdity itself. Some say he asks for wealth, and some say he refers to his helpers whose names end with the word "aspa" (i.e. horse) or 'ushtra" (i.e. Camel)! (Insler). But

what is the relation between these helpers and the pregnancy of ten mares is a question which has no answer! That 'horse' in holy scriptures signifies spiritual progress or soul's journey towards God, and "camel" signifies the Divine Knowledge, - is a sealed book for the materialistic scholars. On this key the holy statement has a profound esoteric and mystical meaning, significance and lesson for the human life. **Without such meanings the Avesta becomes a zoo of varied animals.** Thus there is a 'cow' in the Gatha and "a donkey standing in the midst of a sea" in Haftan Yashta - Yazashney Ha 42-4 (which is stated to have three legs, in Bundahishna). A demon snake with three mouths, three heads, six eyes and a thousand cunningness is referred to in Haoma Yashta (Yazashney Ha 9-8). Baheram Yazata (whom we Parsis worship as a Yazata of victory) is described in Baheram Yashta as a most versatile body-transformer; sometimes he appears as a bull with golden horns; sometimes as a white horse with yellow ears; sometimes as a strong and speedy camel; sometimes as a wild boar; sometimes as a sheep or bird or goat, and suddenly as a warrior, and to crown it all, as strong pleasant wind!! Take all this literally and you have a Zarathushtrian zoo of absurdities; but apply the master key of Khshnoom and you will be stunned at the divine messages hidden in these passages.

The Prophets, "Good Shepherds."

Similarly, water, river, mountain, tree, pasture, farm, shepherd, farmer, cattle in Avesta are the keys to understand certain cosmological events. When in the Gatha Ha 29-1, the soul of the cattle is asking for a good shepherd ("Vohu Vastraya") and in Gatha 29-6 and Farvardin Yasht Karda 24, Zarathushtra is described as the prosperity-bringing-shepherd or tiller of the ground ("Frashuyantaechaa Vastrayaichaa" or "Vastroyo Fashuyans"), is He referred to as just a farmer or herdsman of the alleged primitive agricultural times? Just read the following words of a great Sufi of our own times, Hazrat Inayat Ali (1882-1927) :

"The Masters of the Past like Moses and Mohammed have always loved to tend their flocks in the wilderness and Jesus Christ spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd, while St. John the Baptist spoke of the Lamb of God, harmless and innocent, ready for sacrifice." ("The Mysticism of Music, sound and Word" page 26 - volume II : The Sufi Message).

So also is the child Krishna, with His divine flute, going out in the fields to feed the cattle. In all these holy Scriptures and Writings, the Shepherd or the Farmer is the divine Guide tending the flocks of humanity and feeding them towards God. That is the technical mystical meaning of these ordinary looking words.

The Divine Terminology

The Gatha is full of such technical words of divine significance and Khshnoom is the Key to understand their true divine meanings, constructions and interpretations. Dharma, Daena, Religion is a divine science and no science can be without its technical terminologies and nomenclatures. More so, when the subject matter of the science of Daena extends from a speck of dust to the Light of God!!

In addition to explaining the mystical significance of the words, phrases and passages, khshnoomic translations do rely on the rules of grammar and philology, which the Westerners have tried to formulate and construct on the basis of the presumption that Avesta is the genuine sister of Sanskrit, and both are the branches of the great Aryan stock of Indo-European languages. However, Khshnoom, speaking through the translations of Dr. Faramroze Chiniwala, points out that all Avesta are Manthra compositions; that they are mystical treatises; and that the rules of grammar have a limit. Within the ambit of these three axioms, Khshnoomic translations do utilize the western grammar; but the amazing situation is that they are often found to stick to the grammatical rules more strictly than the western translations. The Westerners having been stuck with the materialistic and fragmen-

tary paradigms of the 19th century thinking, very often twist the grammar to fit in their wild guesses and conjectures. Numerous illustrations of this are scattered all around the western studies.

Another distinct characteristic of the Khshnoomic translations is that they place full reliance on the Pahalvi translations, writings, commentaries and versions. The Pahalvi writers were much nearer to Avesta than our materialistic scholars. The Pahalvi translations and commentaries do set out the divine and mystical truths contained in Avesta. But the reading of the Pahalvi language is an extremely difficult exercise. There are only 14 distinct letters and most of them are polyphonous i.e. one letter has several sounds. For instance, one letter can be read as 'a', 'aa', 'ha', 'kha', ! There is another which has 17 sounds! Khshnooin is the key to the correct reading since it knows the "taavil" i.e. the esoteric and mystical side of the Avesta Manthra's. Therefore, the Pahalvi translations elaborate the mystical meanings of Avesta technical words contained in the Gatha. Several of the western scholars (including some Parsi ones) have discarded and even blasphemed Pahalvi, often due to a frustration flowing from their inability to probe into the extremely difficult language. Khshnoomic translations on the other hand have no such escapist complex; they supplement, and are supplemented by the Pahalvi translations and commentaries.

Further, the Khshnoomic translations do not have the arbitrary assumption, as the West has, that the Gatha is an isolated text, and its content is divergent from, and even contradictory to, the non-Gathic Scriptures. This assumption emanates from the fragmentation complex of the 19th century and constitutes the most rigid paradigm of the western studies. Ilim-e-Khshnoom, on the other hand, declares that all scriptures are holistic in their contents and teachings. They present consistent and coherent Truths about Ahura Mazda's creation, from Him to a grain of sand or a drop of water. Every Avesta passage, whether Gathic or non-Gathic, presents (i) the

Truth in nature, (ii) the way of life for the humans and (iii) a fervent cry of divine love and devotion. There is a common thread of divinity running throughout. It is again a grand error of the West to think that any one word in the Gatha **must** have only one meaning. There are not only more than one meanings, but also more than one levels of comprehension in each word and passage. Only Ilm-e-Khshnoom indicates this.

To summarize, then, the Khshnoomic translations :-

1. Reveal the mystical and esoteric meanings;
2. Adhere more strictly to the rules of grammar than the Western;
3. Supplement and are supplemented by Pahlvi translations and versions;
4. Present, coherently and consistently, the Divine Truths in all the Gathic and non-Gathic Scriptures and the Pahlvi writings;

5. Gives indications that there are more than one meanings and more than one levels of comprehension to all Scriptures;

6. Reveals that each passage in any Scripture has three messages in one, viz (i) the Divine Science, the Knowledge, the Ilm-Khshnoom, Chisti, (ii) the rules of governing our thoughts, words and deeds during our day to day life on the planet earth; and (iii) a fervent cry of love, devotion, ecstasy towards the Divine.

I now conclude this series of articles, which was by way of an introduction to the Khshnoomic translations of the Gatha rendered by Dr. Faramroz Chiniwalla. After the next issue this humble journal will present the English version of his Gujarati renderings of some selected passages from the Gatha, which will amply illustrate all that is said in this humble series about the Khshnoomic translations.

(CONCLUDED : by the grace of the Almighty.)