

UNDERSTANDING THE ZOROASTRIAN RELIGION

Historians differ about the exact year of the arrival of our ancestors at Sanjan. It may be anywhere in or after the 7th century. But there is no doubt that they selected the coast of Gujerat, under the divine guidance and with the planned intention of preserving and protecting our Religion- not a Religion of just good thoughts, words and deeds but the Religion vibrating with its spiritual and divine Institutions. We lived by these Institutions with unshakable faith and that enabled us to preserve our identity as a small but powerful community in spite of many obstacles.

Then arrived the Nineteenth century when modern science reached an overpowering stature in the West. A large part of the humans on the globe started thinking that they were a superior species with a superior equipment, the human brain, which was capable of understanding the whole nature and even conquering it. 'We will find out all the natural laws by which this mechanical universe was operating', cried the ego intoxicated humans with great relish. 'We have found out the secrets of matter, life and mind. No God is required for that purpose.'

FAILURE OF WESTERN STUDIES

Along with this wave of faithlessness and materialism, arose the Western studies of our Religion. Our Divine Scriptures were subjected to the newly founded grammatical and etymological sciences. Heavily influenced by the wave of physical science, those studies reduced our Religion to history, geography and philology. Faith, divinity, spiritualism and mysticism, which are the most essential ingredients of any Religion were thrown overboard. Our spiritual Institutions like Manthra, Atash, Dokhma, Yasna were all scholastically declared as arising out of the fear and superstition of the primitive people. Asho Zarathushtra was reduced from His Divine stature to a common-sense philosopher. In the result, the so called 'reformists' shot out of ground and invaded our Religious Institutions mainly as an excuse for mixed marriages and conversion.

And yet there were and are numerous Parsis who have not lost their faith in the Institutions. They are known as the orthodox. They crave to preserve and live by the Institutions. But the faithless have hatched a conspiracy to throttle the voice of the orthodox.

WHERE DO WE GO FOR KNOWLEDGE ?

The orthodox are perplexed. They instinctively feel and many of them have even experienced that Sudreh-Kushti and Manthra prayers are effective; Divine Atash does help; Dokhma and Rituals are necessary for the journey of the Ruvan in the next world; boonak - pasbani is a must for survival. But many of them do not know why. Where do we go to get knowledge about our Religion and its Institutions, they ask. Mobeds who perform ceremonies in Agiary are unable to answer our questions. The so called High Priests change their views like a chameleon as Neville Wadia Chapter revealed.

No: You need not be perplexed. Today there are ample materials in all the fields of human thought which shatter all those airy fads of the faithless. This humble Parsi Pukar is meant to place before you those modern materials.

RELIGION, THE DIVINE PRESCRIPTION FOR DAILY LIFE

The first truth to be born in mind is that Religion is not a matter of mere philological exercise or historical treatise. It is a divine message from God brought by His divine Messengers. They declare that a human being is a fragment of God but separated from Him, and has to go back to Him. To go back to Him the human has to follow a certain prescribed way of life on the Earth. Certain do's and 'dont's are ordained, which the human has to endeavour to adopt in his day to day life while dealing with the humans, the animals, the vegetation and physical matter on the globe.

The next truth is that the divine Message of Religion is not just an intellectual exercise. It is a matter of faith.

INADEQUACY OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

Now, what is faith? It is the acceptance of the truth that the intellect of an ordinary non-saintly human is not capable of absorbing and understanding a large part of the events, existences and phenomena in Nature. The human equipment consisting of the five senses and thought process of the mind has a very limited circumference of experience. What is experienced by that equipment is a very very small fraction of Nature. In other words, the Nature has vast mystical regions closed to non-saintly humans. Religion deals with such mystical regions. The very first teaching of any Religion viz God Himself is such mystical Existence beyond our reach. His Divine Messengers point out that He exists and that the human consciousness can expand and reach those mystical regions, provided the life is led as prescribed and ordained by Religion. **There cannot, therefore, be any Religion without mysticism.**

All our Institutions Manthra, Sudreh Kushti, Atash, Dokhma, Yasna are, therefore mystical and spiritual. They cannot be explained within the compass of our limited - mental equipment. If you want to understand the spiritual function of Sudreh Kushti, you will have to believe in the existence of nonphysical body within you, which is beyond your normal experience. If you want to know about the divine power of Atash-beherem, you will have to be aware about some mystical regions in Nature and some laws of Karma operating in Nature. If you desire to know about the Yasna (i.e. Rites and ceremonies) for the dead, you are required to know something about the life after death and the mystical stations of the Ruvan's journey in the next world.

Our whole difficulty is that the Western studies of our Religion have no idea whatsoever about the mystical aspects interwoven in the fabric of our Religion; and that is the reason of the pathetic failure of these studies to throw any light on any of our Institutions. They have formulated some scholastic paradigms which are nearer to athiesm than Religion. This is obvious because their foundations are on the materialistic sciences of the 19th Century.

But, then, you may ask: in this age and time of science and technology, can mysticism survive? Has not modern science discarded and repudiated all the so called mystical phenomena? Are they not inconsistent with what science has found out about nature?

MYSTICISM IN MODERN SCIENCE

The answer is: **modern science is knocking the door of mysticism and denied the entry.** 400 years of scientific exertions have revealed that the mental equipment of a non-saintly human is incapable to arrive at the truth! This revolution in the most basic material branch of science viz. physics began in the first decade of the 20th century and reached its climax in the last two decades. Each of the pioneers of modern physics was a mystic. They had to admit that science was trying to fetch water from the well of truth by a leaky bucket.

All those faithless vociferous journalists, scholars, Dastooors and Akabars are blissfully ignorant of all this and are still relying on the human thought of 19th Century which is now mercilessly shattered.

So our dear orthodox Readers: Don't get disheartened. This Parsi Pukar will bring to you the materials from modern sciences as also from the ancient mysticisms.

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