

ZOROASTRIANISM AND IQBAL

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Before we tackle the problem of Zoroastrian Religion and its resemblance with Iqbal's thought, it seems necessary at the very outset to give a brief survey of the development of this system, which became a state religion of Persia during the days of Darius the Great (521-485 B. C.)

Tradition has it that Darius caused all the sacred scriptures of Zoroastrianism to be collected after he was firmly established on the throne. He had them inscribed on parchment in letters of gold. The whole collection was divided according to the subject matter into 21 books, called the "Nasks."

Thus, Darius and Cyrus the Great (558-529 B. C.) were both stalwart champions of their religion and their inscriptions prove their humble faith in and devotion to Ahura Mozda. Though they are both to be reckoned among the greatest of the Rulers of the ancient world, still in their inscriptions they ascribe all their greatness to the grace of Ahura Mozda. In his great inscription at Behistun, Darius says:

"What I have done, that did I all by the grace of Ahura Mozda. Ahura Mozda vouchsafed me help till I completed the work. May Ahura Mozda protect me, and likewise my house and these lands! For this do I pray Ahura Mozda may vouchsafe me this!

"O man! This is Ahura Mozda's command to thee, Think no evil, abandon not the right path, Sin not!"

The later Achaemenian inscriptions show markedly different spirit. The pure ethical worship of Ahura Mozda recedes somewhat into the background and though his name is mentioned, others like Mitra and Anahita (Venus) are also invoked side by side with Him.

This was doubtless a sign of weakening of the ancient faith. Of this period, Browne says "that the language itself has degenerated and consequently with this decay of language appear signs of degeneration in creed; Ahura Mozda no longer stands alone, but is associated with other gods, Mitra (The Sun) and Anahita (Venus)"¹.

Side by side with this change, there appears a marked change in the outlook of the kings who out of sheer arrogance assumed the title of "The King of Kings". These inscriptions which are the only relics of ancient Persia eloquently indicate the pride that goeth before destruction. Thus, the true spirit of Zoroastrianism had departed and the imperial family was torn to pieces by internal factions. So when Alexander led the armies of Greece against Persia, the whole Achaemenian power collapsed. This happened in 330 B. C.

Alexander not only destroyed the Achaemenian power but also destroyed the holy scriptures of Zoro-Aster. In a drunken fit he set fire to the palace at Persipolis and the whole of the Library perished in the conflagration.

For nearly two centuries after Alexander's death, we have no record whatever of the Zoroastrian religion. The priests, who had survived the invasion, had kept the faith alive in the hearts of the people and very likely they had also preserved in their memory the greater part of the scriptures which had been destroyed. The religion was by no means dead; but it had ceased to be the State religion for the time being.

Alexander's successors were quite tolerant in religious matters, consequently in the days immediately following Alexander's conquest there appeared various streams of religious thought in Iran, with the result that the main stream of Zoroastrianism was driven underground. There was in the first place, the Greek religion, itself influenced on the one hand by Mitrism (which had been rising as a mystic school in Persia during the last days of the Achaemenians) and on the other hand by the hoary religion of Egypt. Then again there were Buddhist missionaries who had spread all over Western Asia during the two centuries succeeding Alexander. Asoka (272-232 B. C.) was responsible for the spread of Buddhism.

1. Literary History of Persia Vol I. P.P.

Judaism was also a great force in the world of thought. And by the time the revival of Zoroastrianism took place in Iran, Christianity had also arrived.

With the advent of the Parthians (249 B. C.) a new era dawned in the history of Persia. The Parthians were not Zoroastrians in the beginning and were probably not even Aryans. It is curious to note that Firdausi does not mention the Parthians as rulers at all, but as "Knights" at the Courts of Kings of Iran. In fact, the name used for these heroic knights is "Pahlwan," which is identical phonetically with Parthava (Parthian). The founder of the Parthian dynasty came to power with the help of the Bactrian rulers, who had accepted the religion of Zarthustra. The Bactrian Zoroastrians transmitted their religion to the Parthians and when the Parthians power had reached its zenith, Zoroastrianism also began to regain its lost dominion in Iran. At one epoch, we find three great Iranian (Zoroastrian) powers dominating the whole of Western Asia. These were Pontus, Armenia and Parthia. Out of these rivalries, the power of Parthia ultimately emerged victorious. The later Parthian rulers were Zoroastrian and they did much to bring together the scattered remnants of the older scriptures. The work of recompiling the Avesta text was definitely begun by the Parthian Valkhash (Vologeses) I (A. D. 51-77); but the work was finally completed under the Sasanian Shapur II (A. D. 309-379).

In the province of Pars; which earlier had given birth to the Achaemenian, there arose the family of Sasan. This family is traditionally believed to have been descended from a prince of the Achaemenian line, who had taken refuge in India after Alexander's conquest. Ardashir was a mighty ruler of Sasanian dynasty who overthrew the last Parthian ruler (A. D. 226) and established himself upon the throne. Ardashir was an ardent devotee of Zoroaster, and he carried forward, with great zeal, the work already begun by later Parthian monarch of recompiling the Avesta scriptures and of having them translated into Pahlavi. The work was not finished during his reign and was carried on by his son and successor Shapur I (A. D. 240-271). Zealous, as were the early Sasanians about the ancient religion of Zoroaster, they were tolerant of members of other faiths. Of course, Zoroastrianism being the religion of the King of Kings, was dominant in the land. Unfortunately this policy of toleration could not last long. In the reign of Shapur, Mani appeared on the religious horizon of Iran.

Christianity had already established there. Mani propagated his religion. His views were far in advance of his age. He held very advanced views upon toleration and the brotherhood of man. His views about the organisation of the State and Society were democratic in the extreme and as such were not particularly acceptable to the aristocratic Aryan polity of his age. His uncompromising asceticism as well as his views regarding life as an unmixed evil also revolted the Zoroastrian priesthood. At last his democratic teaching was represented as undermining the Aryan and Iranian polity and so he was beheaded by Beharam I (A. D. 272-275).

After the end of Mani, the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as the State religion. Consequently the Persian Christians began to regard it as their spiritual centre. Naturally therefore the Persian Christians owing to their spiritual allegiance to the Emperor of Rome, became political suspects. Shapur II definitely took up the view that Christians were disloyal to Persia and to the House of Sasan. So from that time onward, the Christians were subjected to many disabilities and they had to suffer heavily from time to time.

Another sect founded by Mozdak rose about A. D. 487 and spread with wonderful rapidity all over Persia and Armenia. On the spiritual side Mozdak taught devotion and the sacredness of animal life; but on the social side his views were more radical than that of a modern communist. He maintained a perfect equality of all men, not merely at birth but throughout life, and so he taught that property as well as wives should be held in common. The extreme rapidity with which these revolutionary doctrines spread indicate clearly that something was fundamentally wrong at the very heart of Sasanian polity. Ultimately the Mozdakites were put down with relentless cruelty and there were wholesale massacres of these people which began in A. D. 523.

In the time of Noshirwan the Just (A. D. 531-578) the Sasanian empire attained the zenith of its power and glory. It was in his time that the great Prophet of Arabia (Peace be on Him) was born (A. D. 570). It was really a miracle that the Sasanian empire crumbled away within less than three quarters of a century after the passing away of the greatest of the Sasanians. The august incident of the birth of the Prophet of Islam is related in Shah Nama as follows:

Noshirwan saw in a vision the crumbling of the turrets of his palace

and the burning out of the Holy Fire. Messengers were despatched to "Sateeh", a hundred and twenty years old hermit, who informed them that there was born at that time in Arabia, a Prophet whose followers would conquer Persia and establish their faith instead of Fire Worship. Firdausi beautifully illustrates this incident in Shah Nama and his verses about it are worthy of quotation:

چنان دید روشن روانش بخواب	که در شب برآمد یکے آفتاب
چهل پایه' نردبان از برش	که میرفت تا اوج کیواں سرش
برآمد برین نرد بان از حجاز	خراماں خراماں بکشی و ناز
جہاں قاف تا قاف پر نور کرد	بہر جا کہ بد ماتمی سور کرد
در آفاق ہر جاز نزدیک و دور	بندکان نہ از فر او یافت نور
بہر جا کہ بد نور نزدیک راند	جز ایوان کسری کہ تاریک ماند

Buzer Jamehr, his Vazir, gave his interpretation of the dream in the following terms:

ازیں روز در تا چهل سال و بیش	نہد مردے از تازیان پائے پیش
کہ در پیش گیرد رہ راستی	بہ پیچد ز ہر کثری و کاستی...
بہم برزند دین زردشت را	بہمہ چو نماید سر انگشت را
جہود و مسیحی نماند بجائے	در آرد ہمی دین پیش ز پائے
بہ تخت سہ پایہ بر آید بلند	دہد مر جہاں را بگفتار پند
چو او بگذرد زین سرائے سینج	از باز ماند بگفتار گنج...
شود زد جہاں قرن تا قرن شاد	جز ایوان شد کاں برآئید بیاد
پس ازوے ز تو یک بنیرہ بود	کہ با پیل و کوس و تبیرہ بود
سپاہے بتازد برد از حجاز	اگرچہ ندارد سلیح و جہاز
ز تخت اندر آرد مر او را بخاک	ز گرداں کند مر جہاں جملہ پاک
بیفتد ہمہ رسم جشن سہ	شود خاکداں جملہ آتش کدہ
نہ آتش پرستند و نئے آفتاب	سر بخت گرداں در آید بخواب

(شاهنامہ)

Thereafter, one night, the royal palace actually crumbled and the King realised the significance of his dream. Firdausi describes this horrible scene in a vivid and graphic manner.

چنان شد کہ از شب گذشتہ سہ پاس یک آواز آمد چنان پر ہراس
کہ گفتی جہاں سر بسر گشت پست پس آنگہ یکے گفت کاہیوں شکست
برآمد ہمی شاہ را دل ز جاے ندانست آن کار را سر ز پائے
بہ بو زر جمہر آنگہ آواز کرد ز طاق شکستہ پس آغاز کرد
چو آن دید دانا ہم اندر زمان چنین گفت کاہی شاہ نوشیروان
بخواب اندرون ہرچہ دیدی تو دوش از مہر امشب برآمد خروش
چنان دان کہ ایوانت آواز داد کہ آن ماہ پیکر ز مادر بزاد
سوارے رسد ہم کنوں با دو اسپ کہ بر باد شد کار آذر گشپ
دریں بود کاملد سوارے چو گرد کہ آذر گشپ اس زمان گشت سرد
(شاہنامہ)

When Islam appeared, the general condition of the people was not good. They were not satisfied with their lot either spiritual or political. And consequently, at the very first shock with fresh and vigorous Islam the power of old Iran simply melted away. There were practically only two hard fought battles, Qadisiya (A. D. 636) and Nahavand (A. D. 642).

As soon as the Arabs had established their power over the country, the masses flocked to their side and embraced the new religion of Islam. Thus the religion of Zoroaster was replaced in the land of its birth by the new gospel from Arabia. Though zealous and eager to spread their own faith, the Arab leaders did possess a great deal of toleration and their inborn spirit of democracy undoubtedly helped them to accord to others the same religious liberty they themselves wished to enjoy.

At the time of the Arab conquest, though the masses were ready to embrace Islam, still there did exist a small body of Zoroastrians who were strong in their adherence to the ancient faith of Iran. They took refuge among the hills of Kohistan in the province of Khorasan.

For they defied the Arab conquerors, and at last they were hunted out of their mountain retreats and took refuge in the Island of Ormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Hard-pressed even here, they ultimately migrated to India and settled in South Gujrat, on the western coast of India.

II

In order to understand properly the religion of Zoroaster it is necessary to know something about the background of that religion which appeared in Iran, according to Iqbal, in the age of Solon and Thales.¹ The message that he gave to the people, was based upon what they had inherited from dim and distant past. In fact, all great Prophets have built upon the past traditions of the race they have come to lead. They adapt the eternal ancient wisdom to the peculiar needs of the people. So Zoroaster found a certain mass of traditions in Iran and the message he gave to the people was based upon those traditions. It is an established fact that both the Indians and the Iranians who belong to the Aryan race, have lived together for long ages and have followed one religion. In other words, before the advent of Zoroastrianism both the Indians and the Persians followed the same religion. When Zoroaster appeared, he inherited the fundamental principles of religion from the Aryan ancestry:—

(a) There is Law in nature and also (b) there is conflict in nature. "It is the observation of law and conflict in the vast panorama of being that constitutes the philosophical foundation of his system. The problem before him was to reconcile the existence of evil with the eternal goodness of god. His predecessors worshipped a plurality of good spirits, all of which he reduced to a unity and called Ahura Mazda—on the other hand, he reduced all powers of evils to a similar unity and called it Daruj Aheriman. Thus, by a process of unification he arrived at two fundamental principles, which, as though shows, he looked upon, not as two independent activities, but as two parts or rather aspect of the same primary being".

This evidently leads one to the conclusion that the religious traditions inherited by the Indians and Persians were the common Aryan traditions. This is further borne out by the fact that many names are common between the Avesta and Veda and what is really remarkable, several of these names are used in diametrically opposite senses. This later fact may point to religious troubles between the two sections of Aryan race. But still, a more remarkable fact is that the agreements are far greater in number than the oppositions.

1. "Development of Metaphysics in Persia" by Dr. Iqbal, pp. 4, 5.

Further, the Aryans are said in the Avesta, to have had their original home in the fair land created by Mozda. It was far to the North, and a most remarkable point about this ancient home was that there "the year seemed as a day".

The Hindus also say, that a day of the gods equals a year of us mortals. Both these branches of the Aryans divided the universe into seven regions called Kishwar (کشور).

It is further interesting to note that many sages belong to the common traditions of Vedas and Avestas. For instance, take the case of Yima (Yama,—later King Jamshed of the Persian Herocycle). In the Avesta he is the great ruler and teacher of the golden age. He was warned by Mozda about the impending destruction of the wicked world by snow and ice and he was commanded to build an underground enclosure and to take there a set of specially chosen people, together with the seeds of the finest trees, the best fruits and the most fragrant flowers, and also a pair of each best and most useful animals. All these details do not exactly correspond with those given in the Vedas about Yama, though there also, he is "the King" but other details given above are associated in the later Puranas (Traditional Lore) with Manu—brother of Yama.

Another sage, belonging to this common tradition may also be mentioned. He is "Kava-Ushan", who is one of the royal sages of Avesta. He overcame the forces of evil by his prayers, and he was specially favoured for the glorious halo that surrounded him. He is also said to have ascended the sky with the help of a heavenly bird. He is also said to have established the sacred fire.

A third royal sage may be mentioned. He is "Thraetaona" (later "Faridun", in the Herocycle of Persia). He seems to be specially associated with the curing of diseases with the help of "Spells" (Mantras) and is the great physician and the healer. These points are also associated with him in the Atherva Veda, where he is called Trita. He is also associated with "Sama" and the preparation of the drink of Immortality. In the Yajur-Veda he is mentioned as granting immortality. The Vedic traditions also mention that he had slain three-headed monster who had for ages oppressed the world. The same tradition, in almost the same words, is found in the Avesta and in the later Persian "Epic of the Kings" (the Shah Nama); this three-headed

demon became the semetic tyrant 'Zohak', from whose oppression Iran was freed by the Royal "Faridun".

Coming to the Deities, worshipped by the Aryans we get a really formidable list of names, which are the common property of both the branches. These Deities may be divided into two classes, the first containing those names which came to signify diametrically opposed powers among the two communities and second, which contains names regarded sacred by both of them. The older scholars seemed to think that Zoroaster came as a reformer, and that out of a host of gods, he put forward only Ahura (Asura) as the one supreme god. This, they said, caused a schism and a religious conflict which led to the inversion of some of the ancient deities into "Demons" among the Iranians, and that the Hindus also repaid the compliment. Apparently there was a religious conflict, but the origin of it could by no means be ascribed to Zoroaster with any degree of certainty. And moreover this view fails to explain how the older Deities came to regain their sway in Iran during the later ages.

The first name is the name of the Supreme Lord Himself—Ahura—which in the Sanskrit form "Asura" signifies a "demon". The name originally signified 'the Lord of life'. The Sanskrit 'Asura' also signified originally "the one eternal life" and in the Rig Veda it is not used in its latter degraded signification. In the early Vedas the epithet Asura is used especially for Varuna—all-pervading life which ensouls the creation. He is the ruler of the universe, the Lord of the Righteousness, the one Being, who has laid down the law and order of Nature. The one important point to note in this conception of the Vedic Varuna is the great emphasis laid therein on the moral and ethical aspect of this god. "VARUNA" is pre-eminently the Lord of Righteousness. This concept of Asura-Varuna agrees closely with that of Ahura Mazda and of the earlier Avesta, and very probably in the Brahmanas and in the Epics of the Hindus about the conflicts between "The gods and the demons" are but the echoes of some religious and national strifes between the two branches of the Aryans on the Pre-Historic days.

The Avestic "Deva" is the natural complements of Ahura. Originally "the shining one", this word retains its pristine purity practically throughout the history of Indian languages. But in Avesta it is never used in the signification of Deity; rather it invariably means "Demon" or individual deities, there are but few that have suffered this inversion.

The most notable of these is Indira, one of the greatest Deities in the Vedic Pantheon. In the Avesta she is the chief helpmate of the evil one. It is very remarkable that of the two of the most important gods of the Vedas—Varuna and Indira—one should have become in Iran the Supreme Being, Ahura, while the other became the most important helpmate of evil.

But the most important of the ancient Indo-Iranian Deities in many ways is "Mithra", who represents the Sun. In the Veda he is very intimately associated with Asura Varuna. In the Avesta, however, he is associated more with the two guardian-judges of departed souls than with Ahura Mozda. In later days the cult of Mithra attained great importance in Iran and grew into an important esoteric school of occultism, which in its turn profoundly influenced the later Roman thought as well as earlier Christianity.

It is significant to note that though the object of worship among the ancient Hindus and the Persians were the elements—Fire, Water, Earth and Air—and the Light of Heaven—the Sun, the Moon and the Stars which were invoked as heavenly beings—yet above and beyond them all, was the idea of Supreme God, which is seen in the Vedas and which was far more strongly emphasised by Zoroaster. This emphasis which he laid upon the supremacy of Ahura has coloured the whole of the subsequent development of Iranian religious thought.

Such are some of the ancient Aryan traditions which the Iranians and the Indians had inherited. In Iran, however, the dominating influence of Zoroaster has completely over-shadowed all later developments. His Philosophy and his solution of the riddle of life has been at the root of all Iranian, and particularly, Zoroastrian thought, ever since. He made use of these traditions, but he laid the greatest emphasis upon the moral concept of Ahura and of Asha (Vedic Rita) *i.e.* the right path, and made the latter the key-stone of his religion.

III

The Indo-Iranian people had, besides the traditions mentioned above, one fundamental doctrine of Faith, which they held in common, the conception of Asha or Rita. Even in the earliest of the Gathas of the Avesta, as also in the oldest of the Vedic Hymns, we find the idea fully developed. The words purity or righteousness is the accurate translation of the word Asha as used in the later Avestic and in the

Pahlavi works. Zoroaster revived this idea of the ancient wisdom which was the joint heritage of both Iran and India.

The Parsis of today name it 'Ashoi' which is practically the same word, though to most of them the idea predominating is that of material or earthly purity. The implication of the higher degree of "Spiritual purity" is at best vague in this word "Ashoi". Exactly, the same has been the history in India of the word "Dharma", which had replaced the ancient vedic word "Rita". Thus all these words have fallen from their original "high estate". Asha was, however, restored to its original meanings during the days of Sasan. From the later Sasanian days onward, however, it seems that the idea of spiritual purity receded slowly into the background, with the masses, at any rate.

This decay of spiritual ideals in the nation as a whole, combined with the fierce intolerance of the priesthood, who resorted to unceasing persecutions of all religious beliefs other than their own, and who had gone to extremes of ferocity in putting down the followers of Mani and Mozdak, led to the sure and rapid downfall of Zoroastrian faith during the later days of the House of Sasan. And when the new and generous gospel of Islam was arrayed against the old faith, the later withered up practically without any forcing on the part of Islam. Naturally people turned to the doctrine of Islam, with its more practical effort at brotherhood and with its native urge towards democratic ideals. Islam was, indeed, distinctly adapted to be acceptable to the masses and to inspire them with the sense of equality and neighbourly love, while the order of faith of Zoroastrians in those days of its degeneration had become so overlaid with outward ceremonial and mere bodily purification, that people ceased to care for such mere outer forms of purity, which neither inspired them nor satisfied their spiritual thirst.

Asha or righteousness means the eternal truth, the only reality of all manifestations and of all evolutions. It also means the great Law, the faculty of divine knowledge, the Plan of God, according to which He fashioned the universe.

One aspect of Asha's working is the Law of action and re-action, known as the Law of Karma, another aspect is the eternal conflict between good and evil. Both these aspects of Asha are dealt with pretty clearly in Zoroastrian Philosophy. A full comprehension of Asha must inevitably lead the human soul to help in the great plan of God.

In the Veda the word Rita has exactly the same signification as the word Asha in the Avesta. The later word Dharm has also had the same signification originally, but in later times it also lost much of its original spiritual signification, and now it means merely ceremonial observance of religion.

Iqbal seems to have some parallels to Zoroastrian thoughts. His conception of Intuition bears some resemblance with Zoroastrian conception of Asha, which implies not only the law of God, but also spiritual experiences or a faculty of divine knowledge. It is through intuition that we apprehend and associate directly with reality in its wholeness. Both Zoroaster and Iqbal combine materialism and spiritualism in their system of philosophy and vigorously maintain that intellectual and intuitive experiences are not opposite. They are fused together in one dynamic unity of experience.

According to Iqbal, intuition is similar to other objective faculties of knowledge. It is as objective as perception. But, it is through intuition that we enter into and grasp the nature and meaning of reality as an Indivisible whole.

A similar idea is expressed by Zoroaster who maintains that it is through spiritual inspiration (Asha) that the vision of God, proximity and final absorption in Him are accomplished. He further points out that good or noble mind is the mind of the Lord Himself and the gift from Him are the 'Insight' or inspiration (Intuition) that comes to human being who is striving upward to realise the highest.

But, Iqbal believes neither in autocracy nor in priesthood for, he maintains that human nature is originally good.

He agrees with Zoroaster in holding that the highest virtue is Righteousness or Asha to use the Zoroastrian phrase, which is defined in the Holy Quran in the following terms:

"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces in prayer towards East and West; but it is this that one should believe in Allah, the last Day, the Angels and the scriptures of the Prophet, and give away wealth, for His sake to the Kith and Kins and Orphans, the needy and the way-farers and the beggars and for the redemption of Captives and keep up prayer and pay to poor-rate and who perform their covenant when

they have covenanted and are patient in destruction and affliction" (Al-Quran).

As pointed out above, Asha is the Law of God or the path to God and as such it implies a regular and ordered progress in all manifestations. According to Zoroaster, all beings tend God-ward and human beings are expected to work out their own salvation by their own efforts. God has endowed men with a faculty, known as reason, that enables them to choose for themselves between good and evil.

Zoroaster postulates freedom of thought and originality of action in his Philosophy.

Iqbal gives expression to his ideas in the following verses:-

تراش از شیشہ خود جادہ خویش
 براہ دیگران رفتن عذاب است
 گر از دست تو کار نادر آید
 گناہے ہم اگر باشد ثواب است

"Cut your path with an axe of your own, it is sin to tread the beaten path of others. If you achieve something unique and original, even sin becomes virtue. Again he says.

ندرت فکر و عمل کیا شے ہے ؟ ذوق انقلاب
 ندرت فکر و عمل کیا شے ہے ؟ ملت کا شباب

ندرت فکر و عمل سے معجزات زندگی
 ندرت فکر و عمل سے سنگ خار لعل ناب

What is originality of thought and action? An urge to revolution.

What is originality of thought and action? Bloom of the millat.

The miracles of life are from the originality of thought and Action.

Hard stone transforms into mere pearl by originality of thought and action.

(Bal-e-Jibreel)

Both Zoroaster and Iqbal are unanimous in holding that the achievement of goal demands intense and manifold activities on the part of Individual, which must be carried on in vital contact with the totality of the material and cultural environment. Both hold vigorously that life is meant not for mere contemplation and dreaming about the metaphysical problems, but for an active pursuit of the good. We have to become good through action, that is, by fighting against the rigid and static world.

Iqbal very aptly points out that:-

“It is the lot of man to show the deeper aspirations of the universe around him and to shape his own destiny as well as that of the universe, now adjusting himself to its forces and now by putting the whole of energy to mould its forces to his own end and purpose. And in this process of progressive change, God becomes co-worker with him, provided man takes initiative.”

“If he does not take the initiative, if he does not evolve the inner richness of his being, if he ceases to feel the inward push of advancing life, then the spirit within him turns into stone and he is reduced to the level of dead matter”.¹

IV

Iqbal in his “*Development of Metaphysics in Persia*” points out, “that the problem before Zoroaster was to reconcile the existence of evil with the eternal goodness of God. His predecessors worshipped a plurality of good spirit, all of which he reduced to a unity and called it Ahura Mazda. On the other hand, he reduced all the powers of evil to a similar unity and called it Daruj-Ahriman. Thus by a process of unification, he arrived at two fundamental principles which as Haug shows, he looked upon not as two Independent activities, but as two parts or rather aspects of the same primary being” (P. 4,5). Haug comes to the conclusion that Zoroaster was theologically a monotheist but philosophically a dualist.

Iqbal points out that there is an inherent weakness in the attempt of Zoroaster to reconcile theological monotheism with philosophical

1. *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* P. 12

dualism, in as much as he says, that the two states United in the Supreme Being, virtually means that the principle of evil constitutes a part of the very essence of God; and the conflict between good and evil is nothing more than the struggle of God against Himself.

He further points out that the original conflict of the two spirits is manifested in the opposing forces of nature, which presents a continual struggle between the powers of good and the powers of evil.

Although Zoroaster preached about the two spirits, his philosophy is by no means dualistic. Haug has misunderstood Zoroastrian thought and has thus failed to find out the actual position.

Zoroaster, no doubt, preached about the two spirits; but his philosophy is by no means dualistic. This idea of dualism did creep into the religion during the later stages of its development, but in Zoroaster's own days, and from his own words, dualism cannot be confirmed. Zoroaster's position is not dualistic in the sense of conceiving two co-eternal and two co-equal powers, one good and one evil, who are for ever at war with each other. The concept of Zoroaster is essentially different. He tells us that there are two spirits—the good and the evil—at war with each other. They form the antithesis of each other in every respect. His teachings differ from the popularly conceived idea of dualism in the following two respects:

(1) In the first place the conflict is bound to have an end. Even the later books which were responsible for all this later confusion of thought, speak of the ultimate triumph of the good spirit and the hidings of the evil one underground. Zoroaster himself categorically declares in the Gatha (Yasna xxx 10): "Then indeed shall the support of falsehood come down and broken shall be its power; that evil shall ultimately perish". If, therefore, one of the two powers, in the so-called "Dualistic" system, is ultimately to perish, we cannot in reason say that the system teaches that these two powers are either co-equal or co-eternal.

(2) Secondly, the two spirits are not "self created", as may be expected in a truly "Dualistic" system. For, both these emanate from and are the creation of Ahura Mazda. These twin spirits first emanate from Him, the eternal lord of all life, and these twins working together create and maintain the whole of the universe. Jackson has very well expressed it, "These two spirits do not exist independently, but each

in relation to the other; they meet in the higher unity of Ahura Mazda. They exist before the beginning of the world; but their opposition only comes to its expression in the world that we see".*

In Yasna, xix, 9, Ahura Mazda speaks of the two spirits as His own, implying that they both emanated from Him. Thus we may conclude that the two spirits represent the double emanation from the Eternal, when the Eternal "breathes out into manifestation". They may be compared to the two-fold powers, spirit and matter, which have been postulated in the Yoga Philosophy of India, as emanating from the supreme lord, Ishvara. It is for the purposes of manifestation, according to Zoroaster that the twin spirits (good and evil) created by Mazda. The twin spirit of good and evil represent the two poles upon which the whole of manifestation and evolution revolves. Apparently, opposed to each other in every respect they are both necessary to create and to sustain the manifested universe. Their opposition is clearly and forcibly declared in the Gathas (Yasna xxx 4).

"And now when these two spirits together come, they in the beginning created life and not life".

And in another place Zoroaster declares (Yasna xiv, 2) "I will speak of the spirit twin at the first beginning of life, of whom the holier spoke thus to the wicked one: never shall our minds harmonise, nor our doctrines; neither our aspiration, nor yet our beliefs; neither our words nor yet our action; neither our hearts nor yet our soul". The first quotation given above is very significant—"they created life and not life". This quotation is in fact the clearest expression of the fundamental difference between the two spirits that is to be found in the Zoroastrian scripture. If we look upon them, as in a sense representing the two phases of the eternal activity of God, namely, creation and dissolution, we may better understand their true importance. The later Zoroastrian theologians seem to have forgotten the important fact that destruction is also part of God's work, that one side of His activity, as shown in the progress of the Universe, consists in renovation and renewal, which is impossible without the destruction of what has ceased to help in the forward march of creation and has thus become evil. This attitude led, in later times, to a marked divorce between the function of Matter or Not-life aspect of God, and those of the spirit or life aspect of God. The result

was that while good spirit became more and more identified with Ahura Mazda, the spirit of evil got estranged from being his creation. At last in Sasanian times, we find, instead of the good and evil spirits, Ahura and Ahriman forming the fundamental pair. This was probably due to the influence of Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism, with hosts of demons and evil spirits, that Zoroastrianism lost its natural form and true spirit. As a result of these influences "Angro-Mainyu" and evil spirit, far from being "creation of God," became the arch opponent of the Almighty, very much as "Satan" did after "he fell from the Heaven". This later idea of "Ahriman" is decidedly unphilosophical and inconsistent with the other dogmas, simultaneously put forward of the omnipotence of God. And it is certainly opposed to the original teachings of Zoroaster, which as we have seen admitted no other at God's level. This latter conception was due to a misunderstanding of Zoroaster's teachings, very possibly under the influence of Semetic theology. Thus, this conception of Ahriman is responsible both for the philosophic confusion and the superstition that crept into Sasanian Zoroastrianism and also for the belief among the foreigners that Zoroaster's religion was "dualistic."

The purest and the most philosophical explanation of the existence and the origin of evil, "Life and Not life" is embodied in the "Gathas." They are the two poles of the same Eternal source of life. In other words they are the first creation of His will. The Absolute willed to manifest and from 'unity' He became 'duality.' Zoroaster vigorously maintains that the spirit of evil is as essential for creation and manifestation as the spirit of good. This point is beautifully brought out by Iqbal in the following verse.

مزی اندر جہانے کور ذوقے
کہ یزداں دارد شیطان ندارد

(اقبال)

What is pleasure in a world of bad taste.
That it has god, but lacks satan.

This idea is also contained in "Sarosha Yasht". In that Hymn, Sarosha¹ is described as paying His homage to all the Beings, who have helped to create the Universe:

"Among the creatures of the great Ahura, He was the

first to worship the eternal; He first did worship the immortal holy. The Six that stand around the throne of Mazda;
 He also worshipped first the twin Maintainers.
 The Twin creators—who create together
 The manifold creation all around us” 1. *Yasna I vii.*

Thus, evil is necessary in the world in order that good may ultimately triumph. Zoroaster exhorts the people to follow the Eternal Laws or Asha which impels all creation to progress Godwards. To him, life upon this earth meant a constant endeavour to tread this path. It is an unceasing endeavour, a continuous activity—what the Hindus have named, Karma Yoga, or the Religion through action. Zoroaster expected all his followers to be active partisans on the side of Asha; consequently all that helps the forward progress of humanity is good, all that tends to hinder it is evil. Spirit, he says, must unite itself with Matter, in order to realise completely the fullness of its stature. That good shall come out triumphant in the end has been maintained by Zoroastrian theology throughout its long history.

(b) A second implication is with regard to human conduct. Evil is found in the world, in order that we may strengthen ourselves by learning to overcome it. For life, according to Zoroaster, is a constant and strenuous effort; not merely in being good but also in fighting and overpowering evil. Evil has to be regarded, so to say, as a whet-stone for a Zoroastrian to sharpen his determination upon. Evil is like Mephistopheles in Goethe's "Faust"

“Part of that power which still produceth good whilst ever scheming ill”.

(c) Another, and perhaps a more remote implication from these ideas is that complete freedom is left to the individual to choose his own side in the eternal battle. According to Zoroastrian theology each human being has a principle within himself called “Urvan” which is often translated as soul or reason; but its literal meaning is “the chooser”; for it is that which enables human beings to choose between the right and wrong, between the temporary and eternal. Zoroaster,

¹ سروش — جبرائیل علیہ السلام دھر فرشته کہ پیغام خیر آرد (صفحه ۳۹۷ غیث الغات)

even while he proclaimed his first message, said:

“Hear with your ears the great truths, consider them with clear thought, deciding between the two and choosing—man by man—each one for himself”.

Thus, according to Zoroaster evil is but a negative aspect of the Divine life, only “the shadow of the eternal” does not exist; but it is relative, depending upon the distance from God at which the Individual stands upon the path of Asha. Angro-Mainyu (Spirit of evil) is terrible indeed as long as he has power to tempt people with material and temporary happiness, or to confound their intellect and soul. He has tempted sages always and often quite successfully.

‘Action’ is the pivot of Iqbal’s philosophy. Like Zoroaster, he believes that man grows to his full stature and realises his destiny through a life of strenuous activity, not one of renunciation and soft self-centred contemplation.

میارا بزم ساحل که آنجا نوائے زندگانی نرم خیز است
بدریا غلط و باموجش در آویز حیات جاودان اندر ستیز است

“Feast not on the shore, for there
softly breathes the tune of life
grapple with the waves and dare!
Immortality is strife”.

Life, therefore, demands strenuous and constant efforts. True joy, according to Zoroaster and Iqbal, is to be found, not in watching the performances from the spectator’s gallery, as it were, but in throwing oneself into the midst of the storm and tasting every experience painful or pleasant.

گفتش که سود خویش ز جیب زیاں برآر کل از شکاف سینه زر ناب آورید
درمان ز درد ساز اگر خسته تن شوی خوگر به خار شو که سراپا چمن شوی

“Get the profit out of Loss;
The rose has created pure gold by rendering the breast!
If thou art wounded, make the pain thy remedy!
Accustom thy self to the thorns that thou mayst
become entirely one with the gardens.
(Pyame-e-Mashriq P.225).

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