

THE  
**RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF THE PARSIS**

**A LECTURE**

DELIVERED BY

**JIVANJI JAMSHEDJI MODI**

AT THE

**TOWN HALL**

ON

**MONDAY, the of 12th JANUARY, 1885**

**BOMBAY**

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## FOREWORD

It has been the endeavour of the Board of Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet not only to keep our traditions alive but to disseminate the ideas, concepts, precepts and practices enshrined in our Holy Scriptures, and the Commentaries on those Scriptures, by the most erudite scholars, Parsis and non-Parsis alike.

For the benefit of the readers, I am happy to state that on the advice of Vada Dasturji Kaikhushru M. JamaspAsa and Dr. Homi Dhalla, the Board have consented to re-print the following 5 Titles mainly for the benefit of the Zoroastrian readers in India and abroad.

### TITLE

1. The Religion of the Good Life - Zoroastrianism.
2. A Brief Sketch of the Zoroastrian Religion and Customs.
3. The Religious System of the Parsis.
4. Zarathushtra and His Teachings.
5. Handbook of Information on Zoroastrianism.

In order to reach our professed aim of disseminating this invaluable religious lore, as extensively as practicable, the Board of Trustees have decided to donate a few copies of each Title to the Zoroastrian Panchayets and Anjumans in India and to the Zoroastrian Associations in Pakistan, Iran and in the other parts of the world.

I take this opportunity to thank the following persons for being actively associated with this Project :

Vada Dasturji JamaspAsa

Dr. Homi Dhalla

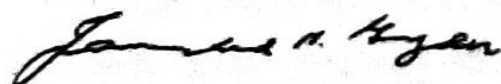
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(J. N. GUZDER)

President

June 1, 2001

BTD/KHE

This lecture was delivered at the Town Hall, on the 12th of January, 1885, before a mixed audience of all communities, when His Excellency Sir James Fergusson, Bart., K.C.M.G., C.I.E., Governor of Bombay, kindly presided. It is published in pamphlet form at the suggestion of some friends. My thanks are due to the Trustees of the Sir Jamshedjee Jejeebhoy Translation Fund for supporting this publication.

**JIVANJI JAMSHEDJI MODI.**

Colaba, 1st March, 1885.

# THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF THE PARSIS.

MR. JIVANJI JAMSHEDJI MODI, B.A., delivered a lecture yesterday evening (Monday the 12th January), at the Town Hall, before a large and influential assembly, mainly consisting of Parsis. The hall was crammed to its utmost capacity, and there was a fair sprinkling of Europeans and Hindoos present. His Excellency the Governor, whose arrival was greeted with long continued cheering, presided; and he was supported on the platform by the Hon. Mr. Melvill and the Hon. Sir Charles Sargeant.

His Excellency the Governor, who was received with cheers, said,—It is always proper on such occasions to introduce the lecturer. I think it is hardly necessary to give that introduction here, as the respected gentleman who is to address you in a moment holds an honorable position in the Parsi community. (Hear, hear.) I think therefore it is quite unnecessary that he should be introduced like one who is a stranger and is previously unknown. I should like to say that I myself, and I am sure my honourable colleague and the Honourable the Chief Justice and other Europeans present as well, will listen with great interest to a lecture which will make known in a popular form the history and the characteristics of this great community, which is so firmly established

amongst us. I do not think that either the Governor or the leaders of society ought to hesitate to give countenance and pay every mark of respect to a body of their fellow-citizens who have so well earned it as the Parsi community of Bombay. (Loud applause.) Their position is unique—a handful of persons among the teeming millions of India, and yet who not only have preserved their ancient race with the utmost purity, but also their religion absolutely unimpaired by contact with others. They have risen, as a community and as individuals, to a position of the highest eminence in competition with others. (Applause.) Members of the Parsi community have gained a reputation which is not only local, but world-wide, for their eminence and their benevolence. Long before I came to Bombay, I knew that their name was a household word in England; and since I have been here, I have enjoyed the friendship of many members of that body, which I trust long to retain. So, gentlemen, it requires no apology, and little explanation for our presence here to-night. I can only say that no one will listen with more interest than myself to the lecture which we are about to hear, and in the way of which I will no longer stand. (Loud applause.)—*The Bombay Gazette*, 13th January, 1885.

YOUR EXCELLENCY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

The subject of my lecture this evening is "The Religious system of the Parsis" or the religion founded by Zoroaster the great Parsi Prophet.

In a mixed community like that of Bombay, people of different nationalities, castes, and creeds come into contact with one another every day, but they know very little of the manners and customs, and almost nothing of the religious systems of one another. This lecture is intended to present to non-Zoroastrians an outline, a mere outline, of the religious system of the Parsis or Zoroastrians, who form a small, though not an unimportant, part of the mixed community of Bombay. In the words of The Right Reverend Dr. Meurin the learned Bishop (Vicar Apostolic) of Bombay, the Parsis are "a people who have chosen to relinquish their venerable ancestors' homesteads rather than abandon their ancient religion, the founder of which has lived no less than 3,000 years ago; a people who for a thousand years have formed in the midst of the great Hindoo people, not unlike an island in the sea, a quite separate and distinct nation, peculiar and remarkable, as for its race, so for its religious and social life and customs."

The Parsis do not at the present day form more than ten thousandth part of the population of the whole of our earth. Yet as Professor Max-Muller says:—"There were

periods in the history of the world when the worship of Ormuzd threatened to rise triumphant on the ruins of the temples of all other gods. If the battles of Marathon and Salamis had been lost, and Greece had succumbed to Persia, the state religion of the empire of Cyrus, which was the worship of Ormuzd, might have become the religion of the whole civilized world. Persia had absorbed the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires ; the Jews were either in Persian captivity or under Persian sway at home ; the sacred monuments of Egypt had been mutilated by the hands of Persian soldiers. The edicts of the great king, the king of kings, were sent to India, to Greece, to Scythia, and to Egypt ; and if ' by the grace of Auramazda ' Darius had crushed the liberty of Greece, the purer faith of Zoroaster might easily have superseded the Olympian fables." The same learned orientalist further says, ' Though every religion is of real and vital interest in its earliest state only, yet its later development too, with all its misunderstandings, faults and corruptions, offers many an instructive lesson to the thoughtful student of history. Here is a religion, one of the most ancient of the world, once the state religion of the most powerful empire, driven away from its native soil, deprived of political influence, without even the prestige of a powerful or enlightened priesthood, and yet professed by a handful of exiles—men of wealth, intelligence, and moral worth in Western India—with an unhesitating fervour such as is seldom to be found in larger religious communities. It is well worth the earnest

endeavour of the philosopher and the divine to discover, if possible, the spell by which this apparently effete religion continues to command the attachment of the enlightened Parsis of India, and makes them turn a deaf ear to the allurements of the Brahmanic worship and the earnest appeals of Christian missionaries."

It is the system of such a religion, gentlemen, that is the subject of my lecture this evening. Before speaking of the religion itself, it will not be out of place to say here a few words about the birth place of its founder Zoroaster or Zarthust, and the age in which he lived.

On these points a great difference of opinion exists among learned orientalisists. Some say he was a Bactrian, and others that he was a Median. I prefer to call him a Bactro-Median, or rather a Medio-Bactrian because he was born in Rae in Media, and he propagated his religion in Bactria, the country of the modern Balkh which was the capital of Gustasp, the then king of Persia. Dr. Spiegel not only makes him a contemporary of Abraham, but says that they lived together in the same place. He says that Haran in which according to the Old Testament, Abraham lived is the same as Arran or Airyana—vaeja of the Zoroastrian scriptures, and he attributes the similarity of several ideas in the two religions to this fact. Max-Muller, however, differs from him, and attributes the similarity to the fact that the Avesta and Hebrew manuscripts are very modern, and to the fact that it was at the same time, in the third

century B. C., and at the same place, Alexandria, that the Old Testament and the Avesta were translated into Greek.

Greek and Roman historians place this law-giver in times as old as B. C. 5,000 or 6,000. The eminent orientalist Dr. Haug says "under no circumstances can we assign him a later date than B. C. 1,000, and we may even find reasons for placing his era much earlier and making him a contemporary of Moses."

Whatever difference of opinion there may exist amongst scholars as to the probable age of Zoroaster there is no doubt that he lived in very remote antiquity.

From the very high terms in which Cyrus the great Persian monarch is spoken of in the Old Testament (Isaiah Chapters 44, 45 and 46,) Dr. Haug infers that "this religion was not so diametrically opposed to the Mosaic as the other ancient religions were." Again says Dr. Haug, "the Zoroastrian religion exhibits even a very close affinity to, or rather identity with, several important doctrines of the Mosaic religion and Christianity, such as the personality and attributes of the devil, and the resurrection of the dead, which are both ascribed to the religion of the Magi, and are really to be found in the present scriptures of the Parsis."

Coming to the subject proper of the lecture, viz. the religion of this very ancient prophet, I will treat the subject under three heads. I. The theology of the

Zoroastrian religion. II. Its speculative philosophy. III. Its moral philosophy.

### THEOLOGY.

Zoroastrianism or Parsiism, by whatever name the system may be called, is a monotheistic form of religion. It believes in the existence of one God whom it knows under the names of Mazda, Ahura, and Ahura-Mazda, the last form being one that is most commonly met with in the later writings of the Avesta. That the religious system of Zoroaster is monotheistic and not polytheistic is evidenced, among other things, by the fact that Zoroaster rejected from his writings the word "daeva" a very ancient Aryan word for God, derived from the aryan root 'div' "to shine." Most of the western nations which separating from the parent stock emigrated to the west, took with them this word in one form or another for the name of their God. Thus the Greeks called their God, Deos or Zeus, the Romans, Deus, the Germans, Teus, the Lithunians Diewas and so on. The Indian and the Iranian branches had the word "daeva." But when Zoroaster saw that the belief of the people of his country and time was tending to polytheism, and that the sacred word "daeva" instead of being used for God alone, was being used for many of his created objects, he stamped the word as unfit for the name of God, and rejected it altogether from his Avesta. Bishop Meurin in his pamphlet named "Zoroaster and Christ" says that the fact "that in no other but the Zoroas-

trian religion this name "Daeva" bears the meaning of an evil Spirit, is a proof that Zoroaster, on seeing it bestowed on many Beings who were not God, rejected it altogether as the name of the only One God, and stamped it in his reformatory zeal as a designation of the diabolical opponents of the One Supreme Being." That Zoroaster preached monotheism and detested polytheism is further evident from some of his speeches that have come down to us as preserved in the Gathas which form the oldest part of the Avesta scriptures. It appears that he explained his new monotheistic religion to large audiences composed of learned men who had specially come from different parts of the country to hear him preach. One of his speeches begins thus, "All he who have come from near and far should now listen and hearken to what I shall proclaim." In another of his speeches (Chapter 30 of the yasna) he thus addresses his audience, "I will now tell you who are assembled here, the wise sayings of Mazda the praises of Ahura, and the hymns of the good spirit, the sublime truth which I see arising out of these sacred flames. . . . Every one both men and women ought to-day to choose his creed: ye offsprings of renowned ancestors! awaken to agree with us." Thus addressing his audience he proceeds to propound his monotheistic religion. We will not enter here into this speech, but will give its purport in the words of Dr. Haug. "The chief tendency of this speech," says this orientalist, "is to induce his countrymen to forsake the worship of the devas or gods, *i.e.*, polytheism, to bow only before

Ahura-Mazda, and to separate themselves entirely from the idolators. In order to gain the object wished for, he propounds the great difference which exists between the two religions, Monotheism and Polytheism, showing that whereas the former is the fountain of all prosperity both in this and the other life, the latter is utterly ruinous to mankind."

Ahura-Mazda is represented in the Zoroastrian Scriptures as omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. A long list of all his attributes is given in Ahura-Mazda Yasht. Instead of entering into that long list I will here quote Dr. Haug on the picture of God as drawn in the Parsi scriptures.

"Spitama Zarathushtra's conception of Ahura Mazda as the Supreme Being is perfectly identical with the notion of Elohîm (God) or Jehovah, which we find in the Books of the Old Testament. Ahura-Mazda is called by him "the Creator of the earthly and spiritual life, the Lord of the whole universe, in whose hands are all the creatures." He is the light and source of light; he is the wisdom and intellect. He is in possession of all good things, spiritual and worldly, such as the good mind (Vohu-manô), immortality (Ameretâd), health (Haurvatâd), the best truth (Ashavahishta), devotion and piety (Armaity), and abundance of every earthly good (Khshathra-vairya). All these gifts he grants to the righteous man, who is upright in thoughts, words and deeds. As the ruler of the whole

universe, he not only rewards the good, but he is a punisher of the wicked at the same time. All that is created, good or evil, fortune or misfortune, is his work."

This religion requires no images or idols for the purpose of worship. What that great and ancient historian Herodotus, who lived in the 5th Century B. C., said of the Persians of his time is true of the Parsis of the present day. The great historian says "they (the Persians) have no images of the gods, no temples, nor altars, and consider the use of them a sign of folly."

I will here say a few words on the reverence paid to fire by the Parsis. A foreigner coming to Bombay, and moving about its streets comes across several places of worship called Fire-temples. The very name Fire-temple perhaps strikes him as an unusual form of worship. I will not enter here into the history of the so-called fire-worship, nor enter into the different grounds, religious, moral and scientific, which actuate and even justify a Parsi in offering his reverence—which it must be remembered is something different from worship—to fire. Suffice it here to say that the Parsis do not worship fire as God. They merely regard fire as an emblem of refulgence, glory and light, as the most perfect symbol of God, and as the best and noblest representative of His divinity. In the words of a learned author "In the eyes of a Parsi his (fire's) brightness, activity, purity and incorruptibility bear the most perfect resemblance to the nature and perfection

of the Deity." A Parsi looks upon fire "as the most perfect symbol of the Deity, on account of its purity, brightness, activity, subtilty, fecundity and incorruptibility." I will here again quote Dr. Meurin on this point. This learned divine says "Zoroaster restored not only the unity of God, but also the most ancient and characteristic Aryan form of divine service, the worship of fire, as the most suitable representative of God, corresponding to their high idea of God as Eternal Light. . . . A pure and undefiled flame is certainly the most sublime natural representation of Him, who is in Himself Eternal Light."

Anquetil du Perron, the first European who studied the Avesta, says on this point, "The religion prevalent in Persia till the destruction of the empire, and carried into India by the Parsis, who still possess it, merits more attention than almost any other. It was at first a pure theism though even in the time of Abraham debased by heterodox opinions; but they have ever zealously preserved the doctrine of the Unity of God; and we are not to consider from the veneration they showed, and still show to fire and the sun that they have ever adored either the element or the luminary. Zoroaster their great teacher dictated them to turn towards the sun or the fire when they prayed, but the prayers which they recite in this position are addressed solely to the Sovereign Being, and not to the symbols of Him."

According to Professor Max-Muller the feeling which the

Parsis have about the fire is "similar in some respects to that which many Christians have about the cross. They do not worship the cross but they have peculiar feelings of reverence for it and it is intimately connected with some of their most sacred rites."

From similar considerations Dr. Meurin says "I am, therefore, very far from supposing that the Parsi fire-worship is idolatry. Whoever accuses the Parsis of that most heinous of all crimes, and is not able to prove that they believe fire or the sun to be God Himself, is certainly guilty of the most detestable sin of calumny."

## II.—SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY.

We have seen that Ahura-Mazda or God is, according to Parsi scriptures, the causer of all causes. He is the Creator as well as the Destroyer, the Increaser as well as the Decreaser. He gives birth to different creatures and it is he who brings about their end. How is it, then, that he brings about these two contrary results? In the words of Dr. Haug "Having arrived at the grand idea of the unity and indivisibility of the Supreme Being, he (Zoroaster) undertook to solve the great problem which has engaged the attention of so many wise men of antiquity, and even of modern times, viz., how are the imperfections discoverable in the world, the various kinds of evils, wickedness, and baseness, compatible with the goodness, holiness, and justice of God? This great thinker of remote antiquity solved this difficult question *philosophi-*

cally by the supposition of two primeval causes, which, though different, were united, and produced the world of material things, as well as that of the spirit."

These two primeval causes or principles are called in the Avesta the two "Mainyus." This word comes from the ancient Aryan root "man" to "think" which corresponds to the Latin root from which our English word "mind" is derived. It may be properly rendered into English by the word "spirit" meaning that which can only be conceived by the mind but not felt by the senses. Of these two spirits or primeval causes or principles one is Creative and the other Destructive. The former is known in the Avesta by the name of "Spenta-mainyush" or the Increasing spirit and the latter by that of "Angr-mainyush" or the Decreasing spirit. These two spirits work under one God, Mazda, who through the agency, as it were, of these two spirits is the causer of all causes in the universe, the Creator as well as the Destroyer. These two spirits work under the Almighty day and night. They create and destroy, and this they have done ever since the world was created.

The very roots of the words Spenta and Angra show the functions of the two spirits. The former comes from the Avesta root (Span=Sanscrit Shvi) meaning to increase. The latter comes from the root Ang=Sanscrit Anh=Lat. angere (to press together, to annoy).

According to Zoroaster's speculative philosophy our

world is the work of these two hostile principles, Spenta-mainyush, the good principle, and Angra-mainyush the evil principle, both serving under one God. In the words of that learned orientalist Professor Darmestetter "All that is good in the world comes from the former, all that is bad in it comes from the latter. The history of the world is the history of their conflict, how Angra-Mainyu invaded the world of Ahura-Mazda and marred it, and how he shall be expelled from it at last. Man is active in the conflict, his duty in it being laid before him in the law revealed by Ahura-Mazda to Zarathushtra. When the appointed time is come .....Angra-Mainyu and hell will be destroyed, man will rise from the dead, and everlasting happiness will reign over the world."

I will here describe the functions of the two spirits in the words of European scholars. In the words of Dr. Haug "Spentô-mainyush was regarded as the author of all that is bright and shining, of all that is good and useful in nature; while Angrô-mainyush called into existence all that is dark and apparently noxious. Both are as inseparable as day and night, and though opposed to each other, are indispensable for the preservation of creation. The beneficent spirit appears in the blazing flame, the presence of the hurtful one is marked by the wood converted into charcoal. Spenta-mainyush has created the light of day, and Angro-mainyush the darkness of night; the former awakens men to their duties, the latter lulls them to sleep. Life is produced by Spentô-mainyush,

but extinguished by Angrô-mainyush, whose hands, by releasing the soul from the fetters of the body, enables her to rise into immortality and everlasting life."

According to Professor Darmestetter Spenta-mainyush "is all light, truth, goodness and knowledge; Angra-mainyu is all darkness, falsehood, wickedness, and ignorance. Ahura (i. e. Spenta-mainyu) dwells in the infinite light, Angra-mainyu dwells in the infinite night. Whatever the good Spirit makes the evil Spirit-mars." According to the well-known Pehelvi book Bundehesh, this conflict between the good and evil spirits, will, in the end, end in favour of the former.

These philosophical notions have led some learned men to misunderstand Zoroastrian theology. Some authors entertain an opinion that Zoroaster preached Dualism. But this is a serious misconception. On this point Dr. Haug says "the opinion, so generally entertained now, that Zarathushtra was preaching a Dualism, that is to say, the idea of two original independent spirits, one good and the other bad, utterly distinct from each other, and one counteracting the creation of the other, is owing to a confusion of his philosophy with his theology. . . . A separate evil spirit of equal power with Ahura-Mazda, and always opposed to him, is entirely foreign to Zarathushtra's theology."

The reason why the "the original Zoroastrian notion of the two spirits the creative and the destructive which form only two parts of the Divine Being" is misunderstood as

dualism is this. In the Parsi scriptures, the names of God are Mazda, Ahura, and Ahura-Mazda, the last word being a compound of the first two. The first two words are common in the earliest writings of the Gatha, and the third in the later Scriptures. In later times the word Ahura-Mazda instead of being restricted like Mazda to the name of God began to be used in a wider sense and was applied to Spenta-mainyush the Creative or the Good principle. This being the case, wherever the word Ahura-Mazda was used in opposition to that of Angro-Mainyush, later authors took it as the name of God, and not as the name of the Creative principle which it really was. Thus the very fact of Ahura-Mazda's name being employed in opposition to that of Ahri-man led to the notion that Zoroastrian scriptures preached dualism.

Dr. West, the late Dr. Haug's coadjutor in some of his works, and a well-known Pehelvi scholar, takes another view of this question and rebuts the charge of dualism in the sense in which it is ordinarily understood. This learned orientalist, in the Introduction to his English Translation of the Pehelvi Bundelesh, one of the series of Max-Muller's sacred books of the East says, "The Parsi religion has long been represented by its opponents as a dualism; and this accusation, made in good faith by Muhammadan writers, and echoed more incautiously by Christians, has been advanced so strenuously that it has often been admitted even by Parsis themselves, as regards the mediæval form of their faith. But neither party seems

to have fairly considered how any religion which admits the personality of an evil spirit, in order to account for the existence of evil, can fail to become a dualism to a certain extent. If, therefore, the term is to be used in controversy, it behoves those who use it to define the limits of objectionable dualism with great precision, so as not to include most of the religions of the world, their own among the number.

“ If it be necessary for a dualism, that the evil spirit be omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, or eternal, then is the Parsi religion no dualism. The Bundahis distinctly asserts that the evil spirit is not omniscient and almighty ; that his understanding is backward, so that he was not aware of the existence of Aûharmazd, till he arose from the abyss and saw the light ; that he is unobservant and ignorant of the future till it is revealed to him by Aûharmazd ; that his creatures perish at the resurrection, and he himself becomes impotent and will not be. Nowhere is he supposed to be in two places at once, or to know what is occurring elsewhere than in his own presence. So far, his powers are considerably less than those generally assigned by Christians to the devil.”

“ The origin and end of Aharman appear to be left as uncertain as those of the devil, and, altogether, the resemblance between these two ideas of the evil spirit is remarkably close ; in fact, almost too close to admit of the possibility of their being ideas of different origin.

. . . If, therefore, a belief in Aharman, as the author of evil, makes the Parsi religion a dualism, it is difficult to understand why a belief in the devil, as the author of evil, does not make Christianity also a dualism."

We see from this passage that not only is the charge of dualism as levelled against Zoroastrianism, and as ordinarily understood groundless, but that there is a close resemblance between the ideas of the devil among the Christians, and those of the Ahriman among the Zoroastrians.

Dr. Haug says the same thing in the following words. "The Zoroastrian idea of the Devil and the infernal kingdom coincides entirely with the Christian doctrine. The Devil is a murderer and father of lies according to both the Bible and the Zend Avesta."

Thus we see that according to Zoroaster's philosophy there are two primeval principles which are, as it were, two parts of the Divine Being, that produce our material world. Consequently though the Almighty is the creator of all, a part of the creation is said to be created by the good principle, and a part by the evil principle. Thus, for example, the heavenly bodies, the earth, water, fire, horses, dogs, and such other objects are the creation of the Good Principle, and serpent, ants, locusts, &c., are the creation of the Evil Principle. In short, those things that conduce to the greatest good of the greatest number of mankind fall under the category of the creations of the Good Principle, and those that lead

to the contrary result, under that of the creations of the Evil Principle.

This being the case, it is incumbent upon men to do actions that would support the cause of the Good Principle, and destroy that of the Evil One. Therefore the cultivation of the soil, the rearing of the domestic animals, &c., on the one hand and the destruction of wild animals and other noxious creatures on the other are considered meritorious actions by the Parsis.

Under the Good Principle of Spenta-mainyush or Ahura-Mazda are six Ameshaspends (lit. immortal increasers) who correspond to the Christian Archangels. They are known by the names of Beheman, Ardëbehesht, Shehriver, Aspendad, Khurdad, and Amërdad. In the oldest Scriptures of the Gathas, where God is almost always known by the name of Mazda, these names are as Dr. Haug says "nothing but abstract nouns and ideas, representing all the gifts which Ahura-Mazda, as the only Lord, grants to those who worship Him with a sincere heart, by always speaking truth, and performing good actions. In the eyes of the prophet they were no personages; that idea being imported into the sayings of the great master by some of his successors." As there are six angels under the Good Principle so there are six devils under the Evil Principle.

Now as there are two primeval principles united in Ahura-Mazda, that produce our material world as seen above, there are two principles inherent in the nature of

man which encourage him to do good, or tempt him to do evil. One asks him to support the cause of the Good or Creative Principle, the other to support that of the Evil or Destructive Principle. The first is known by the name of vohu-mana, which word was afterwards changed into Beheman meaning "good mind." The prefix "vohu" or "beh" is the same word as that of which our English word "better" is the comparative. "Mana" is the same as the word "Mainyu" previously considered and means "mind" or "spirit." The second is known by the name of Akamana, *i.e.*, bad mind. The prefix "Aka" means "bad" and is the same as our English word "ache" in "headache."

This leads us to the third part of our lecture, viz., Zoroaster's moral philosophy. But before passing to that subject I will, under the head of speculative philosophy allude to a few other notions of Zoroastrianism, because the belief in these notions is to a great extent necessary for a belief in the truth of moral principles.

The Zoroastrian religion believes in a life to come. The Avesta writings of Hadokht Nushk, and of the 19th chapter of the Vendidad, and the Pehelvi books of Minokherad, and Viraf-nameh, treat of the fate of the soul after death. The last mentioned book contains an account of the journey of Arda-Viraf through the heavenly regions. This account corresponds to that of the ascension of the prophet "Isaiah." Its notions about heaven and hell correspond to some extent to the Christian notions about them. According to

Dr. Haug its description of hell, and some of the punishment suffered by the wicked there, bears a striking resemblance to that in the Inferno of the Italian poet Dante.

Thus Zoroastrianism believes in the immortality of the soul. A plant called the Homa-i-saphid or white Homa, a name corresponding to the Indian Soma of the Hindus, is held to be the emblem of the immortality of our soul. According to Dr. Windischmann and Professor Max-Muller this plant reminds us of the "Tree of Life" in the garden of Eden. As in the Christian scriptures the way to the tree of life is strictly guarded by the cherubim, so in the Zoroastrian scriptures the Homa-i-saphid or the plant which is the emblem of immortality is guarded by innumerable Fravashis that is guardian spirits. The number of these guardian spirits, as given in various books, is 99,999.

The Mahomedan-Scriptures also say that there is a tree called "Līdra" or "Lotus" in heaven near the seat of the Almighty and it is guarded by 70,000 angels. But the relation of this tree to the immortality of soul is not specially mentioned.

A good deal of importance is attached in the Avesta and in the later Pehelvi writings to this question of the immortality of soul, because a belief in this dogma is essential to the structure of moral principles. The whole edifice of our moral nature rests upon its ground-work. Dr. Thomas Dick in his "Philosophy of Future State" very rightly says that "This is an enquiry far more interesting

and important, to every individual of mankind, than any other which comes within the range of the human mind. Next to the Being of a God, the doctrine of the immortality of man, lies at the foundation of all religion, and of all the animating prospects which can cheer us in the land of our pilgrimage. Remove from the mind the belief of a future existence, and the hope of immortality, and religion becomes a shadow, life a dream, and the approach of death a scene of darkness and despair. Upon this short question, "Is man immortal, or is he not?" depends all that is valuable in science, in morals, and in theology,—and all that is most interesting to man as a social being, and as a rational and accountable intelligence. If he is destined to an eternal existence, an immense importance must attach to all his present affections, actions, and pursuits! and it must be a matter of infinite moment, that they be directed in such a channel, as will tend to carry him forward, in safety, to the felicities of a future world. But if his whole existence be circumscribed within the circle of a few fleeting years, man appears an enigma, an inexplicable phenomenon in the universe, human life a mystery, the world a scene of confusion, virtue a mere phantom, the Creator a capricious Being, and his plans and arrangements an inextricable maze."

Again Zoroastrianism believes in Heaven and Hell. Heaven is called Vahishta-ahu in Avesta. It literally means the best life. This word is afterwards contracted with a slight change into the Persian word "Behesht"

which is the superlative form of "Veh" meaning "good" and corresponds exactly with our English word "best." Hell is known by the name of "Achishta-ahu." Heaven is represented as a place of radiance, splendour and glory, and hell as that of gloom, darkness, and stench.

Between heaven and this world there is supposed to be a bridge named "chinvat." This word from the Aryan root "chi" meaning to *pick up*, to *collect*, means the place where a man's soul has to present a collective account of the actions done in the past life. This bridge reminds us of a bridge called "Al-sirat" among the Mahomedans.

According to the Parsi scriptures, for three days after a man's death, his soul remains within the limits of this world under the guidance of the angel "Srosh." If the deceased be a pious man, or a man who led a virtuous life his soul utters the words "Ushtâ-Ahmâi Yahmâi Ushta-Kahmai-chit" *i. e.*, "well is he by whom that which is his benefit becomes the benefit of any one else." If he be a wicked man, or one who led an evil life his soul utters these plaintive words "Kâm Nemoi Zâm ? Kuthrâ nemo ayeni" ? *i. e.*, "to which land shall I turn ? whither shall I go" ?

On the dawn of the third night the departed souls appear at the "Chinvat bridge." This bridge is guarded by the angel Meher Dâver, *i. e.*, Meher the Judge. He presides there as a judge assisted by the angels Rashné and Astâd, the former representing Justice, and the latter Truth. At this

bridge and before this angel Meher, the soul of every man has to give an account of its doings in the past life. Meher Dâver the judge weighs a man's actions by a scale pan. If a man's good actions outweigh his evil ones, even by a small particle, he is allowed to pass from the bridge to the other end to heaven. If his evil actions outweigh his good ones, even by a small weight, he is not allowed to pass over the bridge, but is hurled down into the deep abyss of hell. If his meritorious and evil deeds counter-balance each other he is sent to a place known as "Hamast-gehan" corresponding with the Christian purgatory and the Mahomedan "Aeraf." His meritorious deeds done in the past life would prevent him from going to hell, and his evil actions would not let him go to heaven.

The soul remains in these conditions until the day of Frasho-Kereti. The first part of this word Frasha is the same as German "Frisch" and English "Fresh" and the second part comes from the root Kar=L create=Fr Créer=to create. The whole word means the "fresh creation." Thus Zoroastrianism also believes in Fresho-Kerti, *i.e.*, resurrection or the "renovation of the world," which is one of the chief dogmas of Christian, Jewish, and Mahomedan religions. This is an old doctrine of Zoroastrian scriptures. Dr. Haug says on this point "That the resurrection of the dead was a common belief of the Magi, long before the commencement of our era, may be learnt from the statement of Theopompos." This Greek writer and philosopher Hermippos who lived in the third century.

B. C. are reported by Plutarch to say that "the Magis believed that finally "Areimanios, (Ahriman) is to perish, mankind is to enjoy a blessed state of life; men will neither be any more in need of food, nor will they cast shadows; the dead are to rise again, men will be immortal, and everything is to exist in consequence of their prayer." According to Dr. Haug this belief in the resurrection "agrees completely with the spirit and tendency of the Parsi religion. All life of the good creation, especially that of man, bodily as well as spiritual, is a sacred pawn intrusted by God to man, who must keep his body free from impurity, and his soul from sin. If death destroy the body (in the natural course), it is not the fault of man who falls to an inexorable fate; but it is considered as the duty of God, who is the preserver of all life, to restore all life that has fallen a prey to death, to destroy this arch-enemy of human life, and so make life everlasting. This is to be done at the time of the resurrection."

From these considerations we see that according to the Zoroastrian scriptures, a pious man or a man who leads a moral life is allowed to go across the "Chinvat Bridge" to heaven, and the wicked or immoral man is committed to hell.

Well then, what constitutes according to Zoroastrianism a moral or pious life? This leads us directly to the third part of the subject of the lecture, viz., the moral philosophy of the Parsi religion.

### III.—MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

Mon. Harlez in the introduction to his French translation

of the Avesta says "The Mazdian religion distinguishes itself from all other ancient religions in this, that it has a moral systematized and founded upon philosophic principles. And this moral is certainly the purest and soundest that has been produced, Judaism excepted," We will see, how it is systematized and founded upon philosophic principles.

The late Dr. Haug rightly observed that "the moral philosophy of Zoroaster was moving in the *triad* of thought, word, and deed." These three words form, as it were, the pivot upon which the moral structure of Zoroastrianism turns. It is the ground-work upon which the whole edifice of Zoroastrian morality rests.

We have seen that there are two principles inherent in the nature of man, viz, Vohumana, and Akamana, *i.e.*, Good mind and Evil mind. Now both these principles exert their influence upon a man's manashni, gavashni, and kanashni, *i.e.*, upon a man's thoughts, words and deeds. When the influence of the former, *i.e.*, the Good mind predominates, our thoughts, words and deeds, result in humata (good thoughts), hukhta (good words) and hvarshta (good deeds), but when that of the latter, *i.e.*, the Evil mind predominates they result in dushmata (evil thoughts), dūzukhta (evil words) dūzvarshta (evil deeds). The prefix "hu" in the first set of words corresponds to the Greek "eu" as in eulogium euphony, and the prefix "dush" in the second set to the Latin "dis" as in dislike, disapprove.

Now the 5th chapter of the Vendidad gives, as it were, a

short definition of what is morality or piety. There, first of all the writer says that " Yaozdâo Mashiyâi aipi Zânthem-vahishtâ " *i. e.*, as Dr. Spiegel puts it " Purity is the best thing for man after birth." This you may say is the motto of the Zoroastrian religion. Therefore Mon. Harlez very properly says that according to Zoroastrian scriptures the "notion of the word virtue sums itself up in that of the 'Asha.'" This word is the same as the Sanscrit "rita" which word corresponds to our English "right." It means therefore righteousness, piety, or purity. Then the writer proceeds to give a short definition of piety. It says that "The preservation of humata, hukhta, and hvarshta, *i. e.*, good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, is piety." In these three pithy words "humata, hukhata and huvarshta" is summed up, so to say, the whole of the moral philosophy of the Zoroastrian scriptures. It says that if you want to lead a pious and moral life and thus to show a clean bill of spiritual health to the Angel Meher Dâver who watches the gates of heaven at the Chinvat Bridge, practice these three. Think of nothing but the truth, speak nothing but the truth, and do nothing but what is proper. In short, what Zoroastrian moral philosophy teaches is this, that your good thoughts, good words, and good deeds alone will be your intercessors. Nothing more will be wanted. They alone will serve you as a safe pilot to the harbour of heaven, as a safe guide to the gate of paradise.

The following dialogue in the Pehelvi Pandnameh of Buzurche-Meher shows in a succinct form what weight is

attached to these three pithy words in the moral code of the Zoroastrians :—

Question.—Who is the most fortunate man in the world?

Answer.—He who is the most innocent.

Question.—Who is the most innocent man in the world?

Answer.—He who walks in the path of God and shuns that of the devil.

Question.—Which is the path of God? and which that of the devil?

Answer.—Virtue is the path of God, and vice that of the devil.

Question.—What constitutes virtue? and what vice?

Answer.—Humata, hukhtâ, and hvarshta, *i.e.*, good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, constitute virtue, and dushmata, duzukhta, and duzvarshta, *i.e.*, evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds constitute vice.

Question —What constitute humatâ, hukhta, and hvarshta, *i.e.*, good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, and dushmata, duzukhta, and duzvarshta, *i. e.*, evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds?

Answer—Honesty, charity, and truthfulness constitute

the former, and dishonesty, stinginess, and falsehood constitute the latter.

From this dialogue it will be seen that a man who acquires humata, hukhta, and hvarshta, *i.e.*, good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, and thereby practises honesty, charity, and truthfulness is considered to walk in the path of God, and therefore to be the most innocent and fortunate man. It also appears from the dialogue, that honesty, charity and truthfulness are considered, as it were, the three cardinal virtues by the Parsis. These virtues are enjoined in many parts of the Zend Avesta, and later Pehelvi books. Speaking on the subject of charity, here referred to, Dr. Haug, alluding to the injunctions of Viraf-nameh and Minokherad says, "It is regarded as the highest virtue by the Zoroastrians which circumstance explains the princely donations made by the Parsis up to the present day for public purposes."

In the Vendidad, three kinds of charitable deeds are especially mentioned as meritorious. I. To help the poor with money. II. To help a man to marry and thus to enable him to lead a peaceful and honourable life. III. To give education to those who are in search of it. If one were to look to the long list of Parsi charities, headed by that of that prince of Parsi charity, the first Parsi Baronet, he will find these three kinds of charity especially attended to.

As for the third virtue of truthfulness, it is well known

that there were three things that the ancient Persians were taught first ; to be a good rider ; to be a good archer ; and to speak the truth. Again the Parsi scriptures abound with precepts that teach a Parsi to love his neighbour as he loved himself. This is also a Christian doctrine. This is shown very forcibly from the fact that in a short prayer called Tan darusti, which is recited by a Parsi at the end of his usual prayers, he beseeches his Almighty to confer his blessings firstly upon his sovereign, then upon his fellow subjects, and lastly upon himself, his parents, wife, children, and other near relatives whose names he enumerates. He beseeches the Almighty in the following words which being written in the modern Persian will be easily understood by those who know the Hindustani language :—“ Yâ bâri Khodâ Khodâvand-i-âlamrâ, hamé Anjumanrâ dér bédâr, &c., *i. e.*, Oh Almighty God ! confer thy blessings upon my sovereign, upon my fellow subjects, upon myself, &c.”

I will here conclude my lecture by quoting two learned authors on the subject of the influence exerted by the writings of the Parsi law-giver upon the people of his time.

From a consideration of the great philosophical thoughts expressed in the Zoroastrian scriptures, Dr. Haug says of its founder that “Having regard to the early period at which he must have lived, long before the Greeks were acquainted with anything like philosophical speculation, we cannot expect him to have established a complete and

developed system of philosophical thoughts, which cannot even be said of Plato ; but the few philosophical ideas which may be discoverable in his sayings, show that he was a great and deep thinker, who stood far above his contemporaries, and even above the most enlightened men of many subsequent centuries. The great fame he enjoyed, even with the ancient Greeks and Romans who were so proud of their learning and wisdom, is a sufficient proof of the high and pre-eminent position he must once have occupied in the history of the progress of the human mind.

From a consideration of the moral notions inculcated in the Zoroastrian scriptures, Mr. Francis Power Cobbe in his "Studies new and old of ethical and social subjects" thus writes of the founder of the religion : " Should we in a future world be permitted to hold high converse with the great departed, it may chance that in that Bactrian sage who lived and taught almost before the dawn of history, we may find the spiritual patriarch, to whose lessons we have owed such a portion of our intellectual inheritance that we might hardly conceive what human belief would be now had Zoroaster never existed." This opinion has been endorsed by Miss Francis Cobbe in her "Essays moral and physical."

The lecturer concluded by thanking His Excellency for the kindness and honour done him by presiding on the occasion. (Applause.) He regarded it as an honour to the whole Parsi community, and attributed His Excellency's presence to his desire to know everything that concerned those placed under His Excellency's sway. (Applause.) The lecturer concluded by reading a letter from Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, who regretted his inability to attend the meeting owing to indisposition. He said it was a matter of gratification to the lecturer, and of congratulation to the entire Parsi community, that His Excellency should have honoured the occasion by his kind presence, and thus testified to the great interest he was always ready to evince in the well-being not only of the Parsis, but of all other communities in general. (Applause.) The lecturer then offered his best thanks to the audience.

The Governor then said—Gentlemen, the learned lecturer has noticed my presence here in terms of too high commendation because I felt it no more than my duty to be here, when invited so cordially as I was, and also because I have really had great pleasure in coming as well to show my respect to this community, as also to benefit by the most lucid lecture we have heard. (Applause.) I am sure, it must have struck you all that it is honourable to the professors of this ancient religion that they should make no secret of it, but be glad to explain to their fellow-citizens the principles on which they conduct their lives,

and on which they rest their faith. Of course we must all love our own religion, which we consider to be the best. At the same time, I think we cannot without pleasure trace the community of the source from which the principles of all our religions have proceeded; and still more the sentiments which we possess in common. I am sure I may say that although we may value above all things the principles of our own religion, still we must honour the high principles which have been explained to us as ruling in the Parsi religion, and I think I may go so far as to say this—that we recognize in the actions of the Parsi race their fidelity to those principles. (Hear, hear and applause.) There are, I conceive, in this great assembly representatives of a great many races and faiths, and I have no doubt I have expressed the sentiments which have brought them here, and with which they have heard this lecture. I trust the result of our meeting to night may tend to cement more closely the ties which bind us together, the respect with which we regard each other, and particularly the respect we feel for this community, which has done so much for our common nation.

His Excellency resumed his seat amidst much cheering.

The assembly then broke up.—The *Bombay Gazette*, 13th January, 1885.

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