

# **Dr. Kersey Antia's presentation at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in San Francisco on June 20, 1995**

The *Cambridge History of Iran* (Volume 2, 1985, 412-415) which is universally respected for its scholarly work and freedom from bias, also confirms that:

Religious toleration was a remarkable feature of Persian rule and there is no question that Cyrus himself was a liberal-minded promoter of this humane and intelligent policy. Many other examples of Cyrus' help in restoring Babylonian and alien shrines could be quoted, for this was part of a well thought-out policy. At Ur of the Chaldees, for example, a great centre for the worship of the Moon god Nanna, Cyrus installed a new gate in the great Temenos wall. ... he himself restored one of the temples.

... One remarkable characteristic which many historians have attributed to Cyrus is his clemency to fallen rulers in the true fashion of medieval chivalry. ...Cyrus used conquered princes to advise him in the administration of their former domains. The stories of the invariably merciful treatment of conquered kings by Cyrus are ... testimony to a new conscience in international affairs, for no conqueror would previously have desired such a reputation.

... The Gadatas ... may possibly have been the officer named as satrap in Ionia under Darius, who gave him a sharp reprimand for not having respected the privileges accorded to the priests of Apollo in a sanctuary near Magnesia. The only predecessor who can have rewarded the priests of Apollo in this district was Cyrus for whom 'a favourable oracle was worth more than a battle' This instance of intelligent diplomacy towards foreign priesthoods is one that is wholly in accord with what we know of Cyrus' policy when laying down the foundations of the Achaemenian empire.

We have it again from the indisputable authority of *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Vol. 2, 290-291) that:

... (The Persian) rule was one which induced racial and cultural fusion. They respected the institutions and religious beliefs of their subjects. They were rarely bloodthirsty, and often they were magnanimous.

...The impression that we get of the Persians in the Greek writers is in some ways a deceptive one. Too much emphasis is laid on what is pejorative -.... If we read Herodotus carefully, we find in him not only tolerance but a genuine respect for the Persian nobles who figure in his pages: for their courage, their loyalty, their feeling for beauty, and on occasion generosity. Aristocratically-minded Greeks like Xenophon found still more to admire. Cyrus the Younger, who fell at Cunaxa, was Xenophon's great hero, and in his *Cyropaedia* the Cyrus whom he had known can never have been far from his thoughts.... It was this almost Homeric sense of honour that made the most favourable impression on Greeks and may equally have won the admiration of the subject peoples.

As regards the emphasis on truth, it will be difficult to match the record of King Darius on preaching the importance of truth to his subjects, even on his cuneiform inscriptions, the advice he gives about truth is so similar to that given by Zoroaster himself in the Gathas. When Herodotus, whose bias for his own Greek people is very visible, says that truthfulness was one of the three essential things taught to the Persian princess, the others being archery and horsemanship. Therefore, truthfulness formed the very basis of the Persian religion as well as Persian rule. Even today Zoroastrians are known for their truthfulness and tolerance of others.

Zoroastrians have excelled in almost all major professions. Since the advent of modernity, and one of the for their professional excellence is the strict adherence to truthfulness so vehemently preached by their prophet Zoroaster. The most important Zoroastrian prayer is about truth and it declares: "Truth is good. Truth is best. Truth is happiness. Happiness comes to those who attain through truth the state of supreme truthfulness." Zoroaster describes "the Lord as of the same temperament with the best truth." (Yasna 28.8). Zoroaster emphasizes the connection between truth and tolerance since truth will set us free from our prejudices and hostility to others. "Where shall there be protection instead of injury?" he muses. "Where shall mercy take place? Where truth which attains this pinnacle?" (Yasna 51.4) It is not surprising therefore that the Zoroastrians to this day continue to practice truth in their professional and personal endeavors. The Bible say that "the laws of the Medes and Persians never change," and today's Zoroastrians have tried to maintain this

ancient reputation.

I find myself particularly privileged and lucky to have found myself in the role of a Zoroastrian priest as well as a clinical psychologist in full-time private practice. I may not be exaggerating when I say that I had as much opportunity as a psychologist to practice the dictates of my faith as I had as a Zoroastrian priest. Because the way to attain Godhood and salvation in Zoroastrianism is through developing good mind (*Vohumana*), good thinking (*Asha Vahishta*), benevolent authority (*Khshathra Vairya*), congenial and helpful disposition (*Spenta Armaiti*), and perfect physical and psychological well being (*Haurvatat*), I can practice these principles by freeing the mind gone wrong.