

Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 262:

Hello all Tele Class friends:

Many of you have asked me: Why I should pray in Avesta/Pazand language I do not understand?

Such questions have been asked all the times by our well meaning Humdins.

In the past, some attempts were made by writing Gujarati Monajats which we used to sing every day in our beloved Cama Institute.

But the best answer to this question was given by none other than one of our greatest Avesta/Pahlavi Scholar and prolific writer, Shams-Ul-Ulama Dr. Dasturji Maneckji Dhalla, Vada Dastur of Karachi. One of his very wonderful books is: *Saga of a Soul -- An Autobiography*, which was written by him in Gujarati and was translated later on in English and is available at: <http://www.avesta.org/dhalla/saga.htm>

which I highly recommend to all of you to read. It gives details of his life in a very lucid and detailed manner.

In its Chapter LXI : MY FAITH IN DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS (please see the attached file and please read it),

he gives a detailed background about attempts by our scholars to compose and sing prayers in Gujarati with accompaniment of a Harmonium; however, the orthodox Parsis really criticized these efforts and eventually it died down.

His dear wife always kept after him to write a book of Zoroastrian prayers in English and finally after 45 years from the time he wanted to write such a book, he wrote the book of Daily Zoroastrian Prayers in English: *Homage Unto Ahura Mazda*, which is available at:

<http://www.zarathushtra.com/z/article/dhalla/>

and it is a wonderful book of daily Zoroastrian Prayers in English which our youths would really like it.

Those who participated in our 17 Tele Classes will remember that at the end of each Tele Class, we always had a cyber Hum Bandagi with an English Zoroastrian Prayer from Dasturji Dhalla's above book.

To all parents and guardians: please look up this book and make sure the young ones also look it over.

It would be great if all of us have a family prayer from this book each day.

So today, we will present one of these prayers from this book and hope you enjoy it:

Why I should Pray in Avesta - Dasturji Dhalla's excellent alternative - *Homage Unto Ahura Mazda!*

Dasturji Dhalla grew up as a very orthodox Zarathushtri. During his stay in NY and USA for his Ph. D. studies, he experienced the free US society and came in contact with many people

with varied backgrounds. During this period, he started to open his mind and slowly drifted to become an enlightened person with lofty ideals. On his return to Karachi, he was appointed the Vada (Chief) Dastur of Karachi and Sindh province. Many of our NA friends from Karachi speak very highly of him and he used to teach religious classes to them. He was invited to give lectures to many groups. During his first visit to Mumbai for a lecture series, orthodox Parsis threw rotten eggs on the stage and gave a very hard time to him for his enlightened thoughts on religion.

In one of his prayers in his above book, he talks about orthodoxy. Today, we present this prayer by Dasturji on orthodoxy:

Part III(b) Prayer 20 - Orthodoxy courts purities (immaturities) of dogmatic theology, casuistry (sophistry) and irrational formalism

All communities are hydra-headed. They have their orthodox and their reformers, fanatics and sober-minded persons, visionaries and men of commonsense, mystics and rationalists, hypocrites and sincere persons.

The orthodox see not the absurdity of remaining in bondage to the customs of the infant humanity, when it was in swaddling clothes. They are wedded to the beliefs and practices, good and bad, that have come down to them through a long past and whose origin lies buried in obscurity. Blindly do they believe in the dogmas of the bygone days of their primitive ancestors. Stubbornly do they refuse to deliver themselves from the yoke of bigotry fostered by priestcraft.

The mere mention of reform acts upon them like a red rag on a bull. They are daggers drawn over the controversy with the reformers. They indulge in hair-splitting purities. Charlatanry thrives on credulity and superstition.

Save me, my Savior, from bigoted narrowness and sectarian exclusiveness. Let me not take the form for the substance. Let me not live according to the letter of religion, but according to its spirits. Let me see that it is wrong to assert fanatically that whatever is, is right. Let me wisely see that there is much that is wrong and it has to be righted. Let me always unswervingly aim at accuracy and truth in my research work.

Let me always strive to be just to those with whom I differ. Let me put myself in the place of those who differ from me and know and understand their views that I may be tolerant and forgiving in my dealings with them. Above all, let me always remember that abuse is neither argument nor logic.

Zarathushtra, the wisest priest of my religion, does not forcibly exact implicit, mechanical obedience from me to his teachings. He does not impose his prophetic yoke on my thought, but leaves me freedom of thought to exercise my will freely.

May the breath of Vohu Manah, Good Mind, blow the mists of superstition and credulity that generate orthodoxy, from my mind and illumine it with the gleams of

the sunshine of needful reform. May he, the premier archangel of Ahura Mazda, so guide me that I may not be impervious to the light of the new age. May he prevent me from blindly holding to the old order of the dead past. May he inspire me to move with the times.

([Dasturji Dr. Dhalla – *Homage Unto Ahura Mazda Part III\(b\) Prayer 20:*](https://www.zarathushtra.com/z/article/dhalla/ch3b/iiib20.htm)

<https://www.zarathushtra.com/z/article/dhalla/ch3b/iiib20.htm>)

SPD Comments

1. Prayers in this Dasturji Dhalla's book cover all types of subjects of our daily life. It is a great compendium of short daily Zoroastrian prayers in English.
2. It removes the usual complain that I do not understand what I am praying.
3. Dasturji says in the attached background chapter of his Autobiography:
"On receiving and utilising these, many coreligionists wrote to me stating that, despite all their honest efforts, when they had simply failed to have any desire to pray in Avesta, which they could not understand, they had turned in despair to Christian prayers. But now that they had found Zoroastrian prayers in a comprehensible language they had started using them every day."

What a wonderful tribute to Dasturji's book.

4. As I mentioned in my previous WZSE, our prayers are a private communication between us and Dadar Ahura Mazda! They can be a simple Yatha and Ashem, they can be a Kusti prayer, they can be our Daily Farajyaat, they can be singing Gathas, they can be our thoughts in our language and words, etc..

Dasturji Dhalla's book is one more beautiful aid to all who wants to pray in English.

May the Flame of Fellowship, Love, Charity and Respect for all burn ever eternal in our hearts so we can do HIS work with humility, diligence and eternal enthusiasm!

In HIS service 24/7!

Atha Jamyaat, Yatha Aafrinaamahi! (May it be so as we wish!)

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli

Dasturji Dhalla.JPG

