

Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 263: Zarathushtra by Shri Rabindranath Tagore

Hello all Tele Class friends:

Our own late Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani's father, D. J. Irani translated the Gathas of our Prophet Zarathushtra and published as: The Gathas – The Hymns of Zarathushtra (www.zarathushtra.com). The Forward to this wonderful book was given by none other than the Bengali sage, Shri Rabindranath Tagore. Author of Gitanjali and its "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse", he became in 1913 the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Shri Rabindranath Tagore had a great respect and admiration for Zarathushtra and has written about it in many of his works. He knew D. J. Irani and Prof. Kaokhosrov well and was very willing to write the forward to his Gatha book.

So, in this WZSE #263, we will present first few paragraphs of Shri Rabindranath Tagore's Forward to this book and hope you all enjoy reading it:

Zarathushtra by Shri Rabindranath Tagore

[\(Please hear the attached .mp3 file for its recitation\)](#)

The most important of all outstanding facts of Iranian history is the religious reform brought about by Zarathushtra. He was the first man we know who gave a definitely moral character and direction to religion, and at the same time preached the doctrine of monotheism, which offered an eternal foundation of reality to goodness as an ideal of perfection. All religions of the primitive type try to keep men bound with regulations of external observances. These, no doubt, have the hypnotic effect of vaguely suggesting a realm of right and wrong; but the dimness of their light produces phantasms leaving men to aberrations.

Zarathushtra was the greatest of all the pioneer prophets who showed the path of freedom to men, the freedom of moral choice, the freedom from blind obedience to unmeaning injunctions, freedom from the multiplicity of shrines which draw our worship away from the single-minded chastity of devotion. To most of us it sounds like a truism to-day when we are told that the moral goodness of a deed comes from the goodness of intention. But it is a truth which once came to a man like a revelation of light in the darkness and has not yet reached all the obscure corners of humanity.

There are men we still see around us who fearfully follow, hoping thereby to gain merit, the path of blind formalisms, which have no living moral source in the mind. This will make us understand the greatness of Zarathushtra. Though surrounded by believers in magical rites, he proclaimed in those dark days of unreason, that religion has its truth in its moral significance, not in external practices of imaginary value; that it is to uphold man in his life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

The outer expression of truth reaches its white light of simplicity through its inner realization. True simplicity is the physiognomy of perfection. In the primitive stage of spiritual growth, when man is dimly aware of the mystery of the infinite in his life and the world, when he does not fully know the inward character of his relationship with this truth, his first feeling is either that of dread or of a greed of gain. This drives him into wild exaggeration in worship, into

frenzied convulsion of ceremonialism. But in Zarathushtra's teachings, which are best reflected in his Gathas, we have hardly any mention of the ritualism of worship. Conduct and its moral motives, such as Vohumano, Asha and Aramaiti, have received almost the sole attention in them.

The orthodox Persian form of worship in ancient Iran included animal sacrifices and offering of haoma to the daevas. That all this should be discountenanced by Zarathushtra not only shows his courage, but the strength of his realization of the Supreme Being as Spirit. We are told that it has been mentioned by Plutarch: "Zarathushtra taught the Persians to sacrifice to Ahura Mazda 'vows and thanksgivings.'" The distance between faith in the efficacy of bloodstained magical rites and cultivation of moral and spiritual ideals as the true form of worship is immense. It is amazing to see how Zarathushtra was the first among men who crossed this distance with a certainty of realization which imparted such a fervor of faith in his life and his words. The truth which tilled his mind was not a thing borrowed from books or received from teachers. He did not come to it by following a prescribed path of tradition. It flashed upon him as an illumination of his entire life, almost like a communication to his personal self, and he proclaimed the utmost immediacy of his knowledge in these words:

"When I conceived of Thee, O Mazda, as the very First and the Last, as the most Adorable One, as the Father of Good Thought, as the Creator of Truth and Right, as the Lord Judge of our actions in life, then I made a place for Thee in my very eyes"-

Yasna, 31-4. (Translation by D. J. Irani.)

It was the direct stirring of his soul which made him say:-

"Thus do I announce the Greatest of all. I weave my songs of praise for Him through Truth, helpful and beneficent to all that live. Let Ahura Mazda listen to them with His Holy Spirit, for the Good Mind instructed me to adore Him; by His Wisdom let Him teach me about what is best."- Yasna, 45-6.

(Shri Rabindranath Tagore – Forward to the book: *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra* by D. J. Irani:

<http://www.zarathushtra.com/z/gatha/dji/The%20Gathas%20-%20DJI.pdf>)

SPD Comments

1. Shri Rabindranath Tagore wrote many books, poems and even a drama. He was an ardent admirer of Zarathushtra as can be seen from above forward.
2. Another place he stated about the Universal Religion of Zarathushtra:

"Zarathustra's voice is still a living voice, not alone a matter of academic interest for historical scholars who deal with the facts of the past; nor merely the guide of a small community of men in the daily details of their life. Rather, of all teachers Zarathustra was the first who addressed his words to all humanity, regardless of distance of space or time. He was not like a cave-dweller who, by some chance of friction, had lighted a lamp and, fearing lest it could not be shared with all, secured it with a miser's care for his own domestic use. But he was the watcher in the night, who stood on the lonely peak facing the East and broke out singing the paeans of

light to the sleeping world when the sun came out on the brim of the horizon. The Sun of Truth is for all, he declared-its light is to unite the far and the near.” (Shri Rabindranath Tagore – *Religion of Man* – Pages 62 – 63. Please see the attached file for its cover)

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!

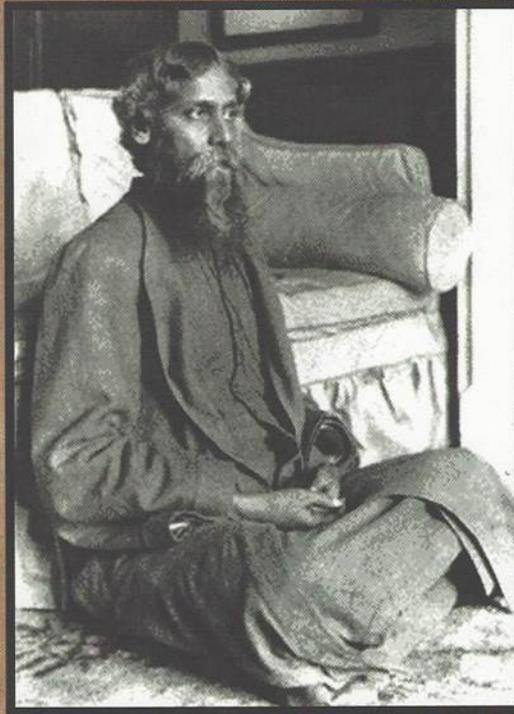
In HIS service 24/7!

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

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli

Tagore Religion of Man

THE RELIGION OF MAN



RABINDRANATH TAGORE
NOBEL LAUREATE FOR LITERATURE

FOREWORD BY PHILIP NOVAK