

Mistree, Firoza Punthakey, and Cashmira Vatcha Bengalli, eds. *The Collected Scholarly Writings of Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal Vol. 1*. Mumbai: Parzor Foundation, 2018. 726 pp. (ISBN-978-81-910957-3-9)

The collapse of the Sasanian Empire was a significant step in the relations between Iran and India as well as between Iran and the Far East. The political migration of Yazdgird's family, the last Sasanian king, to China is a noteworthy part of the claim. Also, communities of Zoroastrians migrated by force to India. These people are now called Parsis (which means those who come from Persia). *Qeşsa-ye Sanjān* is an indicator of the Parsis' settlement in India. There is debate over the exact date of this exodus, whether it was 716 CE, 775, or the 780s (Hinnells 2008). Their secure life and affirmations of their religion are the two main reasons why India mingled with Zoroastrian resurrection and most of the Zoroastrian heroes became entangled with India (Akbarzadeh 2017, 53). Zartosht-nama (1959, 96) refers to a final savior from this region.

Mobeds (priests) not only made new changes in sources, oral and written, due to the new settlement but also they preserved the Zoroastrian heritage generation after generation in India. Despite their sacred texts, they have kept the "Pahlavi language" as their "identity." It is known that A. H. Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805), a French scholar, learned the language from the Mobeds (Dasturs, or Senior Priests: Kāvus and Dārāb) for the first time as a non-Zoroastrian. He brought Zoroastrian heritage to Europe, and the world became familiar with this golden treasury. History confirms Dastur's role in preserving the past Zoroastrian heritage in modern times.

In 2018, the book titled *The Collected Scholarly Writing of Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal*, edited by Firoza Punthakey Mistree and Cashmira Vatcha Bengali, was published by the Parzor Foundation with the support of UNESCO and Wadia Group. The second volume will be published soon, and its content covers the correspondences of Dastur Kotwal with his contemporaries like Prof. M. Boyce, the late Iranologist of SOAS.

Dastur Firoze Meherji Pirojshah Kotwal was born in Navsari to a long line of Bhagariā priests (tracing them to the first group of priests who arrived in Navsari) on 12 December 1935. Despite his high religious position, he is one of the prominent experts of Zoroastrianism, who has worked with most of the well-known Iranologists and scholars of Zoroastrianism; he delivered lectures in many distinguished institutes. His stay at Colorado and Cambridge universities and at SOAS can attest to this (p. 114).

The first volume includes 726 pages. The volume starts with a short forward by J. W. Boyd, a preface by Firoza P. Mistree, an introduction by Dr. Shernaz Cama, the Director General of the Parzor Foundation, and a list of publications and honors conferred on Dastur.

The book can be divided into two main parts. The first chapter (to p. 340), Part I-II (by Firoza P. Mistree) is about Dastur's life, his parents, birth, childhood, relatives, education, narratives, his stay at the Cama Institute, relative priests, H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram, and his meetings with prominent people. His meeting with the Queen of Iran (Shah-banu 1975) can be seen in prestigious photos between pages (pp. 119-121). However, the portrayal of Dastur Kotwal appears very spiritual, modest and amicable in all the photos.

The second part covers the scholarly articles of Dastur. His high knowledge on Zoroastrian rituals is a point that most of the articles stress in this issue. "Zoroastrian Bāj and Drōn" ritual is the first article (co-authored with M. Boyce). The article philologically stresses the religious terms of Zoroastrianism. Also, the readers can find a connection between nīrang (incantation) and Bāj (speech, holy word) semantically (p. 345). According to the article, the two terms can be synonyms. The article stresses a spiritual thematic connection between Bāj and drōn yašt (for example, Bāj ī nān xwardan).

In the next article (co-authored with J. W. Boyd), Dastur explains Pārsi Bāj of Mihragān as a ritual offering to Mihr Yazad (God) which is consecrated once a year, on Mihr's day of Mihr month. For the first time, Dastur in "the Zoroastrian Paragnā" gives detailed information on this rite (p. 309). "The major prefatory ceremony to all high liturgies in the Dar-i- Mihr is Paragnā serving as the foundation for the Yasna, Visperad, and Vendidad," he writes. The readers become familiar with the purification of "ālāt" by being cleansed with fire, ash, and water in the later part of the article (p. 404 ff.).

In the next part (446 ff.), Dastur jointly with Jamsheed K. Choksy explains "the Satomi or stūm Ritual's History and Functions." Stūm generally means "to praise, to profess." The ritual may be conducted in any ritually clean area such as a Zoroastrian house or fire temple. In his wonderful note (p. 485 ff.) on Zoroastrian Nīrangdīn Ritual and an Old Pahlavi text, he writes: "This Zoroastrian ritual, as performed in Zoroastrian places of worship, involves the rite of consecrating pure water and bull's urine and is the foundation of all purity connected with the life of a devout Zoroastrian". To round things out, "Initiation into the Zoroastrian Priesthood" (p. 497 ff.), "The Parsi Dakhma (Zoroastrian tomb, a place for keeping dead bodies)," "Datuš and the Frāgām (twice Zoroastrian ceremony)" (p. 526 ff.), "Select Ritual Aspects of the Gāthās (Zoroaster's hymns) and their Continuity in the Later Tradition" (p. 540 ff.), "Prayer" (p. 553 ff.) and other known Zoroastrian rituals are described by Dastur. The content of the book is the reason it should be called an encyclopaedia of Zoroastrian studies.

Conclusion

The book *The Collected Scholarly Writing of Dastur Firoz M. Kotwal* has been recently published in high quality in New Delhi. The cover, paper, and color can be a part of the claim, at least to its physical quality. The quality of its content, however, is more than outstanding. In addition to the scholarly content, the first chapter includes many lovely photos of Dastur and others; few of these photos have been seen so readily, such as some photos together with M. Boyce. Looking at the second chapter, which is the more scientific section, that surveys Dastur's articles, along with the written content, many Zoroastrian rites have been documented by photos. Each rite includes some photos where Dastur or mobeds perform the ceremonies. Also, this collection has a beautiful glossary (p. 652 ff.) which is most useful for researchers and students. Furthermore, a full bibliography (p. 696 ff.) can be a handbook for those who want to study Oriental or Iranian studies. Finally, an Index (p. 703 ff.) is a useful tool to find specific terms or topics. It is tough to find a weak point in this book or write an explanatory note; it is a perfect encyclopedia.

References

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