



Persian Prophet, Zarathustra



پندارنیک - گفتارنیک - کردارنیک

Good Thoughts - Good Words - Good Deeds

Zoroastrianism (or Zarathustrianism, also sometimes known as Mazdaism) was presented by Zarathustra (Zoroaster) in Persia as late as 600 BC. Zoroastrianism combines elements of monotheism and dualism. Zoroastrianism is uniquely important in the history of religion because of its formative links to both Western and Eastern religious traditions. As "the oldest of the revealed credal religions", Zoroastrianism had more influence on mankind directly or indirectly than any other faith. The holy book of Zoroastrianism is the Avesta.

John R. Hinnells, Persian Mythology

“This doctrine, Zoroastrianism, has been a source of influence for both Eastern and Western beliefs - Hinduism and Buddhism in the East, and Judaism and Christianity in the West.”

Influence of Zoroastrianism in Other Religions

Background

The exilic period begins at 597 B.C. when the first group of the Judeans were deported by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar to Babylonia and ends in the year 539-538 B.C. when Cyrus, the king of Persia conquered Babylonia, issued a rescript granting them the right to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. Henceforth, the contact between the two nations and interaction between the two religions ensued. Many Jews were returned to Palestine and for two centuries remained

under the Persian protection.

Darius (522-486 B.C.) divided his vast empire into twenty satrapies and Palestine remained part of the fifth satrapy, with the city of Damascus as its administrative center. For Palestine, Darius appointed one of the David's descendants, Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar) as its governor, and ordered to comply fully with the Cyrus' decree to rebuild the Jerusalem's temple. Darius, whose era coincided with the Hebrew era of Prophets Ezra, Haggai and Zechariah, ordered all the treasures of Jerusalem that Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylonia, be returned to Palestine (Ezra 6:1-11) for the reconstruction of the temple, that was finished in the sixth year of his reign (Ezra 6:15).

By the order of Artaxerxes I (Ardeshir I) (465-424 B.C.) the walls of Jerusalem were built, and two of the royal court officials, Nehemiah and Ezra were commissioned to compile the Judaic dispensation (445-393 B.C.). Finally reconstruction of the second temple was completed during the time of Artaxerxes II (400 B.C.).

Impacts

Zoroastrianism, through its cultural and socio-political influence carried the seed of a world conception that was previously non-existent and even inconceivable to the affected people, namely the existence of a monotheistic divinity, which is all good, and all light. A divinity who created a dualistic physicality which for its very existence required dual aspects, for each aspect is only definable and may be experienced in the full context of itself vs. its opposite. And finally a conception that gives our lives purpose and meaning, namely being progressive and working for the Good.

Effectively, this Zarathustrian influence generated a major paradigm shift in the people's thoughts at that time and for generations since. It is therefore quite justifiable to claim that Zarathustra's world conception and teachings have affected the Western thought and civilization both directly and indirectly.

Although the teachings of prophet Zarathustra were primarily spiritual, and substantially devoid of mythological and ritualistic beliefs, Zoroastrianism, the religion that was based on his teachings incorporated many aspects of pre-Zarathustra traditions as well as novel and creative approaches to ritualism.

When Zarathustrian conquerors and kings, primarily Cyrus the Great and his descendants expanded the Persian Empire to include much of the known world at that time, inevitably Zarathustrian encountered people of other faiths. While Cyrus true to Zarathustra's teachings, was very respectful of other beliefs and allowed them to flourish of their own accord, and even supported them; it was inevitable that Zoroastrianism as the dominant faith would influence the conquered peoples, perhaps more so than be influenced by them.

The priestly cast, namely the Magi, also did their utmost to influence other people and guide them to the path of righteousness and Asha. After all, this was a moral duty, (*see Ahuna Vairya prayer in Avesta, the Holy book of Zoroastrianism*), to teach others about the path of Asha, and to show them the light of Ahura Mazda, the Universal Divine.

In this exchange of thought and belief, what has obviously been transferred has been some of the visibly manifest aspects of the religion, namely rituals and myths. This is why when the influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism and Christianity is studied, time and again we return to.

Paul William Roberts, In Search of the birth of Jesus - The Real Journey of the Magi:
"Without Zarathustra there would be no Christ. He was the bridge, and the Romans burnt it...."

J. Duchesne-Guillemin: "First, the figure of Satan, originally a servant of God, appointed by Him as His prosecutor, came more and more to resemble Ahriman, the enemy of God. Secondly, the figure of the Messiah, originally a future King of Israel who would save his people from oppression, evolved, in Deutero-Isaiah for instance, into a universal Savior very similar to the Iranian Saoshyant. Other points of comparison between Iran and Israel include the doctrine of the millennia; the Last Judgment; the heavenly book in which human actions are inscribed; the Resurrection; the final transformation of the earth; paradise on earth or in heaven; and hell." by

The following extensively lists quotations from other scholars to emphasize the same point, as well as to elaborate on many of these similarities. However, what is often missed in these comparisons is the effect that such overwhelming influence would have on shaping the faith, psyche and spiritual chemistry of the affected people. Namely, such infiltration of mythology and ritualism will inevitably define a framework of what is conceivable and possible vs. what was once inconceivable and consequently not part of the world conception of that people. Let us first study some of these quotations.

A.V. Williams Jackson, Zoroastrianism Studies:

"The typical passage is found in the Hptokht Nask (Yt. 22. 1-36; and compares Vistps Yasht, Yt. 24. 53-64). For the first three nights after the breath has left the body the soul hovers about the lifeless frame and experiences joy or sorrow according to the deeds done in this life. On the dawn of the fourth day the soul takes flight from earth..."

Note: compare this to the crucifixion of Jesus on Good Friday, and his resurrection on Monday (the dawn of the fourth day).

"The author has attempted in his article in the Biblical World to show how much the Messiah-idea in Judaism and the Saoshyant-idea in Mazdaism, taught by Zarathustra himself, resembles each other."

"The similarity between it (the Zarathustrian doctrine of the future life and the end of the world) and the Christian doctrine is striking and deserve more attention on the side of Christian theology, even though much has been written on this subject."

Rustom Masani, Zoroastrianism: The Religion of the Good Life:

'To all good thoughts, words, and deeds (belongs) Paradise, so is it manifest to the pure.' This is the simple admonition given in the prayer Vispa Humata."

Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a thousand faces:

"Persian belief was reorganized by the prophet Zarathustra according to a strict dualism of good and evil principles, light and dark, angels and devils. This crisis profoundly affected not only the Persians, but also the subject Hebrew beliefs, and thereby (centuries later) Christianity."

James Henry Breasted, The Dawn of Consciousness:

P. 345

"There is plenty of evidence that the post-exilic religious development of the Hebrews was affected by the teachings of Zarathustra, and that among the international influences to which the development of Hebrew morals was exposed, we must include also the teachings of the great Persian Prophet, Zarathustra."

John Gray, Near Eastern Mythology:

P. 16

"The Persians had their own mythology, or rather their own conception of the natural and supernatural order, formulated by the religion of Zarathustra. This cosmic philosophy had an effect on late Jewish thought and Messianic expectations."

P. 127

"The development of the concept of Satan as the personal power of evil, who had his counterpart in the archangel Michael, the champion of cause of man in God's purpose of creation, was developed under the influence of Persian Zarathustrian belief in the two conflicting spirits of good and evil"

Ninian Smart & Richard D. Hecht, Sacred texts of the world - A universal anthology:

"The Zarathustrian dualism between good and evil was to have an impact upon ancient Israel, Judaism, Christianity and Islam."

R.C. Zaehner, The Dawn & Twilight of Zoroastrianism:

P. 20

"Meanwhile in her encounters with the Medes and Persians, Israel had found a kindred monotheistic creed in the religion of Prophet Zarathustra, and one of her own Prophets, Isaiah, did not hesitate to salute Cyrus, her liberator, as the Lord's anointed. From this religion too she learnt teachings concerning the afterlife altogether more congenial to her soul than had been the gloomy prospect offered her by her own tradition, teachings to which she had been a stranger before."

P. 51-52

"An almost exact parallel to this solution of evil is to be found in the Manual of Discipline, perhaps the most interesting document of the Dead Sea sect of Qumran. That Judaism was deeply influenced by Zoroastrianism during and after the Babylonian captivity can scarcely be questioned, and the extraordinary likeness between the Dead Sea text and the Gathic conception of the nature and origin of evil, as we understand it, would seem to point to direct borrowing on the Jewish side."

P. 57

"Zarathushtra's doctrine of rewards and punishment, of an eternity of bliss and an eternity of woe allotted to good and evil men in another life beyond the grave is so strikingly similar to Christian teaching that we cannot fail to ask whether here at least there is not a direct influence at work. The answer is surely 'Yes', for the similarities are so great and the historical context is so neatly apposite that it would be carrying scepticism altogether too far to refuse to draw the obvious conclusion."

P. 58

"Thus from the moment the Jews first made contact with the Iranians they took over the typical Zarathustrian doctrine of an individual afterlife in which rewards are to be enjoyed and punishments endured. This Zarathustrian hope gained ever surer ground during the inter-testamentary period, and by the time of Christ it was upheld by the Pharisees, whose very name some scholars have interpreted as meaning 'Persian', that is, the sect most open to Persian influence."

P. 171

"One is tempted to say that all that was vital in Zarathushtra's message passed into Christianity through the Jewish exiles."

P. 172

"It is impossible to revive a religion once the well-springs of the original revelation have been allowed to dry up, and once the sacred language itself has become so sacred that it is no longer understood even by those who set themselves up as its official interpreters."

Leo Trepp, A History of the Jewish Experience P. 54

"How did the idea of two opposing forces (Satan & God) originate? It too is the result of conditions during the Hellenistic age, a period when ideas were exchanged widely among various religions and nations. The principle of dualism came from Zoroastrianism. This idea spread through the wide open Hellenistic world; the controversy between God and Satan is its reflection in Judaism."

P. 55

"The people have a heavenly representative, a guardian angel. This is a new concept of Zarathustrian origin. Previously the term `Malakh', angel, simply meant messenger of God."

Now Few words in Finnish about Zoroastrianism:

Zarathustralaisuus

Zarathustralaisuus on uskonto, jonka perusti profeetta Zarathustra Persiassa vuosien n. 2000 ennen ajanlaskua, ja se on ensimmäinen uskonto, joka uskoo yhteen jumalaan. Se on ensimmäinen monoteistinen uskonto, jolla on voimakkaita dualistisia piirteitä. Zarathustralaisuus oli Persian valtionuskonto 500-luvulta ennen ajanlaskumme alkua. Tuona aikana Zarathustralaisuus levisi Lähi-itään, Keski-Aasiaan, Kiinaan ja myös osaan nykyiseen Itä-Eurooppaan.

Zarathustralaisuus vaikutti merkittävästi juutalaisuuteen, kristinuskoon ja islamiin. Islaminuskoiset laskevat zarathustralaiset *kirjan uskontoihin*, joihin kuuluvat myös juutalaiset ja kristityt. Juutalaiset omaksuivat zarathustralaisen dualismin, joka erottaa hyvän ja pahan jyrkästi toisistaan. Näin syntyi länsimainen käsitys pahasta (Saatanasta).

Zarathustralaisuuden vaikutus juutalaisiin tulee ilmi Vanhassa testamentissa. Juutalaiset pitivät zarathustralaista kuningasta Kyyros II Suurta messiaana. Jesajan kirja (45:1) käyttää Kyyroksesta kreikan kielen sanaa Χριστός (khristos), joka tarkoittaa voideltua kuningasta.

Zarathustralainen maailmankuva vaikutti myös kristinuskon kehittymiseen. Vaikutteet tulevat ilmi kristinuskon eskatologiassa ja käsityksessä kuolemanjälkeisestä elämästä. Sana "paratiisi" on persiankielestä, joka on tullut suomen ja eurooppalaisiin kieliin. Se on peräisin "Avesta":sta, joka on zarathustralaisten pyhä kirja. Avesta on zarathustralaisten pyhien kirjojen kokoelma. Avestan tuonti Eurooppaan 1700-luvun lopulla vaikutti koko uskontotieteen kehitykseen. Avesta on kirjoitettu muinaispersialaisella avestan kielellä.

Zarathustralaisuus on edelleen elävä uskonto. Nykyisin zarathustralaisia yhteisöjä elää Iranissa Jazdin ja Kermanin maakunnissa sekä Intiassa, jossa heitä nimitetään parseiksi. Siirtolaisuuden myötä zarathustralaisia asuu nykyisin myös Pohjois-Amerikassa, Englannissa ja muualla Euroopassa. Suomeen zarathustralaisuus on saapunut maahanmuuttajien mukana. Iranissa zarathustralaisilla on tunnustettu asema vähemmistöuskontona. Tämä tarkoittaa jaettua paikkaa valtion parlamentissa juutalaisten kanssa.

Zarathustralainen uskonto korostaa dualistista erottelua hyvän ja pahan välillä. Zarathustralaisten pyhän kirjan, Avestan mukaan hyvää, totta ja oikeudenmukaista on se, mikä on luonnonmukaista. Luonnonjärjestys ilmenee kasvien, ihmisten ja eläinten välisenä sopusointuna. Oikeudenmukaista luonnonjärjestystä ylläpitää Jumalallinen Viisus Ahura Mazda (Viisas herra). Auringolla ja tulella

on zarathustralaisessa uskonnossa tärkeä rooli. Zarathustralaisten temppeleissä palaa ikuinen tuli, joka symbolisoi jumaluuden kipinää ihmisen sielussa.

Luonnonjärjestyksen vastakohdasta käytetään sanaa paha ja rappiota. Oikeuden- ja luonnon kanssa sopusoinnussa olevat teot edistävät ihmisten ja eläinten välistä harmoniaa, terveyttä ja hyvää mieltä. Luonnonvastaiset teot rikkovat luonnon ja ihmisten välistä harmoniaa. Ne tuottavat sairauksia ja surumielisyyttä. Uskomuksen, toiminnan tai tiedon arvo riippuu siitä edistääkö se elämälle myönteisiä asioita: iloluontoisuutta, terveyttä ja hyvää mieltä.

Ihminen joutuu tekemään elämässään valinnan kumpaa tietä hän seuraa: elämään johtavaa- vai rappioon johtavaa tietä. Avesta korostaa valinnan tekemisessä yksilön tahdon vapautta. Tämä tuodaan ilmi Avestassa seuraavalla tavalla (Jasna 30-2): "*Tutki selvästi näkevällä mielellä valintaa, jonka jokainen joutuu itse tekemään kahden vaihtoehdon välillä*".

Ihminen ei ole luonnostaan paha. Epäterveet ja surumieliset ajatukset saavat ihmiset toimimaan luontonsa vastaisesti. Zarathustran hymneissä esitetään seuraava näkemys valheen seuraajista: "Heidän mielensä oli sekava, kun he tekivät valintaa ja he valitsivat huonot ja epäterveet ajatukset. Näin he lankesivat väkivaltaan, sairaan miehen elämään." (Jasna 30-6).

Hyveet:

Zarathustralaisten kultainen sääntö kuuluu seuraavalla tavalla: "Ainoastaan sellainen luonne on hyvä, joka ei tee toiselle mitään sellaista, joka ei olisi sille itselleen mieluista tai hyväksi."

Hyvät ajatukset, hyvät sanat, hyvät teot.:

Zarathustralaisella totuuden seuraajalla on kolme tavoiteltavaa hyvettä:

- hyvät ajatukset (humata)
- hyvät sanat (hukhta)
- hyvät teot (hvaršta)

Hyvät ajatukset sisältävät veljeyden ihmiskuntaa kohtaan, sovussa elämisen muiden ihmisten kanssa ja koulutuksen.

Hyvät sanat tarkoittavat sopimusten pitämistä, rehellisyyttä ja pyrkimystä olla loukkaamatta muita.

Hyvät teot tarkoittavat puhtaan veden ja ruuan tuottamista apua tarvitseville, köyhien auttamista sekä yhteisön hyvinvoinnin ja vaurauden edistämistä.

Pelastajamyytti:

Zarathustran kritiikki vallitsevaa uskontoa kohtaan muistuttaa vahvasti Jeesuksen esittämää kritiikkiä Uudessa testamentissa.

Zarathustralaisten mukaan profeetta kehitteli ajatuksen "maailman pelastajista" (saošiants), joiden tehtävä on toimia opettajina ja ohjata maailmaa kohti "*totuuden inspiroimaa olemista*". Zarathustralaisen käsityksen mukaan maailmaan saapuu määrättyjen ajanjaksojen välein pelastaja, joka uudistaa vanhoja oppeja.

Vaikka Zarathustra puhuu Avestassa paljon ilomielisyyden ja hyvän mielen puolesta, ei Avesta lupaa maailman pelastajille helppoa osaa. Profeetta käy Avestassa keskustelua jumalallisen viisauden kanssa, seuraavin sanoin: "Kun minä ensimmäisen kerran tulini valaistuneeksi sinun sanoistasi, silloin minä ymmärsin, että ihmiskunnan puolesta toimiminen, tulee aiheuttamaan minulle kärsimystä."

Pyhät kuolemattomat

Jumala tuo itsensä esiin "pyhien kuolemattomien" (ameša spentas) kautta. Pyhiä kuolemattomia on toisinaan verrattu arkkienkeleihin, jotka muodostavat yhdessä jumalan kuusi puolta. Ne toimivat ihanteina, joita ihmisen tulee elämässään pyrkiä noudattamaan. Pyhät kuolemattomat taistelevat totuuden ja oikeuden puolesta.



Zarathustralaisten symboli Faravahar, kuvaa ihmisen sielua ja

- hyvää ajattelemista (humata)
- hyvää puhumista (hukhta)
- hyvää tekoa (hvaršta)



Zarathustralaisten symbolina hakaristi, joka kuvastaa nousevaa aurinkoa (*Garduneh-e Khoršid*).

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