

# EVIDENCE OF DUALIST VIEWS AMONG EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY PARSIS

Dr. Kersey Antia, Mar 6, 2020

It is often stated that the Parsis insisted on being monotheistic and resented being called dualists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to the western influence which is, however, hardly conceivable except for a few highly westernized ones as almost half of them were still living in the hinterland of Gujarat still following their traditional life or had more or less recently moved to Bombay still adhering to their traditional life and views. There were some fervent advocates of dualism amongst them even before the rise of the Boyce School such as J. E. Sanjana who even published a book (*Zoroaster and His World*, Union Press, Bombay) in 1947; for commending Ernst Herzfeld's book with the same title in order to emphasize Herzfeld's (and his own) strong views about Zoroastrianism being dualistic. He rightly attributes the contemporary Parsi tendency to regard Zoroastrianism as monistic to the very popular Theosophist School of the time, (p. 49) which was however, not a Western influence per se. Sanjana also quotes C.E.M. Joad's book, *God and Evil* (1962) to justify the dualistic teachings of Zarathushtra though Joad wrongly attributes its origin to Mani but we now know Zoroaster preceded Mani by two millennia or so. He also quotes University of California, Los Angeles Professor John Elov Boodin's works, *Three Interpretations of the Universe* (1934) and *Religion of Tomorrow* (1946), which will be worth reading even today. Boodin maintains what later writers have made it abundantly clear, that Plato and Plotinus held dualistic views under Persian influence and "the ethical dualism of the prophets became a metaphysical dualism through the contact of the Hebrews with the Persian religion during the Exile." (p. 420).

Sanjana concludes: "Indeed, it is something to feel proud for that the most recent researches in science and philosophy only fully confirm the conclusion of the prophet of Iran who saw deeper and further into the mysteries of being and non-being than any one born of man has since the beginning of recorded history." (p. 52). Since Sanjana disclaims being a scholar of Zoroastrian religion, history or "even" literature, his views may be representative of the general Parsi opinion."