

## **Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 200 – Mehergaan festival, Meher Yazata and breaking promise - Meher Yasht - Kardaa 1 - Verses 1 - 2**

Hello all Tele Class friends:

### **A Milestone for our WZSEs – 200th continuously Presented!**

When I was a graduate student in the Northwestern University Chemical Engineering, my thesis was an experimental one with hydrocarbons under very high pressure. With my Phillipino friend Ricky and a Yugoslavian friend Drago, we used to work in the same big room. The best times for such experiments were after 10 or so PM up to 3 to 4 AM sometimes. And each one of us had a radio going to keep us company.

At 12 mid-night, our favorite program: Moon River – will come on with the announcer starting: “Why do I love thee? I love thee not because of what you are, but because of what I am when I am with you!” Profound!

And then within the one hour broadcast, he would say: “Hey! Anybody out there listening? Or I am just talking to the wall!”

Sometimes, over the course of the last 199 weeks, I felt the same way. Out of the 900+ people that we send these WZSEs, I have a handful of loyal followers who comment on different WZSEs – just a handful! And then when I am out of town in a gathering, some Humdins will come to me and comment: “I really like your WZSEs and read them every week!”

Let’s see how many will reply!

### **Mehergaan Festival:**

By Shehenshahi calendar, on coming Tuesday, 2/28/17, it will be Meher Maah and Meher Roj, a Parabh Day – the famous Mehergaan festival! We Parsis usually just have a Parabh Jashan and that’s it! Our Irani brethren on the other hand really know the significance of the festival and celebrate it with almost the same pomp as Nowruz. (see the attached photo).

However, since most of them follow Fasli (seasonal) calendar, the correct seasonal time for Mehergaan is around October 2nd.

Our very good friends Niloufer and Rohinton Hathiram, St. Petersburg, always have a Jashan on this day as a family tradition. And one of my niece was born on this day and you guess her name: Meher! Happy birthday Meher!

According to Firdowsi Shahnameh, on this day, King Faredoon vanquished evil Zohak and confined him on Mount Damavand.

Mehergaan was celebrated in an extravagant style at [Persepolis](#). Not only was it the time for harvest, but it was also the time when the taxes were collected. Visitors from different parts of the [Persian Empire](#) brought gifts for the king all contributing to a lively festival.

During pre-Islamic and early Islamic Iran, Mehergaan was celebrated with the same magnificence and pageantry as [Nowruz](#). It was customary for people to send or give their king, and each other, gifts. Rich people usually gave gold and silver coins, heroes and

warriors gave horses while others gave gifts according to their financial power and ability, even as simple as an apple. Those fortunate enough would help the poor with gifts.

Gifts to the royal court of over ten thousand gold coins were registered. If the gift-giver needed money at a later time, the court would then return twice the gift amount. Kings gave two audiences a year: one audience at **Nowruz** and other at Mehergaan. During the Mehergaan celebrations, the king wore a fur robe and gave away all his summer clothes.

For this celebration, the participants wear new clothes and set a decorative, colorful table (see the attached photo). The sides of the tablecloth are decorated with dry **marjoram**. A copy of the **Khorddeh Avesta**, a mirror and a *sormeh-dan* (a traditional eyeliner or **kohl**) are placed on the table together with rosewater, sweets, flowers, vegetables and fruits, especially pomegranates and apples, and nuts such as almonds or pistachios. A few silver coins and lotus seeds are placed in a dish of water scented with marjoram extract.

A burner is also part of the table setting for *kondor/loban* (**frankincense**) and *espan* (seeds of *Peganum harmala*, Syrian rue) to be thrown on the flames.

At lunch time when the ceremony begins, everyone in the family stands in front of the mirror to pray. **Sharbat** is drunk and then—as a good omen—*sormeh* is applied around the eyes. Handfuls of wild marjoram, lotus and sugar plum seeds are thrown over one another's heads while they embrace one another.

In 1960s the Postal Service in **Tehran** issued a series of stamps to commemorate Mehergaan Festival.

For further reading on Mehergaan: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehregan>  
[http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Mehregan\\_Thanksgiving\\_Festival.htm](http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Mehregan_Thanksgiving_Festival.htm)

**We in NA should celebrate Mehergaan festival with our Irani brethren at its correct seasonal time on October 2nd. It can be a very good Children Class material!**

## **Meher Yazata and Breaking a Promise:**

[Kangaji in his English Khorddeh Avesta, in Meher Nyaayesh, on page 43 footnote states:](#)

Meher Yazata is called the just judge. Its reason is that after the passing away of a person, his/her soul proceeds towards the Chivat Bridge on the fourth day at dawn, where Meher Yazata, Srosh Yazata and Rashne Yazata, after weighing all the actions committed by him/her in this world, assign him/her the proper place (Heaven, purgatory or hell).

There are various meanings of the word Meher, who is called in Avesta 'Mithra' :- light, origin of light, the harbinger of the Sun, twilight; a contract, promise, an agreement, truth, justice, friendship, love; the yazata presiding over light and truthfulness; the yazata helping the just and virtuous persons and punishing the liar and wicked persons; the judge at the Chinvat Bridge of the souls of the dead. We have the full details about the functions of Meher Yazata and his praise from the Meher Yasht. In former times the worship of Meher Yazata was spread more than that of the other yazatas. Some hint about it is seen from the later portion of Meher Niaaesh and Meher Yasht. ...

As seen from the above, some meanings of the word Meher are: contract, promise, agreement, etc..

Breaking a promise, to whomever you gave, was considered a great sin and Meher Yazata will punish the person for the same.

In the first two verses of Meher Yasht, Dadar Ahura Mazda advises Spitama Zarathushtra about breaking the promise and we present these two verses here:

## **Meher Yazata and breaking promise - Meher Yasht - Kardaas 1 - Verses 1 – 2**

(Please hear the attached .mp3 file for its recitation)

(1) Mraot Ahuro Mazdaao Spitamaai Zarathustraai,  
aa-at yat Mithrem yim vouru-gaoyaoitim fraadadhaam,  
azem Spitama, aa-at dim dadhaam avaaontem yesnyata,  
avaaontem vahmyata, yatha maamchit, yim Ahurem Mazdãm.

(2) Merenchaité vispaam dainghaom mairyo mithro-drukhsh,  
Spitama, yatha satem kayadhanaam avavat ashava-jachit.  
Mithrem maa janyaa, Spitama, maa yim dravatata peresaaongheh,  
maa yim khvaa-daenaat ashaonat.

Vayaa zi asti Mithro dravataécha ashaonaécha.

## **Meher Yazata and breaking promise - Meher Yasht - Kardaas 1 - Verses 1 – 2 Translation:**

(1) The Creator Ahura Mazda spoke unto Spitama Zarathushtra:  
When I created, Oh Spitama Zarathushtra!  
Mithra Yazata, the lord of the wide pastures,  
I created him as worthy of worship and as worthy of adoration as Myself  
Ahura Mazda.

(2) The cruel promise-breaker, Oh Spitama Zarathushtra!  
destroys the whole country.  
That promise-breaker becomes the injurer of the righteous man to the  
extent of hundred wicked men.  
Oh Spitama Zarathushtra! Thou shalt not break the promise at all;  
whether thou dost contract with the wicked man  
or whether thou dost contract with the righteous co-religionist  
but do not break that promise at all,  
because the promise is the same for both -

for the wicked man and for the righteous man.

(Translation from Kangaji English *Yashts* – Pages 55 – 56 – available at:  
[http://www.avesta.org/kanga/kanga\\_yashts.pdf](http://www.avesta.org/kanga/kanga_yashts.pdf))

## SPD Comments

1. It is interesting to note that a promise made to a wicked man is as good as the one made to a righteous co-religionist.
2. “This fact was instilled in every Iranian child. Telling of lies and breaking of promises were considered as deadly sins.” (Dr. Kolsawalla Thesis)
3. The rest of Meher Yasht describes how Meher Yazata punishes the wicked persons and safe guards the righteous ones.

**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!**

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

**(Aafrin Pegaamber Zartosht, from [Ervad Kangaji Gujarati Khordeh Avesta Baa Maaeni](#) – Page 424, adapted Aafrinaamahi - we wish instead of Aafrinaami – I wish, in the original)**

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli



Mehregan Table Persian Festival of Autumn in UCTI University of Malaysia by Persian Students, 2011.

