

## **Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 209 – Poem: "IF" - By Poet Laureate Rudyard Kipling**

Hello all Tele Class friends:

In our lives, a small two letter word – “IF” – plays a very important role.

We use it for many different scenarios – “If I have done that; If I have seen that person; If I had eaten that dish;” etc. etc. etc..

However, a famous English Poet Laureate Rudyard Kipling of “Jungle Book” fame made this small word very famous by writing a very famous poem by its name: “IF”!

Rudyard Kipling is a well-known Victorian writer, who is known for his poetry and stories about India. Perhaps his most memorable work is *The Jungle Book*.

**Kipling was born in Bombay, India, in 1865.** His father, John Lockwood Kipling, was **principal of the Jeejeebhoy School of Art**, an architect and artist who had come to the colony, writes Charles Cantalupo in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, "to encourage, support, and restore native Indian art against the incursions of British business interests." He meant to try, "to preserve, at least in part, and to copy styles of art and architecture which, representing a rich and continuous tradition of thousands of years, were suddenly threatened with extinction."

Rudyard Kipling is one of the best-known of the late Victorian poets and story-tellers.

**He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907.**

“If-“ is, without a doubt, Kipling's most beloved poem, and, along with "The White Man's Burden", his most famous. It is consistently ranked among the highest of Britons' favorite poems. It was first published in the "Brother Square-Toes" chapter of *Rewards and Fairies*, a 1910 collection of verse and short stories.

While the poem is addressed to Kipling's son John, it was inspired by a great friend of his, Leander Starr Jameson, the Scots-born colonial politician and adventurer responsible for what has been deemed the Jameson raid that led to the Second Boer War. The raid was intended to start an uprising among the British expatriate workers in the South African Republic, but there were complications and it was a failure. Jameson was arrested and tried, but he was already being hailed a hero by London, which was filled with anti-Boer sentiment. He served only fifteen months in prison and later became Prime Minister of Cape Colony back in South Africa.

In his autobiography *Something of Myself*, Kipling wrote of Jameson and "If-":

"Among the verses in Rewards was one set called 'If-', which escaped from the book, and for a while ran about the world. They were drawn from Jameson's character, and contained counsels of perfection most easy to give. Once started, the mechanization of the age made them snowball themselves in a way that startled me. Schools, and places where they teach, took them for the suffering Young - which did me no good with the Young when I met them later. They were printed as cards to hang up in offices and bedrooms; illuminated text-wise and anthologized to weariness. Twenty-seven of the Nations of the Earth translated them into their seven-and-twenty tongues, and printed them on every sort of fabric."

In India, a framed copy of the poem was affixed to the wall before the study desk in the cabins of the officer cadets at the [National Defence Academy](#), at [Pune](#) and [Indian Naval Academy](#), at Ezhimala. In Britain, the third and fourth lines of the second stanza of the poem: "If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster / and treat those two impostors just the same" are written on the wall of the players' entrance to the [Centre Court](#) at the [All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club](#), where the [Wimbledon Championships](#) are held.

The Indian writer [Khushwant Singh](#) considered the poem "the essence of the message of [The Gita](#) in English."

"If-" contains a multitude of characteristics deemed essential to the ideal man. They almost all express stoicism and reserve – the classic British "stiff upper lip." In particular, a man must be humble, patient, rational, truthful, dependable, and persevering. His behavior in response to deleterious events and cruel men is important; he must continue to have faith in himself when others doubt him, he must understand that his words might be twisted and used for evil, he must be able to deal with the highest and lowest echelons of society, and he must be able to withstand the lies and hatred emanating from others.

The virtues expressed in "If-" are devoid of showiness or glamour; it is notable that Kipling says nothing of heroic deeds or great wealth or fame. For him the true measure of a man is his humility and his stoicism. Kipling's biographer, Andrew Lycett, considers the poem one of the writer's finest and notes in 2009 that "If-" is absolutely valuable even in the complicated postmodern world: "In these straitened times, the old-fashioned virtues of fortitude, responsibilities and resolution, as articulated in 'If-', become ever more important."

So, here are the first two verses of Rudyard Kipling's famous poem: "If".

In next weekly, WZSE #210, we will cover the remaining verses as well as the origin of Rudyard name.

## Poem: "IF" by Rudyard Kipling, Verses 1 – 2:

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

IF you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

**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 Janyaat, 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