

Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 292: Zarathushtra given excellent eye-sight like "Kara Maahee" (Sturgeon) Fish - Behram Yasht - Kardaas 11 - Verses 28 - 29

Happy Yalda to all of you!

Tomorrow, December 21st 2018 is the Winter Solstice when the Sun is the furthest South and the night is the longest. Then on, the Sun starts its journey North and the day is getting longer and longer. This phenomenon was well-known to our ancestors in Iran and they used to celebrate this day, December 21st in a big way and called it Yalda meaning the Birth, since the legend says it was the birth of Mithra Yazata by his mother, Anahita. This celebration is as old as Navroze and predates XMAS by many centuries. Due to the problem of not accounting for the Leap Year, it was determined that the Birth of Mithra was on December 25th. Mithraism was the dominant Religion followed by the Romans and the Christian Religion was just starting at the time and so it was determined that Christmas will be celebrated on December 25th.

So, Jo Ann and I wish you all a very Happy and Healthy Yalda and Christmas and a Happy New Year 2019 and many more beyond!

Parsis' Tryst with Fish!

Growing up in the Arabian Sea coastal village of Tarapur, Maharashtra State, India, there were around 100 Parsi families living in the village, in what was called Parsi Waad (Parsi Street), clustered around the Vicaji Meherji Agiary. My father was the Panthaki of the Agiary. There was only one Muslim butcher, providing one goat meat each day. And the chicken was the most expensive meat, only available to the families who raised their own in the fenced backyard like our family.

However, being on the Arabian Sea, fresh fish was always available every day and growing up we had fish almost every day for either lunch or dinner. The King of the fish was Boi (Mullet) which was available almost every day. The fisherwomen would sell Boi in the open market in the morning. I used to accompany my dad each day to the market and learn from him how to haggle for the price of the vegetables, and especially of the fish with the fisherwomen. The fish would be laid out on a wooden platform and the clients like my dad would inspect the gill of the fish to see if they are fresh (red) before buying.

Then during the season there was the famous Bombay Duck (Boomlaa, Bombil) fish! In my village, Boomlaa was very much sought after as fresh as well as dried. (please see the attached photos). Our Tarapur village was famous for Bombay Ducks and during the season, on the beach, you will find scaffoldings draped with Bombay Ducks for drying. And their pungent smell was something to experience. It was said that if you can walk through these scaffoldings, you will never get cancer! Bombay Ducks is eaten fresh as well as dried all year long. In fact, our Tarapur village is so famous for the Bombay Ducks that a famous recipe for the dried Bombay Ducks is called "Tarapori Paatio"! And my mom's recipe for it was world famous!

And then there was Pomfret (Chhamnaa)! (Please see the attached photos). This is the most sought after fish during its season and its recipe cooked with banana leaves, Paatraa-ni-Machhi” is the highlight of a Parsi dinner!

So, I was very intrigued when I was going through the Gujarati book by none other than our esteemed scholar and highly decorated Sir Dr. Ervad Jivanji J. Modi on his journey from Bombay to N. Africa, Europe, USSR, Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran describing details of his experiences and comparing customs especially of our brethren Irani Zarathushtris with our own. He wrote 101 letters to Jame-Jamshed daily newspaper which covered its daily issues for more that a year. He finally compiled them in a book which I was fortunate enough to have a scanned copy thanks to my nephews in Mumbai.

In one of his letters, he described his experiences on the Caspian Sea which he connects with our scriptures' Vourukash Sea. This Vourukash Sea is mentioned in our Aafrens and many other Yashts. While there, he mentions a reference from Behram Yasht about a fish and so this long winded introduction to **the Parsis' tryst with fish**.

So, here is what Ervad Modi says about a reference to a fish from Behram Yasht!

Kara Maahee (fish)

In our scriptures, there are references of a fish called “Kara Maahee”. The natural habitat of this fish is the present Vourukash (Caspian) sea. For this fish in Behram Yasht (Para. 14.29), it is said that Behram Yazad had bestowed upon Zarathushtra a far sightedness, or the power of seeing very small things similar to the one present in “Kara Maahee” fish. (Ahmaai dathat Verethregano Ahuradhaato Aomcha sukem yim baraity karo masyo).

The habitat of this fish is mentioned as Rungahaa river and it is said that it can see the smallest hair in the water, to such an extent that it can differentiate which is the head of the hair and which is the tail of such a tiny hair. (Yo rangahayao ----- vareso stawanghem aapo urwaesem maarayaete.) This fish is abundant in this Caspian Sea (which in fact is a very very large lake but in the olden days, it was so large that people referred it as a Sea!)

This fish is now called “sturgeon” and its zoological name is: “Acipenser huso”.

So today, we present the Verses 28 – 29 from Behram Yasht with a reference to this Kara Fish in giving a boon to our Holy Prophet Zarathushtra!

Zarathushtra given excellent eye-sight like “Kara Maahee” (Sturgeon) Fish – Behram Yasht – Kardaa 11 - Verses 28 – 29:

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

(28) Verethraghnem Ahuradhaatem yazamaidéh,

Arsho-karem, marsho-karem, frasho-karem, hvaakhshtem, hvaayaonem.

Tem yazata yo ashava Zarathushtro, Verethraghnahé paiti manahi,

Verethraghnahé paiti vachahi, Verethraghnahé paiti shyaothnéh,
Verethraghnahé paiti fravaakéh, Verethraghnahé paiti paaiti-vaakéh.

(29) Ahmaai dathat Verethraghno Ahuradhaato,
erezoish khaao, baazvaao aojo, tanvo vispayaaoo dravataatem,
tanvo vispayaaoo vazdvaréh aomcha sukem yim baraiti Karo Masyo
upaapo,
Yo Ranghayaaoo duraeparayaaoo jafrayaaoo hazangro-virayaaoo,
Vareso-stavanghem aapo urvaesem maarayeiteh.

**Zarathushtra given excellent eye-sight like “Kara Maahee”
(Sturgeon) Fish – Behram Yasht – Kardaa 11 - Verses 28 – 29
Verses 28 – 29 Translation:**

(28) We worship Beheram Yazata created by Ahura Mazda,
who is virility giver, who is bringing death, who helps to progress,
who is firm footed possessing sufficient vigor.
In the thoughts of Beheram Yazata, in the words of Beheram Yazata, in the
deeds of Beheram Yazata, in the advice of Beheram Yazata, in the answer
of Beheram Yazata, Holy Zarathushtra worshipped him.

(29) Unto Holy Prophet Zarathushtra, Beheram Yazata created by Ahura
Mazda, gave the fountain of truth, strength of both the arms, health of the
entire body, total happiness of the entire body and that excellent eye-sight
which the fish called Kara living in the water possesses.

Kangaji’s explanation (as regards the eye-sight of Kara fish it is stated):

That Kara fish can see a thing of the size of the hair in the waters of the River
called Ranghaa whose (Ranghaa River’s) ends lie afar and whose depth is a
thousand times the height of a man.

(Translation from Kangaji Gujarati *Khordeh Avesta* translated into English, pages 312-313.)

SPD Comments

1. For the Parsis, Fish is a very important item for their multitudes of recipes.
2. In the Birthday, Navjote, Wedding receptions, one of the Dinner/Lunch course has to be a Fish which is invariably Paatraa-ni-Machhi or Machhi-no-saas.
3. The same reference of the Kara Fish is also in Vendidad, Fargarad 19, Verse 42 and Fargarad 20, Verse 4.
4. Ranghaa was the greatest River among the ancient Iranians. Spiegel, Justi and Geiger thinks it is Xaxartes River. Haarlez thinks it is the River Oxus. And Darmesteter thinks it is the River Tigris.

5. According to Harlez and Darmesteter, the Kara Fish eyesight was so good that it can see a ripple in the water not thicker than a hair.

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!)

In HIS Service 24/7!

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli

Bombay duck



Bombay Ducks drying on scaffoldings 001.JPG_s.jpg



▲ A skyline of high-rise buildings is seen through rows of Bombay ducks drying on a bamboo scaffold at a fishing village in south Mumbai. Photograph: Sebastian D'souza/AFP/Getty Images

Bombay Ducks drying on scaffoldings 002.JPG_s.jpg



Bombay duck drying in open air



Bombay Ducks drying on scaffoldings 004.JPG_s.jpg



Bombay Ducks drying on scaffoldings 006.JPG_s.jpg



Patra-Ni-Machhi.jpg



pomfret-clovegarden.jpg



Tandoori-Pomfret_1.jpg

