

Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 334: Vaishnava Jana Toh - Beautiful Gujarati Bhajan (Hymn) by Poet Narsinh Mehta – Mahatma Gandhiji’s very favorite Bhajan

Hello all Tele Class friends:

Seasonal Ayaathrem Gaahambaar – Meher Maah – Aastaad to Aneraan Roj

Zoroastrian Society of Washington State (ZSWS) of Seattle celebrates all six Seasonal Gaahambaars and Mobedyaar Jamshid Poursfandiary performs all Gaahambaar Jashans. They will celebrate Ayaathrem Gaahambaar during the five days – Meher Maah, Aastaad Roj through Aneraan Roj – October 12 – 16.

Many other Irani and Parsi Associations also celebrate these Seasonal Gaahambaars.

Narsinh Mehta:

Narsinh Mehta is still a very liked and followed Gujarati poet/saint, notable as “Bhakta” – exponent of “Vaishnav” poetry. He lived during the fifteenth century. He was called “Aadi Kavi” (Sanskrit for “The First Among Poets”). His Gujarati Bhajan – Vaishnava Jana To – was Mahatma Gandhi’s favorite and has become synonymous to him.

Narsinh Mehta was born in a Nagar Brahmin family at Talaja and later moved to Junagadh in Saurashtra peninsula of modern-day Gujarat. His father held an administrative post in a royal court. He lost his parents when he was five years old. He could not speak until the age of eight. He was raised by his grandmother Jaygauri.

He married Manekbai probably in the year 1429. Mehta and his wife stayed at his brother Bansidhar's house in Junagadh. However, Bansidhar's wife did not welcome Narsinh very well. She was an ill-tempered woman, always taunting and insulting Narsinh Mehta for his devotion (Bhakti).

One day, when Narasinh Mehta had enough of these taunts and insults, he left the house and went to a nearby forest in search of some peace, where he fasted and meditated for seven days by a secluded Shiva lingam until Lord Shiva appeared before him in person. On the poet's request, the Lord took him to Vrindavan and showed him the eternal *raas leela* (dancing) of Lord Krishna and the Gopis (women admirers of Lord Krishna). Mehta, as the popular account goes, at Krishna's command, decided to sing His praises and the wonderful experience of the *raasa* in this mortal world. He resolved to compose around 22,000 kirtans or compositions.

After this divine experience, the transformed Mehta returned to his village, touched his sister-in-law's feet as reverence, and thanked her for insulting him for had she not made him upset, the above episode would not have occurred.

In Junagadh, Mehta lived in poverty with his wife and two children. He reveled in devotion to his heart's content along with sadhus, saints, and all those people who were Lord Hari's subjects – Harijans (untouchables) – irrespective of their caste, class or sex.

There are many stories about how Lord Krishna helped his very poor devotee in many instances which are preserved vividly in the memory of Gujarati people by compositions by later poets and films.

He went to Mangrol where, at the age of 79, he is believed to have died. He will forever be remembered for his poetic works and devotion to Lord Krishna. He is known as the first poet of Gujarati Adi Kavi.

His Bhajan – Vaishnava Jana Toh – is a beautiful hymn learned by us in our beloved MFCAl school in our Gujarati Class under that wonderful Gujarati teacher, Shri Kantilal Upadhyay. Mahatma Gandhiji loved this poem and made it world famous, often sung in his Ashram during the prayer time.

The poem describes the qualities of a true devotee of Lord Vishnu, the Lord Nourisher, one of the three Gods of Hindu religion.

So today, we present the first two verses of this beautiful Bhajan and we will present the rest of its verses in our next WZSE:

Vaishnav Jan Toh

(Please hear the original film clip of the song at:)

https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-pty-pty_packages&hsimp=yhs-pty_packages&hspart=pty&p=vaishnava+jana+to+lyrics#id=1&vid=6d81e88572cbaa325bc422e454358541&action=click

Gujarati Bhajan

English Translation

Vaishnava Jana Toh, Tene Kahiye Jeh	Vaishnav (Devotee of Vishnu) is the one,
Peed Paraayi Jaaneh Reh,	Who realizes the Pain of Others
Para Duhkkeh Upakaara Kareh Toh Yeh	Helps those who are in misery
Mana Abhimaana Na Aaneh Reh	Without letting pride enter his mind
Vaishnava Jana To	Vaishnav is the one
Sakala Loka Maa Sahunhe Vandeh,	A Vaishnav respects and praises the entire world
Nindaa Na Kareh Konī Reh,	and doesn't criticize anyone

Vaacha Kaacha Mana Nishchala Raakheh,	Keeps his promises, actions and thoughts pure
Dhana Dhana Jananī Tehnī Reh	The mother of such a person is blessed
Vaishnava Jana To	Vaishnav is the one

(Gujarati verses and their English translation copied from the above YouTube video)

SPD Comments:

1. What a description of a Vaishnav person!
2. Mahatma Gandhi's life was an example of such a Vaishnav person.
3. When I was in my second year of Inter-Science in St. Xavier's College in Mumbai, I used to live in its dormitory. Our Superintendent was Fr. D'Cruz, who was also Vice-Principal of the College. He took his final vows of Society of Jesus (SJ) during my second year. Our Dormitory Student Association decided to felicitate Fr. D'Cruz for his Final Vows. Our Association's President was Mr. Shah, a very good Gujarati friend of ours. He requested me to sing this song in honor of Fr. D'Cruz at the felicitation which I did. Fr. D'Cruz was very impressed by our thought of singing this song for him at the occasion.

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!

In HIS SERVICE 24/7!

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

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli