

Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 251 – Zarathushtra asks for 10 Mares, One Stallion and a Camel (?!?) – Ushtavaiti Gatha – Yasna 44, Verse 18

Hello all Tele Class friends:

March 8 proclaimed by United Nations in 1977 as International Women's day

(Posted in Parsi Khabar on March 8, 2018 by [Dr. Dolly Dastoor](#))

“On this special day we wish to congratulate Zarthushti women all over the world on their achievements big and small. Much has been achieved in all fields which were once considered male bastions. Our women have been in the forefront of all fields, politics, culture, music, arts, science, finance. Much has been achieved but much needs to be done. Zarthushti women have superficial gender equality but we need to continue to work for acceptance of all women into religious ceremonies irrespective as to whom they are married to.

International Women' Day is the story of ordinary women as makers of history. It is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women to participate in society on an equal footing with men. In ancient Greece, Lysistrata initiated a sexual strike against men. In order to end war, during the French Revolution, Parisian women calling for “liberty, equality, fraternity” marched on Versailles to demand women’s rights to vote. In Canada till 1929, women were not considered” persons and hence had no vote.

Today for most of us reading this we cannot even imagine those times.

But has much changed since then? Women are still demanding equal rights and demanding a life free of violence, rape and sexual abuse at all levels from the highest echelons of government to the lowest village.

The idea of an *International Women's Day* first arose at the turn of the century, which in an industrialized world was a period of expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies. The first National Women’s day was established by a group of socialist women in the United States in 1908. This act inspired an international event.

This day is an occasion marked by women’s groups around the world. Women on all continents, often divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural economic and political differences come together to celebrate their day. They can look back to a tradition that represents at least nine decades of struggle for equality, justice peace and development.”

We wish all the women of Hafta Keshwar Zamin a Happy International Women's Day!

Thank you Dr. Dolly Dastoor and Parsi Khabar for the wonderful article about The International Women’s Day and please read the full article in Parsi Khabar at:

https://parsikhabar.net/opinion/march-8-proclaimed-by-united-nations-in-1977-as-international-womens-day/17176/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+ParsiKhabar+%28Parsi+Khabar%29

Zarathushtra asks for 10 Mares, One Stallion and a Camel (!!?) – Ushtavaiti Gatha – Yasna 44, Verse 18

Zarathushtra's Gathas have been translated by a number of scholars, each one differing in its meaning! There are many excellent Western Scholars who have their own personal view about Zarathushtra and his Gathas. Some of them take literally the meaning of Geush Urvaa as cow. Then there are other Parsi and Iranian scholars who have taken the correct meaning of such words as the soul of Mother Earth, etc. And then there are other Sanskrit scholars who have tried to compare Gathas with the Sanskrit Rig Veda. In the last group we can include among many others, Prof. Martin Haug. Dr. Irach Taraporewalla and Shri Jatindra Mohan Chatterji.

A perfect example of such a philological interpretation is this Verse 18 in Ushtavaiti Gatha, Yasna 44. Here is what Dr. Kolsawalla says in his thesis:

“This is one of the mystic verses in the Gathas which has been difficult for the Western scholars to comprehend. Zarathustra's mention of ten mares and a stallion is taken literally. They suggest that Zarathustra is seeking material wealth from Ahura Mazda to build up his flock of horses. How patently absurd! A prophet who has sought no physical powers, glory or kingdom, is reduced to begging for ten mares and a stallion!

Zarathustra was born of wealthy parents and could have obtained a major share of his patrimony. Thus, he would have no need to ask for horses, cattle, sheep or goats, specially a disproportionate number of mares in comparison with one solitary stallion.

What he is asking for is the **total control over his ten senses** represented allegorically by ten mares and the stallion which allegorically represents **the mighty mind**. This in turn leads to self-realisation and immortality. This verse clearly highlights the pitfalls of relying blindly in translating the Gathas on basis of philology alone. The esoteric meaning is rapidly degenerated into banality of a pastoral life.”

Dr. Irach Taraporewalla – in his opus The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra states:

“The crux of this verse is in line 3, the ‘ten mares, accompanied by a stallion and a camel’. Such is the ‘reward’ Zarathushtra is anxious to earn ‘through Asha’; and after receiving this reward he hopes to understand what ‘Perfection and Immortality’ might mean, and these He hopes to bring to all mankind. ... There is no difference of opinion with regard to the ‘ordinary dictionary meaning’ of the words used. ...

It does seem strange that none of the modern scholars and commentators have tried to explain this glaring incongruity in these words of Zarathushtra. None has tried to give any explanation of the very heterogenous and extraordinary mixture of

Asha, mares, stallion, camel, Haurvataat and Ameretaat. Western scholars see nothing in this but 'primitive and confused' thought and they insist that the words should be taken *literally*, and our Parsi scholars have merely echoed their views.

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Ever since, as a schoolboy, I first read the translation of this verse by Kanga, and years before I had begun the study of Avesta, I have believed that there was some 'occult' or 'mystic' symbolism behind the animals mentioned here. But I have also wondered why the Pahlavi translators have not made the point clear. Pahlavi literature abounds in such mystic animal symbolism, A likely explanation of this silence of the Pahlavi translators may have been that this occult symbolism was well understood in their days and so they thought that no further explanation was needed.

I believe that this verse embodies a very ancient occult symbology, which is explained at some length in the Kathopanishad (i. 3.3-6). There the Aatmaan (the soul) is called 'the Lord of the Chariot', the Body is the 'Chariot', and the Human Senses are 'the Horses'. These 'horses' are rushing outwards trying to reach various material 'sense-objects' that attract them, unless they are 'reined in' by the Mind (*manas*). I make the suggestion (for whatever it may be worth) that the 'mares' in the Gaathaa verse are very much the same as the 'horses' of the Upanishad. They are *ten* in number, because from very ancient times the Aryan people have recognized them as made up of the five 'senses of knowing' (*gnaanendriyaani*) and the five 'senses of action' (*karmendriyaani*). In the Gaathaa verse these ten have been symbolized as 'mares'; and they are *arshnavaitish* (accompanied by a stallion).

It is interesting to note here that "the simile of the chariot has some points of similarity with the well-known passage in Plato's Phaedros, but Plato did not borrow this simile from the Brahmans". Plato was certainly among the greatest occultists of Greece and the same idea found in his works points to an ancient tradition inherited equally by Iran, India and Greece.

So now we can see clearly what the 'inner' sense of this verse is. Zarathushtra hopes that through Asha He may get His reward, viz., His ten senses brought under complete control of the 'Mighty One', the Mind, and that thus He may also gain the Illumination. Then He would be able to comprehend what Perfection and Immortality mean, and He would help mankind to understand what these are."

With this introduction, let us present Dr. Taraporewalla's translation of this mystic Gatha verse about 10 Mares, One Stallion and a Camel in Yasna 44 Verse 18:

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

**(17) Tat thwaa peresaa eresh moi vaochaa Ahuraa;
Kathaa ashaa tat mizhdem hanaani,
Dasaa aspaa arshnavaitish ushtremchaa,
Hyat moi Mazdaa apivaiti Haurvaataa
Ameretaataa yathaa hi taeiby daaonghaa.**

**Zarathushtra asks for 10 Mares, One Stallion and a Camel (!?) –
Ushtavaiti Gatha – Yasna 44, Verse 18 Translation:**

**(18) This do I ask, Ahuraa, Tell me true:
How shall I earn through Asha that reward –
Ten Mares, my Senses, led by Stallion Mind,
Which Mares shall bear me safe into Thy Light;
Where perfect Life Eternal I'll attain,
And also bring those gifts to all mankind.**

**(Dr. Irach Taraporewalla - The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra – Pages 521 –
525)**

SPD Explanation:

The following are Sri Chatterji's thoughts on the above verse:

“Bhagavan Zarathushtra introduces here a main problem of religious life-viz, if detachment be the rule of life, how can one seek any worldly good whatsoever, consistently with his loyalty to the above principle.

This is virtually the question that Arjuna had put to Sri-Krishna

“As you teach desirelessness, why should I go into war at all and desire victory?”

Sri Krishna gave the reply in Bhagwat Gita 2-38:

“Desire is the source of all misery, and normally speaking all desires should be curbed. When however, a person has become established in Detachment to such an extent, that success or failure does not make the least difference to him, there is no harm if he asks for some thing—not for his own pleasure, but for the welfare of the world.”

What a profound thought!!

**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 Aafrinaamaha! (May it be so as we wish!)

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli