

Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 270: Gustahem requests Aavaan Aredvi Sura to part the River Vitanguhaiti - Aavaan Yasht - Yasht 5 - Verses 76 - 79

Hello all Tele Class friends:

Happy Navroz Mubaarak to our Kadmi Humdins!

Today (7/15/2018) is the auspicious Navroz (New Year), Farvardin Maah and Hormuzd Roj, according to Kadmi calendar! And all of us wish a very Happy and Healthy Navroz Mubaarak to all our Kadmi Humdins of the Hafta Keshwar Zamin! May Daadaar Ahura Mazda shower HIS Choicest Blessings upon you all and may you have a wonderful year with your loved ones, family, and friends!

Extant Avesta Literature – Dr. Ervad Rooyintan Peshotan Peer

Our own celebrated, much revered Avesta/Pahlavi Scholar, Ervad Kavasji Edulji Kanga (fondly referred to as Kangaji) translated word-by-word the whole extant Avesta literature in Gujarati, a monumental work to date.

In the preface of the Kangaji's third book in English translation – [*Yasht-Baa-Maayeni*](#) (Yasht with translation), in 2001, Ervad Peer has given a wonderful account of our extant Avesta and Yasht Literature. ([I have attached this whole preface to this WZSE.](#))

I have taken liberty to include certain portions of this scholarly preface in this WZSE.

Ervad Peer writes:

Even though there is much demand for work of this kind and utility, readership in the Gujarati language is gradually diminishing in the Parsi community, particularly among the younger generation as well as among a very large number of those who have migrated to Western countries in recent years.

The Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat of Bombay have therefore undertaken the task of getting such classic works in Gujarati translated into English. The Trustees therefore entrusted this work to another celebrated scholar of Avesta -Pahlavi of international repute, the late Professor Ervad Maneck Furdoonji Kanga.

Prof. M. F. Kanga then completed three of late Ervad Kavasji Kanga's works, viz. *Khordeh-Avesta-Baa-Maayeni*, *Gatha-Baa-Maayeni* and *Yasht-Baa-Maayeni* before his sad demise in October 1988 at the age of 80 years.

The terms of reference for these works entrusted to Prof. M. F. Kanga were to carry out a faithful word-by-word translation into English language from the original Gujarati of Ervad K. E. Kanga, and also to include the text in the Roman script without any alteration. Prof. M. F. Kanga completed these works with meticulous care, and brought to bearing on it his vast knowledge and experience.

Subsequently, the first volume of the *Khordeh-Avesta- Baa-Maayeni* in English was published by the Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat of Bombay in January 1993. The

second such volume of the Gatha-Baa-Maayeni in English was published in January 1997. Now the Trustees are making available for the benefit of the Zoroastrian World, the third and last of such volumes in the form of the present edition of the Yasht- Baa-Maayeni in English.

Ervad Peer further states in this preface:

The oldest Zoroastrian religious scripture, as preserved at present, is known as the Avesta - a term which is also applied to the language in which the scripture has been preserved.

Having experienced at least three major periods of holocaust in its history, the scripture in Avesta that has survived at present is only a minuscule amount of the original.

Out of the 21 Nasks (Books) of Avesta even in the Sassanian times viz. in the third century A.C., only one Nask, i.e. the Vendidad, has survived almost in full at present. Out of the other 20 Nasks, a total of only about another half a volume of Nask in fragments has survived. This gives an idea of the colossal amount of destruction that Zoroastrian literature has suffered through the ages.

The extant Avesta literature is divisible into five groups, viz:- 1) The Yasna, 2) The Visparad, 3) The Vendidad, 4) The Yasht Literature and, 5) The Khordeh Avesta.

The fourth of the above groups, the Yasht Literature, is not a single running text like that of the first three groups, namely, The Yasna, The Visparad and The Vendidad. Instead, it is a compilation of a number of independent texts called Yashts. Each such Yasht is a prayer in the form of a hymn and assigned to each of the major Yazatas in his/her praise. 'Yazata' is the Avesta term for a spiritual divinity or an angel. Its later form is 'Yazad'.

At the outset, a Yasht is generally composed in a ballad form of poetry, in which that particular 'Yazata' is personified, and is a sort of a hero in the central character, and his characteristics and functions are brought out in a majestic heroic language. This personification is so done in order to make it understood at the level of lay people. But the real study and understanding of these Yashts only lie in their deeper meanings, with each one of them representing the different aspects of Universal creations as has been noted; problems only arise when these Yashts are tried to be explained only at the outer superficial story level.

The Yasht literature is therefore a real treasure trove of the ancient Iranian civilization. These Yashts could be compared to some extent with the different Puranas among the Indian literature like Agni Purana, Vayu Purana, Garud Purana and so on.

The Pahlavi word 'Yasht', Avesta 'Yazati', is derived from root 'yaz' : 'to worship,' the same stem from which the word 'Yasna' is derived. The Yashts evidently form a part of the ancient Baghan Nask. They are composed in honour and worship of Ahura Mazda, Amesha Spentas and Yazatas.

The Yashts are a treasure-trove of Iranian epic poetry and of the Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Iranian religious and moral literature. They are an ample mine of knowledge of ancient Iranian poetry and mythology, and constitute comparatively a very substantial portion of the Avestan literature. They provide us ample ground for ethical, literary, historical and philological dissertations. They contain valuable records of legends of Iran and of ancient mythology. Important historical materials of the kings and heroes of the Pishdadian and Kyanian times and epic narrations and heroic descriptions of those times have been preserved in the Yashts. Moreover, the Yashts have incorporated ancient Avestan tradition and history and contain much of the ancient laws. They sing glory and greatness, piety and benevolence, effort and exertions, truthfulness and valor, and love and patriotism of the great Iranian ancestors.

The epic character and the poetic form are the distinguishing features of the Yashts. Other than the Gathas (which are absolute metrical compositions), the poetic pieces in the Avesta are noticeable particularly in the Yasht literature. Although there is no uniform meter running through them, different types of rhythmic metrical compositions are to be found in the Ardivisur Yasht, Tir Yasht, Meher Yasht, Hom Yasht and so on. A favorite form in the glorification of various Yazatas is the piling up of qualitative epithets for some lines together. Such strings of adjectives may produce a striking literary effect. There is latent in the Yashts, an abundance of mythical lore, folk legend, and epic material in embryo which find full expression centuries later in the Shah Nameh.

I apologize for this lengthy introduction, but it needs to be stated here.

Aavaan Yasht – Yasht 5

Like many Yashts, in Aavaan Yasht, many Iranian kings and heroes are asking for a boon from Aredvi Sura Yazata. Depending upon the character of the king/hero, she grants the boon, or she rejects it. Kings like Hoshang, Jamshid, Faridun, Kay Kaaus, Kay Khushroo, Kay Vishtaaspa, Jaamaaspa, etc. were granted their requests; whereas, Zahaak, Afraasiyaab, Arjaaspa, etc. were refused.

In this WZSE, we will present a legend of an Iranian hero Gustahem who is asking for a boon from Aredvi Sura Yazata to part the waters of River Vitanguhaiti so he can safely go across the river and she granted his request.

So here is this legend from Aavaan Yasht – Verses 76 – 79:

Gustahem requests Aavaan Aredvi Sura to part the River Vitanguhaiti – Aavaan Yasht – Yasht 5 - Verses 76 - 79

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

**(76) Taam yazata Vistaurush yo Naotairyaano,
upa apem yaam Vitanguhaitim erezukhdhaat
paiti vachanghat, uiti vachebish aojano.**

(77) Taa baa asha taa arsukhdha, Aredvi Sureh anaahitéh,

yat meh avavat daevayasnanaam nijatem,
yatha saarem varsanaam baraami.
Aa-at meh tum Aredvi Suréh anaahitéh,
hushkem peshum raechaya taro vanguhim Vitanguhaitim.

(78) Upa-tachat Aredvi Sura anaahita,
kainino kehrpa srirayaa ash-amayaa huraodhayaa,
uskaat yaastayaa erezvaithyo, raevat chithrem azaatayaa,
zaranya aothra paitismukhta yaa vispo-pisa baamya.
Aramaeshtaa anyaa aapo kernaot,
frasha anyaa fratachat, hushkem peshum raechayat,
taro vanguhim Vitanguhaitim.

(79) Dathat ahmaai tat avat aayaptem,
Aredvi Sura anaahita, hadha-zaothro-baraai
aredraai yazemnaai jaidhyantaai daathrish aayaptem.

Gustahem requests Aavaan Aredvi Sura to part the River Vitanguhaiti – Aavaan Yasht – Yasht 5 - Verses 76 - 79

(76) Gustahem, the descendent of Naaotara, worshipped her
near the shore of the River Vitanguhaiti, with truly- spoken hymn,
uttering the below-mentioned words.

(77) Oh Aredvi Sura, the undefiled! This fact indeed is true, this fact is justly-spoken,
that I have slain as many worshippers of daevas as the hairs I have on my head.
Therefore, for my sake thou, Oh Aredvi Sura, the undefiled! Drain out waters
so as to make a dry passage across the good river Vitanguhaiti.

(78) Ardvi Sura the undefiled hastened unto him in the form of a maiden beautiful,
very strong, of good appearance, high cinctured, straight, and lofty,
of a glorious descent, nobly born, shod with golden shoes, all adorned and bright;
and one part of the waters of that river she made stand still and
other part she caused to flow forward and thus she made a dry passage
for going across the good River Vitanguhaiti.

(79) Aredvi Sura, the undefiled, the giver of boon granted that boon
to that offerer accompanied with the zaothra,
to one who dedicates an oblation in worship,
to the worshipper, to the beseecher of boon, Gustahem.

(Translation from Kangaji – Yasht Baa Maaeni – Aavaan Yasht – Pages 28 – 29
– Translated from Gujarati to English by Prof. Ervad Maneck Furdoonji
Kanga, M. A.)

SPD Comments

1. The above legend reminds us of the **Crossing of the Red Sea** - a part of the biblical narrative of the Exodus, the escape of the Israelites, led by Moses, from the

pursuing Egyptians in the Book of Exodus. This story is also mentioned in the Quran in Surah 26: Al-Shu'ara' (The Poets) in verses 60-67.

According to the Exodus account, Moses held out his staff and the Red Sea was parted by God. The Israelites walked on the exposed dry ground and crossed the sea, followed by the Egyptian army. Moses again moved his staff once the Israelites had crossed and the sea closed again, drowning the whole Egyptian army.

2. A similar legend is described for Shreeji Iranshah by famous Parsi historian Shapurji K. Hodiwalla in his famous book: Paak Iranshahni Tavaarikh (History of Paak Iranshah) – Pages 309 – 310:

At this time, Iranshah was in Valsad but Sanjana Mobeds, due to various difficulties, found it difficult to stay in Valsad. They left Valsad with Iranshah one night and came to the River Paar, between Valsad and Pardi. Here is what Hodiwalla writes:

“One night they took Shreeji and moved towards Udvada. Their enemies (who had kept a careful watch over their movements) rushed goondas with sticks behind the Sanjanas. In the end, the Sanjanas came close to Paar river. They crossed it safely, reached the opposite bank and advanced. When their pursuers reached Paar river, the waters rose in it and so they had to return disappointed.”

Consecrated sacred fires like Iranshah cannot be transported on water. It had to be carried by foot in touch with the earth. In this case, waters were not parted but the final result was the same – Iranshah was safely carried across the river.

3. The legend mentioned above in this WZSE is not found in Firdausi's Shahnameh.

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!)

In HIS Service 24/7.

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli