Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 292: Zarathushtra
given excellent eye-sight like "Kara Maahee" (Sturgeon)
Fish - Behram Yasht - Kardaa 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!

Parsi’s 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 than 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 Aafrins 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 ranghahyao ----- 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 paití manahi,
Verethraghnahé paiti vachahi, Verethraghnahé paiti shyaothnérh,  
Verethraghnahé paiti fravaakéh, Verethraghnahé paiti paaiti-vaakéh.

(29) Ahmaai dathat Verethraghno Ahuradhaato,  
erezoish khao, baazvaao aojo, tanvo vispayaaao dravataatem,  
tanvo vispayaaao vazdvaréh aomcha sukem yim baraiti Karo Masyo  
upaapo,  
Yo Ranghayao duraeparayaao jafrayaao hazangro-virayaao,  
Vareso-stavanghem aapo urvaesem maarayeitheh.

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 that 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 Jamyaat, Yatha Aafrinaamahi! (May it be so as we wish!)

In HIS Service 24/7!

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli
Bombay duck
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 duck drying in open air
Bombay Ducks drying on scaffoldings 006.JPG_s.jpg
Tandoori Pomfret