

# **Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 335: Vaishnava Jana Toh - Beautiful Gujarati Bhajan by Poet Narsinh Mehta – Verses 3 – 5 – 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 Pouresfandiary performs all Gaahambaar Jashans. Seasonal Ayaathrem Gaahambaar is during the five days – Meher Maah, Aastaad Roj through Aneraan Roj – October 12 – 16, and ZSWS celebrated it on Saturday October 12th.

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

## **Narsinh Mehta:**

Let us repeat some background about Narsinh Mehta from our last WZSE #334:

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.

In our Last WZSE, we presented the first two verses of this Bhajan. Today, we will present the rest of its Verses 3 – 5:

### **Vaishnav Jan Toh – Verses 3 – 5:**

(Please hear the YouTube video of the entire 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](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)

(Please hear the YouTube video from 1.56 minutes for the last 3 verses)

#### **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
(3) Sama-Drishti Neh Trishnaa Tyaagī,	(3) A Vaishnav sees everyone equally and
Para Strī Jehneh Maata Reh,	Respects women as he respects his own mother
Jihvaa Thakī Asatya Na Boleh,	His tongue would never utter a lie and
Para-Dhana Nava Jhaaleh Haatha Reh	Never eye the wealth of others

Vaishnava Jana To .....	Vaishnav is the one .....
(4) Moha Maayaa Vyaapeh Nahi Jehneh,	(4) Doesn't succumb to greed and avarice
Dridha-Vairaagya Jenaa Mana maa Reh,	He has rejected anger and all the worldly pleasures
Raama-Naama Śhu Taalī Reh Laagī,	Is enticed by the Name of Lord Rama
Sakala Tīratha Tena Tanamaa Reh	All Holy Sites of Pilgrimage are embodied within him
Vaishnava Jana To .....	Vaishnav is the one .....
(5) Vana-Lobhī Neh Kapata-Rahita Chheh,	(5) A Vaishnav encompasses the absence of greed and deceit
Kaama Krodha Nivaaryaa Reh,	Also has renounced all types of lust and anger
Bhaneh Narasaiyo Tehnu Darasana Karataa,	The Poet Narsi would like to witness such a person by whose virtue,
Kula Ekotera Taaryaa Reh	The entire family would attain Salvation.
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. In the last verse above, the words "Kula Ekotera Taaryaa Reh" actually points to the Hindu Religion belief that one should have 71 ("Ekotera") rebirths to attain salvation.
4. As part of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi (October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018), artists from over 124 countries have contributed musically in paying homage to Mahatma Gandhi through his favorite bhajan 'Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye', the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

The famous Gujarati hymn was penned by the 15th century poet Narsimha Mehta and was one of the favorite 'bhajans' of Mahatma Gandhi who included it into the roster of prayers routinely sung before his meetings, it said. The result is an eclectic, colorful and rich rendition of the hymn infused with the local flavor of the region, the MEA said.

"From Armenia to Angola, Sri Lanka to Serbia, Iraq to Iceland, prominent local singers/groups have showcased their talent to this favorite hymn of the Mahatma. 1-2 videos from different regions of the world were then put together in a fusion video of about 5 minutes to give a flavor of the bhajan as recorded by different artists," it said.

Here is the original article from Times of India of October 2, 2018, 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, including this fusion video.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/gandhis-favourite-bhajan-goes-global-artists-from-124-nations-pay-musical-homage/articleshow/66040797.cms>

***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 Janyaat, Yatha Aafrinaamahi! (May it be so as we wish!)**

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli