

INDIA (BHARAT) - IRAN (PERSIA)

SIMILARITIES PART - 1



Dr. Gaurav A. Vyas

This book contains the Similar tradition between India (Bharat), Iran (Persia) and other countries due to Aryan Migration.

This book is written by collecting information from various sources available on the internet.

ROOTSHUNT

15, Mangalyam Society, Near Ocean Park, Nehrunagar, Ahmedabad – 380 015, Gujarat, BHARAT.

M : 0091 – 98792 58523 / Web : www.rootshunt.com / E-mail : hunt2roots@yahoo.com

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1. Introduction :

When certain groups of Aryans like Brahmins and Rajputs migrated from Iran to India they brought their culture and traditions.

In this topic we are going to cover similar traditions and customs in different religions, community and country due to Aryan migration.

2. Vedic Infulence in Iran and Iraq :

BY STEPHEN KNAPP ON DECEMBER 30, 2016

Long, before the advent of Islam, even as early as the third millennium BCE, India had cultural bonds with the Mesopotamian civilization, now the region of Iraq and Iran. As explained by N. N. Bhattacharya, there are plenty of references to establish a very close contact between India and the Islamic world. Actually, Iraq was an area that had been a part of the Vedic civilization at one time. The extreme antiquity of India's trade with the West-Asia (now known as middle-east) is an established fact.

In the Rig Vedic age, Afghanistan and its neighboring countries were culturally a part of ancient India, Bharatvarsha, and ancient Iran was also hardly distinguishable from India. It is recognized that some forms of Vedic culture prevailed in Western Asia. According to the Syrian writer Zenob, there was an Indian colony in the canton of Taron (in the region of modern day Turkey) on the upper Euphrates, to the west of Lake Van, as early as the second century BCE. Two temples were built there containing images of the Vedic divinities as large as 18 and 22 feet high.

According to Dr. Sayce, a pioneer British Assyriologist and linguist the commerce by sea between India and Babylon must have been carried on as early as about 3000 BCE, when *Ur Bagas*, the first king of United Babylonia, ruled *Ur of the Chaldees*. Indian teak wood is believed to have been found in the Babylonian remains of the third millennium BCE, and Hewitt is of the opinion that this wood must have come by sea from some port of the Malabar coast. (Mookerji, *Indian Shipping*, p. 86) Herodotus even explains that Babylonia imported precious stones from India. (Cowell, *Jataka*, III, p. 83) The *Baveru Jataka* (no. 339) speaks of the visit of Indian maritime traders to the kingdom of Baveru (Babylon), which may refer to the Seleucid empire, established in 312 BCE., with its capital at the city of Babylon.



Sandalwood, rice and peacocks were exported from India to Babylonia. It may also be pointed out that Phoenician trade with South India has been traced from the fact that peacocks brought by Hiram's ships to Solomon were called tuki derived from Tamil Tagai. In pre-Islamic days Indian spices were imported in large quantities into Arabia, and Indian wares were sent to

the mart of Batene. Arabic words like Quaranful are derived from Indian names like Karan-phul. The word, *made of Indian steel*, is proverbial in Arabic literature. Thus we can safely conclude that there were trade relations between India and Western Asia from times immemorial. Some scholars say that this trade may have been interrupted with the rise of Islam, when Arabia became the seat of Islam.



1. Iran :

Parthia or Persia, now Iran, was the land where several tribes connected with the Vedic tradition had settled, such as the Druhyus, Panis, Parsas, and Bisnois. They all followed various Vedic practices, such as fire rituals and Sun worship, many of which were later incorporated in ways into Zoroastrianism. Support by the rulers for such practices went on for sometime until the area was taken over by Muslims, after which many of the architectural monuments were also lost.

In the Vedic period during the time when Parashurama defeated the Kshatriyas 21 times, many of the defeated Kings, those who refused to follow or be a part of the Vedic civilization, left the region of India to find their own place to live. These people were known as Parshvas, and resided in Persia. These people later became followers of Zoroastrianism wherein they worshiped Asur Medha, or Asur Mahta, later called Ahurmazda. Today they are known as Parsis.

Dr. Poonai has also written that Persia was named after the Vedic axe warrior Parashurama. "The doctrines of the *Vedas* were therefore widely taught to the noble people of Iran, also called Purusham Aryanam, a phrase which can be abbreviated to Parsianam or Parthians or Persians."

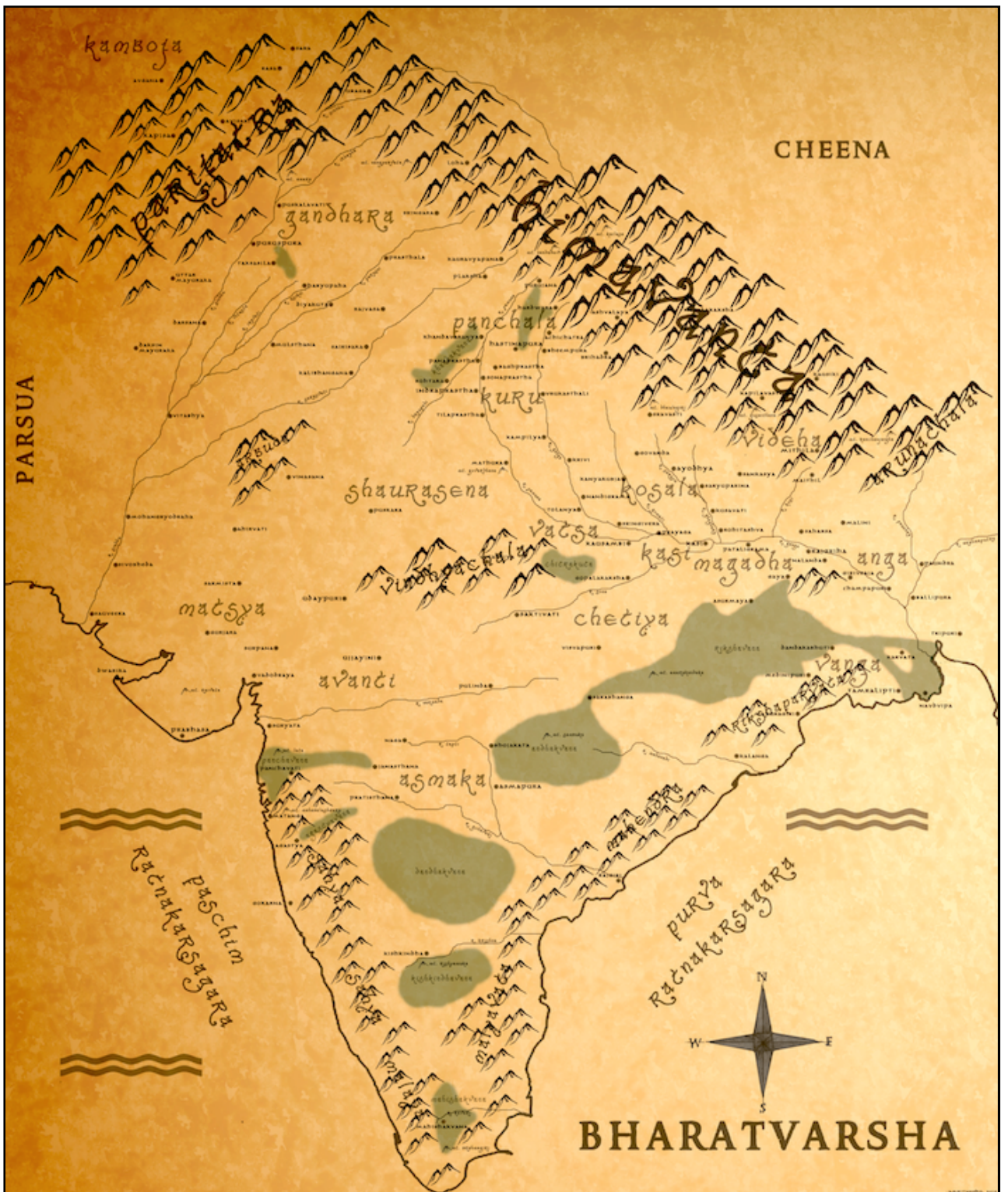
More recently, Dr. Peter B. Clarke, editor of *The World's Religions* (1993, p. 130), writes that the name Iran is derived from Aryan, and Aryans inhabited that ancient Iran.

T. Burrow in *The Sanskrit Language* (2011, p.4) explains :

The relations between this ancient Iranian and the language of the Veda are so close that it is not possible satisfactorily to study one without the other... It is quite possible to find verses in the oldest portion of the Avesta, which simply by phonetic substitutions according to established laws can be turned into intelligible Sanskrit.

Dr. Jagat K. Motwani, nicely summarizes :

It clearly suggests that the Iranian Aryans and the Indo-Aryans were one and the same people in ancient times when they 'lauded the same gods with the same hymns, and worshipped them with identical rites.' The people may not have been known as Hindus or Persians at the time. All the people of the subcontinent, including Indians, Iranians, Nepalese, Bhutanese, Sri Lankans, Burmese, etc., must have been called Aryans, as the country was known as Aryavart, Aryadesh, or Aryabhoomi. The unfounded theory of the Aryan Invasion—engineered in London and guided by the world-known British policy 'Divide and Rule'—seems to have divided Indians and Iranians who, in ancient times, were one and the same people.



Max Muller had written :

The Zoroastrians were a colony from Northern India. They had been together for a time with the people whose sacred songs have been preserved to us in the *Vedas*. A schism took place and the Zoroastrians migrated westward to Archosia and Persia.

He goes on to explain,

Still more striking is the similarity between Persia and India in religion and mythology. Gods unknown to any Indo-European nation are worshiped under the same name in Sanskrit and Zend.

In the Iranian religion the ritual was called the *yazna*, in which a festive meal would take place and a god would be invited to attend, in which fire and a sacred drink, called *houma*, would be offered. This would be done in the open air, outside, often performed by the priestly clan, called the *Magi*. Through the performance of such rituals, blessing from the gods would be attained.

This is very similar to the Vedic tradition, in which the ritual was called the *yajna* (pronounced as *yagya*), or the *homa* ritual, with a central fire that would become the vortex to the deity or the mouth of the deity, and the sacred drink called *soma* would be offered, and then consumed as *prasada*. This would often be performed by the priestly class called the Brahmins (Brahmanas). So the Iranian ritual is likely a direct carry-over from that Vedic tradition.

In Introduction to the Aitareya Brahman (Vol. I, page 23), Dr. Huang, another noted Indologist, writes :

The ancestors of the Brahmins and those of Parsis (the ancient Iranians) lived as brother tribes peacefully together.

This indicates that when the Parsis came to India in 910 CE, to escape the religious persecution they were suffering at the time at the hands of the Muslims, they were *merely returning to their original home*.

However, Persia had the Vedic culture and its spiritual philosophy before Zarathustra founded the Zoroastrian religion. Their religious *gatha* "*Zend Avesta*" is "*Chhanda Avastha*" as part of or derived from the *RigVeda*. In fact, Lord Vishnu was worshiped in the region even after the arrival of Islam. For example, Arminius Vambery, a Hungarian writer who has traveled extensively through several Muslim countries, relates that near the city of Shiraz in Iran is a village named Saadi. The village gets its name from the poet Saadi, who is buried there. This Saadi, a Muslim by birth, was a devotee of the Vedic deity Vishnu. Vambery writes, He even assumed the religion of the worshipers of Vishnu in order to extend and increase his knowledge of all things.

Sir W. Drummond also corroborates this in *Origins of Several Empires* :

In the early ages of the world, the inhabitants of Iran and India were governed by the same laws and were united as one people under the same monarchy.

Sir William Jones, as quoted by Lt. General Charles Vallancy, says, It has been proved by clear evidence and plain reasoning, that a powerful monarchy was established in Iran, long before the Assyrian government, that it was in truth a Hindoo monarchy that subsisted for many centuries and that its history has been engrafted on that of Hindoos, who founded monarchies of Ayodhya and Indraprasth.

From his book, *The Aryans: A Study of Indo-European Origins*, V. Gordon Childe writes that the Mitannis were warriors (Kshatriyas) from India :

Finally we know that there existed among the Mitanni at this time a class of warriors styled *marianna* which has suggested comparison with the Sanskrit *marya*, young men, heroes.

Childe goes on to describe the dynasts installed in the Mesopotamia region, who were perhaps Mitanni and Hittites :

So it is clear enough that the dynasts installed on the Upper Euphrates by 1400 B.C. were Aryans, closely akin to those we meet in the Indus Valley and later in Media and Persia. But their subjects were non-Aryan Asianics, and the rulers had adopted the native language and the Babylonian script for their official correspondence, and apparently acknowledged local gods besides their own.

Dr. Peter B. Clarke (ed), in *The World's Religions* (1993: p.130), writes that the name *Iran* is derived from *Aryan*. He seems to suggest that Iran, in ancient times, was inhabited by Aryans. The old Iranian language Avestan was very close to Sanskrit.

This is in line with the more recent research of C. V. Vaidya as he explains in *History of Sanskrit Literature* (1986, vol. 1, pp. 39-40) wherein he gives lingual evidence in Sanskrit and Avestan to establish that in ancient time, the Indian Aryans and Iranians lived together, but were also one people. The evidence he uses is that the Avestic *gathas* and the *Rig Veda* mantras were extremely similar and sometimes identical.

Argument again in favor of a late date for the Rigvedic hymns is sought to be derived from the extreme similarity of Avestic *gathas* and Rigvedic mantras which are sometimes identical. There is no doubt that the Indo-Aryans and the Iranians once formed one people and lived together.

They naturally have some mantras in common. But we must remember that Zoroaster did not himself compose these *gathas*. He only preserved what had come down for centuries, and even if we take 550 B.C. as the date of Zoroaster, that cannot be the date of those *gathas*. Indeed, as the Hindus have preserved the Vedic mantras intact for thousands of years, because they have become sacred, so also must the Avestic *gathas* have been preserved intact for thousands of years before they were taken up by Zoroaster for his new religion.

2. Iraq :

Iraq was known as Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and where the records of the area show the recognition of the Vedic gods. This is the place of the Sumerian society, followed by the Assyrian. Later groups of the area also included the Mitanni, Hittite and Kassites.

Furthermore, the excavations at Ur, dating back to the 6th and 7th century BCE, revealed Amaranite beads, which could only come from the Nilgiri Hills in South India. Even in the area that became Iraq, Baghdad had become a city of Vedic learning. The last Barmak or minister at

the time had been brought up in India and received his education in Kashmir before he was appointed Minister at the court of Baghdad. (Ibn Faqih Hamadani, *Kitab 'ul-Buldan*)

The name of the city itself is of Indian origin, as Bagh in Sanskrit means God, as in Bhag or Bhagavan, and da in Sanskrit means "to give". Hence, Baghdad means the "gift of God" and "city of God." Its earlier name was Madianul-as-Salam, which meant "city of peace." Of course, as they now say, it is a city in pieces.

It was founded and built by Caliph Al-Mansur in A.H. 145 (762-63CE), and was designed on a scientific basis with the help of Indian engineers and architects.¹⁰ However, it was planned in an organized manner, circular in design, with the help of Indian engineers and architects in the Vedic fashion. It was one of the first Muslim cities which was circular in design. This leads some to believe it was actually a Vedic city but only captured or renamed by Muslims outside Saudi Arabia.

Of course, capturing and renaming cities by Muslims has a long history, as we have seen with such places as Jarbavatu that was renamed as Ahmedabad, or Prayag renamed Allahabad, Agravan as Agra, Bhagyanagar as Hyderabad, and many others.

There were also many similarities between India and the Semitic world, including the flood legends, cosmological stories, the earth tales, and many other cultural traits. Legends and stories relating to the mysteries of creation, life and death, child birth, death, to the domains of theogony entered Western Asia from different sources including India, and were reflected in Islamic mythology, and then changed, altered and adapted to suit the local mood.

On the other hand, as we study the *Talmud* and *Midrash*, some stories therein are directly adopted from Indian sources. For example, in the *Puranas* are the cosmographic conception of seven firmaments and seven underworlds, as also found in the Koran XLI, 8. This also reminds us of the Hebrew conception of seven heavens (Villon, Rakia, Shekhakim, Szebhu, Maon, Makhon, and Araboth) and the seven underworlds (Eretz hatahtonch, Adamah, Arka, Ge, Neshia, Zija, and Tebel).

3. Sufism:

The term Sufism came into existence in the second half of the eighth century. It is generally believed that the followers of Sufism had their inspiration from the Indian wandering ascetics. An earlier form of such influence is manifested in Zuhd or asceticism that in fact is proto-Sufism. Before that, the *Tasabhuf* was followed by various ascetic sects like the *Zuh'ha'd*, the *Kkas'sas*, the *Shak'kaun*, the *Nashmak* and others.

The presence of wandering Indian monks was a factor of practical importance to the adherents of Islam as early as the time of Abbasid Caliphate. (Titus, *Indian's Islam*, p.149)



4. Early Muslims Were Receptive to Vedic Thought :

In the early days of Islam, they were more ready and open to learn from India and to look into the knowledge that was provided by the Vedic philosophy. Unfortunately, with the decline of the Abbasid power by around the middle of the ninth century, the direct exchange between India and Baghdad was practically cut off.

With the fall of Arab power, the leadership of Islam went into the hands of the Turks as a result of which Islamic culture and learning were decentralized. The new situation thus created was not very favorable to the spread of Indian thought in the lands dominated by the Turks who were not so respectful towards Indian culture as the Arabs.

In conclusion, Edward Pococke writes about the evidence that shows how Persia was but an extension of Bharatvarsha and the Vedic culture :

The ancient map of Persia, Colchis, and Armenia is absolutely full of the most distinct and startling evidences of Indian colonization and what is more astonishing, practically evinces, in the most powerful manner, the truth of several main points in the two great Indian poems, the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The whole map is positively nothing less than a journal of emigration on the most gigantic scale.

Source :

<http://dharmatoday.com/2016/12/30/vedic-influence-iraq-iran/>

3. Ancient Iranian Religion :

Ancient Iranian religion refers to the ancient beliefs and practices of the Iranian peoples before the rise of Zoroastrianism.

The Iranian peoples emerged as a separate branch of the Indo-Iranians in the 2nd-millennium BC, during which they came to dominate the Eurasian Steppe and the Iranian Plateau. Their religion is derived from Proto-Indo-Iranian religion, and therefore shares many similarities with Vedic religion which may have branched from it. Although the Iranian peoples left little written or material evidence of their religious practices, their religion is possible to reconstruct from scant Iranian, Babylonian and Greek accounts, similarities with Vedic and other Indo-European religions, and material evidence. Prior to the Achaemenid period, the *daivas* were also commonly worshipped. The kings made it a state policy to destroy their shrines and vilify them. Old Persian *daiva* occurs twice in Xerxes' *daiva inscription* (XPh, early 5th century BCE).

This trilingual text also includes one reference to a *daivadana* "house of the *daivas*", generally interpreted to be a reference to a shrine or sanctuary. In his inscription, Xerxes records that "by the favour of Ahura Mazda I destroyed that establishment of the *daivas* and I proclaimed, 'The *daivas* thou shalt not worship!'" This statement has been interpreted either one of two ways. Either the statement is an ideological one and *daivas* were gods that were to be rejected, or the statement was politically motivated and *daivas* were gods that were followed by (potential) enemies of the state. Ahura Mazda received state patronage as the chief deity and the emperors became his representatives.

The post Achaemenid religion was polytheistic and the chief god of their pantheon was Ahura Mazda, who was recognized as the creator of the world. They had a three-tiered division of the cosmos into the earth, the atmosphere and the heaven above. Dualism was strongly emphasized and human nature was considered essentially good. The chief ritual of the ancient Iranians was the *yazna*, in which the deities were praised and the mind-altering drug *hauma* was consumed. This ritual was performed by a highly trained priestly class. Fire was worshiped as the deity *Atar*. Politics and religion under the Persian Empires were strongly connected.

Beginning in the early 10th-century BC, the ancient Iranian religion was gradually displaced by Zoroastrianism, which contains many essential aspects of its predecessor.

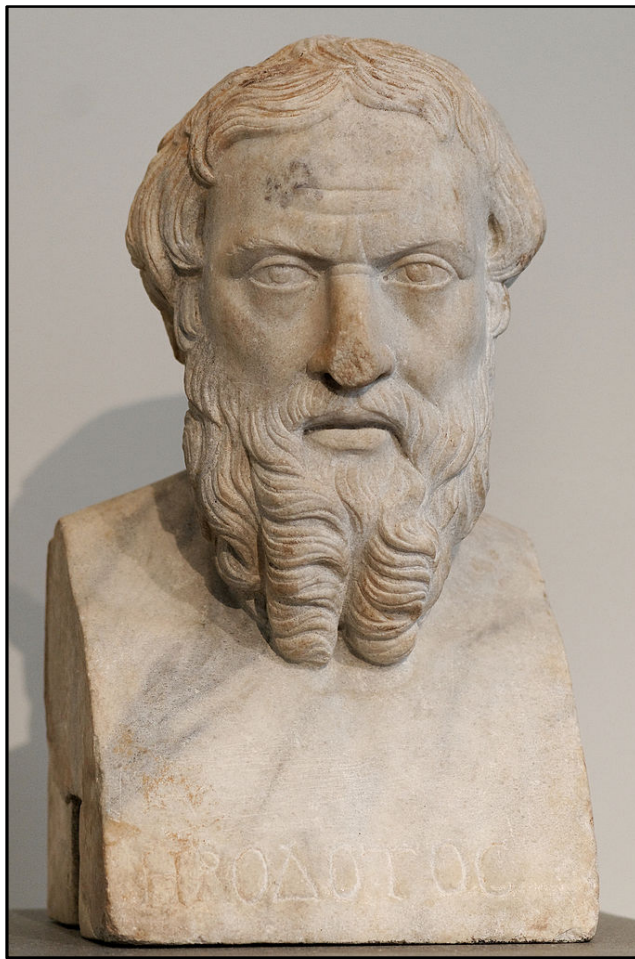
Iranian sources :



The Bistun Inscription of Darius the Great is an important source on the ancient Iranian religion.

An important Iranian source is the Avesta, which are Zoroastrian sacred scriptures made in the Avestan. This is considered the principal source of knowledge on ancient Iranian religions. It is a collection of several texts that seems to have been over a large span of time by a variety of authors. These texts have been subjected to editings and redactions throughout their development. It is now the only extant fragment of what remained in the 9th century AD of the Avesta compiled in the Sasanian Empire by Khosrow I (6th century). Summaries of its content reveal that it was a huge collection containing texts not only in Avestan, but also in Pahlavi, which was the language of Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian Empire.

Though the existing Avesta is dated quite recently, it contains information that is considerably older. The Gathas ("Songs") of the Prophet Zoroaster and much of the Yashts are considered among the oldest. The Gathas includes expressions of the religious vision of Zoroaster, which in many ways is a reinterpretation of the ancient Iranian religious principles. The Yashts are a collection of verses dedicated to various deities. These verses are mostly related to Zoroastrian terminology and ideas, but have little relation to anything specifically Zoroastrian. The gods invoked are basically the pre-Zoroastrian gods of the Iranian peoples. There is little agreement on when Zoroaster lived, but most scholars agree that he lived somewhere between 1200 and 600 BC. Dating the Yashts is similarly difficult, but it is likely that they were redacted (not necessarily composed) initially in the 5th-century BC.



The 5th-century BC Greek historian Herodotus is an important source on ancient Iranian religion.

Another Iranian source are royal inscriptions of the Achaemenid Empire made in the Old Persian (with Akkadian, Aramaic and Elamite translations). These inscriptions, in particular those of Darius I and his son Xerxes I, contain many references to religion. The fact that these are fixed in time and place make them particularly useful.

Except from the Achaemenid inscriptions, there is no evidence that the Iranian religious compositions were written until the late Parthian or Sassanid period. This makes ancient Iranian religion the only major religion of the Middle East which has no written texts in the ancient period. The religious information was rather oral both in composition and transmission.

Non-Iranian sources :

The non-Iranian sources are mainly Greek. The most important Greek source is Herodotus. Some of the Greek information on ancient Iranian religion is however unreliable. This is either because it is based on outright wrong information or based on misunderstandings.

The historical reconstruction of ancient Vedic literature is also an important source. The earliest religious texts of the related Indo-Aryan peoples are indispensable for reconstructing the historical development of the ancient Iranian religion. The most important of these texts in this regard is the Rigveda. It is composed of more than 1,000 hymns dedicated to various deities.

Material sources :

Material sources are rather limited and mostly confined to western Iran. The remains of Achaemenid architecture are the most important of these material sources. They provide a mass of evidence of imperial articulation of religious symbols and indicate a significant dependence on Middle Eastern precedents.

Origins :



The Andronovo culture, Bactria–Margiana Archaeological Complex and Yaz culture cultures have been associated with Indo-Iranians.

During the second half of the 2nd millennium BC, one group of Indo-Europeans migrated southwards from the Eurasian Steppe into the Middle East, the Iranian plateau and the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent. These were Indo-Iranians calling themselves Arya ("nobles"). Those that settled in the Near East and India are known as Indo-Aryan peoples, while those that settled in Greater Iran are known as Iranian peoples. Because of their common origin, Iranian and Indo-Aryan religion is substantially similar. Through a comparative study of both groups one can reconstruct general features of Iranian religion for which there is no direct documentation.

The Iranian peoples were originally seminomadic pastoralists whose main economic base was cattle, chiefly bovines but also goats and sheep. They excelled at breeding horses, which they used for riding and pulling chariots in sport and warfare. Exactly how rigid their society was is difficult to determine. The Iranian peoples were specialists in religious matters. Men who could afford chariots and horses were recognized as leaders and warriors.

By the creation of the Achaemenid Empire, a more rigid division of society into priests, nobles, farmers and artisans had developed. Society was heavily patriarchal, which was strongly reflected in religion. As the Iranian peoples settled the land they became more engaged in agriculture and sedentary life. During this process they were influenced by the indigenous populations. The religions of these peoples are completely unknown except from the elements they have left Iranian religion which has no parallel with other Indo-European religions.

Cosmography :

The ancient Iranians believed in a cosmos which was a three-tiered structure. This structure consisted of the earth, the atmosphere, and the heaven above. Beyond heaven was the realm of Endless Lights while below the earth lay the realm of darkness and chaos. The earth rested on a cosmic sea called the Varu-Karta. In the earth's centre was cosmic mountain Hara. Down the Hara flowed the river Ardvi.

The earth divided into six continents surrounding the central continent. The central continent was Khvaniratha, the locus of Aryana Vajiah (land of the Aryans).

Creation :

Who is the original father of arta? Who established the paths of the sun and the stars? Who is it through whom the moon now waxes now wanes? Who supports the earth below and (keeps) the heavens (above) from falling down? Who yokes the two steeds to the wind and the clouds?... Who fashioned honoured Devotion together with Dominion? Who made... a son respectful of his father?

- Zoroaster

Neither the Avesta or Achaemenid inscriptions have much to say about creation as they contain nothing that can be compared to the Babylonian Enūma Eliš or the first chapters of the Book of Genesis. What is rather emphasized is the majesty and power of Ahura Mazda as the creator of heaven and earth. Beside Ahura Mazda is the ancient Indo-Iranian god Thvarshatar ("Artisan"). Thvarstar also appears under the name Spenta Mainyu ("the Beneficent Spirit") in Zoroaster's system of the Beneficent Immortals. In the creative aspect Thvarshatar functions in many ways as Ahura Mazda. In the Younger Avesta Spenta and the Gathas Mainyu is paired with the evil antagonist Angra Mainyu ("the Evil Spirit", Ahriman in Middle Persian). In later sources it is Ohrmazd (Middle Persian for Ahura Mazda) who is paired with Ahriman. The Avesta contains cryptic allusions to the creations of two antagonistic spirits.

It is Plutarch (De Iside et Osiride 47), who conducts the first discursive exposition of world creation by two spirits. Plutarch describes the Persians as telling mythical tales about Oromazes (i. e., Ahura Mazda), who is born from light, and Areimanios (i. e., Ahriman), who is

born from gloom, engaging in a war against each other. This dualistic idea of two primordial spirits, which Zoroaster calls twins, is an early Indo-European concept. Reconstruction indicates that primordial twins that existed before the creation of the world, came into conflict. One was named "Man" (Iranian *Manu', meaning "man"), the other was named "Twin" (Iranian Yam, Avestan Yima). After Man killed Yima he used his dismembered body to fashion the world.

He used the flesh for the earth, the bones for the mountains, the skull for the sky, etc. In a different Iranian variant of the myth, Yam is the first mortal and the first ruler. His rule is described as a golden age in which there is no hot or cold, no death or old age, etc. When falsehood enters Yam's speech this golden age comes to an end. The royal Glory (Khvarnah) departs from Yam and seeks refuge in the cosmic sea. Azhi Dahaka ("Dahaka the Snake"), a serpentine tyrant, then overthrows Yam. His rule ushers in a period of chaos, drought and ruin. Azhi is later defeated by the hero Thraitauna. Thraitauna establishes the legendary line of rulers called Kavis.

Myths :

Since all sources on Persian mythology, both from indigenous texts and classical authors, originated after the emergence of Zoroastrianism, it is difficult to distinguish between myths that are Zoroastrian innovations from those that are inherited. The fact that Zoroastrianism is heavily inspired by already existing ideas and has adapted from previous Iranian religions makes this discerning particularly hard. Like other ancient religions in general, Iranian religions did not have main collection of myth. Iranian myths are rather fragments from a diverse variety of myths that exhibit variations in common themes.

There is a variant of the Noah's Ark myth in Iranian religion. Here Yam appears as the herdsman and leader of mankind. Yam rules the world for a long time, during which the earth is increased threefold due to overcrowding. Ahura Mazda tells Yam that a great winter is on the horizon. He advises Yam to build a large three-story barn-like structure (vara) in order to hold seeds of plants and pairs of animals. It seems that the vara were actually some sort of paradise or blessed island, even though the story at first developed as myth among pastoralists about the culture hero building a first winter cattle station.

Zoroaster appears to have been the first religious figure to develop an eschatological myth about a future saviour to rescue the world from evil. This idea plays an important part in Zoroastrianism. It was probably also influential in introducing the concept of the messiah in exile Judaism.

Pantheon :

The Iranian pantheon was similar to that of other Indo-European religions. It contained a large number of deities, primarily male. These deities personified natural phenomena, social norms or institutions. It seems that there were two major groups of deities, the daivas and the ahuras. Daiv, which means "heavenly one", is derived from the common Proto-Indo-European word for "god", which is the meaning it has in the Vedas. Among some Iranians and in Zoroastrianism the daivas were considered demons, but this view was not universal. The ahuras ("lords") were noble sovereign deities. They were contradicted with the bagha ("the one

who distributes") and the yazata ("the one who worshipped").

The chief of the pantheon was Ahura Mazda ("wise lord"). He was particularly connected with the principle of social and cosmic order called *asha* in Avestan. Closely connected to him was the ahura Mithra. Mithra was the god who presided over the covenants. In Iranian religion there were two gods with martial traits similar to those of Vedic Indra, these were Mithra and Vrthraghna. The most prominent female deities were Spanta Aramati, the deity of the earth, and Ardvi Sura, the deity of the sacred river.

Ahura Mazda :



Ahura Mazda (on the right, with high crown) presents Ardashir I (left) with the ring of kingship. (Naqsh-e Rostam, 3rd century CE)

[Ahura Mazda was] the great god... who created this earth, who created yonder heaven, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Darius king.

- Darius I, Inscription at Naqsh-e Rostam

Ahura Mazda ("Wise Lord") was probably the main god in pantheon of the pre-Zoroastrian Iranians. In both the religion of Darius, Xerxes and Zoroaster, he was worshipped as the supreme god to the point that the rest were almost excluded. He is chiefly considered the creator of the universe and the one who maintains cosmic and social order, *arta*. In his inscriptions, Darius derives his source of authority from Ahura Mazda and makes it clear that political stability and order through law imitates the model set out by the Creator. Through interrogative discourse, an ancient Indo-European poetic device, Zoroaster asks: "Who is the original father of *arta*? Who established the paths of the sun and the stars? Who is it through whom the moon now waxes now wanes? Who supports the earth below and (keeps) the heavens (above) from falling down? Who yokes the two steeds to the wind and the clouds?...

Who fashioned honoured Devotion together with Dominion? Who made... a son respectful of his father?"

Neither the Avesta nor the Achaemenid inscriptions identify Ahura Mazda with a natural phenomenon. In the hymn of the goddess Rti (Reward), Ahura Mazda is identified as her father and Spenta Ariamati (Earth) as her mother. This implies that he has assumed the role of the Indo-European Father Heaven (*Diēus Pater, Vedic Dyaus Pitar), who is paired with Mother Earth. Herodotus apparently makes this identification when stating that Zeus in Persian mythology "is the whole circle of heavens". Zeus is also equated with Oromazes (Ahura Mazda) in other Greek sources. These Greeks made this comparison because of Ahura Mazda's role as father and chief god of the pantheon. His name implies that he was sought by worshippers for his wisdom. Based on the expressions of Darius and Zoroaster, it is reasonable to assume that he was the object of a personal devotion which seems to have been absent with other deities.

Mithra :



Investiture of Sassanid emperor Ardashir II (3rd century CE bas-relief at Taq-e Bostan, Iran. On the left stands the Mithra with raised *barsom*, sanctifying the investiture.

Along with Ahura Mazda, Mithra was the most important deity in the ancient Iranian pantheon. He may have occupied a position almost equal to him. In the Achaemenid inscriptions, Mithra is along with Anahita the only deity specifically mentioned.

In the ancient Iranian pantheon there was an individual sun god called Hvar Khshaita. In the eastern Iranian traditions laid out in the Avesta, Mithra also appears to have a connection to the sun, especially with the first rays of sunrise as he drives forward in his chariot. In the western Iranian tradition Mithra was thoroughly associated with the sun and his name became the common word for "sun".

Despite his connection to the sun Mithra function prominently in the ethical sphere. The word Mithra was a common noun meaning "contract, covenant, treaty". Mithra was thus the god of Covenant. In this respect he function as a celestial deity overseeing all solemn agreements made between people. Breaking such agreements was subjected to severe punishment whether the agreement were made between individuals or sociopolitical entities. As a covenant breaker, Mithra is described as sleepless and having 1,000 ears and 10,000 eyes. He is great warrior sporting a mace while driving his chariot into battle. In this capacity he intervenes on behalf of those faithful to treaties by subjecting the treaty breakers (mithra-drug) to panic and defeat.

As an independent deity, Mithra carried the standing epithet varu-gavyuti, which means "one who (presides over) wide pasture lands". Another of his epithets was payu, "protector". He is considered the one who protects the territories of those who worship him and abide by their promises.

Mithra is the god who gave his name to the religion of Mithraism, which was at one point popular throughout the Roman Empire. The Iranian origins of mithraism are difficult to trace.

Anahiti :



Taq-e Bostan high-relief of the investiture of Khosrow II (*r.* 590 to 628). The king (center) receives the ring of kingship from Mithra (right). On the left, apparently sanctifying the

investiture, stands a female figure generally assumed to be Anahita.

One of the longest of the Avestan Yashts is devoted to a goddess whose name is given as Ardvi Sura Anahita, which means "the damp, strong, untainted". The long name apparently combines two separate names which originally belonged to two individual deities, Ardvi Sura and Anahiti. Ardvi Sura is the Iranian name for the heavenly river goddess who in the Rigveda is called Sarasvati. In this capacity she brings water to the earth, streams, rivers, and seas while flowing from Mount Hukarya to Varu-Karta sea. Anahiti on the other hand is a separate goddess of unknown origin whose cult appears to have been popular originally in northeastern Iran. The name probably meant "untaintedness, purity". Here purity was meant both in moral and physical terms. The Greek Anaitis preserves the original Old Iranian form of this name, while the Old Persian and Avestan Anahit(a) is a more recent linguistic form. In post-Achaemenid Iran Anahiti was closely connected with kingship and the shah.

The Yashts describe Anahita in great detail, unlike any other deity. The descriptions about her clothing and ornamentation are so specific that it is likely the source of the description was a dressed cult image. This fact is confirmed in her mentioning by Artaxerxes II. Berossus, a Babylonian historian, notes that the king had several images of her made and distributed. Since the Iranians did not originally make images, it is likely that the cult of Anahiti was inspired by Mesopotamian models. The Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar is a likely candidate in this regard, although Anahiti's dress, in particular her beaver coat, shows major differences. There were also major similarities in their roles. Ishtar was the patroness of the palace and goddess of war. Anahiti is described as a patron of Iranian heroes and legendary rulers and her Yasht is strongly devoted to her martial traits. Both goddesses were important for fertility.

Vrthraghna :

Vrthraghna was the mighty deity of war. He had martial traits are similar to Mithra and the Vedic god of war Indra. In the post-Achaemenid period he was equated with Hercules and became a favourite deity of monarchs, many of whom took his name. His name means "the smashing of resistance or obstruction". In his capacity as the god who guaranteed his people to overcome all resistance, his name came to be understood as meaning "Victory".

In connection with rulership and granting victory, he held the epithet bara-khvarnah, which means "Bearing the Glory." Like Mithra he is portrayed as the ideal warrior. For the earliest Iranian invaders of the Iranian plateau, he came to personify aspirations to acquire new territory from the native population. For later Iranians he became the divine manifestation for the will to conquer the world.

In the Iranian pantheon, Vrthraghna was the god who predominantly possessed the ability to undergo transformations, both anthropomorphic and theriomorphic. Though rich mythologies are believed to have existed for these avatars, only 10 forms have been recorded. These are: [Vrthraghna is a] ferocious wild boar with sharp teeth and tusks, a boar that kills at one blow...who, overtaking his opponent...strikes (him) down with a toss of his head...until he smashes the vertebrae, the pillars of life...(and) mixes on the ground the bones, hair, brains, and blood.

Description of Vrthraghna as a wild boar :

- The Wind (the god Vayu)
- Bull
- Stallion
- Rutting camel
- Wild boar
- 15-year-old male (this was considered the ideal age)
- Falcon
- Ram
- Goat
- Hero

The avatars of Vrthraghna all had a fellow aggressiveness and virility. In some violence is conspicuous. Descriptions of these avatars can be particularly graphic.

Rashnu :

Rashnu was an ethical deity, a divine judge who presided over the legal disputes of humans. He was often associated with Mithra. The name of Rashnu is derived from the Indo-European verb, *reg ("to be, make straight, direct, judge"). In particular he seems to have been the god of oaths and ordeals administered in trials. In several ways he was responsible for the same judicial functions as the Vedic god Varuna, who was the ultimate judge presiding over oaths, often inseparable from the Vedic Mitra.

While it is uncertain whether Ahura Mazda had any judicial responsibilities, Rashnu and Mithra were connected with two separate areas of law. While Mithra was concerned with covenants, Rashnu mainly had jurisdiction of legal matters, in particular those of criminal nature. He was invoked as the god who "best smite(s), who best destroy(s) the thief and the bandit at this trial."

Tishtrya and Tiri :

Astral deities figured more prominently in ancient Iranian religion than Vedic religion. This may be explained with the influence of Babylonian science on the Iranians, in particular the western groups. In the Avesta stars and constellations such as Ursa Major, the Pleiades, Vega, Fomalhaut and the Milky Way are mentioned. The most important astral deities seem to have been Tiri and Tishtrya.

For reasons that are unknown, Tishtrya is associated with the star Sirius in one Yasht that is entirely devoted to her. Though the heliacal rising of Sirius is assumed to have occurred during the season of drought, his chief myth concerns a battle between him and the demonic star Apausha ("Nonprosperity") over rainfall and water. In a battle taking place along the shores of Varu-Karta, Tishtrya and Apausha battled each other while assuming the forms of a white stallion and an ugly horse. Though Apausha is initially victorious, Tishtrya eventually prevails after receiving worship, driving Apausha "along a path the length of a race course." This combat was reenacted by the Iranians in a yearly equestrian ritual. After assuming victory Tishtrya causes the cosmic sea to boil and surge. Then another star, Satavaisa (Formelhaut), arises with cloud-forming mists. These mists are blown by the wind in the form of "rain and clouds and hail to the dwelling and the settlements (and) to the seven continents."

Tishtrya was considered to contain the seeds of waters and was thus closely connected with agriculture. He defeated shooting stars identified as witches, in particular one named "Bad Crop" (Duzhyāryā). In Zoroastrianism Tishtrya was in late Achaemenid times identified with the western Astral deity Tiri (Mercury in Sassanid astronomy). Little is known about Tiri except from the highly important agricultural festival, the Tiragan. The fourth month, (Tir, Avestan Tishtryaeninis), and the 13th day (Tir) of the Zoroastrian calendar, bears this name.

Practices :

In sharp contrast to other people of the Middle East, the Iranians neither made images of their deities or built temples to house them. They preferred to worship their gods in the open. The ancient Iranians practiced a sacrificial ritual yazna. In this ritual fire and the sacred drink hauma played a key part. The chief officiant at this sacrifice was the zautar.

Yazna :

Worship was mainly performed through the central ritual yazna. This ritual corresponds in many regards with the Vedic yajna. Despite changes undergone through the millennia, these rituals are still performed by Zoroastrians and Hindus. It is probably the oldest continuously enacted ritual in the world. As far as yazna can be reconstructed, it was basically a highly elaborate festive meal offered to a guest. In this ritual the sacrificer was the host and the deity the guest. While yazna is a daily ritual in Zoroastrianism, its frequency among the early Iranians is not precisely known.

Yazna was held to into communion a divine. This was either for a specific purpose, for example to secure victory in war, to express piety or to secure general welfare. Yazna followed the general rules of hospitality. A guest was sent by invitation. Upon arrival he received a warm greeting and was shown to a comfortable seat. There he was given meat and drink while entertained with songs praising his deeds and virtues. The guest was expected to return the hospitality with a gift.

The seat provided for the gods invited to yazna originally consisted of special grasses spread on the ground in front of the altar. In Vedic terminology this was called the barhish (Avestan barzish, "cushion"). The Avestan word barəsmān (Iranian barzman), used in Zoroastrianism, is a cognate of this word. It is used for a bundle of sticks, later thin metal rods, that are manipulated by priests.

Of bigger importance than the offering of meat was the preparation of the divine drink hauma. Like fire, hauma was considered both sacred and as a deity. The most important part of yazna was probably the preparation of hauma. Despite numerous proposals, the plant whose juices were extracted to prepare hauma has not been identified. The word hauma is derived from a verb "to press, extract". It thus literally means the juice which has been pressed out of the whatever plant that has been used. While making hauma the stalks were first soaked in water and then pounded. While Zoroastrians did this with metal mortar and pestle, the early Iranians pounded the stalks between two pressing stones. The juice was filtered and mixed with milk to reduce the bitter taste.

It was also possibly mixed with water. Hauma was described as yellow. The drink was then consumed immediately. Though it was not alcoholic it was rather a mind-altering drug. According to the Yasht to Hauma: "All other intoxicants are accompanied by Wrath with the horrible club, but that intoxication which is Hauma's is accompanied by gladdening Truth (arta)." This minor statement can be extended with more informative descriptions in the Rigveda. In the Rigveda soma was not only offered to gods, but also consumed by poets to increase their power in their search for truth. Hauma was also drunk as a stimulant by warriors before going into battle. Many heroes of Iranian mythology are remembered for having practiced this cult.

It is probable that yasna from a very early period was carried out by a priest, the zautar (Vedic hotar). The zautar was probably assisted by several other ritual specialists. With the priests acting through the sacrificer, the gods were invoked through fire. When the god arrived he was placed at the barzman, served parts of the slaughtered victim as food, served a drink and entertained with song. In turn the sacrificer would request a gift, usually in the form of heroic songs, good health or victory. In many ways the ritual can be compared with the old Latin dictum *do ut des* ("I give so that you may give"), in the sense that it was meant to provide a means of inducing the deities to act in favor of humans. In addition it made a communion between the divine and human realms possible. Deities could also be addressed directly through prayer. In this case the supplicant would be standing erect with upraised arms. Prostration was not known.



Fire temple of the early Parthian or Sasanian period in Kashan, Iran.

Fire :

Fire was of supreme importance in Iranian rituals. In ancient Iran, fire was considered a deity and highly sacred element. As a result, atar was denoted both "fire god" and "Fire". Every instance of fire was considered a manifestation of a deity. Because burned offerings were not made, Atar's role was mainly that of an intermediary between heaven and earth and between humans and gods. This is similar to his Vedic counterpart Agni. Beyond yazna, fire was carefully treated as a sacred element. Whether in households, or later, in fire temples, fire was maintained with proper fuel, protected from polluting agents, and most importantly never extinguished.

Songs :

The song of praise to the divine guest was a major importance. Almost all of the Rigved and much of the poetic portions of the Avesta must be understood in this context. This means that the ancient poetry of the Indo-Iranians was religious in nature and composed specifically for ritual occasions in which gods required songs of praise in order to make them well disposed towards those who worshipped them.

The obscure parts of many Vedic hymns and Zoroaster's Gathas can best be understood through realizing that the intended audience were the gods rather than humans.

Festivals :

The Iranians celebrated various festivals throughout the year. These were mostly related to agricultural and herding cycles. The most important of these was that of New Year, which is still celebrated by Iranian peoples.

Philosophy :

Dualism :

Like with other ancient religions, the cosmological dichotomy of chaos and cosmos played an important part of both myth and worldview. The most important and unique aspect of ancient Iranian religion was the development of dualism. This was mainly expressed in opposition between truth (arta) and falsehood (drug, drauga). While originally confined to the conflict between social order and social disorder, this dualistic worldview came to affect all aspects of life. The pantheon became divided between gods and demons. Under the influence of the Magi, who were members of a priestly Median tribe, the animal kingdom became divided into two classes. There were beneficent animals and noxious creatures.

Dualism even permeated the vocabulary. "ahuric" and "daivic" words were developed for such things as body parts. For example, the word zasta and gava became used for the hands of a righteous and evil person, respectively. This was however not a gnostic system like the ones that flourished in the Middle East in the Common Era. This was because there was no myth of evil being created through the corruption of a spiritual being.

Human nature :

In the Zoroastrian myth of creation, humans are created for the purpose of repulsing the Evil Spirit. Although it is uncertain whether this is a pre-Zoroastrian concept, it shows that in Iranian religion human nature was considered essentially good. This is contrary to the myths about the baseness of human condition found in Babylonian mythology, for example in Enûma Eliš. In Iranian religious thought humans had free will and were able to determine their own destinies through their ethical choices.

In addition to the body (tanu), an individual was believed to consist of a number of spiritual elements that basically fall under the category of souls.

These were :

- The animating force (ahu)
- The breath of life (vyana)
- Mind or spirit (manah)
- The soul (ruvan, Avestan urvan)
- The protective spirit (fravarti; Avestan fravashi)

- The spiritual double (daina; Avestan daena)

In Zoroastrianism, belief in the Day of Judgement was a central aspect. Zoroastrianism considers the ruvan to be accountable for a person's actions in life. It is therefore the ruvan which receives reward or punishment in the afterlife. At the time of judgement, the ruvan is encountered by the daina. The daina embodies the sums of a persons deeds in life, and is manifested as either a beautiful maiden or an ugly old woman. Depending on how the persons deeds are weighed, the soul is either crossed safely across the Cinvat Bridge to the other world or descends into the abyss.

The fravarti is a deity which functions as a protective spirit for an individual. It is also an ancestor spirit. The fravartis constitute a warrior band, quite similar to the Vedic Maruts.

Politics :

Apart from the legendary kings of eastern Iran, the Kavis, of whom Zoroaster's patron Vishtaspa (Hystapes) was the last, the only historical information about the relationship between religious and political authority come from the Achaemeneid period in western Iran. The ideology of kingship was closely connected to Ahura Mazda, the supreme deity. The kings ruled through his will. Achaemenid kings were compelled to contend with the Median priests, known as magi. The origin of the magi is unclear. According to classical sources they were responsible for presiding over religious ceremonies and chanting "theogonies".

The magi were also deeply involved in politics. This can be seen by the attempt of the magus Gaumata to usurp the throne after the death of Cambyses II. Darius persecuted the magi, but they were able to preserve their power and eventually become the official priesthood of the Achaemenid Empire. The magi were probably responsible with introducing dualist ideology and enforcing zealous preoccupation with ritual purity in Zoroastrianism. They are also famous throughout the ancient world for their ability to perform magic.

Source :

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Iranian_religion

4. Sun Worship in Iran, India and Egypt :

1. Iran :

Mithraism :

Mithraism, the worship of Mithra, the Iranian god of the sun, justice, contract, and war in pre-Zoroastrian Iran. Known as Mithras in the Roman Empire during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, this deity was honoured as the patron of loyalty to the emperor. After the acceptance of Christianity by the emperor Constantine in the early 4th century, Mithraism rapidly declined.



History :

Before ancient religious reformer Zarathustra (Greek name Zoroaster) gained influence in the region during the 6th century BCE, the Iranians had a polytheistic religion, and Mithra was the most important of their gods. First of all, he was the god of contract and mutual obligation. In a cuneiform tablet of the 15th century BCE that contains a treaty between the Hittites and the Mitanni, Mithra is invoked as the god of oath. Furthermore, in some Indian Vedic texts the god Mitra (the Indian form of Mithra) appears both as "friend" and as "contract."

The word *mitra* may be translated in either way, because contracts and mutual obligation make friends. In short, Mithra may signify any kind of interpersonal communication and whatever establishes good relations between people. Mithra was called the Mediator. Mithra was also the god of the sun, of the shining light that beholds everything, and, hence, was invoked in oaths. The Greeks and Romans considered Mithra as a sun god. He was probably also the god of kings. He was the god of mutual obligation between the king and his warriors and, hence, the god of war. He was also the god of justice, which was guaranteed by the king. Whenever people observed justice and contract, they venerated Mithra.

The most important Mithraic ceremony was the sacrifice of the bull. Opinion is divided as to whether this ceremony was pre-Zoroastrian or not. Zarathustra denounced the sacrifice of the bull, so it seems likely that the ceremony was a part of the old Iranian paganism. This inference is corroborated by an Indian text in which Mitra reluctantly participates in the sacrifice of a god named Soma, who often appears in the shape of a white bull or of the moon. On the Roman monuments, Mithra reluctantly sacrifices the white bull, who is then transformed into the moon. This detailed parallel seems to prove that the sacrifice must have been pre-Zoroastrian. Contract and sacrifice are connected, since treaties in ancient times were sanctioned by a common meal.

Beginning with Darius the Great (522–486 BCE), the Persian kings of the Achaemenid dynasty were Zoroastrians. But Darius and his successors did not intend to create political difficulties by attempting to eradicate the old beliefs still dear to the heart of many nobles. Thus, the religion of Zarathustra was gradually contaminated with elements of the old, polytheistic worship. Hymns (the Yashts) were composed in honour of the old gods. There is a Yasht dedicated to Mithra, in which the god is depicted as the all-observing god of heavenly light, the guardian of oaths, the protector of the righteous in this world and the next, and, above all, as the archfoe of the powers of evil and darkness—hence, the god of battles and victory.

In the mixed religion of the later Achaemenid period, however, the Zoroastrian aspects clearly dominate the heathen aspects. The sacrifice of the bull, abhorred by every Zoroastrian, is never mentioned. When Alexander the Great conquered the Persian empire about 330 BCE, the old structure of society appears to have broken down completely, and about the worship of Mithra in Persia no more is heard.

Local aristocrats in the western part of the former Persian empire retained their devotion to Mithra. The kings and nobles of the border region between the Greco-Roman and the Iranian world still worshipped him. When Tiridates of Armenia acknowledged the Roman emperor Nero as his supreme lord, he performed a Mithraic ceremony, indicating that the god of contract and of friendship established good relations between the Armenians and the mighty Romans. The kings of Commagene (southeast of Turkey) venerated Mithra. Mithradates VI of Pontus may have been a worshipper of the god, and his allies, the Cilician pirates, are known to have performed Mithraic ceremonies (67 BCE). The worship of Mithra, however, never became popular in the Greek world, because the Greeks never forgot that Mithra had been the god of their enemies the Persians.

There is little notice of the Persian god in the Roman world until the beginning of the 2nd century, but, from the year 136 CE onward, there are hundreds of dedicatory inscriptions to Mithra. This renewal of interest is not easily explained. The most plausible hypothesis seems to be that Roman Mithraism was practically a new creation, wrought by a religious genius who may have lived as late as *c.* 100 CE and who gave the old traditional Persian ceremonies a new Platonic interpretation that enabled Mithraism to become acceptable to the Roman world. Roman Mithraism, like Iranian Mithraism, was a religion of loyalty toward the king. It seems to have been encouraged by the emperors, especially Commodus (180–192), Septimius Severus (193–211), and Caracalla (211–217). Most adherents of Mithra known to us from inscriptions are soldiers of both low and high rank, officials in the service of the emperor,

imperial slaves, and freedmen (who quite often were very influential people)—persons who probably knew which god would lead them to quick promotion.

Mithraic sanctuaries and dedications to Mithra are numerous at Rome and Ostia, along the military frontier, in Britain, and on the Rhine, the Danube, and the Euphrates. Few dedications are found in peaceful provinces; when they do occur, the dedicator is usually a provincial governor or an imperial official. Within a few generations, the Roman world had completely assimilated the Persian god. When Diocletian attempted a renewal of the Roman state and religion, he did not forget Mithra. In 307 CE, in a dedication from Carnuntum (at the Danube, near Vienna), Diocletian and his colleagues dedicated an altar to Mithra as the patron of their empire (*fautori imperii sui*).

But in 312 Constantine won the battle at the Milvian Bridge under the sign of the cross. Instantaneously, the dedications to Mithra ceased, even though there was no immediate public interdiction of Mithraic ceremonies. The worship seems to have collapsed quite suddenly when imperial favour ceased to be with the Mithraists. Dedications to Mithra appear again between about 357 and 387, but only at Rome. The dedicators all come from the old pagan aristocracy of the city of Rome, which in this period was in open opposition to the new Christian emperor at Constantinople. In these inscriptions, however, Mithra is only one of many traditional pagan gods. The Mithraic mysteries had gradually faded long before. And when the Roman opposition was defeated, pagan worship was suppressed altogether.

Mythology And Theology :

The creation of the world is the central episode of Mithraic mythology. According to the myths, the sun god sent his messenger, the raven, to Mithra and ordered him to sacrifice the bull. Mithra executed the order reluctantly; in many reliefs he is seen turning aside his face in sorrow. But at the very moment of the death of the bull, a great miracle happened. The white bull was metamorphosed into the moon; the cloak of Mithra was transformed into the vault of the sky, with the shining planets and fixed stars; from the tail of the bull and from his blood sprang the first ears of grain and the grape; and from the genitals of the animal ran the holy seed which was received by a mixing bowl. Every creature on earth was shaped with an admixture of the holy seed. One Mithraic hymn begins: "Thou hast redeemed us too by shedding the eternal blood." The plants and the trees were created. Day and night began to alternate, the moon started her monthly cycle, the seasons took up their round dance through the year, and thus time was created. But, awakened by the sudden light, the creatures of the dark emerged from earth. A serpent licked the bull's blood.

A scorpion tried to suck the holy seed from the genitals. On the reliefs a lion often is also seen. With the bull's death and the creation of the world, the struggle between good and evil began: thus is the condition of human life. The raven symbolizes air, the lion fire, the serpent earth, and the mixing bowl water. So the four elements (air, fire, earth, and water) came into being, and from them all things were created. After the sacrifice, Mithra and the sun god banqueted together, ate meat and bread, and drank wine. Then Mithra mounted the chariot of the sun god and drove with him across the ocean, through the air to the end of the world.

The myth was interpreted by the Roman Mithraists in terms of Platonic philosophy. The sacrifice took place in a cave, an image of the world, as in the simile of the cave in

Plato's *Republic*. Mithra himself was equated with the demiurge, or creator, of the *Timaeus*: he was called "demiurge and father of all things," like the Platonic demiurge. The four elements, the mixing bowl, the creation of time, and the attack of the wicked animals upon the newborn creature are well-known features of the *Timaeus*. The Mithraic doctrine of the soul is intimately linked with the myth of creation and with Platonic philosophy. As in the *Timaeus*, the human soul came down from heaven. It crossed the seven spheres of the planets, taking on their vices (e.g., those of Mars and of Venus), and was finally caught within the body. The task of human life is to liberate one's divine part (the soul) from the shackles of the body and to reascend through the seven spheres to the eternal, unchanging realm of the fixed stars. This ascent to the sky was prefigured by Mithra himself, when he left the earth in the chariot of the sun god.

Worship, Practices, And Institutions :

The Mithraic sanctuaries were subterranean caverns, which presented obvious limitations of size. None of the many excavated shrines could receive more than a hundred persons, most even fewer. All ceremonies were of necessity enacted in artificial light. The cavern always contained a well. Access to the cavern often consisted of a system of subterranean passages, which were used in the initiation ceremonies. Men only were admitted to this religion of soldiers, and no organizational hierarchy seems to have existed.

The initiates were organized in seven grades: *corax*, Raven; *nymphus*, Bridegroom; *miles*, Soldier; *leo*, Lion; *Perses*, Persian; *heliodromus*, Courier of (and to) the Sun; *pater*, Father. To each rank belonged a particular mask (Raven, Persian, Lion) or dress (Bridegroom). The rising of the Mithraist in grade prefigured the ascent of the soul after death. The series of the seven initiations seems to have been enacted by passing through seven gates and climbing a ladder of seven steps. Each grade was attributed to one of the seven planetary gods. The zealous Mithraist gradually passed the spheres of these minor deities and finally reached the region of the fixed stars.

Little is known about initiation ceremonies. Ancient texts refer to ablutions (baptism) and purifications and chastisements, to fetters and liberation, and to certain ceremonial passwords. Frescoes at Capua (Italy) show the initiates blindfolded, kneeling, and prostrated. A simulated death and resurrection was probably part of the ceremony. Tertullian, the 2nd-century North African Christian theologian, describes the test of courage to which the *miles* was subjected. Weapon in hand, he had to force his way—probably by a sham duel—to a wreath. When he had succeeded, an officiant offered to crown him with the wreath. But the candidate had to decline, saying that Mithra alone was his wreath, and throughout the rest of his life he never again bore a wreath.

The Mithraic caverns were decorated with frescoes, reliefs, and statues of minor deities and of the planetary gods. A narrow aisle was flanked on both sides by a broad, raised bench on which the worshippers kneeled or reclined. At one end of the aisle (often apselike) there was always a relief or fresco representing the sacrifice of the bull. Sometimes the relief could be turned on a pivot; the back of the stone represented the repast of Mithra and the sun god. While it is unlikely that the ceremony of the bull's sacrifice was frequently performed, the common meal of the initiates was a regular feature of Mithraic worship.

Source :

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mithraism/Mythology-and-theology>

2. India :

Sun Worship in India :

The Vedic scriptures of the Hindu religion refer to the sun as the store house of inexhaustible power and radiance. The sun god is referred to as Surya or Aditya. The Vedas are full of hymns describing the celestial body as the source and sustainer of all life on earth. The origin of the worship of the Sun in India is thus several centuries old.

References to sun worship are found in the puranas. The Ramayan speaks of Sage Agastya initiating Ram into sun worship through the Aditya Hridaya Mantra. The astronomer and astrologer Varahmirhir makes references to the intricacies of ceremonies connected with the installation of the icon of the Sun. Mayura, who lived in the court of Harshavardhan (1st millennium CE) composed the Surya Satakam in praise of Surya and is believed to have been cured of blindness.

It is also said that Iran was once a center of Solar worship and that some of the Magha priests of Iran had been brought to India to officiate in ceremonies.

Sun temples in ancient days were known as Aditya Grihas. The traveller Ktesias mentions a site of sun worship in western India (400BC).

Sun temples across the subcontinent absorb the flavor of the region that they belong to. Dakshinaarka Temple in the Gangetic Plains (considered to be a site for making offerings to ancestors), Suryanaar Koyil in South India, Arasavilli and Konark on the East Coast of India, Modhera in Gujarat (Western India), Surya Pahar in North Eastern India and Unao in Central India are some of the well known sun temples of India.

It should be mentioned here that remains of an ancient Sun temple are found at Martand near Srinagar in Kashmir. It is said to date back to the first century CE. Ruins of a sun temple which attracted thousands of visitors in the 7th century CE are found in Multan in Pakistan.

Several temples dedicated to Shiva, feature a small shrine for Surya the Sun God. In addition, it is believed that Surya, the Sun God has offered worship at several of the shrines in Tamilnadu; many of these shrines have been designed in such a way that the sun's rays illuminate the sanctum (of Shiva) on certain days of the year. Several of the South Indian Temple Tanks also bear the name Surya Theertham or Surya Pushkarini.

3. Egypt :

Sun Worship in Egypt :

Sun worship, veneration of the sun or a representation of the sun as a deity, as in Atonism in Egypt in the 14th century BCE.



Although sun worship has been used frequently as a term for “pagan” religion, it is, in fact, relatively rare. Though almost every culture uses solar motifs, only a relatively few cultures (Egyptian, Indo-European, and Meso-American) developed solar religions. All of these groups had in common a well-developed urban civilization with a strong ideology of sacred kingship. In all of them the imagery of the sun as the ruler of both the upper and the lower worlds that he majestically visits on his daily round is prominent.

The sun is the bestower of light and life to the totality of the cosmos; with his unblinking, all-seeing eye, he is the stern guarantor of justice; with the almost universal connection of light with enlightenment or illumination, the sun is the source of wisdom.

These qualities—sovereignty, power of beneficence, justice, and wisdom—are central to any elite religious group, and it is within these contexts that a highly developed solar ideology is found. Kings ruled by the power of the sun and claimed descent from the sun. Solar deities, gods personifying the sun, are sovereign and all-seeing. The sun is often a prime attribute of or is identified with the Supreme Deity.

In ancient Egypt the sun god Re was the dominant figure among the high gods and retained this position from early in that civilization's history. In the myth relating the voyage of the sun god over the heavenly ocean, the sun sets out as the young god Kheper; appears at noon in the zenith as the full-grown sun, Re; and arrives in the evening at the western region in the shape of the old sun god, Atum. When the pharaoh Ikhnoton reformed Egyptian religion, he took up the cult of the ancient deity Re-Horakhte under the name of Aton, an older designation of the Sun's disk. Under Akhenaton, the sun's qualities as creator and nourisher of the Earth and its inhabitants are glorified.

The sun god occupied a central position in both Sumerian and Akkadian religion, but neither the Sumerian Utu nor the Semitic Shamash was included among the three highest gods of the pantheon. The sun was one of the most popular deities, however, among the Indo-European peoples and was a symbol of divine power to them. Surya is glorified in the Vedas of ancient India as an all-seeing god who observes both good and evil actions. He expels not only darkness but also evil dreams and diseases.

Sun heroes and sun kings also occupy a central position in Indian mythology, where Vivasvant, the father of Yama, corresponds to the Iranian Vivahvant, the father of Yima. There is a dynasty of sun kings, characteristically peaceful, that is quite distinct from the warlike moon kings. In medieval Iran, sun festivals were celebrated as a heritage from pre-Islamic times. The Indo-European character of sun worship is also seen in the conception of the solar deity, drawn in his carriage, generally by four white horses, common to many Indo-European peoples, and recurring in Indo-Iranian, Greco-Roman, and Scandinavian mythology.

During the later periods of Roman history, sun worship gained in importance and ultimately led to what has been called a "solar monotheism." Nearly all the gods of the period were possessed of solar qualities, and both Christ and Mithra acquired the traits of solar deities. The feast of Sol Invictus (Unconquered Sun) on December 25 was celebrated with great joy, and eventually this date was taken over by the Christians as Christmas, the birthday of Christ. The most famous type of solar cult is the Sun Dance of the Plains Indians of North America.

In the pre-Columbian civilizations of Mexico and Peru, sun worship was a prominent feature. In Aztec religion extensive human sacrifice was demanded by the sun gods Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca. In both Mexican and Peruvian ancient religion, the Sun occupied an important place in myth and ritual. The ruler in Peru was an incarnation of the sun god, Inti. In Japan the sun goddess, Amaterasu, who played an important role in ancient mythology and was considered to be the supreme ruler of the world, was the tutelary deity of the imperial clan, and to this day the sun symbols represent the Japanese state.

Source :

<http://www.templenet.com/beliefs/sunworship.htm>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/sun-worship>

5. Moon Worship in Iran and India :

1. Iran :

Mah :

Māngha (māṅha) is the Avestan for "Moon, month", equivalent to Persian Māh (Old Persian māha). It is the name of the lunar deity in Zoroastrianism. The Iranian word is feminine, and consequently the personification of the Moon is a goddess, as in Greco-Roman tradition but in marked contrast both to Vedic religion and to her Mesopotamian predecessor Sin. Although Mah is not a prominent deity in the Avestan scripture, her crescent was an important symbol of royalty throughout the Parthian and Sassanid periods.

The Iranian word is cognate with the English moon, from PIE *mēns; its equivalent is recorded as the Sanskrit word for "month" (māsa), but is not used as a name of the Indo-Aryan lunar deity.



Monumental rock relief at Taq-e Bostan, depicting Khosrow II (r. 591–628). The king is flanked by Anahita and Ahura Mazda, and crowned by a crescent, shown both as part of his crown and as hovering above his head.

Avesta :

Although there are two Avestan hymns dedicated to the Moon, she is not a prominent divinity. In both the third Nyaish as well as in the seventh Yasht, the 'moon' more commonly spoken of is the physical moon. In these hymns, the phases of the moon are described at length. Ahura Mazda is described to be the cause of the moon's waxing and waning, and the Amesha

Spentas evenly distribute the light of the moon over the earth. The Fravashis are said to be responsible for keeping the moon and stars on its appointed course. The sun, moon, and stars revolve around the peak of Hara Berezaiti.

The Moon is however also "bestower, radiant, glorious, possessed of water, possessed of warmth, possessed of knowledge, wealth, riches, discernment, weal, verdure, good, and the healing one". "During the spring, the Moon causes plants to grow up out of the earth". In the litany to the Moon, she is described as the "queen of the night."

The Moon is repeatedly spoken of as possessing the cithra[a] of the primeval bull. This is an allusion to a cosmological drama that is however only properly attested in the texts of

In tradition :



Persepolis mural: The death of Gavaevodata/Gawiewdad, the primordial bovine, whose cithra[a] is rescued by the moon.

Herodotus states that the moon was the tutelary divinity of the Iranian expatriates residing in Asia Minor. The divinity Mah appears together with Mithra on Kushan coins.

In the Zoroastrian calendar, the twelfth day of the month is dedicated to and is under the protection of the Moon.

The Moon plays a prominent role in Zoroastrian cosmogony, in particular as described in detail in the Bundahishn, a text finished in the 12th century. The legend runs as follows: Ahriman (Av: Angra Mainyu) incites Jeh (Jahi) the primeval whore to kill the primordial bovine Gawiewdad (Av. Gavaevodata). Jeh does as told, but as the creature lies dying, the chihr[a] is rescued and placed in the care of the moon. This chihr is then the "prototype" (karb) of all creatures of the animal world.

In the hierarchy of yazatas, the Moon is the assistant (or 'cooperator', hamkar) of Vohu Manah (MP: Bahman), the Amesha Spenta of animal welfare, in particular of cattle. The identification with Vohu Manah - the hypostasis of "Good Purpose" or "Good Mind" - is reflected in other texts where the moon is associated with mental harmony and inner peace.

Source :

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mah#:~:text=In%20tradition,-Persepolis%20mural%3A%20The&text=Herodotus%20states%20that%20the%20moon,the%20protection%20of%20the%20Moon.>

2. India :

To the ancient people the earth, the moon and the sun were the most immediate and visible aspects of the cosmos. They influenced their thinking and fueled their imagination to think beyond this world and this life. No wonder, Vedic people were inspired by the sight of the Sun and the Moon. they used them to symbolize their view of the cosmos, life and death.

They envisaged a four tier world, consisting of the earth, the mid-region, Indra's heaven, and the higher heaven of the immortals. Apart from them, they recognized the importance of celestial bodies such as the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, directions and phenomena such as the clouds, the rain, thunder, lightning, etc.

The Vedas contain descriptions of them either as divinities or their aspects. The Vedic people noticed that the moon suffered from regular waxing and waning, while the sun remained constant. Hence, for them the sun symbolized permanence and immortality while the moon represented recurrence, repetition, rebirth and the world of ancestors, to which souls that were destined for transmigration went.

Thus, in Hinduism the moon has a great significance. It represents many aspects of creation, life, and mortal existence. It also symbolizes many aspects of Hinduism such as the Vedic deities Soma and Chandra, the dream state, the soma ritual, the ancestral world, a planetary god (graha) by the same name, the eye, the mind, rebirth, a king, time, a jewel adorning the head of Shiva, and most importantly decay and impermanence.

The Vedas describe the moon as a vessel, which contains the mysterious Soma drink. It was drunk by the worshippers pm specific occasions to enter altered states of consciousness and communicate with gods and celestial beings. Vedic people compares him to king Soma, the lord of the Soma Juice. He is extolled as the companion of Indra, beloved of the soma sacrificers and lord of the heaven. In Hindu literature and folklore, the moon is associated with romance, loneliness, friendship, pleasant nights and kinship.

For children in India, the moon is a close relation from their mothers' side and called Chandamama. His assuring presence in the night sky serves as a soothing distraction for the disturbed children. Depending upon its size and position in the sky and among the planets, the moon is viewed as auspicious or inauspicious. The waxing moon is considered beneficial whereas the waning moon, harmful.

On certain auspicious occasions, the light falling from the moon is believed to contribute to good health and longevity, whereas on certain days it is not to be viewed at all,. For example, watching the moon is considered harmful at the time of lunar eclipse, and on the day of Ganesh Chaturthi, the Hindu festival. The moon shares a close relationship with Shiv.

He adorns his head like a jewel. According to legends, he was once cursed by Prajapathi, his father-in-law, for neglecting his daughter. As a result he began to wane and lose strength. Shiv took pity upon him and gave him the power to wax and wane alternately so that he could not only honor the curse of Prajapathi but also save the moon from its destructive spell.

As in many cultures, Hindus believe that the moon has an inexplicable connection with the human mind and exerts an adverse influence upon people on the full moon day, making them mentally and emotional unstable.

In Vedic astrology the moon is associated with mind and emotions. Hence, its position in relation to other planets is believed to influence the mental, emotional, and romantic destiny of individuals.

Many rituals and beliefs are associated with the full moon, half moon and new moon days. The new moon day is traditionally considered auspicious. On that day, in some parts of India people make offerings to their ancestors. However, some people consider it inauspicious and do not begin any new work or travel to another place on that day. In Hindu lunar calendar, each month begins and ends on a new moon day.

Source :

<https://www.hinduwebsite.com/symbolism/symbols/moon.asp>

6. Understanding Hindu Goddesses :

Inorder to understand Hindu goddess we need to go in History of Bharat (India).

A lot of trade happened from Aryan Trade Route also known as Silk Route. Many items were traded including slaves.

During Arab invasion many kings and groups from different countries lost against Arabs and their soldiers and people were forced to live a nomadic life. These nomads entered India for safety reasons because India was also facing invasion from Arabs. India accepted all tribes and people in its country with open arms.

India is also known as land of warriors because all these warriors, nomads, etc who started to live in India got together and fought against Arabs.

When these nomads started to live in India inorder to preserve their culture they connected their customs and traditions with Hinduism example in Hinduism celebrated 9 days of Navratri. (Navratri festival is associated to the prominent battle that took place between Durga and

demon Mahishasur and celebrates the victory of Good over Evil. These nine days are solely dedicated to Goddess Durga and her nine Avatars - the Navadurga.)

People of Iran who started to live in India connected their stick dance known as sarbedaran and known as Raas in India and claping hands and moving in circle known as Garba in India with Navratri.

The Iranians who came to India connected Nowruz with Navratri and celebrated Nowruz by growing wheat grass known as Jawara in Navratri.

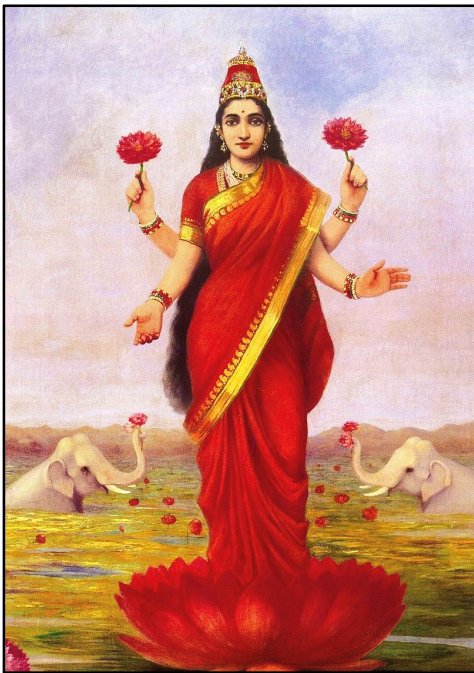
Many Brahmins and Rajputs (sakas) also came from Iran to India due to Arab invasion. Certain groups of Brahmins already lived in India hence local people of India did not doubt them as invaders.

It was these Brahmins who helped the nomads, many warrior groups and Rajputs to be accepted by the locals of India.

Brahmins were mostly temple priests, advisor to king, monks or teachers and highly respected in India.

The goddesses which Brahmins worship are also worshipped by all nomads, warrior groups and Rajputs who came to India but they also have their own goddess.

The easiest way to know the difference is that Brahmin goddess wear saree and the nomad goddess wear nomadic dress which are similar to dress to Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, Afghanistan, etc. Below is the example :



**Brahmin Goddess Laxmi
in Saree**



**Nomad Goddess Khodiyar in
Nomadic dress**

Many Nomadic groups are there whose Goddess are also seen in saree but if you are Indian you can know the difference through the caste and community of Nomads.



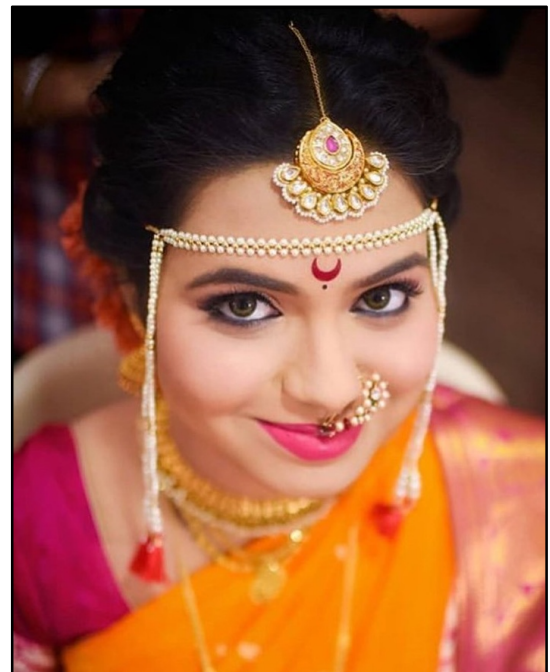
**Nomad Goddess Randal in
Nomadic dress**

Above is another goddess known as Randal. The Bindi on her forehead is known as Chandraknon Bindi which represents crescent moon.

A Maratha king known as Shivaji who was a Scythian used this mark on his forehead known as Chandrakon Tilak. In Maharashtra even today women put on this sort of Chandrakon Bindi.



Shivaji Chandrakon Tilak



Chandrakon Bindi

Another common thing which you will see on Goddess is Chundri which is put on the head of Goddess which is similar to Chadar / Chador worn by women in Iran.

Chunri is also worn by women in India.



Chunri



Chadar / Chador

Here, we can observe that Chadar / Chador came to be known as Chunri in India.



Goddess Durga



Old Iran Flag

Lion is known as vehicle of Goddess Durga and Old Iran flag also had Sun and Lion which represents power.

7. Ancient Flags of Iran and India :

1. Iran :

The first religion of man was the worship of the stars. The most prominent symbol in the sky is the sun and naturally people attributed godhood to it. Its also where we get the idea of the light being holy, since light lets you see and without the suns light we wouldnt be able to exist.

Its an ancient ancient thing, its something thats been with man from day one. It existed long before persia existed.

This worship of the stars and the anthropomorphism of their characteristics is why we see many similar concepts across the continents despite these ancient peoples not knowing of each others existence.

Lion and Sun are a old Power symbols of Persia.



Old Persian Flag

While Iran stopped using the Lion and Sun flag (Monarchy) after the revolution of 1979 the Iranian Army still uses the Sun (The Power Symbol of Persia) as its main patron.

when foreign leaders visit Iran, they have to bow to the Sun Flag of the Iranian Army. (in the pic its Erdogan visiting Iran).



Ceremonial flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army



Samanid era Lion and Sun coins of Persia



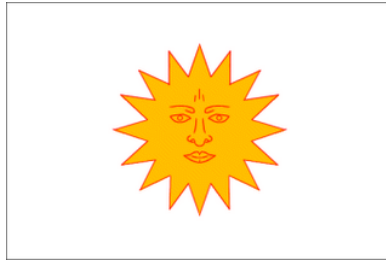
Kurdistan Iran Flag

2. India :

Ancient India had many princely states which were ruled by Rajputs who came from Iran. Each of these states had their own flag. In many of the princely states flag we still find the similarities between Iran flag, Iran and its culture.



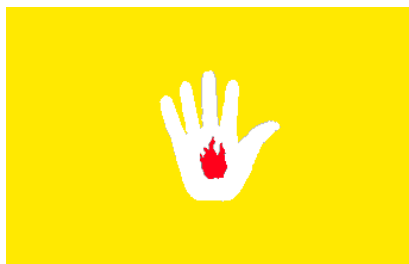
Wadhwan



Sitamau



Shivrati



Rewah



Pratapgadh



Parla Khimedi



Morvi



Mehsana



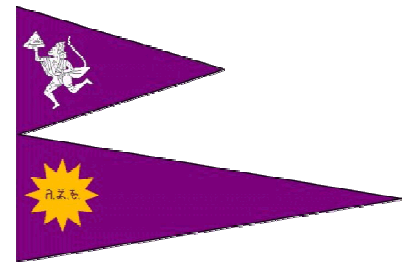
Gwalior



Danta



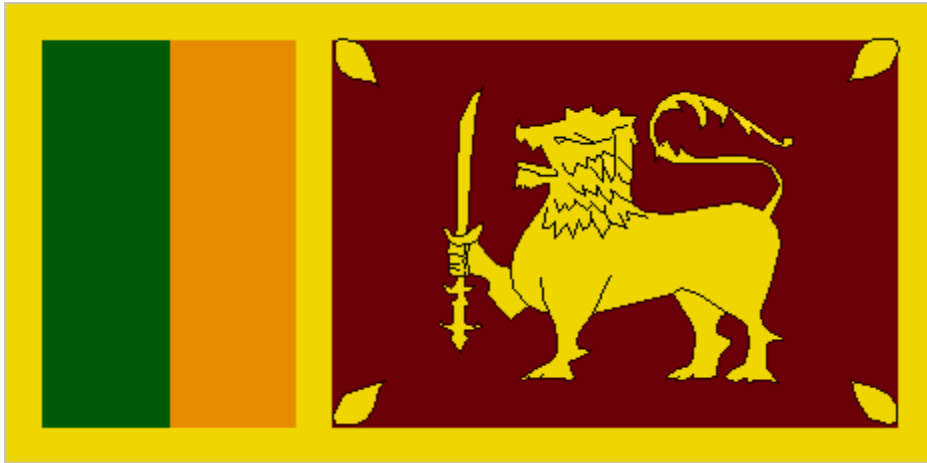
Bastar



Ajaigarh

Here, we find not only Lion and Sun but also trident and hand palm symbol which is a symbol also used in Islam.

Not only this we find the flag of Srilanka having same lion symbol in flag as in old Iran flag. The reason for this is that since time of Lord Ram India had its cultural influence on Srilanka.



Srilanka Flag