

Love, Desire, and Theological Issues in Indo-Iranian Myths: A Comparative Introduction

Abbas Saeedipour

Dept. of Persian, Faculty of Humanities & Languages, J.M.I, the Central University, New Delhi, India

The Mythic Drama of Yama and Yami in the Rig Veda

Abstract- In the world of myths anything can happen illogically, or sometime logically. In the tragedy of Prometheus Bound written by Aeschylus, the Greek Prometheus there can steal fire from heavenly gods and give it to the earthly mortal creatures. Tiresias the blind soothsayer, descended from Oudaeus, in the Sophocles' tragedy of Oedipus the King, can predict the future fate of Thebes happening to the people there. Cersei the whore, in the Homer's, can bewitch the bravest and the most powerful Greek heroes. One set of potential human couple Mashya and Mashyana grows like a set of plants out of forty years of processing being under the air, the sun, and the soil. They are metamorphosed and clutched together. There is apparently no specific limit or any fixed and distinguished laws or regulations. Nonetheless, myths have their own logic, seeds, and cluster. The personification of things and forces, of phenomena, as well as abstractions are widely and repeatedly allowed and the composers have freedom and poetic license to manipulate and manufacture their imaginatively made- narratives. Myths have got their own logic, initiation, making process structural mythemes and those of subjectivists' features space- timelessness and settlingless danglings.

Index Terms- mythic drama, love, sin, tradition. Yama, Yami, Mashya, Mashyana, metaphorical setting, ethical issue

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the first and also the best dramatic narratives and representations of the mentality of man in the earliest stages of his fictive creation that is still remained in the Rig Veda, Mandala X, hymn 10, is the drama of Yama and Yami: the first Aryan tribal couple, the first parents of men.

The parallel of the Rig Veda's couple is the Iranian mythic couple of Mashya and Mashyana. It is more developed and dramatized (Wendy Doniger, 1974, 1994 Hindu Myths, p.64) Nevertheless, the plot and the story in its dramatic context, of course, more extended and connected to later and the whole future generations of the races of man in Iranian version of the Avestan Scriptures. These are the most ancient dramatic mythic literature of the world.

II. YAMA [MALE] AND YAMI [FEMALE] IN THE RIG VEDA

However, both the interior and exterior formation and configuration of the two versions of the dramatic myth of the

first Aryan couple from which many future generations bear different human races on the earth are beautifully and imaginatively concrete. The credibility of the characters, of design, and of the plot together make up the process of development exportable and persuasive. It is like a full and modern drama. The Iranian version of this dramatic myth of the earliest literature of man is, particularly, extended and profounded in length, depth, and horizon. In other word, the Iranian version of this drama of the first Aryan couple of the Indo-Aryan genealogy is well designed, structured and processed horizontally and vertically. The drama tracks and is hunted down to progenitor: Gaymart and his determination with Ahura Maza, victory over devils and darkness, and succession. It also gets going to the future.

III. THE DRAMA OF YAMA AND YAMI: THE DIALOGUE

Yama to Yami: "....." Surya is our father and his wife Saranyu is our mother. We are brother and sister." Why should you desire something deviating?

Yami to Yama: "In this lonely and abandoned Island, I feel attracted to you You have been with me since I was in mother's womb. "

"I seek your companionship". She has a biological appetite to physically communicate with a male (his brother)

Yama to Yami: "I, Yama, your brother do not agree with you. I do not want such companionship. Being my sister, it is not right for us to have such relation. The deities ... who reside in heaven, are watching us." This is a religious argument and theological reasoning. This portion of dramatic dialogue represents a sense of spiritual as well as moral transcendence that is assumedly lead from certain belief available and held by the vedic society. It is not ritual, it is the set of codes of behavior

Some scholars and writers who look into Indo-Iranian mythology, especially those modern Europeans may see this loving dialogue between the female and the male as a break of law and tradition. Because the dramatic dialogue does contains such potentialities in itself. It seems that tradition, responsibility, and honour resist against desire in the context of the drama at the time. It appears that ancient Aryans in two – three thousand years before Jesus Christ had indeed the criteria of behavior and held conventions of men or God and observed moral regulations. Yama and Yami, as many researchers emphasized, were not the ancestors of human race.

The hymn of the tenth Mandala (book) of the Rig Veda is a sort of dramatic exposition of Yama and Yami. It is a modern

point of view of a dramatic setting as if you were reading one of those lovely plays of Shakespeare. Nevertheless, in the hymn there is the self-exposition of siblings with the parents named Surya as father, and Saranya as mother of the two. The tenth the hymn of the tenth Mandala of the Rig-Veda represents a desirous dialogue with romantic tone and sensual appeal contains fourteen verses of considerable suggestive lines and erotic words but completely in a metaphoric setting.

It represents a moral discourse with its own philosophical and ethical standards. Distinguishing between right deed and wrong act is significantly theological: "we have never done such a thing before. We should not follow the path dishonor. We should be truthful and stay away from falsehood ... we are brother and sister."(RV. 10.4) That is not only a self-proclaim criterion. It is interesting that the suggestion is emphatically from Yami (female) side and she justifies her lusty desire and sensual appeal: "such a relationship is banned for mortals, but we are not mortals." Disallowance is "for mortals" is a self-pronouncement decree arousing from an emotional trend and biological desire. On the other hand Yama is well aware and theoretically confident that this sort of behavior has never been taken place before.

The issue indeed is something beyond the will and desire of Yama, the individual persona: "these ... deities... neither stop nor ever close their eyes to anything." Yama not only argues that the deed itself is not right but also emphasizes that there has been no any trace of this relationship in his line and stock of ancestors available. The new reason is an additional prohibiting ban. The viewers, spies, and live spectators are present and watching us. "A person who commits intercourse with his own sister is considered to be a great sinner."

[Note the following text translated by Griffith, Ralph T.H: The Rig Veda,book X, hymh 10,pp.422-24].

The Dramatic Dialogue of Yama and Yami in the Rig veda

1. FAIN would I win my friend to kindly friendship. So may the Sage, come through the air's wide ocean, Remembering the earth and days to follow, obtain a son, the issue of his father.
2. Thy friend loves not the friendship which considers her who is near in kindred as stranger. Sons of the mighty Asura, the Heroes, supporters of the heavens, see far around them.
3. Yea, this the Immortals seek of thee with longing, progeny of the sole existing mortal. Then let thy soul and mine be knit together, and as a loving husband take thy consort.
4. Shall we do now what we ne'er did aforetime? we who spake righteously now talk impurely? Gandharva in the floods, the Dame of Waters-such is our bond, such our most lofty kinship.
5. Even in the womb God Tvastar, Vivifier, shaping all forms, Creator, made us consorts. None violates his holy ordinances: that we are his heavens and earth acknowledge.
6. Who knows that earliest day whereof thou speakest? Who hath beheld it? Who can here declare it? Great is the Law of Varuna and Mitra. What, wanton! Wilt thou say to men to tempt them?

7. I, Yami, am possessed by love of Yama that I may rest on the same couch beside him. I as a wife would yield me to my husband. Like car-wheels let us speed to meet each other.
8. They stand not still; they never close their eyelids, those sentinels of Gods who wander round us. Not me-go quickly, wantons, with another, and hastens like a chariot wheel to meet him.
9. May Surya's eye with days and nights endow him, and ever may his light spread out before him. In heaven and earth the kindred Pair commingle. On Yam! be the unbrotherly act of Yama.
10. Sure there will come succeeding times when brothers and sisters will do acts unmeet for kinsfolk. Not me, O fair one,-seek another husband, and make thine arm a pillow for thy consort.
11. Is he a brother when no lord is left her? Is she a sister when Destruction cometh? Forced by my love these many words I utter. Come near, and hold me in thy close embraces.
12. I will not fold mine arms about thy body: they call it sin when one comes near his sister. Not me,-prepare thy pleasures with another: thy brother seeks not this from thee, O fair one.
13. Alas! thou art indeed a weakling, Yama we find in thee no trace of heart or spirit. As round the tree the woodbine clings, another will cling about thee girt as with a girdle.
14. Embrace another, Yami; let another, even as the woodbine rings the tree, enfold thee. Win thou his heart and let him win thy fancy, and he shall form with thee a blest alliance.

IV. MASHYE, MASHYANE, AND THE RACES OF MAN

Mobad Rostam Shahzadi the Iranian writer in his Dictionary of Pazand (2007) also defines Mashya and Mashyani, or Mashya and Mashyane as follow: " Mashya is the first Aryan man of the sperms of Kayomarth (=Gayomart) and Mashyani is the first Aryan woman from the seed Kayomarth (=Gayomart). These man and woman are born of a Rivas=Rhubarb" (See Shahzadi, Rostam(ed. by Shahzadi, Mehrangiz, published by Farvabar, Tehran, 2007, P.302)

In the mythic narrative there might be considerable number of parallel myths of mythical couples in different versions and transformations. The first human couple in the Avestan tures and Iranian mythology there are various pair name of the same stock: Mash-Mashan, Mishi, Mishan, Mishah-Mishani, Mahla-Mahlina, Meshah-Meshyanah. These variations of the first human pair (the Aryan pair) are originally from the back bone of Gayomart.

Arthur Emanuel Chritensen(1845-75), one of the youngest western Iranologists and scholars, and one of the good Danish friends of Iran, amongst other fair orientalisists ,has also spent several pages of the first volume of his ' the First Man and the First King' on Mashya and Mashyana, and there he refers to different concerned sources of classic and original authorities, such as the Avesta, the Avestan Scriptures, Ibn Athir, Alberuni, Shahrestani, Tabari, Ferdoussi'Shahnameh and so on.

When the death time of Gayomart approaches he falls down in his left side and his sperms pour on the earth and the process of their purification under the sun's warmth take place.

It is after forty years of being in the soil of the earth that the Gayomart's semen bear the pair in the form of Rivas plant (Rhubarb) with fifteen leaves. They were interwoven together in such a way that from their shoulders, hands and back were attached and connected with each on the earth.

This dramatic and the mythical story of Gayomart, Mashya and Mashyana(Mashyag, Mashyang) has been repeatedly recorded, narrated, and confirmed. Sometime it is commented by different Iranian writers both Muslim and Zoroastrian: Alberuni in his *Remained*, Tabari in his *History*, Bala'ami in his *King and Prophets*. Yashts and Persian poetic works, like *Shahnameh* are also the most famous.

Gayomart is indeed the first mythical man-like creature made on earth to assist Ahura Mazda. Gayomart from whom the Aryan race is developed. He is genuinely and meaningfully is immortal mortal. This is a paradox that should be explained in its own contextual realm.

All Pahlavi documents, relevant texts and the Avestan scriptures have narrated this mythical narrative of the pair who are from rhubarb-Rivas-plant. (Christensen, Arthur, *Les types du premier homme et du premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des Iraniens* 2 vols, Persian trans. P. 67)

Ahura Mazda to this first human couple says: "you are men I created you. You are the predecessors of the human being of two yourselves, I made you complete and the best in the best way of this king:

Good thought, Good Deed, Good Word: Thou Do Not Pray Devils [Deevs]:

Note the following scripture about Mashya and Mashyana quoted from a translation of the Farsi Avestan texts into English: *Bundahishn* 23, scriptures of Zoroastrianism, http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacred_scripts/zoroscripts/Bundahishm.chapter_X_to_XV. [See also the English versions of the Sacred Books of the East, Oxford University Press, chapter XV.

Mashya and Mashyana in the Bundahishn

1. On the nature of men it says in revelation, that Gayomart, in passing away, gave forth seed; that seed was thoroughly purified by the motion of the light of the sun, and Neryosang kept charge of two portions, and Spandarmad received one portion.
2. And in forty years, with the shape of a one-stemmed Rivas-plant, and the fifteen years of its fifteen leaves, Matro [Mashye] and Matroyao [Mashyane] grew up from the earth in such a manner that their arms rested, behind on their shoulders (dosh), and one joined to the other they were connected together and both alike.
3. And the waists of both of them were brought close and so connected together that it was not clear which is the male and which the female, and which is the one whose living soul (nismo) of Ohrmazd is not away.
4. As it is said thus: Which is created before, the soul (nismo) or the body? And Ohrmazd said that the soul is

created before, and the body after, for him who was created; it is given into the body that it may produce activity, and the body is created only for activity; hence the conclusion is this, that the soul (rhubarb) is created before and the body after.

5. And both of them changed from the shape of a plant into the shape of man, and the breath (nismo) went spiritually into them, which is the soul (rhubarb); and now, moreover, in that similitude a tree had grown up whose fruit was the ten varieties of man.
6. Ohrmazd spoke to Mashye and Mashyane thus: 'You are man, you are the ancestry of the world, and you are created perfect in devotion by me; perform devotedly the duty of the law, think good thoughts, speak good words, do good deeds, and worship no demons!'
7. Both of them first thought this, that one of them should please the other, as he is a man for him; and the first deed done by them was this, when they went out they washed themselves thoroughly; and the first words spoken by them were these, that Ohrmazd created the water and earth, plants and animals, the stars, moon, and sun, and all prosperity whose origin and effect are from the manifestation of righteousness.
8. And, afterwards, antagonism rushed into their minds, and their minds were thoroughly corrupted, and they exclaimed that the evil spirit created the water and earth, plants and animals, and the other things as aforesaid.
9. That false speech was spoken through the will of the demons, and the evil spirit possessed himself of this first enjoyment from them; through that false speech they both became wicked, and their souls are in hell until the future existence.
10. And they had gone thirty days without food, covered with clothing of herbage (giyah); and after the thirty days they went forth into the wilderness, came to a white-haired goat, and milked the milk from the udder with their mouths.
11. When they had devoured the milk Mashye said to Mashyane thus: 'My delight was owing to it when I had not devoured the milk, and my delight is more delightful now when it is devoured by my vile body.'
12. That second false speech enhanced the power of the demons, and the taste of the food was taken away by them, so that out of a hundred parts one part remained.
13. Afterwards, in another thirty days and nights they came to a sheep, fat and white-jawed, and they slaughtered it; and fire was extracted by them out of the wood of the lote-plum and box-tree, through the guidance of the heavenly angels, since both woods were most productive of fire for them; and the fire was stimulated by their mouths; and the first fuel kindled by them was dry grass, kendar, lotos, date palm leaves, and myrtle; and they made a roast of the sheep.
14. And they dropped three handfuls of the meat into the fire, and said: 'This is the share of the fire.' One piece of the rest they tossed to the sky, and said: 'This is the share of the angels.' A bird, the vulture, advanced and carried some of it away from before them, as a dog ate the first meat.

15. And, first, a clothing of skins covered them; afterwards, it is said, woven garments were prepared from a cloth woven in the wilderness.
16. And they dug out a pit in the earth, and iron was obtained by them and beaten out with a stone, and without a forge they beat out a cutting edge from it; and they cut wood with it, and prepared a wooden shelter from the sun (pesh-khur).
17. Owing to the gracelessness which they practiced, the demons became more oppressive, and they themselves carried on unnatural malice between themselves; they advanced one against the other, and smote and tore their hair and cheeks.
18. Then the demons shouted out of the darkness thus: 'You are man; worship the demon! so that your demon of malice may repose.'
19. **Mashye** went forth and milked a cow's milk, and poured it out towards the northern quarter; through that the demons became more powerful, and owing to them they both became so dry-backed that in fifty winters they had no desire for intercourse, and though they had had intercourse they would have had no children.
20. And on the completion of fifty years the source of desire arose, first in **Mashye** and then in **Mashyane**, for **Mashye** said to **Mashyane** thus: 'When I see thy shame my desires arise.' Then **Mashyane** spoke thus: 'Brother **Mashye!** when I see thy great desire I am also agitated.'
21. Afterwards, it became their mutual wish that the satisfaction of their desires should be accomplished, as they reflected thus: 'Our duty even for those fifty years was this.'
22. From them was born in nine months a pair, male and female; and owing to tenderness for offspring the mother devoured one, and the father one.
23. And, afterwards, Ormazd took tenderness for offspring away from them, so that one may nourish a child, and the child may remain.
24. And from them arose seven pairs, male and female, and each was a brother and sister-wife; and from every one of them, in fifty years, children were born, and they themselves died in a hundred years.
25. Of those seven pairs one was Siyamak, the name of the man, and Nasak of the woman; and from them a pair was born, whose names were Fravak of the man and Fravakain of the woman.
26. From them fifteen pairs were born, every single pair of whom became a race (sardak); and from them the constant continuance of the generations of the world arose.
27. Owing to the increase (zayishn) of the whole fifteen races, nine races proceeded on the back of the ox Sarsaok, through the wide-formed ocean, to the other six regions (karshwar), and stayed there; and six races of men remained in Xwaniratha.
28. went to the plain of the Tazhikan (Arabs); and of one pair Hooshang was the name of the man and Guzhak of the woman, and from them arose the Airanakan (Iranians); and from one pair the Mazendarans have arisen.

29. Among the number (pavan ae mar) were those who are in the countries of Surak, those who are in the country of Aner, those who are in the countries of Tur, those who are in the country of Salm which is Arum, those who are in the country of Seni, that which is Chinistan, those who are in the country of Dai, and those who are in the country of Sind.
30. Those, indeed, throughout the seven regions are all from the lineage of Fravak, son of Siyamak, son of Mashye.
31. As there were ten varieties of man, and fifteen races from Fravak, there were twenty-five races all from the seed of Gayomard; the varieties are such as those of the earth, of the water, the breast-eared, the breast-eyed, the one-legged, those also who have wings like a bat, those of the forest, with tails, and who have hair on the body.

The Issue of Love Offspring in the Myth of Yama and Yami:

The view of incest in the Mashya and Mashyana dramatic story of Mashyana and Mashya, in the Avestan scriptures, and in the dialogue of Yama and Yami, in the Rig Veda, is not fully enough considered. The cores of the texts do not accept the incest opinion. That means the myths do not substantiate and do not furnish the opinions and judgments about themselves the do not assess and do not see the whole play on the stage.

The direct and clear response of Yama to Yami denies and refutes the opinion of incest in the Rig Veda (Appendix, Yama and Yami). The actual words and statements avoid immorality and illegitimacy. The complete drama rejects the belief of men being bastard or love offspring of illegal intercourse. The climax of the play in its falling action resolves the conflict in the benefit and the release of man that found not guilty.

The question of the story in the Avestan scriptures is different. The characters are completely and substantially metamorphosed. The characters of the drama of the first couple of the world are metaphorically transformed to something freakish. It becomes somehow incredible and grotesque. The contents and elements of the Avestan drama is not like that of the Rig Veda. (Appendix: Mashya and Mashyana). It does not seem to be the one that is established. So, the approach and plot appears to require different touch and criticism. Characterization, substance, nature and features of all ingredient mythemes (Strauss's terminology) are incompatible with that of dramatic scene of Yama and Yami in the Rig Veda.

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AUTHORS

Abbas Saeedipour, M.A(Kent University, U.K), Scholar and the Candidate of the PhD in Indo-Iranian Comparative Mythology at Dept. of Persian, Faculty of Humanities & Languages, J. M.I, the Central University, New Delhi, India, Email: asaedipour@yahoo.ca