

The Celestial Trinity of Indo-Iranian Mythology

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I. PROLOGUE

Understandably, one of the best ways to get a better grasp of the subject matter of the topic: 'Comparative Study of Indo-Iranian Mythologies' is to comprehend the grand, weighty, multidimensional, and acute points and sites of their similitude and co-relational originalities. In T.S.Eliot's terms, his 'objective correlative' is good for broader analysis of the Aryans' feelings and thoughts that may be signaled through the texts and archaeological records and evidences, amongst other things.

Indo-Iranian myths and their concerned ancient texts of reference of the period, before and after their separation, are some signpost- points that show something to us from which certain and definite results appear. They are materials for understanding man better. The certain cores and titles of cultural phenomena of both branches of Aryan people, Indian and Iranian, can be chosen to be compared and assessed for finding out their similar characteristics, theoretical statements, and some other speculative implications. As we see them closely, and go through them systematically and measurably, then, comparatively, fruitful outcome will be acquired. Through their contexts, contents, structural textuality, and signified contextuality referring to modern and postmodern considerations we can access the most reliable data and results.

Another reason for this process is that ancient collections of both the Rig Veda and the Avesta are voluminous. Therefore, it is not possible to catch everything at once and fast. A few examples may be selected in order to show and assess the shared and common features. It is possible to point to the sites of similitude from different angles and approaches. It is also possible to look into them simultaneously from two or more positions and or theoretical attitudes.

II. THE VEDIC PANTHEON

The Vedic pantheon is to be linked up with the Avestan pantheon as they have got a common origin and homage as well as homogenous composer and constructors. They have celebrating deities, the similar set, processes of creation, and challenges in treatment of natural forces, behavior, arrangement of cosmic affairs, and ritualistic sensitivities etc. The Indian Rig Vedic Pantheon is, perhaps, one of the most ancient and also complex Pantheons of myths in the world. It is complex because in various contexts can also be treated in a very figurative apprehension. Indeed symbolic explanation as Zimmer has held is another modern treatment. Also the mythologies of Indo-Iranian, through different critical approaches, may be explicated.

The texts of mythic expositions Indo-Iranians are one set of the most metaphoric and complex literatures of the ancient world the world has created. Although the imagery is very concrete and sensual, the meanings are eventually abstract and metaphysical. As an example look at the hymn five of mandala IV, Rig Veda, we read:

"Indra is bounteous like a tree with ripens fruits... we praise Indra in the same manner as a lusty man praises a fair maiden."¹ The roles of Indra are in a great deal numerous and great. He can be compared with that of so called sin forgiving role of Christ. He is wise, mighty and grantor of wealth who "destroys all the sins of the hosts"² who chant in Yagya the holy ritual. He is omniscient and everywhere.

III. THE EXTENT OF SIMILITUDE

It can never be coincidence or accidental that two kinds of texts written or composed by a separated people be so similar to such an extent: to have such a vast and numerous topics and subtopics, as well as contents and forms, layout, and streams, of romantic trends, and linguistic similarities. This matter is so serious and significant in culture and anthropological studies. One may call and gather all data and information from recent archaeological, linguistic, historical, as well as ethnographical findings of the fields of the research in order to reconstruct more and more accurate and heavily detailed configuration of such a complex bodies of common constituents and characteristics. What would be remarkable is multitude of distinctive data and knowledge on culture, myth, religion and the discovery of portions the records of people migrating and setting here and there in ancient world within and through the concerned fields of analytical approaches. An example of the parallel pantheons is common site of Mitra, Varuna, Aryman/ Mithra , Ahura, Airyman as trinity pantheon of Indo-Iranians

IV. THE CELESTIAL TRINITY OF MITRA - VARUNA, AND ARYAMAN

" Mitra, Varuna, Aryaman are free to take us through their desired path. Let Aryaman convey our wishes to the bounteous Lord. Guarded by the deities, may we be happy with their gifts in the form of wealth and noble son."³

"Let Mitra, Varuna, and Aryaman grant riches for us and our sons. Let all the paths in our lives be smooth and easy to tread. O

¹ Rig Veda IV. 5

² Ibid. IV. 8-9

³ RV., 7,64,3

God, may you guard us with your holy powers forever and bless us."⁴

These three deities (Adityas) in the Vedic pantheon have significant status among other Adityas most of the times. They are present in the Yagya ritual in various hymns of the Rig Veda with other Adityas.

"Mitra, and other gods and Aditi are the leaders of this peaceful Yagya. They are the wealth gods too."⁵

Mitra, Varuna are majestic and king of all deities. That is what in hymns 64, 65, and 66 among others, specially addressed and introduced, we can see. In hymn 65 we read: " Let both these powerful and great gods [Mitra and Varuna] make our people prosperous."⁶

This triplet is responsible for wealth and health of the mortals of the earth. They are the givers of light, water, warmth, morality and order.⁷

Varuna specially stands for the better life of the mortal on earth. He cares about right and good of deeds and orderly practice of the earthly mortals.

Mitra is such a significant mighty deity in the whole Indo-Iranian Pantheon to be called and requested also in madala eight hymn 25 again with Varuna, peaceful goddess: Marutas, great Indra and other gods of Indian pantheon accompanying Aryaman. Lord Vishnu also is present (VII.25.12). At the final mandala of the Rig Veda(X) hymn 132 Mitra and Varuna are present again together.

It is necessary now to remind that those deities we are talking about in here are those Indo-Iranian ones that, according to the evidence, they are called as witnesses for a treaty between Hittite and Mitanni states. The evidence was discovered in Bogaz koi, somewhere near the north of Syria.

So, one of the sacred gatherings of these three (Mitra, Varuna, and Aryaman) deities of Indo-Aryan and Indo-Iranian pantheon is recorded in the treaty discovered at Bogaz koi. This is what G. Dumézil (1961) also emphasizes on his "The Three Functions Theory of Myths."⁸

In many cases in the Rig Veda we have these three linked up deities together. "Mitra, Varuna, and Aryaman are free to take us through their desired path. Let Aryaman convey our wishes to the bounteous Lord".⁹

" Let Mitra, Varuna, and Aryaman grant riches for us and our sons.... O gods!may you guard us with your holy powers forever and bless us."¹⁰

"O great leaders Mitra, Varuna, and Aryaman". "At the time of sunrise, we request you to share your mighty wealth with us. O holy leaders, you have been born to perform the Yagya, you enhance the Yagya and guard it from evil and jealous demons."¹¹

They are so majestic that in Mesopotamian and minor Asian state-level society were they called for witness (although originality can be disputed).

Of Mithra in Khorda Avesta is also magnificently emphasized in Mihr Yasht (Yasht 10).

The characteristic of Mitra (Mithra) ,Varuna, and Aryaman may be understood and illustrated from the Rig Veda as well as the Avesta texts.

Mithra (in the Avesta) is also a deity of friendship and help, he is ever awake and sleepless. He is bright and he "wakefully guards the creation of Mazda."¹²

Mithra is helpful to Ahura (in Avesta) as Mitra is great co-worker with our deities such as Asura, Surya (deity of sun). In the Avesta, Yasna I we read " I announce (and) carry out (this) Yasna for the two, for Ahura and Mithra, the lofty, and the everlasting, and the Asha – sanctified and for all the stars which are Spenta Mainyu's creatures, " the Airyaman prayer smites down the strength of all the creatures of Angra Mainyu, of the Yatus and Pairikas. It is the greatest of spells, the fairest of all spells, the fearful one amongst spells, the most fearful of all spells; the firm one amongst spells, the firmest of all spells; the victorious one amongst spells, the most victorious of all spells; the healing one amongst spells, the best-healing of all spells. Another significant deity who is important is Aryaman both in the Rig Veda and the Avesta Aryaman. Therefore it is evidential that two mythologies had had shares before the Vedic period started.

Mitra, with the Rig Vedic dictation and form, as a masculine deity of the early Vedic period literally means "friend, companion, and associate."¹³ As a masculine deity he is an Aditya and one of the twelve Suryas, his mother is Aditi and his father Kasypa. He is one of the most important staff members of Indra's Union, who is also "generally evoked with Varuna and Aryaman".¹⁴ He is, as the Rig Veda's hymns express, the earth and sky guard. He is one of the six major sovereign principles and one of the three whole realms in the world. Specifically, as F.W. Bunce emphasizes, the three are "solidarity, the sacredness of the world given, and the link of the man."¹⁵ Mitra (or Mithra in the Avesta) is a common deity of Indo-European, especially of Indo – Iranian, as well as of Babylonian and of Zoroastrian people.

"Unto Mithra, the lord of wide pastures, who has a thousand ears, ten thousands eyes,"¹⁶

"To whom the chiefs of nations offer up sacrifices as they go to the field..."¹⁷

Who first of the heavenly gods reaches the Hara" (mount Alburz , Whence the sun rises"¹⁸ is Mithra .

It is to be mentioned that one of the longest Yashts of the Khorda Avesta is the one which is especially ascribed to Mithra. He is the witness of truth and sees everywhere and looks into the depth

¹² Khorda Avesta, Yasht 10. 26.

¹³ Maneka Gandhi, The Penguin Dictionary of Hindu Names, Viking, India, 1992.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Bunce, Fredic W. Hindu Deities, Demi-Gods, Godlings, Demons and Heroes (3vols) Vol.1 D. K print world (p) Ltd. New Delhi, 2000, P. 354.

¹⁶ Avesta, Yasht x.1

¹⁷ Avesta, Yasht x.2

¹⁸ Avesta, Yasht x.4

⁴ RV., 7, 65, 6

⁵ RV. Mandal 7., 66, 6

⁶ RV. Mandal 7., 65, 2

⁷ RV. Mandal 7., hymans 62-65

⁸ Encyclopedia Iranica, p98.

⁹ RV. 7. 64.3.

¹⁰ RV. 7 . 61.6.

¹¹ RV. 7.66. 12-3.

of things, who is "sleepless and awake" ever and ever and ever (Y.X. repeatedly).

He is most honoured as in the Rig Veda. Mithra (in the Avesta) who is invoked, exposed and praised in Mihr Yasht (=Yasht 10), is one of the Indo-Iranian deities of the Indo-Iranian Pantheon. The only difference here is that his parallel in the Rig Veda is spelled Mitra and praised, exposed and described with his various associations in the several hymns of the Holy Scripture. In the third Mandala, hymn fifty nine, nine verses are addressed to lord Mitra.¹⁹ In other mandalas like mandala number five, hymns sixty two to seventy two he is joined with Varuna, and also Aryaman, whom is always associated with.²⁰ Also in mandala seven, hymns sixty one to sixty five, he is a giant deity associated with Varuna. However he is also addressed with Agni, and in hymn sixty two verse number six with Aryaman.

Airyaman is the healer deity (the Persian Avesta Yasht IV.54) but the guard of marriage laws in the Rig Vedic hymns. And in Hindu culture he is still so.

He is honourable and ideal, powerful and victorious who is created by Ahura Mazda, and is praised by him for his strength.²¹ Therefore, Aryaman, like Mithra, Varun, and like Ahura, is unavoidably the ancient deity of Indo-Iranian people. He had existed before they came into the sacred books of the Avesta and the Rig Veda. And he is, amongst other parallel and similar figures, one of the significant common myths of the two separated people of the same origin of India and Iran. The meaning of the name both in the Rig Veda and the Iranian hymns in the Avestan scriptures is the same. He is, to Ahura Mazda, a healing deity having his place of residence in the sky (see Fargard 22, Vendidad, the Avesta). He is made against Angra Mainyu, the creator of ninety nine thousands and nine hundred and ninety nine (99999) diseases. Aryaman, his associate is residing in an enlightening space (abode) in the sky. He is also called the deity of the sky.²²

He is significant in order to remove illnesses, dirty stains, and the unclean. He seems to be an agent who is advanced in functions and duties by handling the Ahura Mazda's struggle against satanic forces of Angra Mainyu. Aryaman in Rig Veda is usually linked up with Mitra (Mithra) and Varuna. While in the Avesta he is independently given a magnificent, well lighted, and enlightening, home, better to say he is lodging with brilliant lights.²³

His nature essentially is promising. He is kind and concerned, as it is said previously, he is with marriage affairs and ceremonies in the Rig Veda while he is the guard and defender of goodness, pure thoughts, privileged deeds, and clean spirits. George Dumézil calls him Aryaman supporter.

These three holy Adityas (Mithra, Varuna and Aryaman) perform the holy ritual of Yajna and fulfill wishes of the worshippers. They have the quantities of absolving and cleansing

their worshippers' sins. They are not only the performers, guards, observers, controllers, but also providers and makers of holy rituals. Mortals expect and worship them to listen to them for being saved and cleansed: "O Adityas, may you grant enormous riches, comfortable dwelling to the host who is tired after expressing the Somras...." (soma juice). "O Adityas, may you fulfill all our wishes.", "O Varuna, Mitra, and Aryaman, you are great.. we seek your blessing."²⁴ In one of the verses of hymn fifty six Aditi herself is invoked with her three sons or all sons to free the worshippers from evil's tricks and chains: "O Aditi and Adityas..."²⁵

Evil demons are mentioned again in the same mandala, hymn thirty, verse three when all "thirty and three" deities are invoked in verse two of the similar hymn. In the rituals of yajnas Manu (the first man) performed the rite of worshipping.²⁶

Aryaman is the son of Aditi and Kasypa who represents honour nobility, chivalry, rules, and order of the society. He is another and the earliest common deity of Indo-Iranian Pantheon. Aryaman is also introduced as the guard of regulations. He concerns with the cycling and recycling of the time, calendar and light. Aryaman is, again, one of those seven or twelve Adityas who are immortal because their element is the everlasting light. It is understood that Anyaman, as one Aditya is another name for the sun.

He is constantly linked up with Mitra (Mithra), Varuna Indra, and others repeatedly, like most deity and ritual cases. In several Mandalas and hundreds hymns of the Rig Veda this is repeated. AS Adityas are sons of Aditi, mother of gods, she is repeatedly addressed too. Indra, Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Daksha, Ansa, Savitra, Aditya, Dhatri, Vishnu, and Martanda are the twelve Adityas whose mother is Aditi in the Rig Vedic and Hindu mythology (as Amshe Spandas in the Avestan Scriptures). Aditi herself is immortal, too.²⁷

Aryaman, as **one of the pillars of the trinity of Aryan pantheon** is enough old and experienced to be associated with Ahura Mazda and at the same time be an Aditya whose mother is all deities' mother. Some scholars even realized him as an elder twin of Ohrmazd²⁸ (Ahura Mazda). His counterpart also is significant in here to be another pillar of the trinity. He is supremely wise and rational: Varuna, again, being an enlightening eternally is a celestial Aditya. Being an omniscient commander of universe, he has been said to be creating three complex realms (heaven, earth, and the air). In addition to it, he is well 'all seeing deity' and the inevitable judge and the scale of the mortals' deeds. He is judge of the dead, too. He is associated with Yama the judge of dead souls.

As we see in different hymns of the Rig Veda, he is emphatically said to be a kind deity amongst and through other sons of Aditi. Apart from Mitra and Aryaman, Indra, Bhaga, Savitr, Anas, and also Martanda (Vivasvat) and a beautiful charming and beloved sister Ushas, are his siblings.

¹⁹ Rig Veda, III. 59. 1-9

²⁰ Ibid. I. 62-72

²¹ Dostkhah, Jalil, Vendidad, the Avesta, the Oldest Hymns of Iranians (2 vols.), Vol. 2 (in Farsi) 10th print, Tehran, Morvarid pub. 2007, p. 639, 633).

²² Ibid, Fargard 22., p. 884 (trans. mine).

²³ Fargard XXII. 1-25, Vendidad, the Avesta, both in Farsi and in the English languages.

²⁴ RV. Mandal VIII. Hymn 56. 1-10.

²⁵ Ibid. Verse 10.

²⁶ RV. VIII. 30.2

²⁷ See Fredrick W. Bunce, Maneka Gandhi, and Jan Kappert, Indian Mythology, Harper Collins, New Delhi, 1991.

²⁸ Colter, C. R and Turner, Patricia, Ancient Deities, FD, London and Chicago, 2000, p.71.

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