MANIFESTATION OF EVIL IN PERSIAN MYTHOLOGY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ZOROASTRIAN RELIGION

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ABSTRACT
Zoroastrian religion, which was first founded in ancient Iran before Islam, introduces the constant conflict between Ahura Mazda, known as the benevolent, omniscient and endless light, and Ahriman which is the endless and absolute darkness and aims to demolish Ahuramazda. For this purpose, Ahriman creates six demons of evil thought including Akoman (equivalent to AvestanAkemManah), Indar, Naonhaithya, Saurva, Taurvi and finally Zauri which are incarnated as villains to counter Ahura Mazda’s creation and good thoughts. In a mythological legend like Shahnameh, Ferdowsi distinctly depicts the battle between evil and human being which ultimately leads to the victory of benevolence. This paper aims to investigate the mythological villainy of Akoman and its defeat by Rustam in Ferdowsi’s great epic Shahnameh.

Key Words: Zoroastrianism, Villain, Daeva, Ahriman, Ahura Mazda, Aka Manah, Myth.

INTRODUCTION

Hinnels begins his book Persian mythology by describing the function of myth. He believes that: myth is a part of the history because myth describes human being’s attitude about himself and his surrounding world. This idea is very true about Persian mythology because its myths dealing with creation and recreation of the universe are interpretations of the world’s process of being or ideas concerning them (Hinnells, 1994).

Ancient Iranian believed that world is round like plate while the sky wasn’t endless space but hard and compact essence like diamond encompasses the world in its shell. The earth was intact originally; there were neither mountains nor valleys. Sun and stars were in their orbit in the sky.
Everything was quiet and orderly, but this order and peace was broke down by entering the devil. Devil broke the sky and penetrated the earth, fell into the water and entered the core of the universe and shook it when mountains came out (Hinnells, 1994).

Zoroastrianism had its source in a branch of the great Iranian race. It rose to power as the religion of the Medo-Persian Empire, and while it spread widely among the people, mostly in Asia Minor, its strongholds were always the Iranian lands. People who lived in India and in Iran were called Indo-European. Their gods were incarnated figures of ideals like Honesty or natural events such as storm or they were adventurous heroes like Indra and Keresaspa (Rouse, 1907). They were commonly heroes fighting against threatening monsters.

The religion of the early Iranians was closely akin to that of the Vedic Indians. One of the greatest of the Iranian gods is Mithra, the Vedic Mitra; other Indo-Iranian gods are Zoroastrian devils, like Indra and Nasatya (Naonhaithya) (Moore, 1912).

Proto-Indo-Iranian religion is an ancient development of Indo-European religion. The religion whose supporters call themselves "Worshippers of Mazda," the Wise God, and which we commonly name after its founder Zoroastrianism, is in many ways of peculiar interest. Zoroastrianism is, further, extremely an ethical religion, both in its idea of God and of what God requires of men. It presents itself as a revelation of God's will through his prophet. His will is that men, rejecting the false gods, should serve the Wise Lord alone, obey his word, and contend on his side for the defeat of evil and the triumph of all good in nature and society and in the character of the individual (LincolnB., 1997).

**COSMOLOGY OF CREATION**

In the Zoroastrian, which has universally been represented as the classic example of a fundamental dualism, creation myth represents us with two gods-Ahura Mazda, who is good, and AngraMainyu, the evil one. Ahura Mazda dwells in the lights on high, and Ahriman dwells in the eternal darkness in the depths (Fox, 1967). In the Zoroastrian scriptures the primitive challenge between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman is expressed most entirely and appealingly in the Bundahishn (MacKenzie, 1990). Here in this paper the relation of the rules of light and darkness is declared in the precise and formal manner. According to Zoroastrian tradition, world history is twelve thousands years divided into four three thousands. The first three thousands is original creation period. The second three thousands year is spent based on Ahura Mazda’s will and the next period is combination of good and evil. The final three thousands is the time to defeat Ahriman. Ahura Mazda was on high in omniscience and goodness; for boundless time he was ever in the light. The light is the space and place of Ahura Mazda that is the Endless Light and omniscience and goodness are the entirety of
Ahura Mazda. Ahriman, slow in knowledge, whose will is to smite, was deep down in the endless darkness. He was not even aware of the existence of Ahura Mazda until he arose from the chasm and came to the light. Ahriman, of course, being eternal in time past, believes himself also to be everlasting in time future. As Zoroastrian myth goes on, Ahura Mazda in his omniscience knew that Ahriman existed, that he would strike and, since his will is envy, would mingle with him; and from the beginning to the end he knew with what and how many instruments he would carry out his purpose (Ahmadi, 2004).

In ideal form he fashioned forth such creation as was needful. Then Ahriman rose up from the lowest point and went to the border from where the lights are seen. When he saw the light of Ahura Mazda subtle, he rushed forward. Because his will is to smite and his substance is envy, he made rush to demolish it. Seeing courage and domination superior to his own, he fled back to the darkness and fashioned many demons, a creation destructive and meet for combat. Ahriman, then, once he comes to know of Ahura Mazda's existence, sets out to destroy him, but before doing so he makes a preliminary reconnaissance at the borders of Ahura Mazda's heavenly kingdom which, it should be noted, is intangible (Bahar, 2001).

According to one sect of the Zoroastrians, the Zurvanites (Boyce, 1957), Ahriman did in fact "master the world" and that for a time Ahura Mazda had no force against him. Ahriman rules the world for nine thousand years, while Ahura Mazda rules higher than him, apparently in heaven: the one is king in time, the other in eternity (Dadegi, 1989). In the Pahlavi sources a measure of earthly power is settled to Ahriman, though he never really has a chance of winning. According to the Bundahishn: Ohrmazd knew in his omniscience that within these nine thousand years three thousand would pass entirely according to the will of Ahura Mazda, three thousand would pass according to the will of both Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, and that in the last battle the Destructive Spirit would be made powerless and that he himself would save creation from hostility (Dadegi, 1989). Ahura Mazda, knowing in what manner the end would be, offered peace to Ahriman, saying:

"O Ahriman, bring aid to my creation and give it praise that in reward therefor thou mayest be deathless and unageing, uncorrupting and undecaying. And the reason is this that if thou dost not provoke a battle, thou shalt not thyself be powerless, and to both of us there shall be benefit abounding" (Zaehner, 1965).

But Ahriman cried out:

"I will not bring aid to thy creation nor will I give it praise, but I shall destroy thee and thy creation forever and ever: yea, I shall incline all thy creatures to hatred of thee and love of me." (Zaehner, 1965).
And the interpretation thereof is that Ahriman thought Ahura Mazda was helpless against him, and that therefore did he offer peace. He accepted not but offered threats.

In Zoroastrian myth, the conflict between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, probably dates back at least to the fourth century B.C. In the Bundahishn Ahura Mazda and Ahriman have now agreed to limit the battle to nine thousand years. Ahriman now attacks again, and is again repulsed: "Then Ohrmazd chanted the Ahunavar- Zoroastrians sacred pray that Ahura Mazada recited to defeat Ahriman- and he showed to Ahriman his own final victory, the powerlessness of Ahriman, the destruction of the demons, the resurrection, the Final Body, and the independence of all creation from all aggression forever and ever. When Ahriman beheld his own powerlessness and the destruction of the demons, he was rested low, collapsed, and fell back into the darkness. Unable to do hurt the creatures of Ahura Mazda for three thousand years Ahriman lay crushed (Hinnells, 1997).

Unmistakably, we have here a dualism. All that comprises the world is the creation of one or the other of these two primal spirits, the good or positive elements ("Life") coming from one, and the evil or negative elements ("Not-Life") from the other. These spirits are Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu (Boyce, 1979). Ahura Mazda or Ormazd means wise god and almighty, Spenta Mainyu holy is the symbol of creation Ahura Mazda. Ahriman and Spenta Mainyu are twins and Ahriman is the symbol of destruction. Spenta Mainyu is the symbol of Asha (honesty and rightness) and Ahura Mazda is supporter of Asha. Ahriman is the symbol of lie while spentamainyu is considered as mere good, Ahriman is assumed as villain. The story of Kaveh the Blacksmith and Azidahakain Shahnameh proves the villainy of Ahriman whose aim is to annihilate human being.

Ahriman’s ultimate goal is to get rid of mankind so he created Azidahaka, a tyrannical ruler, to obliterate piety and generate ignorance and darkness (Hinnells, 1997). Azidahaka is a tyranny ruler who is known as a man with two serpents. Once Ahriman appeared to him as a faithful young man and asked permission to kiss Azidahaka’s shoulders on which two serpents grew then Ahriman said they must be fed with two young men’s brains every day. This is the story of battle between right and wrong, human being and evil, justice and tyranny, love and hatred and finally between Ahriman and Ahura (Hossein and Azi, 2005). Ahura Mazda besides Speanta Mainyu that is the head of seven immortals has other six accompanies, together they are called Amesha Spenta (Boyce, 1983). In non-specific usage, the term Amesha Spenta denotes all the divinities that furthered or braced creation and all that are bounteous and holy. The "divine sparks" that appear in the Gathic Yasna 47.1 are: Vohu Manah roughly means good purpose, Asha Vashishta means truth and righteousness, Khasathra means desirable, Spenta Armaiti means holy and devotion, Haurvata means wholeness, and finally Ameretat which means immortality (Bahar, 2001).
On the other hand evil spirit Ahriman creates his hordes of dews to counter the creation of Ormuzd. Ahriman is seen to create six dews that in Zoroastrian tradition are the antitheses of the Avestan AmeshaSpentas. Mirroring the task of the AmeshaSpentas through which Ahura Mazda realized creation, the six antitheses are the instrument through which AngraMainyu creates all the fears in the world (Bahar, 2001).

The six arch-demons are respectively: Akoman of evil thought and equivalent to Avestan AkemManah, Indar that freezes the minds of the creatures from practicing righteousness, Naonhaithya of discontent, Saurva of oppression and desire, Taurvi the destroyer and at last Zauri who poisons plant creation (Yasna 32.3).

AKEMMANAH, THE DEAVE

AkemManah (AkәmManah) is the Avestan language name of Zoroastrianism's demon of the "evil mind" or "evil purpose" or "evil thinking". Manah denotes a state of mind, and akemmanah may thus be more precisely described as the state of mind or being that stops an individual from accomplishing his moral sense of duties. The hypostasis of this malign influence is the demon (daeva) AkemManah, who appears in the Gathas. Gathicakemmanah may also be compared with acishtemmanah "worst thinking," which reflects the later Zoroastrian opposition between akemmanah and vohumanah, "good purpose." In the Zoroastrian texts of the 9th-12th centuries, Akoman is the second of Ahriman's devised to counter Ohrmuzd's creation of the world. This rank reflects AkemManah's opposition to VohuManah who is the second of the AmeshaSpentas (Ahmadi, 2004). In the Gathas, the oldest texts of the Zoroastrian canon are believed to have been composed by Zoroaster himself, the daevas are 'wrong gods' or 'false gods' or 'gods that are rejected'. In the Younger Avesta, the daevas are noxious creatures that encourage chaos and disorder. In later tradition and folklore, the dēws are personifications of every conceivable evil. In these pre-historic texts, where the term occurs 19 times, the daevas are a distinct category of "quite legitimate gods, who had, however, been rejected." In Yasna 32.3 and 46.1, the daevas are still worshipped by the Iranian peoples. Yasna 32.8 notes that some of the followers of Zoroaster had previously been followers of the daevas.

In the Gathas, the poet censures the daevas as being incapable of discerning truth (asha) from falsehood (druj). They are accordingly in "error" (aēnah-), which led them to have accepted the bad religion. Simultaneously, the Indo-Iranian legacy of the daevas as beneficent gods is still evident in numerous expressions that appear in both Avestan and Vedic Sanskrit. Furthermore, although the daevas are described as being incapable of proper discernment, they are never identified with the druj itself. The daevas are never themselves druj "false" or dregvant "of the lie."
Although the *daeva* are clearly identified *with* evil (e.g., *Yasna* 32.5), they are not identified *as* evil. They deceive mankind and themselves, but they are not *aka mainyu*, *AngraMainyu* or *Ahriman* in Persian, once the Zoroastrian epitome of evil, lost its original Zoroastrian/Mazdaist identity in later Persian literature, and was eventually depicted as a *div*. Religious depictions of *Ahriman* made in the era following the Islamic invasion show *Ahriman* as a giant of a man with spotted body and two horns (Omidsalar, 2001).

Found in abundance in Persian mythology are the *Dives*, meaning 'celestial' or 'bright'. These divinities were worshipped in pre-Zoroastrian Mazdaism, and as in *Vedic religions*, the adherents of the pre-Zoroastrian form of Mazdaism considered the *daēva* holy and sacred beings. It is only after the religious reforms of Zarathustra that the term *daēva* became associated with *demons* and villain. Even then the Persians living south of the Caspian Sea continued to worship the *daēva* and resisted pressure to accept Zoroastrianism, and legends that involve *daēva* live on to this day. Dive is one of the most important members of the legends and myths in the history of early Iranians. In ancient times this word was applied to a group of Arian’s gods which were worshiped among Iranians and Indians. *Dive* meant “God” too. Before the immigration of Indo-Iranian Arian tribes from their common country, these tribes worshiped the natural elements as their “god”, but after the appearance of Zoroaster some modifications took place in the field of Iranian religion (Zaehner, 1965). Zoroaster believed that only it is “Ahura Mazda” who deserved to be worshiped and he rejected worshiping other gods.

**DIVE AS VILLAIN IN PERSIAN MYTHOLOGY**

The characters of Persian mythology almost always fall into one of two camps. They are either good, or they are villain. The resultant conflict mirrors the ancient conflict, which in Persian mythology is based on the Zoroastrian concept of the dual emanation of *Ahura Mazda*. *SpentaMainyu* is the source of constructive energy, while *AngraMainyu* is the source of darkness, destruction, sterility, and death. Persian myths are traditional tales and stories of ancient origin, some involving extraordinary or supernatural beings. Drawn from the legendary past of *Iran*, they reflect the attitudes of the society to which they first belonged - attitudes towards the confrontation of *good and evil*, the actions of the gods, *yazats* (lesser gods), and the exploits of heroes and fabulous creatures (IlonaK. and Takeshita M., 2001). Myths play a crucial part in *Iranian culture* and our understanding of them is increasing when we consider them within the context of *Iranian history*.

In Persian literature “Dive”, incarnated as a villain, is introduced as a mythical creature with a body like a mankind, but giant, two horns and a tail, ugly and frightening. Based on common narrations they were homely deceived creatures who enjoyed eating the flesh of mankind. They were
powerful, cruel and stone-hearted with big teeth like boar (Safa, 1991). They had ability to transform themselves. They were skilled in conjuring and their clothes were made of pelt. Through Persian legendary epics like Shahnameh, the well known masterpiece of Ferdowsi (Yarshater, 2007), many dives blocked the way of the heroes. These dives are problematic villains. They are usually forces of enemy to help them in the wars between Iranians and the people of other countries but they are killed by Iranian heroes. The Dives are very powerful and they are able to do extraordinary tasks.

**MYTHOLOGICAL VILLAINY OF AKVAN DIVE**

In Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, the story of Akvan Dive is a short account concerning villainy of a demon. Akvan is described as having long hair, blue eyes and a head like an elephant with a mouthful of tusks instead of teeth transformed himself into a zebra. Safa believes that:

"In my book, since the dives were used to wear animal fur -as Akvan wears zebra's- they are described as having horn and tail in old Iranian tales and myths, as well as Shahnameh" (Safa, 1991).

Because the story of Akvan and his villainy is rooted in old beliefs of Iranian, there is a philosophical enlightenment at the beginning of the story to remind readers of power of great god and his conquer over all villainies and the role of good thought in Iranian beliefs.

Story begins when a shepherd of Iranian king Kikavoos (Yarshater, 2007) notifying the attack of a strange animal like zebra to the cattle. Be made aware by consultants about a dive, Kikavoos knows that the animal is not a zebra but Akvan dive (Ferdawsi, 1996). Accordingly, he asks the brave men of the army to beat Akvan. Unable to find anybody, Kikavoos asked Rostam (Davis, 1999) to help him to get rid of that dive. Rostam proceeds to the pasture of the shepherd. He searches the meadow for three days but he finds the dive in the fourth. When Rostam attempted to kill him, Akvan disappeared as the result of his own magic and made Rostam follow him on and on as Rostam finds out that he is not an animal but a dive. Feeling tired Rostam fell into asleep beside a spring (Davis, 1999). Rostam got up after a long sleep and found himself defeated by the dive. Akvan detached the piece of land on which Rostam was sleeping. Disappointed, Rostam knows that if he dies the dive can overcome all the Persian land. So when dive asked him to choose whether he prefers to be thrown into the sea or mountain, Rostam knew Akvan is spiteful and inverts his alternative he responded. Rostam told dive to throw him to the mountain and Dive threw him in to the sea. As swimming, Rostam struggled with sea animals and reached the shore and searched for his adored horse, Rakhsh. Finding his horse in the cattle of Afrasyab (Yarshater, 2007), he fights with his men to take back his horse and goes back to the place where he has been taken by Dive. He finds Dive in the same place and takes him and bangs him in the head with his strong weapon,
gorz. Then he cuts off the head of Akvan and prays god. Ferdowsi calls dive wicked and villain who has diverted from the way of humanity and honesty.

CONCLUSION

In a general conclusion we can say that dive has a metaphorical meaning in Persian literature. The purpose of the usage of dive is the wicked and villains as they are the depictions of Satan. They annihilate the holy creatures. Their ugly and frightening faces are the symbol of their bad and evil deeds. In mystic and moral literature dive means concupiscence and internal Satan. They should be killed by pious and mature representatives of God. In fact god and dives are hostile to each other and in the legends villains in tales, story and mind of Iranian people are the incarnated figures of dives.

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