Chapter II

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2.1 Introduction

Archaeological excavations have uncovered skeletons of early homo erectus man in Iran and it seems that from the earliest stages of human development, Iran, as a land bridge, has been constantly inhabited.

In terms of civilisations, the evidence carries us to the earliest stages of human settlement. Hunter-gatherers from the high mountains have settled around the plateau as early as 30,000 B.C. The origins of most of the earliest human settlements in the plateau are not known and they seem to be local, developing from hunter-gatherer stage to the settled farmers settling in the mountains or plains of southern Caspian coast and northern Persian Gulf. Between 8,000 to 6,000 B.C., the earliest signs of settlement and domestication of animals appear in west and south-western Iran, followed by appearance of painted pottery.¹

When the Sumerian kingdom was established in the southern most section of Mesopotamia, many tribes had already settled and were in early stages of state building. The apparent trade between the Dravidian civilisation of the Indus Valley and Sumer passed through the territories of these small states. From the apparent peace and quiet that persisted on the area and the flow of trade, we can assume that some kind of agreement was reached for the protection of merchant caravans. The future rise of kingdoms in the area also points to the profit that was gained by them from the passing trade.²

2.2 Iranian native people

Civilisation in Iran

The earliest of evidences of a civilization in Iran comes from the southern Caspian region, in present day province of Gilan. Around the village of Marlik, evidence of metal work and pottery has been found that date back to the 5th century B.C. This area seems to have been inhabited by the same people who were settled in eastern Anatolia,
Proto-Hattians and Hurrians of later Urartu kingdom. The similarity of art works seems to suggest close connections with the Kassites of Luristan who later became one of the two dominant civilizations of pre-Aryan era.

The other pre-historic civilization that is attested in Iran is the civilization of the people who lived in the city of Sialk, near modern Kashan in central Iran. This walled
city attests the oldest fortified settlement in Iran. The danger that these walls were trying to keep out is not known, but it might have come from migrating Kassites who moved from the north and northwest towards the southwestern Iran and the mountains of Luristan. Sialk pottery is close to the Marlik and Kassite pottery, while the signs of metal works are limited. The houses are built from stones, the ready material of the region, and the position of the city suggests a port situation, probably of a larger lake whose remains still exist as the Daryache Namak (the salt lake) near the modern city of Qom.  

**Kassites:**

The origin of the Kassites is not known, but their material life suggests close connections to the civilisations of Hurrians and Hattis and even to the Luvian and other pre-Greek cultures of Anatolia and Minoans of Crete. The bronze work of the Kassites is very famous and is used to establish links between the Sumerians, Monoans, Etruscans, and Dravidian civilization of the Indus Valley/Mohenjo-daro. Linguistic research relates the Kassite to the Indo-Iranians, but these are mainly extracted from the names of the deities, mentioned later in the Kassite history. As with the case of the Mitanni, these gods might belong to a ruling class that could have had Indo-Iranian roots, but in general, there is no strong evidence to suggest Indo-European roots of the Kassite. Other local inhabitants of Luristan and the rest of the southwest Iran, Lullubis and Gutians, also do not show any Indo-Iranian characteristics.  

Kassites first entered written history in the Babylonian records when they attacked Babylon in a campaign from 2080-2043 B.C. Under the rule of their first king, Gandash. The Babylonian king, Shemshu-Ilune, the son of Hammurabi the great law-giver, defeated the unorganised Kassite tribes and drove them back to their mountain strongholds. Centuries later, in 1595 B.C., a united Kassite and Gutian force, under the command of Agum-Kak-Reme, attacked Babylon following the Hittite withdrawal, this time successfully, and ruled for about three hundred years, until 1180 B.C. The Kassite dominance of Babylon resulted in the introduction of horse to the Babylonian army, probably the result of earlier Kassite contacts with the Central Asian nomads.
The Kassites also extended their dominance to the Elamite kingdom of southwest Iran and put an end to the Old Elamite kingdom. They extended their lands to the borders of Egypt on one side, and as far north as the Urartu territory in Caucasus and Anatolia. Their last king, Anllil-nadin-akhe, was defeated by the Elamite king and was taken prisoner to Susa where he died in 1180 B.C., putting an end to the Kassite power in Mesopotamia. The remaining of the Kassite tribes, who had managed to keep their own identity, retreated back to the high mountains of Luristan, where they eventually became part of the strong kingdoms of Elam and eventually the Persian Empire.  

**Elam**

Elam, the most powerful and longest lasting civilisation of the Iranian plateau prior to the Aryan arrival, has a complex history. Most of the history of Elam has been recorded by their fierce enemies Babylonians and Assyrians, or by their successors, the Persians, who had a strong incentive to undermine the late Elamite kingdom. As a result, Elamite representation has not been very fair or accurate, and only due to the recent scholarship and reading of Elamite inscriptions we can have a good idea of their culture. 

As with the Kassites, we do not have a reliable knowledge of Elamite origin. As far back as 4th millennium B.C., evidence of Elamite settlement in the plains of Khuz (northern Persian Gulf) exists. Researches done on the Elamite skeletons show their racial closeness to the Sumerians and Dravidians of Indus Valley, while their language, at least in its latest form, shows very little connections with these cultures.

The Elamite pottery and crafts are strongly influenced by the Sumerian artifacts, as well as Mohenjo-daro and Bactro-Margiana cultural artifacts. We might assume that Elamites arrived in their homeland, most likely via the sea from southern Indus Valley region, around 3500 B.C. Prior to their arrival, the plains of northern Persian Gulf were among the oldest civilised areas in the world history and the site of Susa was inhabited as far back as 4200 B.C. and had come under the rule of the kings of Akkad. When the ancestors of Elamites arrived, they settled in that area under the rule of the Sumerian
The proto-Elamites adopted many of the Sumerian cultural characteristics such as the cuneiform writing, which replaced their own original pictographic writing system. Still, they kept their own unique cultural peculiarities such as maternal system of succession and their own religion. Women seem to have held a very important position in the Elamite society. They inherited and willed their property, they ruled and conducted business, and as mentioned before, they were agents of succession in the government. The maternal characteristics of Elamite culture survived up to the Neo-Elamite era (around 750 B.C.), around which it started to give way to the Babylonian/Semitic paternalistic system of its neighbours. 

The Elamite history has been superficially divided into Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, based on the Egyptian system adopted by early Orientalists. This division does not hold firmly for Elam, but it is generally used as a matter of convenience. The Old Elamite Kingdom started a period of growth around the early 2\textsuperscript{nd} millennium B.C. They first established their roots in the Khuz area, in the site of Susa (Shusha in Elamite), where Puzur-Inshushinak (2112–2095 B.C.) built the first Elamite status in his own
honour. Elamites initially attacked and destroyed Ur, and later invaded Babylonia around 2,000 B.C. and founded the Larsa dynasty. By that time, they were already the masters of Uruk, Isin, and Babylon. Later, Hammurabi of Babylonia stopped the expansion of Elam, but Babylonians could not stop the great kings like Kutir-Nakhunte to revive the Elamite power a hundred years later (1700 B.C.).

Around 1600 B.C., Kassites attacked and invaded Elam and annexed it to their empire. This put an end to the Old Elamite kingdom which was ruled successively by Kassites, Babylonians, Hittites, and again by Kassites for another 400 years. In 1160 B.C., Shutruk-Nakhunte, a local ruler of Susa, drove the Kassites out of Elam and established a new dynasty and an Elamite Empire. The culture that allowed the foundation of the Elamite Empire created great cities of Awan, Anshan, Simash and especially Susa, the lowland capital of the Elamites. It also built the great Ziggurat of Chogha-Zanbil, the famous temple of Elam that now remains as the oldest standing archaeological building in Iran.

The Elamite Empire was very short-lived and it was soon invaded by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia in 1120 B.C. For 300 years, Elam, and Susa as its centre, was ruled as a Babylonian protectorate. During this time, the centre of the Elamite power was shifted to the east of their traditional territory and took refuge in the city of Anshan in the Zagros Mountains. Elam once again rose to power in 750 B.C. and took over their old capital of Susa. This New Elamite kingdom soon became a powerful state and started a campaign against the Babylonians and the new Assyrian Empire. This state, however
powerful, could not stand against the overwhelming Assyrian expansion. In 645 B.C., Ashur-Banipal, the last powerful Assyrian emperor, invaded and raised Susa to the ground. This was the last blow on the Elamite power which at this point divided into small states and was soon ran over by the rising Median and Persian powers.

Despite its troublesome history, Elam holds a great place in the history of civilisation, especially from the Iranian point of view. Elamites have been accused of cultural stagnation and lack of innovation. While it is true that many of their cultural characteristics, especially writing system, was adopted from the Mesopotamian civilisations, it is undeniable that the Elamites possessed a distinctly Elamite culture. They kept their own religion and built great temples to their gods, including Inshushinak, the protector of Susa, and a goddess who probably became Arduvui Sura Anahita of the Achaemenid religion. Their government system, especially in its succession procedure, was unique for its time. Contrary to the agricultural economy of Mesopotamian, the Elamite economy was based greatly on trade, but also on mining and export of raw material such as tin that was crucial for the powerful empires of Babylon and Assyria. They also for a long while acted as a buffer zone between Mesopotamia and the internal nomads of Iran, in the process, forming a great hybrid culture of Elamite, Babylonian, and Sumerian characteristics.¹⁰

As far as the later civilisations of Iran are concerned, Elam was the major transmitter of the achievements of older civilisations to the Median and Achaemenid empires. The modified cuneiform that was developed by Elamites from the Sumerian models, constituted an early form of Syllabry that made it possible to create the Old Persian alphabetic cuneiform. Elamite architecture was the model of Achaemenid palaces, and the court procedure of the Persian court was completely modeled after the Elamite costumes. Also, the sciences and knowledge of Elam and Mesopotamia, mathematics and astronomy, were transmitted to the Persian Empire by the Elamite scribes who made their language one of the three official languages of the empire. Maybe the greatest tribute paid to Elam was the selection of their old capital, Susa, as the
main capital of the Achaemenids. Cultural legacy of Elam has affected their successors more than many might imagine.

Other Civilisations

To the north of the Kassites, there lived a group of people called Hurrians who were probably the native inhabitants of the southern Caucasus. They spoke a language unrelated to all other languages around them, and they seem to have spread quickly around the landscape in the second millennium B.C. Their area of influence stretched westwards to the Van Lake area and made them neighbours of the Hatti and later the Hittite Kingdom. Around the 1400 B.C., a group of Hurrian people formed a kingdom called the Mitanni in the areas of modern Kurdistan and eastern Turkey. The Mitannis adopted the Assyrian cuneiform and have thus left us with a few written documents of their civilisation. From these documents and also from an important inscription detailing a Mitanni peace treaty with the Hittites, we know that at least the ruling class of the Mitanni kingdom were from an Indo-European and specifically Indo-Aryan background. A manual for training of horses uses many Indo-European names for horse accessories, and in the aforementioned peace treaty, we have the name of many Indo-Aryan deities included in the pantheon of Mitanni gods. This has for long puzzled the historians, since the distance between the Mitanni and the rest of the Indo-Aryans who at the time lived in Central Asia and Afghanistan is great. Conventional scholarship suggests a migration of Indo-Iranians from the plains of Central Asia to north-eastern Iran and then south to the Indus Valley. If this view is accepted, the existence of a semi-isolated Indo-Aryan ruling class in western Iran seems highly confusing. A possible suggested answer is the migration of a branch of Indo-Iranians from the northern plains of the Caspian Sea down the Caucasus and into western Iran. This and other suggestions seem to be kept at the level of theory in the absence of empirical evidence in their support.11

Urartu, another Hurrian nation, also formed a civilisation of the Iranian plateau. Their kingdom was very successful in its relations with the dominant powers of the time, Assyrians and the Hittite. Urartu formed a trade confederation that benefited from the Assyrian and Hittite desire to access the tin and gold mines of Iranian mountains. With
the wealth coming from their trade, the Urartu built lasting tributes to their civilisation whose remains still stand around north-eastern Iran and eastern Anatolia. The later Armenian kingdoms claimed descent from the Urartans, and the name of the great mountain of Armenia, Mount Ararat, comes from the name of the Urartu people. This civilisation ceased to exist sometimes before the rise of the Median kingdom in the southern borders of their territory (650 B.C.), but it left lasting influences, especially in architecture, on the kingdom of the Medes.12

2.3 Indian native people

The earlier traces of human activity in India, so far discovered, go back to the Second Inter-Glacial period between 400,000 and 200,000 B.C. and these show period of slow evolution, which gathered momentum towards the end and resulted in the spectacular Indus Valley Civilization (or the Harappa Culture as it has been more recently named) in 2500 B.C.13

India's history essentially includes the entire Indian subcontinent, encompassing the territory of the modern nations of the Republic of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka.14

Isolated remains of Homo erectus in Hathnora in the Narmada Valley in Central India indicate that India might have been inhabited since at least the Middle Pleistocene era. The precise date of these remains is unclear, and archaeologists put it anywhere between 200,000 to 500,000 years ago. The fossils are believed to be the earliest human remains found in South Asia. Recent finds include a quarry along the Malaprabha River and Ghataprabha River in the Kaladgi Basin in Karnataka.15
The Mesolithic period in the Indian subcontinent covered a time span of around 25,000 years, starting around 30,000 years ago, where the earliest discovered sites of Mesolithic culture have been unearthed in Sri Lanka. Other settlements have also been found as far north as the caves of the Hindu Kush, which seem to be a direct progression from upper Paleolithic art. Cave paintings of game animals and human activity such as hunting, have been found at Mesolithic sites, and early forms of religious activity seem to have been found at some sites. Overall there is a great proliferation of Mesolithic culture throughout India, suggesting widespread habitation. Hunting, gathering, fishing, and other forms of hunter-gatherer subsistence seem to have dominated the period, however early forms of herding and small scale farming have been detected. Modern humans seem to have settled the subcontinent towards the end of the last Ice Age about 12,000 years ago.
One of the earliest confirmed permanent settlements appeared 9,000 years ago in Bhimbetka in modern Madhya Pradesh. By 5100 B.C., people in the Indus Valley were farming and harvesting einkorn, a primitive form of wheat. Early Neolithic culture in South Asia is represented by the Mehrgarh findings (7000 B.C. onwards), in Balochistan, Pakistan. The Mehrgarh community was mostly pastoral, lived in mud houses, wove baskets and tended to goats and their farms. By 5500 B.C., pottery began to appear and later chalcolithic implements began to appear. By 2000 B.C., the settlement was abandoned.\textsuperscript{16}

Traces of a Neolithic culture have been found submerged in the Gulf of Khambat in 2002. Many of the finds recovered from the area have been radiocarbon
dated to 7500 B.C. Late Neolithic cultures sprang up in the Indus Valley region between 6000 and 2000 B.C., and in southern India between 2800 and 1200 B.C.\textsuperscript{17}

**Indus Valley Civilization**

![A Seal with the Indus script](image)

(pic.4) A Seal with the Indus script (courtesy of Wikipedia)

The irrigation of the Indus Valley, which provided enough resources to support major urban centers such as Harappa and Mohenjo-daro around 2500 B.C., marked the beginning of the Harappan Civilization. This period marked the beginning of the earliest urban society in India, known as the Indus Valley Civilization (or, the Harappan Civilization), which thrived between 2500 and 1900 B.C. It was centred on the Indus River and its tributaries, including the Ghaggar-Hakra River, and extended into the Ganges-Yamuna Doab, Gujarat, and northern Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{18}

![An ancient Indus-Valley city (Lothal)](image)

(pic.5) An ancient Indus-Valley city (Lothal) as envisaged by the Archaeological Survey of India (courtesy of Wikipedia)
The antecedents of the Harappa Culture are the village site of the Baluchistan hill- the Nal Culture, and of the Makran coast to the west of the Indus delta- the Kulli Culture, and certain of the village communities along the rivers in Rajasthan and Punjab.

The Harappa Culture was the most extensive of the ancient civilizations in era, including not only the Indus plain (the Punjab and Sind), but also northern Rajasthan and the region of Kathiawar in western India. It was essentially a city culture and among the centres of authority were the two cities of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa.¹⁹

The civilization is noted for its cities built of brick, road-side drainage system and multi-storeyed houses. The earliest historic references to India may be those to the Meluhha in Sumerian records, possibly referring to the Indus Valley Civilization. When compared to the contemporary civilizations of Egypt and Sumer, the Indus Civilization possessed unique urban planning techniques, covered the largest geographical area, and may have been a single state, as suggested by the amazing uniformity of its measurement systems.²⁰

The Mohenjo-daro ruins were once the centre of this ancient society. Indus Civilization settlements spread as far south as present-day Maharashtra, as far east as Delhi, as far west as the Iranian border, and as far north as the Himalayas. Among the settlements were the major urban centres of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, as well as Dholavira, Ganweriwala, Lothal, Kalibangan, Rakhigarhi etc. At its peak, some archaeologists are of the opinion that the Indus Civilization may have had a population of well over five million. To date, over 2500 cities and settlements have been found, mainly in the general region to the east of the Indus River in Pakistan. It is thought by some that geological disturbances and climate change, leading to a gradual deforestation may ultimately have contributed to the civilization's downfall.²¹

Archaeological resources suggest that the diverse geography of ancient India was increasing in the amount and specialization of faunal remains around 2400 to 1500 B.C. This specialization suggests that the Indus Valley Civilizations was dependent upon
the alluvial soils of the rivers, which produced high yield crops. By 2600 B.C., the presence of a state level society is evident, complete with hierarchical rule and large scale public works. These include accomplishments such as irrigation, warehouses for grain, public streets, and brick-lined drainage systems for sanitation. Around the middle of the second millennium B.C., the region of the Indus River basin, in which approximately two-thirds of currently known sites were located dried up, and the sites were abandoned.  

2.4 Indo–Iranian relationship in pre-Aryan and Aryan period

It is believed that before 3000-2000 B.C., the inhabitants of modern Iraq and southern Iran as also the people of west and North West India came from the same region. Later, around 1500 B.C. Aryan tribes from north invaded and defeated these people and marched further to south Asia. During the pre-historic times (around 3000 B.C.), the people of Kulli culture (North West Indian borders) excelled in making small boxes of soft stone, delicately engraved with linear patterns. At Susa (west Iran) a few pieces of painted pottery have been found which appear to be similar to the wares of the Kulli people. In the hills of Baluchistan, where the people of Nal and Zhob cultures built their little villages, the Barhuis, though ethnically now predominantly Iranian, speak a Dravidian language (spoken in South India).

There seems little doubt that the Indus Valley civilization had contacts with the contemporaneous civilizations of Iran and Mesopotamia. There is a striking similarity between some of the designs and seals. There was trade between the coast of southern Iran and India through the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. Some Indus seals have been excavated at Kish, Susa and Ur in Iran. The Harappan people are believed to have imported silver, copper, turquoise and lapis lazuli from Persia and Afghanistan. Iran supplied silver, gold, lead, zinc, turquoise to ancient India. Ivory was exported from Indi
On the basis of linguistic evidence the people who arrived on the southern slopes of Alborz mountains in North Iran and in Western Iran, are regarded as having originally been along the Indo-Iranians who for a long period shared a common tradition while living as Nomads in the Central Asian steppes. Eventually the two linguistically related groups separated and migrated southwards. The Iranian group moved into the highlands of Iran through the flat passable area south-east of Caspian Sea, while the Indian tribes migrated into the Indian sub-continent.26
It is believed that Indians and Iranians belonged to one single family before the beginning of the Indo-Aryan civilisation and lived together with a common language for many centuries in pasturelands of Oxus valley in Central Asia (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan). This common habitat was either around the upper reaches of the Tigris where the Zob meets it or in the vast doab of the rivers Vahvi-Datiya and Ranha (the Oxus and Jaxertes). The first Aryan migration into India and Iran took place around 2000 B.C. In Iran, as in India, the impact of the Aryans was to prove ineffaceable and founded a long enduring tradition. These people brought with them their patrilineal system, their worship of sky gods, their horses and chariots. In the second millennium B.C. there was close agreement between the language and mythology, religious traditions and social institutions of Indians and Iranians on the one hand and those of the Greeks, Romans, Celts, Germans and Slavs on the other. For a considerable period after their separation from their western kinsmen, the Indians and Iranians are believed to have lived together.
The scriptures Vedas (of the Indian Aryans) and the Avesta (of the Iranians) both agree on the cause, which led to the migration of the Aryans from their original homeland (called Airyana Vaejo in Avesta). In the Vedic account, it is a flood of water that is referred to and in the Avestan account it is a flood of snow and frost. The “praleya” signifying snow or frost is derived from “pralaya” or deluge in Sanskrit by Panini. That there was a huge flood in pre-historic ties in some parts of the then known world is proved by Semitic sources which seem to have borrowed their account from Aryan sources. The name of the person who escaped this disaster is Noah, according to them (more correctly Nuh as in Arabic which is a contracted form of Manuh, nominative form of Manu). In both Indian and Iranian versions, he is the son of the same person – Vivasvat or Vivanghat. According to the tradition of the Vendidad, the ancestors of the Iranians lived in 15 other countries turn by turn. One of these was Haptahindu, i.e. Saptasindhu, the cradle land of Indo-Aryan civilization.
Indian or Indo-Iranian groups who worshiped the Vedic deities were found in and to the north of Syria in the middle of the second millennium B.C. Prof. S.A. Cook writes, “In what may roughly be called the ‘Mosaic’ age, viz, that illustrated by the Amarna letters and the “Hittite” tables from Boghz-Keui, Palestine was exposed to Iranian (Old Persia) or Indo-European Persian Empire…. In the Mosaic Age, Varuna, the remarkable ethical God of ancient India, was known to North Syria.” 30  In the 14th century B.C., there appeared in North East Syria, a people called Mittani, whose kings had Indo-Iranian names and whose gods were very similar to the Aryan gods – Indara (Indra), Uruvna (Varuna), Mitira and Nasatiya. Some other chiefs in Syria and Palestine also had Indo-Iranian names. 31

India is mentioned in the Avesta and there is some description of north India in it. In the Rig Veda there are references to Persia – the Persians who were called Parshavas and later Parasikas, from which the modern word Parsi is derived. The Parthians were referred to as Parthavas. 32

Old Persian language was a member of the Indic branch of the Indo-European languages. Related to it was Zend of Avestan, the language of the earliest Zoroastrian text, which was later, divided into two distinct branches – Indic and Iranian. One later developed as Sanskrit and the other as Persian. The name of India has come from Iran through a long relay – Iranian to Greek to Latin to English and finally to India with its dominance of English. India is a Greek word written ‘India in the Greek alphabet and pronounced Hindia. It comes from Hindos ‘the river Indus’ from the old Persian Hindu, the Persian pronunciation of the Sanskrit Sindhu. (In Avesta and old Persian an initial s was pronounced h). 33

Similarly, the name Iran is related to Sanskrit Arya (noble). The ancient Persian also used the name ‘Arya’ and the word survives in the word ‘Iran’. Iranians are one of three peoples of the world who have called their countries ‘Land of Nobility’ or ‘The Noble Land’. Iran is the Avesta word airya ‘noble’ with the toponymic suffix –an, denoting a geographical area. The name of Ireland is Eire in Irish language and aire
means ‘noble’ in Irish. Aryavarta is the sacred land bounded on the north and south by
the Himalaya and Vindhya mountains, and extending from the eastern to the western sea.
The name Iran and Aryavarta are close relatives and denote the abode of the excellent
ones, the noble and respectable people, those faithful to their land. The Persian speaking
Azerbaijan is the ancient word aryanam vajah ‘the power of the Aryans’, which
celebrates the emerging sway of the Iranians in the second or third millennium B.C. 34

Sanskrit and Avesta have a common basic vocabulary and common grammar. The
name of Hapta Hendu (land of seven rivers) is mentioned in Avesta whereas Ariya (the
name of Persia) is mentioned in the Vedas. In the Rig Veda, the Persians were called
Parshavas and later Parasikas (from which the modern word Parsi is derived).

The ancient Iranians invoked the good mind, the good spirit Vohu Manah (Vasu
manah in Sanskrit). The word vohu is vasu in Sanskrit. Its superlative form is vashishta
(the personification of right). The modern Persian Bahisht is Avesta Vahishta.

River Sarasvati became the province Haraxvaiti in Avesta. The river Rasa became
the district Rangha in Media now Rai near Tehran. Avesta has the river Varan, which
refers to Varanasi, situated on the confluence of Varana and Asi rivers. Avesta mentions
the river Haroyu which is Saryu flowing near Ayodhya. The Hapta Hendu of Avesta and
 Sapta Sindhu of Rig-Veda is Punjab. 35

The Persian word Khuda goes back to Avesta Hvada, which is svadha in Sanskrit
(inherent power). The Avestic bara survives in the name of Baghdad and it is Sanskrit
bhaga ( or better known bhagavan).

Avestic Kshathra and Sanskrit Kshatra become in modern Persian Shahr and
Hindi Khatri/Khet. Avestic dugh and Sanskrit dugdha change into dugh and dudh.
Avestic bratar and Sanskrit bhratri change into Persian baradar and Hindi Bhai. Avestic
hvar or khvar and Sanskrit svara become Persian khur (of Khurshid) and Hindi sur.
Sanskrit dha (set, make), bhr (bear), gharma (warm) are Avestan and old Persian da, bar
and garma. Sanskrit pra (forth), putra (son) are Avestan fra and puthra. “h” replaced “s” in Iranian except before non-nasal stops and after I, u, r, k; Sanskrit sapta (seven), sarva (all) are Avestan hapta and haurva. Iranian also has both xs and s sounds, Indo-Aryan has only ks. Avestan xsayeiti (has power, is capable), saeiti (dwells) are Sanskrit ksayati and kseti.  

There is much in common between the Vedic religion and Zoroastrianism. The core of these religions was sacrifice, centred on fire. The earliest religious texts of Indo-Aryans (principally the Rig Veda dating back to 1300 to 900 B.C.) are indispensable for making historical reconstructions of the development of Iranian religion. Gatha, the hymns of Prophet Zoroaster, included in a part of the Avesta, the holy book of the Zoroastrians, suggests a close link with the ancient Indian hymns, the Rig Veda of 1700 B.C. This is the period prior to the migration of Nomadic tribes into Iran and India.

The hymn of Gayatri resembles the Gatha of the ancient Iranians. The Vedic ritual of Agni and the Avestic ritual of Atar were similar. The Hindu gods and goddesses like Indra and Bhadrika resemble Ahura Mazda and Mithra. During the Vedic period, gods were divided into two classes the devas and the asuras (in Iranian daevas and ahuras). In India devas came to be more powerful than the asuras and the latter word eventually took on the meaning of a demon. In Iran the reverse took place and the daevas were denounced as demons by Zoroaster. They still survive as such in the divs of Persian folklore, especially though Ferdowsi’s epic Shah Nameh.

Vedic and Persian religions (both Aryan) mingled in Gandhar, where stood the Indian city called Taxila by the Greek. By the age of Darius (6th century B.C.), the most refined of its cult had evolved into what was later known as Zoroastrianism – a dualist religion accounting for the problem of evil in terms of struggle of a good with an evil god. To this day, there are close similarities in the Persian festival of Nowruz (Iranian New Year) also celebrated by Parsis in India and Holi as both are centred towards fire.

The Indo-Iranian element in later Hinduism is chiefly found in the initiatory ceremony (upanayana) performed by boys, a rite both in Hinduism and in Zoroastrianism
that involves the tying of a sacred cord. The Vedic god Varuna, now an unimportant sea
god appears in the Rig-Veda as sharing many features of the Zoroastrian Ahura Mazda
("Wise Lord"); the hallucinogenic sacred drink soma corresponds to the sacred haoma of
Zoroastrianism. Varuna was known as an Asura, a term also applied to lesser gods, which
in later Hinduism came to mean a class of demons, but which in Persia was adopted by
the Zarathustra in its local form as part of the title of the great god of light – Ahura
Mazda. Varuna may have been the high god of the Indo-Iranians before the two peoples
divided. Varuna was first and foremost a king, an emperor sitting in a great palace in
heavens often with associated gods around him. Most important of these was Mitra, a god
with some solar characteristics. He was represented in the Zoroastrian pantheon and was
also widely worshipped in the Roman Empire under the Greco-Iranian name Mithras. 39

The Iranian Surya (sun god) wearing a long coat with a sacred girdle and knee-
high boots was worshipped by Indian kings. He had a special name Mundira svami and
the word Mundira is found in ancient Iranian texts from Khotan. The Modhera temple in
Gujarat and Munirka village in Delhi remind of the name Mundira. The Sun god at
Konarak, Orissa is famous in his Iranian drapery and boots. The royal priests of this royal
surya were of Iranian descent like Sakadvipiya, Brahmanas, or Mishra (in which “th” of
Avesta Mithra became “sh”). 40

Both Vedas and Gathas have no place for idols or temples. Both enjoin the
maintenance of fire and performance of sacrifice (Sanskrit yajna and Avestic yasna).
Their priests have common duties and names.

The four varnas (classification of society) of India developed out of very early
Aryan class divisions. Some stratification existed in many Indo-European communities.
Ancient Iran had four pistras (classes), comparable in some respects to those in India. The
four-fold classification of society into priests, warriors, peasants and artisans appears in
the Vedas, the Gathas and Yasna and Ferdowsi’s Shah Nameh which mentions their
designations as Amuzian, Nisarian, Nasudi and Ahnukishi. 41
The system of four yugas (ages) was similar to the doctrine of four ages that existed in ancient Persia. The system was also prevalent in ancient Greece. The Iranians, like the Indians, believed that the world was divided into seven regions or karshvar (keshvar in modern Persian, which means country).

There is a word in the Gathas – asha – that appears in a variety of forms – asha/arsh/eresh/arta/ereta. The last variant is near to the Rita of the Rig Veda. For both Avesta and Veda, this word means the order of the world, the law of the man. Law and order seems to be the fundamental concepts of the Aryans.42

The myths that appear in the part of the Avesta known as Yasht include some tales of very ancient pre-Zoroastrian origin, probably belonging to the pagan Indo-Iranian era. Many of these myths re-appear in the Shahnameh (Book of Kings), an epic in rhyme by the Poet Firdowsi, which was completed in A.D. 1010. The greatest hero of Iranian mythology was undoubtedly Yima (Jamshid of the Shahnameh.) As Yima Khshaeta, King Yima, he belongs to the Indo-Iranian traditions. The Indian equivalent, the Vedic Yama, chooses to die and becomes the Kind of the dead.43

There are several parallelisms between medical, physiological and pathological doctrines of the Ayurveda and those of the Avesta in its surviving texts represented by the Vendidad, the Yasna and the Yashts.44 The Persian word din (religion) is similar to dhena of the Rig-Veda where it means ‘speech reflecting the inner thoughts of man. Its Avesta equivalent is daena, a common word in Gathas meaning inner self of man.

The Samba-purana relates that Samba, the son of Krishna, had been afflicted with leprosy and was restored to health by the grace of Sun god whose worship was performed by Iranian priests called Maga. The Maga priests were the famous Magoi or Magi – Zoroastrian priests who spread the worship of fire and Sun and erected temples at Taxila and Multan. The Bhagvat-Puran calls the sacred girdle of Sun priest avyanga, which is the Avestan aiwyanganha. Samba built the sanctuary of Mitravana on the banks of Chenab. There were Sun temples on the banks of Yamuna. The Maga Brahmins and the
Gandhara Brahmins of North India, as well as Brahmini Magis of the South were all believed to be of Iranian origin. 45

Commerce between the mouth of the Indus and the Persian Gulf was unbroken down to the Buddhist times. There is evidence of trade between the Phoenicians of the Levant and western India as early as 975 B.C. Trade between the Indus Valley and the Euphrates seems to be very ancient.46
Notes and References

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., pp. 321,322.
5. Ibid., p.252.
7. Ibid., p. 140.
8. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p.235.
12. Ibid. pp.50,60.
16. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p.19.
-quoted in Hekmat, op.cit, p.156.


32. Nehru, op.cit., p.147.


34. Ibid., p. 35.

35. Tara Chand, op.cit., p.3.

36. Ibid.

37. Britannica web site.


40. Lokesh Chandra, op.cit.


42. Sarkhosh, op.cit., p.19.

43. Ibid.


45. Sarkhosh, op.cit., p.20.

46. Ibid.