

2. Mitra (Mithra) in the Vedas and Ancient Iranian literature

Mitra originally is one of the Āryan gods which has been mentioned with Varun in the Vedas. Mithra is one of the most important Yazata in the Avesta Book. This name has been mentioned in the Avesta and ancient Persian as Mithra (Miθra), in Sanskrit as Mitra, in the pahlavi text as Mitr or Miθra and in the Modern Persian as Mehr. The meaning of this word is the friendship, contract and love. He is the god of light and brightness. One of the longest Yashts of Avesta, namely; Mihr (Mehr) Yasht is by the name of him. The name of Mithra has also been mentioned in the Achaemenian¹ kings inscriptions beside the name of Ahura Mazda and Anāhita (goddess of Water)².

A. Mitra in the Vedas

Mitra in Sanskrit means “an ally” and “friend”. It is the name of a deity who is usually associated with Varun, the regent of the ocean and of the western direction. Mitra in the Vedic pantheon was one of the seven Ādityas presiding over day, calling all to activity, beholding all with an unlinking eye, sustaining earth and sky³. Mitra in the Vedas is the same Mithra as mentioned in the Avesta.

¹ Achaemenian kings are one of the ancient Iranian dynasty.

² N. Sharp “Commandments of Achaemenian kings” p 138.

³ T. Rengarajan, Dictionary of Indian Epics, P 318.

Mac Donnell says as follows:

“The etymology of the name is uncertain. However, as the word also means ‘friend’ in the R̥gveda and the kindly nature of the god is often referred to in the Veda, Mitra even appearing as the god of peace, while in the Avesta Mithra is on the ethical side of his character the guardian of faithfulness, it must have originally signified ‘ally’ or ‘friend’ and have been applied to the sun-god in his aspect of a beneficent power of nature”.⁴

The name is normally supposed to have been derived from the use of the word as friend, with which accords the fact that Mitra is essentially a kindly god.⁵

Mac Donnell also says:

“The association of Mitra with Varun̥ is so predominant that only one single hymn of R̥gveda is addressed to him alone. The praise of the god is there rather indefinite, but the first verse at least contains something distinctive about him. Uttering his voice (bruvānah) he brings men together (Yātayati) and watches the tillers with unwinking eyes (RV, III, 59, 1). In another passage of R̥gveda the same words are applied to Mitra who brings men together, uttering his voice, in contrast with Varun̥ who is here called “a mighty”, infallible. This seems a tolerably clear reference to Mitra’s solar character, if we compare it with the verse where it is said that the sun-god Savitr̥ “causes all creatures to hear him and impels them” in the fifth verse of the hymn to Mitra the god spoken of as the great Āditya

⁴ Mac Donnell, History of Vedic Mythology, p 44 .

⁵ Keith. A.B, the Religion and philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads, Vol I, P 98.

“bringing men together” (RV, III, 59, 5). The hymn to Mitra further adds that he supports heaven and earth (RV, III, 59, 7), that the five tribes of men obey him, and that he sustains all gods” (RV, III, 59,8) ⁶. “He brings food, strives to keep the sacred Law”⁷ (RV, III, 59, 2),. “He is worshipped to exempt from disease, rejoicing in (abundant) food, roaming free over the (expanse) of the earth”⁸. (RV, III, 59,3),.

Savitṛ is once identified with Mitra because of his laws, and elsewhere Visṇu is said to take his three steps by the laws of Mitra. The two passages appear to indicate that Mitra regulates the course of the sun. Agni who goes at the head of the dawns produces Mitra for himself. Agni when born is Varuṇa, when kindled is Mitra.⁹

In R̥gveda, (III, 59) we read as follows:

- “Mitra, when speaking, stirreth men to labour; Mitra sustaineth both the earth and heaven. Mitra beholdth men with eyes that close not. To Mitra bring, with holy oil, oblation.
- Joying in sacred food and free from sickness, with knees bents lowly on the earth’s broad surface. Following closely the Āditya’s statute, may we remain in Mitra’s gracious favour.
- Auspicious and adorable, this Mitra was born with fair dominion, king, and disposer. May we enjoy the grace of him the holy, yea, rest in his propitious loving kindness.

⁶ MacDonell , History of Vedic Mythology, p 44

⁷ Hymns of R̥gveda, Translated by T.H. Griffith, P 196.

⁸ R̥gvedaSamhitā , Translated by H.H. Wilson, Vol 2, P 236

⁹ MacDonell , History of Vedic Mythology, p 44

- The great Āditya, to be served with worship, who stirreth men gracious to the singer. To Mitra, him most highly to be lauded, offer in fire oblation that he loved.

- The gainful grace of Mitra, God, supporter of the race of the man. Give splendor of most glorious fame.

- Mitra whose glory spreads afar, he who in might surpasses heaven. Surpass earth in his renown.

- All the five Races have repaired to Mitra, ever strong to aid. For he sustaineth all the Gods.”¹⁰

In the Atharvaveda Mitra at sunrise is contrasted with Varuṇa in the evening, and Mitra is asked to uncover in the morning what has been covered up by Varuṇa. These passages point to the beginning of the view prevailing in the Brāhmanas that Mitra is connected with day and Varuṇa with night. The same contract between Mitra as god of day and Varuṇa as god of night is implied in the ritual literature, when it is prescribed that Mitra should receive a white and Varuṇa a dark victim at the sacrificial post.¹¹ The somewhat scanty evidence of the Veda showing that Mitra is a solar deity is corroborated by the Avesta and Persian religion in general. Here Mitra is undoubtedly a sun-god or a god of light specially connected with the sun.¹²

¹⁰ Hymns of R̥gveda, Translated by T.H. Griffith, P 196.

¹¹ For more information about both Mitra see chapter 1, Part .I (Mitra –Varuṇa).

¹² MacDonell, History of Vedic Mythology, p 44.

B. Mitra in the stone carvings and inscriptions of Achaemenian Kings

Mitra is a god who has been invoked by the Achaemenian kings beside the gods Ahura Mazda and Anāhita. His name and the name of Anāhita (the goddess of waters) have been appeared in the inscriptions of Achaemenian kings from period of second Ardeshir (359-404 BC).

In his inscription he says as follows:

“My grand father, Darius built this construction (Persepolis¹³). Fire destroyed it at the time of first Ardeshir (my father). I built it again by order of (according to desire) of Ahura Mazda, Anāhita and Mithra. May Ahura Mazda, Anāhita and Mithra keep me under their shelter and protect me from any enmity; and don't destroy whatever I have built”¹⁴.

And in another inscription which has been discovered in Hamadān (a city in Iran) he mentions first his forefathers and says as follows:

“I built this palace by order of Ahura Mazda, Anāhita and Mitra. May Ahura Mazda, Anāhita and Mitra protect me from any calamity and don't destroy and damage this construction that I built”¹⁵.

The third Ardeshir (338- 359 BC) in the beginning of his inscription in the Persepolis, he first describes Ahura Mazda as follows:

“Ahura Mazda is the great god; Who created this earth; Who created that sky; Who created the people; Who created happiness for the people; Who

¹³ The name of ancient Palace that belongs to the Achaemenian Kings.

¹⁴ Pour Davoud, Yashts , Vol 1, P 168 .

¹⁵ Norman Sharp, Commandments of Achaemenian kings, P 138.

appointed me (Ardeshir) as a king. A unique king among many; A unique ruler among many rulers.”¹⁶

Then in the end of the same inscription he invokes Ahura Mazda and Mitra as follows:

“May Ahura Mazda and the god Mitra protect me and this country and whatever has been done by me.”¹⁷

Some times the Achaemenian kings mention the words “Ahura Mazda and other gods”.

According to the opinion of many scholars “other gods” means Mitra and Anāhita. For instance Darius says it the following:

“Whatever I accomplished, I did it by order of Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda and other gods helped me.”¹⁸

C. Mithra in the Avesta

Mithra is one of the most important Yazata in the Avesta Book. This name has been mentioned in the Avesta and ancient Persian as Mithra (Miθra), in Sanskrit as Mitra, in the Pahlavi text as Mitr or Miθra and in the Modern Persian as Mehr. The meaning of this word is the friendship, contract and love. He is the god of light and brightness. One of the longest Yashts from Avesta namely; Mihir (Mehr) Yasht is by the name of him.¹⁹

¹⁶ Norman Sharp , Commandments of Achaemenian kings, P141.

¹⁷ Ibid .

¹⁸ Ibid , P 70 .

¹⁹ Afifi . R, Mythology and Culture of Iran , P 624

1. Mithra's place in the Avestan literature

Of all the Indo-Iranian divinities that have found their place in the Zoroastrian theology, Mithra is the most prominent figure. As an associate of Varun, a Mithra's individuality was eclipsed during Indo-Iranian period. After separation of these two groups of the Āryan people, Mithra rose to great eminence, and was the premier divinity in the Western Iran, where Zoroaster preached his religion. During the period of syncretism after the passing away of the prophet, Mithra became the most conspicuous angel of the Younger Avestan period. The longest Yasht which is eight times longer than the Yasht, composed in honor of Ahura Mazda, celebrates his greatness. He is the most masculine, exacting, implacable, and relentless of all Yazatas. Ahura Mazda has created him the most glorious of the spiritual Yazatas, as worthy of sacrifice and prayer as himself. The description of him in the Yasht that is dedicated in his honour gives a vivid picture of the character of the pre-Zoroastrian divinities that come to be worshipped in Iran. Mithra was the most eminent of the primitive Ahuras, as he was conjointly worshipped with Ahura Mazda.²⁰

According to the Avesta book Mithra is the strongest, the sturdiest, the most active, the swiftest and the most victorious. Ahura Mazda has created him the most glorious of all the spiritual Yazatas. The composer of the Yasht who sings to his favourite divinity applies to him the same honorific epithets as are applied to the godhead. Mithra is called omniscient;

²⁰ Dhalla, M.N., History of Zoroastrianism, P 183

however it is strictly speaking the epithet of Mazda alone. He is the greatest of Yazata as having a body shining like the moon, and face (*ainika*), as brilliant as Tishtryā. It is interesting to note that R̥gveda uses the corresponding Sanskrit form (*anika*), and says that Varunā's face is as shining as that of Agni. He is the strongest of the strong , the sturdiest of the sturdy , the most intelligent among the divinities , victorious ,glorious , heroic , and undeceivable one , deep , courageous , wealth-giving , propitiated when invoked , exalted , skilful , and a warrior of powerful arms , the leader of hosts , of a thousand devices , lordly ,ruling , the all-knowing one , the one good renowned having good form ,glorious , donor of boons and pasture at his will , the giver of good , having ten thousand spies ,heroic. He is ever afoot, watchful, valiant, having a dominating figure in the assembly, the cause of the waters to flow, one who listens to appeals, cause of the trees to grow, ruler over the districts full of devices, a creature of wisdom. He is the swiftest among the swift, generous among the generous, valiant among the valiant, chief among the chiefs of assembly. He is giver of increase, fatness, flock, son, life, felicity, joy, glory, kingdom, and piety. Mithra is highly merciful, foremost, and peerless. He is the protector and guardian of all creatures. He is the most fiend-smiting among all the Yazatas. He is both good and bad for men and nations. Peace and war between nations are from him. With his wide knowledge, he furthers the creations of Spenta Mainyu. According to the

ancient Iranian calendar the sixteenth day of an every month and the seventh month of a solar year are sacred to Mithra.²¹

2. Worship and Sacrifice unto Mithra

The worshippers of Mithra worship him as follows:

“For his brightness and glory, I will offer unto him a sacrifice worth being heard, namely; unto Mithra the lord of wide pastures.

We offer up libations unto Mithra the lord of pastures, who gives a happy dwelling and a good dwelling to the Aryan nations.

May he come to us for help; May he come to us for ease; May he come to us for joy; May he come to us for mercy; May he come to us for health;

May he come to us for victory; May he come to us for good conscience; May he come to us for bliss; ...”²²

“I will offer up libations unto him, the strong Yazata , the powerful Mithra , most beneficent to the creatures ; I will apply unto him with charity and prayer; I will offer up a sacrifice worth being heard unto Mithra the lord of wide pasture , with the Haoma juice and meat , with the Baresma , with wisdom of tongue with the holy spells, with the speech , with the deeds , with the libations , and with the rightly- spoken words .”²³

The chiefs of nations offer him sacrifice when they go to field of war against enemies:

²¹ Dhalla ,M.N, History of Zoroastrianism, PP184,185

²² The Zend Avesta , part II, P 120

²³ Ibid , P 121

“To Mithra the chiefs of nations offer up sacrifice, as they go to the field, against havocking hosts, against enemies coming in battle array, in the strife of conflicting nations”²⁴

The horsemen worship him for swiftness of their teams and health:

“ To Mithra the horsemen worship on the back of their horses , begging swiftness for their teams , health for their own bodies ,and that they may watch with full success to those who heat them, smite down their foes , and destroy at one stroke their adversaries , their enemies ,and those who hate them”²⁵

The worshipper sacrifices for him and says:

“Listen unto our sacrifice, O Mithra! Be thou pleased with our sacrifice, O Mithra! Come and sit at our sacrifice! Accept our libations! Accept them as they have been consecrated...

Grant us those boons which we beg of thee, O powerful god! in accordance with the words of revelation , namely ; riches , strength , and victory , good conscience and bliss, good fame and a good soul ; wisdom and the knowledge that gives happiness , the victorious strength given by Ahura ...

Grant that we, in good spirits and high spirit, exalted in joy and good spirits, may smite all our foes ...”²⁶

Mithra himself also cries unto Ahura Mazda and calls him as follows:

²⁴ Ibid , P 122

²⁵ The Zend Avesta , part II, P 122

²⁶ Ibid , P 128

“Who, with hands lifted up, ever cries unto Ahura Mazda, saying: I am the kind keeper of all creatures, I am the kind maintainer of all creatures; yet men worship me not with a sacrifice in which I am invoked by my own name, as they worship the other gods with sacrifice in which they are invoked by their own names. If men would worship me with a sacrifice in which I was invoked by my name, as they worship the other Yazatas with sacrifices in which they are invoked by their own names, then I would come to the faithful once at the appointed time; I would come in the appointed time with my beautiful, immortal life.”²⁷

So the pious man worships him with a sacrifice and invokes him by his own name. It is stated in the Avesta as follows:

“But the pious man, holding libations in his hands, does worship thee with a sacrifice, in which thou are invoked by thy own name, and with the proper words”²⁸

Further he says as follows:

“Listen unto our sacrifice, O Mithra! Be thou pleased with our sacrifice, O Mithra! Come and sit at our sacrifice! Accept our libations! Accept them as they have been consecrated...”²⁹

²⁷ The Zend Avesta, part II, PP 132,133

²⁸ Ibid P 133

²⁹ The Zend Avesta, part II, P 133

Some times Mithra considered as very angry god according to the Avesta as stated in the following:

“O! May we never fall across the rush of the angry lord, who goes and rushes from a thousand sides against his foe, he of ten thousand spies, the powerful, all- knowing, undeceivable god.”³⁰

Mithra is worshipped to keep the field and place as follows:

“May we keep our field, may we never be exiles from our field, exiles from our house, exiles from our borough, exiles from our town, exiles from our country”³¹

Mithra is invoked for help with many consecration and offerings as follows:

“I will pray unto thee for help, with many consecrations, with good consecrations of libations; with many offerings, with good offerings of libations, that we abiding in thee, may long inhabit a good abode, full of the riches that can be wished for.”³²

The worshipper hails to the Mithra and the person who offers him a sacrifice. Here Mithra as Varun□ a in the Vedas, who is farsighted and has thousand eyes, describes with thousand eyes in the following:

“Hail to Mithra, the lord of wide pasture, who has thousand eyes! Thou are worthy of sacrifice and prayer; may thou have sacrifice and prayer in the houses of man! Hail to the man who shall offer thee a sacrifice, with the holy wood in his hand, the Baresma in his hand, the holy meat in his

³⁰ The Zend Avesta , part II, P 137

³¹Ibid P 138

³²Ibid P 138

hand, the holy mortar in his hand, with his hands well- washed, with the mortar well- washed, with the bundles of Baresma tide up, the Haoma uplifted.”³³

Mithra in the Avesta like Mitra and Varun in the Vedas has the epithet “keeper”. So he keeps the worshippers in the material and spiritual world as follows:

“So may thou in both worlds, may thou keep us in both worlds, O Mithra, lord of wide pastures both in this material world and in the world of spirit, from the fiend of death, from fiend Aêshma (a demon), from the fiendish hordes, that lift up the spear of havoc, and from the onsets of Aêshma , wherein the evil-doing Aêshma rushes ... ”³⁴

He also is worshipped for giving swiftness to the teams, strength to the bodies and destroys the foes and adversaries:

“So may thou, O Mithra, lord of wide pastures! Give swiftness to our teams, strength to our own bodies, and that we may watch with full success those who hate us, smite down our foes, and destroy at one stroke our adversaries, our enemies and those who hate us.”³⁵

As Mitra and Varun in the Vedas; Mithra and Ahura together are also worshipped in the Avesta as high gods to come for help as stated in the following:

“May Mithra and Ahura the high gods, come to us for help, when the poniard lifts up its voice aloud, when the nostrils of the horses quiver,

³³ The Zend Avesta , part II P 142

³⁴ Ibid P 143

³⁵ Ibid P 143

when the string of the bows whistle and shoot sharp arrows; then the brood of those whose libations are hated fall smitten to the ground, with their hair torn of”.³⁶

And worshippers also offer sacrifice unto them as two great, imperishable and holy gods beside the stars, moon, sun and trees as follows:

“We sacrifice unto Mithra and Ahura, the two great gods, imperishable, the holy gods; and unto the stars, and the moon, and the sun, with the trees that yield up Baresma. We sacrifice unto Mithra, the lord of all countries”³⁷

According to the command of Ahura Mazda, offering up a sacrifice should be done by Spitama Zoroaster and his pupils as follows:

“Offer up a sacrifice unto Mithra, O Spitama! And order thy pupils to do the same.”³⁸

The worshipper of Ahura Mazda should offer a sacrifice for Mithra with small and black cattle and flying birds. As the epithets of Mitra and Varun in the Vedas; Mitra in the Avesta have been mentioned with the epithets strong, powerful, heavenly gods, foremost, watchful, glorious, having thousand eyes and thousands spies as stated in the following:

“Let the worshipper of Mazda sacrifice unto thee with small cattle, with black cattle, with flying birds, gliding, forward on wings.”³⁹

³⁶ The Zend Avesta, part II, P 149

³⁷ Ibid P 158

³⁸ Ibid P 150

³⁹ Ibid P 151

The sacrifice should be offered to the good Mithra who is the strong, heavenly god and victorious ...:

“I will offer up a sacrifice unto the good Mithra, O Spitama! Unto the strong, heavenly god, who is foremost, highly merciful, and peerless; whose house is above, a stout and strong warrior; victorious and armed with a well- fashioned weapon, watchful in darkness and undeceivable. He is the stoutest of the stoutest , he is the strongest of the strongest , he is the most intelligent among the gods , he is victorious and endowed with glory ; he has the thousand eyes , the ten thousand spies , the powerful , all-knowing , undeceivable god. Who, with his manifold knowledge, powerfully increases the creation of Spenta Mainyu, and is a well- created and greatest Yazata, self - shining like the moon, when he makes his own body; whose face is flashing with light like the face of the star Tishtryā (the name of a star and the rain-god in Avesta)?”⁴⁰

As Varuna sits on the strewn grass at the sacrifice, similarly the faithful devoutly invoke Mithra by his name with libations, and implore him to come and sit at the sacrifice, to listen to the invocation, to be pleased with it , to accept it , and to place it with love to their credit in paradise.⁴¹

Ahura Mazda himself offered a sacrifice unto him in the shining Garonmana. Zoroaster is asked to offer sacrifice unto Mithra and so are the Zoroastrian asked to sacrifice unto him with cattle and birds, along with

⁴⁰ Ibid PP 156,157

⁴¹ Dhalla ,M.N, History of Zoroastrianism ,P 190

Hoama and libations. The faithful who desires to drink the holy libations consecrated in honor of Mithra is required to undergo certain penance. He has to wash his body for three days and three nights and undergo thirty stripes, or he might wash his body for two days and two nights and undergo twenty stripes, as the occasion requires. Any one who has no knowledge of the ritual is prohibited from partaking of the sacred libation.⁴²

Mithra demands that his sacrifice shall be performed with devotion. Ahura Mazda says unto Zoroaster that if a sacrifice is offered unto Mithra by a holy and righteous priest, Mithra will be satisfied, and will straightway come to the dwelling of the supplicant. But if it is performed by an unholy priest, it is rejected, no matter how long has been the sacrifice, nor how many bundles of the sacred twigs are consecrated. Mithra promptly comes to help when he is satisfied. He brings sovereignty to him who has piously offered him libations, and gives him a good abode with desirable possessions. He is to be offered sacrifice around and within countries, in the above countries, under and before and behind countries.⁴³

3. Mithra's boons

He is constantly spoken of as he gives happy and joyful abode, to the Aryan people. Many indeed are the boons asked for from Mithra by his votaries, who always approach him with love, homage and sacrifice. He is generally invoked to come to the faithful one for help, freedom, joy, mercy, healing, victory, well-being, and sanctification. The master of the house,

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ibid

clan, town, and country invoke him for help, so do the poor when wronged, look to him for redress of their grievances. The husbandman solicits that rich pasture may never fail him. Horseman sacrifices unto him even from on horseback and beg swiftness for their teams, vigor for their bodies, and might for overthrowing their adversaries. Neither the spear of the foe nor his arrow hits the man whom Mithra helps, for he guards and protects man from behind and in front. Mithra further gives flocks of cattle male offspring, chariots, spacious mansions, and prosperity, he is therefore entreated to grant riches, courage, victory, good name and fame, felicity, wisdom, and strength to smite the adversaries. The worshipper prays that just as the sun, rising from beyond the Alborz mountain (in the north of Iran), reaches the height, so may he, with his ascending prayer, rise above the will of Angara Mainyu and approach Mithra. Mithra's help, it may be added, is invoked for both the worlds.⁴⁴

4. Mithra as the genius of the light

On the material side Mithra presides over light, especially over the light that radiates from the sun, with the radiance of which he is identical on the physical plane. As Varuna in the Vedas who sits in his mansion and looking all deeds in the similarly Mithra As harbinger of light and herald of the dawn, precedes the rising sun on the summits of mountains, and from there watches all Aryan settlements, nay more, even all the seven zones of the world. The great vault of heaven is therefore Mithra garment.

⁴⁴ Dhalla, M.N, History of Zoroastrianism, PP 190, 191

Ahura Mazda and the Amesha Spentas, being in one accord with the sun, have built up for Mithra a dwelling as wide as the earth in this material world, on the great mountain Haraiti Bareza(Alborz)⁴⁵ where neither night nor darkness , nor cold wind nor hot wind , nor sickness , impurity , death and clouds can ever reach . From this elysian abode Mithra surveys the whole universe at a glance. Sleepless and ever wakeful, he watches and spies the doing of man, like Vedic Mithra- Varun□ a as infallible sentinel of heaven .He has posted eight of his comrades as scouts on the celestial watch – towers to spy upon man’s doing. After the sun has set, Mithra traverses the world all around, and surveys all that is between earth and the heavens. Ahura Mazda consequently has ordained that Mithra should watch from on high over the entire moving world. The heat of Mithra, as a guardian genius in the celestial realm, superintends the vast expanse of the universe. Varun□ a has thousand eyes, and Mithra is constantly spoken of as having a thousand ears and ten thousand eyes. Nothing is secret from Mithra’s penetrating gaze. Mithra-Varun□ a have thousand –eyed spies, who descend from heaven and traverse the world, watching the doings of mankind. Mithra, as it has been seen, has ten thousand spies, who work as his messengers.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The name of the mountain in the north of Iran.

⁴⁶ Dhalla ,M.N, History of Zoroastrianism ,P 184

5. Mithra as the guardian of the contracts

Ahura Mazda enjoins upon Zoroaster not to break the contract that is entered into with the righteous or with the wicked, for Mithra stands for both the righteous and the wicked. In his role of genius of light he guards the sanctity of oaths, and the word of Mithra in the Avesta is frequently used as a common noun, meaning 'contract'. For that reason, he who violates the oath, with a believer, feels the visitations of the stern angel's wrath. The crime of the one who thus violates a contract is called *Mithra-druj* 'deceiving Mithra' such a criminal is heavenly punished, and his guilt falls upon the shoulder of his kinsman for years in next world, making them answerable for it by punishment. The ethics regarding man's family and kinsmen responsible for his action seems to be a relic of the primitive type of group morality.⁴⁷

6. Mithra as the Enemy of lie

Mithra in the Avesta is considered the biggest enemy of the lie and he kills the men who lie unto him : " He cuts all the limbs to pieces ,and mingles together with the earth ,the bones , hair , brains , and blood of men who have lied unto Mithra ."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Dhalla ,M.N, History of Zoroastrianism ,P 188

⁴⁸ The Zend Avesta , P 137

He is the keeper, protector and maintainer of the dwelling of those who don't lie unto him as follows:

“Thou are a keeper and protector of the dwelling of those who lie not; thou are the maintainer of those lie not”⁴⁹

Truth was a paramount virtue among the ancient Iranian. It was regarded as everything , it was religion .On this very account we see human evil collectively focused in the Avesta as the *druj* ‘lie’ which corresponds to *drauga* , in the old Persian Inscriptions of the Achamenian kings, a conception almost like that of the evil .⁵⁰

At very early date Mithra was styled the warder of truth. Light is synonymous with truth, as darkness is with falsehood. Mithra being primarily the lord of light, it was but a step from the physical to the moral sphere that he should be depicted as impersonating truth. Lying unto Mithra brings to the offender the sin of being a deceiver of Mithras. The faithful is exhorted never to lie, for Mithra is unforgiving toward liars. Sad is the abode wherein live those that lie unto Mithra, for they are childless, and even their cattle stray along the road shedding tears over their chins. Neither the lord of the house nor the lord of clan, nor the lord of town, nor the lord of the country should ever lie unto this celestial being. He is the protector and guardian of these lords, only so long as they lie not unto Mithra. If however, they commit such a sin, Mithra is offended and angry, and destroys house, clan, town, and the country, along with their master

⁴⁹ Ibid .P 139 .

⁵⁰ Dhalla ,M.N, History of Zoroastrianism ,P 187

and noble. Nor can these culprit lords escape him, for he overtake them, no matter how swiftly they may run. The man of little faith who thinks that he can evade Mithra and indulges in falsehood is mistaken: but Mithra thinks in his mind that were the evil thoughts, evil word, and evil deeds of the earthly man a hundred times worse, they would not rise as high as the good thoughts, good words and good deeds of the heavenly Mithra. Besides if the innate wisdom of the earthly man were a hundred times greater, it would not rise as high as the heavenly wisdom of the heavenly Mithra; or if the ears of the earthly man could hear a hundred times better, he would not hear so as well as the heavenly Mithra who with a thousand of his devices hears well and sees every man that tells lie. To such a one Mithra gives neither strength nor vigor and glory nor reward, but on the contrary , he inflicts dire punishment into the hearts of all such he strikes terror , taking away the strength of their arms , fleetness from their feet , the sight from their eyes , and the hearing from their ears . It is he who hurls down their head as he deals with them death. Mithra keeps back harm and death from him who lies unto him. Neither the wound of the well- sharpened spear nor that of the well- darted arrow gets harm to him whom Mithra comes to help⁵¹.

⁵¹ Dhalla ,M.N, History of Zoroastrianism ,P 187,188

7. Mithra rushes to his foes

According to the Mihir Yasht in Avesta Mithra rushes to his foes and in this sense he is same as the Verethraghna the god of victory in the Avesta:

“Who goes and rushes from a thousand sides against his foe ...

Before whom Verethraghna , made by Ahura , runs opposing the foes in the shape of a boar , a sharp- toothed boar, a sharp- jawed boar , that kills at one stroke , pursuing , wrathful , with a dripping face; strong , with iron feet, iron fore- paws , iron weapons, an iron tail , and iron jaws .

Who eagerly clinging to the fleeing foe, along with Manly Courage, smites the foe in battle... ”⁵²

He also is the enemy of malicious persons and those who are the killers of faithful men:

“Thou dashest in pieces the malice of the malicious, the malice of the men malice; dash thou in pieces the killers of faithful men!”⁵³

Further more, it is said about Mithra as follows:

“In his might , he ever brings to them falcon feathered arrows ,and when driving , he himself comes there ,where are the nations(who are) enemy to Mithra ; he first and foremost strikes blows with his club on the horse and his rider ; he causes fear and fright upon the horse and his rider.”⁵⁴

⁵² The Zend Avesta, part II, P 137

⁵³ Ibid P 138

⁵⁴ Ibid P 145

Mithra also is considered as war divinity due to this reason the warring nations invoked Mithra to help them before going to battle ; and the lord of hosts sides with that army which excels in offering sacrifice . When Mithra marches out amid the hostile armies on the battle field, he produces confusion into the camp of the enemy that has offended him , binds the hands of his offenders ,covers their eyesight, takes away their power of hearing , deprives their feet of movement , and breaks asunder their line of battle , striking terror in their entire array.

Though the enemy uses arrows and spears, swords and maces, they nevertheless miss the mark in every case, and, all the while, Mithra rushes destructively from a thousand direction against the foes. The adversaries who have lied unto him he kills by fifties and hundred, by hundred and thousands, by thousands and tens thousands, by tens of thousands and myriads. Confusing their mind, he shatters their limbs and breaks their bones asunder, at the same time as he throws down their heads he enters the battlefield in person, and levels his club at both the horse and the rider⁵⁵.

8. Mithra's place

According to Avesta, Ahura Mazda has built up a dwelling on the Haraiti Berezaiti Mountain:

“For whom the Maker, Ahura Mazda, Has built up a dwelling on the Haraiti Bareza , the bright mountain around which the many stars revolve ,

⁵⁵ Dhalla ,M.N, History of Zoroastrianism ,PP 188,189

where comes neither night nor darkness , no cold wind and no hot wind , no deathful sickness , no uncleanness made by Daêvas, and the clouds cannot reach up unto the Haraiti Bareza .

A dwelling that all the Amesha- Spentas in one accord with the sun, made for him in the fullness of faith of a devoted heart , and he surveys the whole of the material world from the Haraiti Bareza ”⁵⁶

9. Mithra’s weapon

Mithra’s weapon is a club with a hundred knots and hundred edges that rushes forwards and falls man down. This weapon is the strangest and most victorious of all weapons:

“Swinging in his hands a club with a hundred knots, a hundred edges, that rushes forwards and fall men down; a club cast out of red brass, of strong, golden brass; the strongest of all weapons, the most victorious of all weapons”⁵⁷

10. Mithra’s Chariot

Mithra the lord of pastures has a beautiful chariot which he drives forward from the shining Garothmān⁵⁸ . This chariot is ever - swift, adorned with all sorts of ornaments, and made of gold. According to Avesta (Mihir Yasht) the description of this chariot is as follows:

“Four stallions draw that chariot, all of the same white colour, living on heavenly food and undying. The hoofs of their fore –feet are shod with

⁵⁶ The Zend Avesta , part II , P 132

⁵⁷ Ibid, P144

⁵⁸ Garothmān, is the place of Ahura Mazda. It is called the place of unlimited light (Afifi , Rahim;

Mythology and culture of Iran, P 605) . Garothmān of Parsis; literary means ‘the house of Songs (The Zend Avesta, part I , P 214) .

gold, the hoofs of their hind – feet are shod with silver; all are yoked to the same pole, and wear the yoke and the cross-beams of the yoke ...”⁵⁹

At his right hand drives Rashnu –Razista⁶⁰ (the genius of truth), at his left hand Kista ⁶¹(Chistā, the genius of knowledge), close by him drives the strong thought of wise man, behind him is Ātar (the genius of fire in Avesta):

“At his (Mithra) right hand drives Rashnu - Razista, the most beneficent and most well- shaped. At his left hand drives the most upright Kista (Chistā), the holy one, bearing libations in her hands, clothed with white clothes, and white herself.

Close by Mithra drives the strong cursing thought of the wise man, opposing foes in the shape of a boar, a sharp- toothed he-boar, a sharp-jawed boar, that kills an enemy at one stroke, pursuing, wrathful, with dripping face, strong and swift to run, and rushing all around.

Behind him drives Ātar, all in a blaze, and the awful kingly Glory”⁶²

On the sides of chariot of Mithra there are one thousand bows, well-made one thousand vulture –feathered, one thousand spears well- made and sharp- piercing, one thousand steel hammers , two-edged , well- made , one thousand swords , two edged , well made , one thousand maces of iron

⁵⁹ The Zend Avesta , part II ,P 152

⁶⁰ Rashnu –Razista , the truest true , is the genius of truth ; he is the three judges of departed , with Mithra and Sraosha ; he holds the balance in which the deeds of man are weighed after their death. (The Zend Avesta , part II ,P 168)

⁶¹ Kista (Chistā or Chisti) is the name of the genius of knowledge (Afifi , Rahim ; Mythology and culture of Iran, P 495). In the Avesta it means the religious knowledge, the knowledge of what leads to bliss (The Zend Avesta part II P 264).

⁶² The Zend Avesta part II PP 152,153.

, well- made and a beautiful well- falling club with hundred knots and hundred edges.

On a side of the chariot of Mithra , the lord of wide pasture , stand a thousand bows well- made , with string of cow gut ; they go through the heavenly space , they fall though the heavenly space upon the skulls of the Daêvas.

On a side of the chariot of Mithra, the lord of wide pasture, stand a thousand vultures – feathered arrows, with a golden moth, with a horn shaft, with a brass tail, and well- made. They go through the heavenly space; they fall through the heavenly space upon the skulls of the Daêvas.

On a side of the chariot of Mithra, the lord of wide pasture, stand a thousand spears well- made and sharp- piercing. They go through the heavenly space; they fall through the heavenly space upon the skulls of the Daêvas.

On a side of the chariot of Mithra, the lord of wide pasture, stand a thousand steel hammers, two-edged, well- made. They go through heavenly space; they fall through the heavenly space upon the skulls of the Daêvas.

On a side of the chariot of Mithra, the lord of wide pasture, stand a thousand swords, two-edged, well- made. They go through heavenly space; they fall through the heavenly space upon the skulls of the Daêvas.

On a side of the chariot of Mithra, the lord of wide pasture, stand a thousand maces of iron, two-edged, well- made. They go through heavenly space; they fall through the heavenly space upon the skulls of the Daêvas.

On a side of the chariot of Mithra, the lord of wide pasture, stand a beautiful well- falling club, with hundred knots, a hundred edges, that rushes forward and fall men down; a club cast out of red brass, of strong, golden brass; the strongest of all weapons. It goes through the heavenly space; it falls through the heavenly space upon the skulls of the Daêvas.”⁶³

11. Mithra and other Geniuses

In the Avesta the name of Mithra has been mentioned with the names of other geniuses and some times there are some relationships between them.

Mithra before Verethraghna (the genius of Victory in the Avesta) runs opposing the foes as follows:

“Before whom Verethraghna , made by Ahura , runs opposing the foes in the shape of a boar , a sharp- toothed he boar, a sharp- jawed boar , that kills at one stroke , pursuing , wrathful , with a dripping face; strong , with iron feet, iron fore- paws , iron weapons, an iron tail , and iron jaws .”⁶⁴

Mithra made a dwelling for Rashnu as follows:

“Who made a dwelling for Rashnu (the genius of truth in the Avesta), and whom Rashnu gave all his soul for long friendship”⁶⁵

⁶³The Zend Avesta part II PP 154,155

⁶⁴ Ibid, P 137

⁶⁵ Ibid P 139

The Maker Ahura Mazda gave him a thousand senses and ten thousand eyes to see. With those eyes and those senses, he watches the man who injures and the man who lies unto him⁶⁶

Haoma also offered up for him a sacrifice on the highest mountain Haraiti Bareza as in the following:

“The enlivening , healing , fair , lordly , golden-eyed Haoma offers up a sacrifice on the highest of the heights , on the Haraiti Bareza , he the undefiled to one undefiled , with undefiled Baresma, undefiled libations, and undefiled word ”⁶⁷

The holy Ahura Mazda has established him as a priest, quick in performing the sacrifice and loud in song in the following:

“Whom the holy Ahura Mazda has established as a priest, quick in performing the sacrifice and loud in song. He performed the sacrifice with the loud voice, as a priest quick in sacrifice and loud in song, a priest to Ahura Mazda, a priest to Amesha- Spentas. His voice reached up to the sky, went over the earth all around, went over the seven countries”⁶⁸

He is considered as the first person who lifted up Haoma. Ahura Mazda as well as Amesha- Spentas longed for him for well- shaped body of him:

“(He) who first lifted up Haoma, in mortar inlaid with stars and made of a heavenly substance. Ahura Mazda longed for him, the Amesha- Spentas

⁶⁶ Ibid P 140

⁶⁷ The Zend Avesta part II, P 142

⁶⁸ Ibid

longed for him, for well- shaped body of him, whom the swift- horsed sun awakes for prayer from afar”⁶⁹

At the right hand of Mithra drives Sraosha⁷⁰ and at his left hand drives Rashnu and on all sides drives the waters, plants, and the Fravashis⁷¹ of the faithful.”⁷²

But Among those who work in unison with Mithra, Ahura Mazda stand first; Mithra -Ahura are invoked together as Couple. Their union is pre-Zoroastrian and corresponds to the Vedic Mithra -Varun □ ā⁷³.

In the end of this part these questions arise, whether Mitra in the Vedas is the same Mithra in the Avesta and inscriptions of Achamenian kings? If the answer is yes, what are the similarities and dissimilarities of the character of Mithra in these three sources?

In fact Mitra in the Vedas is the same Mithra in the Avesta and inscriptions of Achamenian kings. But there are some notes as follows:

1- Mithra alone is one of the most important Yazatas in the Avesta book. The longest Yasht which is eight times longer than the Yasht is composed in honor of Ahura Mazda that celebrates his greatness.

While in the Vedas only one single hymn of R □ gvedais addressed

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Sraosha is the priest god ; he first tied the Baresma into bundles and performs sacrifice to Ahura ; he first sang the holy hymns (The Zend Avesta Part I, Introduction IV, P IXX)

⁷¹ The Fravashi was independent of the circumstance of life or death, an immortal part of the individual which existed before man and outlived him.

⁷² The Zend Avesta, part II, P 137

⁷³ Dhalla ,M.N, History of Zoroastrianism ,P 184

to him alone. But there are many hymns which in Mitra is described accompanied with Varun□ a

- 2- The somewhat scanty evidence of the Veda showing that Mitra is a solar deity which is corroborated by the Avesta and Persian religions in general. Here Mitra is undoubtedly a sun-god or a god of light specially connected with the sun.
- 3- The etymology of the name of Mitra is uncertain. However, as the word also means 'friend' in the R□ gveda and the kindly nature of the god is often referred to in the Veda, Mitra even appears as the god of peace, while in the Avesta Mithra is on the ethical side of his character the guardian of faithfulness, it must have originally signified 'ally' or 'friend' and has been applied to the sun-god his aspect of a beneficent power of nature.
- 4- In the Avesta Mithra is called omniscient, which is strictly speaking the epithet of Mazda alone in the Avesta and Varun□ a in the Vedas.
- 5- There are some epithets for Mithra in the Avesta which are the epithets of Mitra Varun□ a in the Vedas like ; strong , powerful , heavenly gods, foremost , watchful , glorious , having thousand senses, thousand eyes and thousands spies.
- 6- There are some attributes of Mithra in the Avesta which are very close to the Verethraghna the genius of victory in the Avesta for examples :

- The victory making, the army- governing, endowed with thousand senses
 - Power wielding and power – possessing
 - Who sets the battle and stands against armies in battle, break asunder the lines arrayed.
 - He throws terror upon the centre of the havocking host and bring them distress and fear.
- 7- Mithra in the Avesta is the biggest enemy of the person who lie unto him. This epithet of Mithra has been mentioned in the Avesta repeatedly.
- 8- Sometimes he has been mentioned with the name of other genius in Avesta like Verethraghna and Rashnu (the genius of truth in the Avesta)
- 9- But Among those who work in unison with Mithra, Ahura Mazda stands first; Mithra -Ahura are invoked together as dual. Their union is pre- Zoroastrian and corresponds to the Vedic Mitra - Varun□ a
- 10- In the Avesta (Mihir Yasht) Mithra and Ahura together are worshipped as high gods to come for help similarly in the Vedas Mithra and Varun□ aare invoked together.
- 11- The name of Mithra has been also mentioned in the Achamenian kings inscriptions beside the name of Ahura Mazda and Anāhita (goddess of Water).There are some epithets for Mithra and Ahura

Mazda in these inscriptions which agree with epithets of Ahura Mazda in the Avesta and Mitra Varuna in the Vedas.

12- Mitra is the greatest of Yazatas with body shining like the moon, and face (ainika), as brilliant as Tishtryā (the genius of rain in the Avesta). It is interesting to note that Rigveda uses the corresponding Sanskrit form (anika), and says that Varuna's face is as shining as that of Agni.

13- As Varuna sits on the strewn grass at the sacrifice, similarly the faithful devoutly invoke Mithra by his name with libations, and implore him to come and sit at the sacrifice, to listen to the invocation, to be pleased with it, to accept it, and to place it with love to their credit in paradise.