Title: Comparative Study of Vedas and Ancient Iran Worships

1. Introduction

According to the scholars’ opinion the indo- Iranian people have lived in the Asia Minor or the areas of Ural Sea in Russia or worth Poe areas. They migrated to earn their living and dispersed in the various countries accompanied by their language and civilization. These people in process of the time completed their language and expanded it. In the beginning of the period of migration some group of indo- Iranian people migrated to Iran and some other people came to the middle Asia. This group after passing from crossing of North-Western of Hidnukush Mountains arrived to “Sapta- Sindhu land” namely “Seven Rivers land” in Punjab. The people who dwell in India were called “Āryan” and they who came to the Iranian Plateau were called “Ariyān” or “Aeryan”. Both of them mean “noble” as the name of Iran has been derived from this root.

It is evident which the inhabitants of Iran and India in spite of having one origin, they were gradually transformed in the new environment and generated two different civilization from the basis of ancient civilization of Asia. Both of them worship the nature elements, because of their primary civilization. They sang to worship of the manifestation of the nature. Indian Mantras have retained in the form of Veda books which are knowledge books and Iranian Gāthā which are base of Avesta, has been sung in description of ancient Iranian Gods.

As per testimony of researchers the oldest documentary history of religions in India begins with the entry of Aryans to India through north west around mid-millennium B.C. Knowledgeable scholars unanimously believe that a holy religious complex called Vedas has accompanied by ancient Aryans which constitute the basis of all formations and later transformations of Hinduism. That this holey complex has been written on old language of Sanskrit which has four parts including, R̥gveda, Sāmaveda, Yajurveda and Atharva Veda.
Simultaneously with entry of Aryans to the land of India, the land of Iran didn’t remain unaffected from their invasion either, since a branch of this clan invaded towards south of Iran and took deserts of plateau of Iran under hooves of their horses. The branch of Aryan which ultimately divided, one towards east (India) and another to west (Iran) again tended to south and scattered in deserts of those two countries.

Passage of time and days brought much changes in their languages, traditions and their rituals and in connection with religion and belief caused two separate beliefs one “Hinduism” and another “Zoroastrian” between these two tribes of Aryan background in which still traces of the same basis and root of those group of people are explicitly visible and evident in their languages, beliefs and methods.

Having cast a transient glance at religious and cultural texts of Iranians and Indians in ancient times we conclude that these two ancient clans have had religious and cultural commonalities, in matter of worship and adoration of Gods in particular. As it follows in this research a great number of these Gods are with the same name and in common which sometimes with similar methods and sometimes with quite different ones and along with peculiar rituals and traditions have been worshipped.

So According to the names or characters of the gods or Yazatas which are mentioned in the Veda and Avesta, Varunā can be compared with Ahura Mazda; Mītra and Mithra; Sūrya and Khorshid( Sun) ; Indra and Verethraghna( Genius of Victory) or in some aspect with Tishtryā( Genius of rain) ; Soma and Haoma ; Chandra and Maongha( Moon ) ; Dyaus and Asmana( Sky ); Prithivī and Zamiyād( Earth) ; Vāyu and Vāyu(Wind), Agni and Āzar( Fire) ; Sarasvatī and Ardvi-Sura Anāhita( the Goddess of waters) ; and Apām Napāt in the Veda and Avesta.
2. The Vedas and Avesta

The affinity of the oldest form of the Avestan language with the dialect of Vedas is so great in syntax, vocabulary, diction, meter and general poetic style that by the mere application of phonetic laws whole Avestan stanzas may be translated word by word in to Vedic, so as to produce verses correct, not only in form but in poetic spirit. The affinity in domain of mythology is by no means so great. For the religion reform of Zoroaster brought about a very considerable displacement and transformation of mythical conception. If therefore, we possessed Avestan literature as old as that Rigveda, the approximation would have been in this respect. Still, the agreement in detail, in mythology no less much greater than in cult, are surprisingly numerous.

3. Importance of the study

Thinkers all over the world are concerned with the self understanding of man. Man wants to know about his own history. In the light of this history he determined his own destiny.

There are many reasons for comparative study:

- One good reason for a comparative study is that a thought structure is reached which will stand against human conflict, religion wars and communal tension. Most probably this is a real fear in the mind of the modernists.

- A study of different faith will show us the common acceptable point found in them, which till now might have been only dimly noticed.

- A study of various religions may serve to enrich and deepen ones insight in to ones own religion.

- A study of religions may cross-fertilized religion, leading to an amalgam of religion in sight or might give rise to newer form of religion.

But my opinion for comparative study of the faith of these two great society
Namely, Iranian and Indian in the ancient era are as follows:

- Clarifying background of some of cultural and religious commonalities of Indians and Iranians.

- Contribution to unification, and development of Indo-Iran nation’s relationship through identification of racial and religious common background in ancient era.

- Such study may help to understand both Iranian and Indian cultures, in relation with each other.

4. **Method of research**

The method of research is comparative and is by library method but the comparison of the faith of these two great ancient societies has been done in two main fields namely, first in linguistic aspects and second compare the character and qualities of deities. In the first field I try to mention the gods by same names or little bit changed and then compare them in both aspects for example: Vāyu in Vedas and Vāyu in Avesta; Soma and Haoma; Āpah and Āpi or Āp; Mitra and Mithra; Apām Napāt in Vedas and Avesta.

In the second field beside the comparison of the name of the gods I tried to compare their characters to distinguish their similarities and dissimilarities of their qualities.

This field of the study is very important because there are many gods in Veda and Avesta which their names are not same but totally different names, but their duties and some qualities are almost same or very near together for example: Agni in the Vedas and Ātar or Āzar(fire) in the Avesta; Varun and Ahura Mazda; Chandra and Maongha(moon); Indra and Verethraghna (genius of Victory), Sūrya and Hvarexšaeta or Khorshid (Sun); Dyaus and Asmana (sky) Prithiand Zamiyād (The earth).
5. Chapterization

This research work has been divided in the five chapters:

Chapter I  Introduction

This chapter has discussed about original place of the Indo- Aryan people and their migration toward Iran and India and finally the formation of Vedas and Avesta hymns in these two great Aryan tribes. Then in the separate sub-topic namely “the Vedas and Avesta” I have discussed about some affinity of the oldest form of Avestan language with dialect of Vedas which is so great in syntax, vocabulary, diction, meter and general poetic style, so that according to the opinion of the scholars whole Avestan stanzas may be translated word by word in to Vedic stanza.

In another part the researcher explains about the four Vedas and the main gods of the Vedas and then he introduces the Avesta book, Amesha spends and the main Yazata (geniuses) in the Avesta.

Discussion about importance of study, method of research and explanation about Classification of the chapters of this work is the other parts of chapter I.

Chapter II  Varunā and Ahura Mazda, Mitra and Mithra, Sun

This chapter has three sub-topics. The first sub-topic discussed about the two great gods namely; Varunā and Ahura Mazda, and compares their qualities and attributes together. Because in fact Varunā goes back to the Indo-Iranian period and Ahura Mazda in the Avesta agree with him in character thought not in name. Second sub-topic explains about Mitra and Mithra and third sub-topic is about Sun which is called “Sūrya” in the Vedas and “Hvarexšaeta” (khorshid) in the Avesta.
Chapter III  Indra and Verethraghna and Tishtryā, Soma and Haoma, Moon

This chapter has three sub-topics. The first one discusses about Indra and Verethraghna (Genius of Victory) and Tishtryā (Genius of rain) in the Avesta. In fact some attributes and qualities of Indra can be compared with these two Geniuses of the Avesta. According to the Vedas the Soma is the sources of Indra’s power to fight with the demons and enemies of the gods, so the second sub-topic of this chapter discusses about Soma and Haoma (the Avestan form of Soma) and compare them together. In the post Vedic literature Soma is placed instead of Moon, so due to this reason, the third sub-topic belongs to the Moon which is called as “Chandra” in the Vedas and “Maongha” (Māh) in the Avesta.

Chapter IV  Sky, Earth, Fire, Wind and Waters

The Elements are very important in the ancient Indian and Iranian literature, however the numbers of these elements are different, because according to the Indian literature there are five Elements namely; Sky, Earth, Fire, Wind and Waters but according to the Iranian literature except the Sky, the remaining namely Earth, Fire Wind and Waters are considered as Four Elements. So the first sub-topic discusses about the Sky and Earth which are called Dyaus and Prithivī in the Vedas; and Asmana (Āsmān) and Zamiyād or Zama Yazata (Genius of the Earth) in the Avesta. Second sub-topic is about Fire namely; Agni in the Vedas and Āzar in the Avesta. Third one belongs to the Vāyu and Vayu (Wind) and fourth sub-topic belongs to the Waters. In this part Sarasvatī and Anāhita (the goddess of water in the Avesta) have been compared together. The last sub-topic explains about Apām Napāt who is the son or the grand son of waters in the Vedas and Avesta.

Chapter V:  Observation and Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has mentioned the summery of some similarities and dissimilarities of Vedic gods, ancient Iranian gods and Avesta Yazatas together however many of this points have been discussed in the concern chapters.
There are many common characters, similarities and dissimilarities of Vedic gods, Ancient Iranian gods and Avesta Yazatas. Some of important points are mentioned as follows:

1- In fact Varuna goes back to the Indo-Iranian period for the Ahura Mazda in the Avesta agrees with him in character through not in name.

2- Varuna and Mitra are considered in the top of Ādityas and they are Universal Monarch and noble Lord among the gods, similarly Ahura Mazda is on the top of all Amesha Spentas and Yazata (Geniuses) in the Avesta and is the lord of Wisdom the greatest of the divinities.

3- Varuna is also a selfdependent ruler similarly Ahura Mazda is the absolute ruler. In the Vedas the epithet asura is connected with Varuna alone or accompanied by Mitra similarly in the Avesta the epithet Ahura is applied for Ahura Mazda.

4- Varuna is omniscient; similarly Ahura Mazda is the Mazda (the all-knowing) and all-pervading.

5- Mithra in the Avesta is the biggest enemy of the person who lies unto him. This epithet of Mithra has been mentioned in the Avesta repeatedly.

6- 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.

7- Sun in both sources namely, in the Vedas as well as Avesta is important, because in the Rgveda ten entire hymns are devoted to the celebration of Sūrya and eleven hymns to Savitr. In the Avesta, also one Čyaķst namely “Khorshid Yasht” and one prayer “Khorshid Nyāyish” belong to him. The Greek historian reports, sun was respected by ancient Iranian people.
8- In the Rigveda the sun is considered as the eye of Mitra and Varuna, similarly the Avestan texts call the sun as the eye of Ahura Mazda.

9- The name of Indra as a great god has been mentioned many times in the Vedas but this name occurs in Avesta in the form of Indra or Andar as one of the demons only two times who is against of Amesha Spenta Urdibehisht and his business is that he constrains the thought of creators from the virtue.

10- Indra’s most distinctive epithet in Rigveda is Vrātrahan “the slayer of Vrātra. Its Avestan corresponding word is Verethraghna which however is not used as an epithet of some gods, but it is the name of a powerful god.

11- Considering that Indra in the Veda is connected with the rain and fighting with the Vrātra (demon of drought) so in this view, he can be compared with the Tishtryā in Avesta (god of rain) and his fighting with Apoasha (Demon of drought).

12- According to Avesta there are ten incarnation for Verethraghna while such incarnations have not mentioned for Indra but may some kind of these incarnations have been appeared in god Vishnu in later period who was the helper of Indra to kill Vrātra in the Vedic period.

13- Soma in the Vedas is called as Haoma in the Avesta. Soma in the Vedic literature and Haoma in the ancient Iranian literature have very great significance in the religious rituals.

14- Both of them namely; Soma and Haoma are considered as “god” as well as “plant”. And both of them as plant are found in the mountains.

15- However Soma in the Vedas is offered for all gods, but among the gods Indra has very prominent role to drink Soma. He drinks Soma to fight with the Vrātra “demon of drought”. But in the Avesta there is no god such as Indra, who has especial role to drink Haoma, and it is offered to all gods equally.
16- Soma in the Vedas is immortal and divine drink which the gods drink it for immortality similarly all over the Avesta book; the Haoma plant and God of Haoma have been mentioned as one who “drives death afar”.

17- This point is very interesting about Haoma that appears in Firdausi’s Shāhnāme as worshipper who worships in the mountains; whereas Soma in Vedas and Haoma Avesta appear as plants which grows up in the mountains. He is shown as strong person as much as he can capture the biggest enemy of Iran, namely Afrāsyāb and he is shown in the Vedas and Avesta as a powerful warlike character and as a strong liquid which is used in the religious ceremonies.

18- Though the moon, apart from its connection with Soma, has not prominent role in the Vedic literature; but in the Avesta it is very important.

19- Moon in the Vedas is an origin of fertility and influences on the Vegetation, similarly in the Avesta, when it warm-up with its golden light, the plants grow up from the earth.

20- According to the Vedas the demon Vṛ̥tra dwells in the sky which Indra fights against him for rain while in the Avesta the heavy duty of the Sky is imprison the Ahriman and demons. And the god Asmana (Sky) guards the sky which the Ahriman doesn’t run away.

21- Some time the Earth is described by the same feature and qualities in the Avesta and Vedas, but her description in Vedas especially in Atharva Veda is much more in the Avesta.

22- The name of Vāyu has been mentioned in Vedas with long /ā/ while in Avesta it is with short (a) namely / Vayu /. However, this name has been mentioned in the Pahlavi texts, as Vayu, Veyu, Vāy and Andarvāy.
23- In the Vedas there is only one kind of Vāyu while in the Avesta there are two kinds of Vayu, the good Vayu which is the space which is connected to paradise world (Ahura Mazda world) and the bad Vayu, the space which is connected to darkness world (Ahriman world).

24- In the Vedas the most important role of the Agni is mediator between people and the Gods and who carries up the prayer of the man to the sky. There is the role of fire in Ancient Iran as Third Dariush has supplicated in front of the Sun, Mithra, and Āzar (Fire genius) to enable his army to defeat Alexander.

25- Fire is one who received the oblation for the gods; In the Vedas in the form of pure ghee; in the Ancient Iran in the form of dry and sweet smelling sticks and some times, selected pieces of meat and according to Firdausi’s Shāhnāme in the form valuable jewels.

26- The word water is called as “Āpah” in Vedas and Āpî Āp in Avesta. There are many similarities between the qualities of Waters and Sarasvatī in Rāgveda with water and Anāhita in the Avesta and Iranian mythology.

27- Apām-Napāt is very old deity who is originally belonging to the Indo-Iranian period and he was praising by Aryan people. The name of Apām-Napāt has been mentioned in the Rāgveda and the Avesta as well. In both sources he is son of waters but in Avesta he also is the guardian of waters who divided waters in to the countries. In Rāgveda three divine females are being surrounded him nourishes him while in Avesta he is the lord of females and invoked by them.

    In fact such study may help to understand both ancient Indian and Iranian believes and culture relation with each other, so the aforementioned points may be able to improve this aim. I hope this study clarifies the background of some of the cultural and religious communalities of Indians and Iranians and contributes to
unification and development of Indian and Iranian relationship in present time. The researcher has studied some aspects of Indian and Iranian Mythology. There are many other aspects that can be studied in further researches. This research may be as an example for the researchers who desire to study about the background of these two great nations.

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