Connection of Mehr, Haft-Khaan-e Rostam and Haft shahr-e Eshgh-e Attar rituals

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INTRODUCTION

We may refer to the mystical journeys rooted in the ideas of the ancients studying ancient Persian rites and rituals based on signs and literature. Spiritual progress is the description of spiritual gifts where the seeker gets rid of temptations of the flesh and the earthly impurities through their sincere efforts and with the guidance of a Moshrad to achieve salvation. Spiritual gifts, in fact, are other appearances of the human spiritual journey of seeking perfection. Regardless of Quran roots and religious sources of spiritual gifts of Islamic mysticism, we reach to pre-Islamic roots - rituals their immediate impact in the formation and evolution of Islamic Sufism cannot be neglected.

Mithraism is of the mysterious rituals of Aryan before Zoroastrianism. Mithra at the ancient belief is the representative of Ahura Mazda and spiritual journey leader to the kingdom of heaven. Spiritual progress in Mithraism constitutes passing through seven grades of initiation for ultimate truth. Dr. Kazazi regarding the effect of Mithraic Mysteries believes: “the reflection of Mithraic seven grades of initiation has created Seven Labors of Rostam in heroic legends and seven path of tariqa in dervish ritual” [13].

Epic poems are the great contexts to reflect the rituals, mythology and ancient religions their structures may be considered the battle between good and evil or Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. Poems dealt with various forms of ritual battles are shown in many cases covered by nemesis and expanding the territory of government.

Initiation ritual is the oldest behavioral pattern faced with many developments and transformations into a variety of practices and ideas with religious roots and customs. According to ancient traditions of Indo-Europeans, it was inevitable for any youth to pass seven labors; based an ancient pattern [7]. One of the most famous examples of initiation ritual in Iran accounts is Haft Khan-e- Rostam (Seven Labors of Rostam).

Heroic saga was replaced with Mystical epic and after the Mongol and the Tartars invasions in Iran. Mystical epic hero who dreams of immortality walks in a difficult deadly path of extinction on God to reach the God. He is the enemy is demon or damned soul armed with worldly attachments. The hero leaves behind the bloody Haft Shahr Eshgh as a seven-Khan, to achieve his high goal. Dr. Kazazi: “Haft Shahr Eshgh” or “Haft Vadiye Tariqa” in the Dervish rituals and the schools of Mysticism may be a reflection of the seven labors by Heroes” [13]. The most obvious mystical epic in a form seven paths or seven grades or so to speak, in the literature is “Haft Shahr Eshgh” in “The Conference of the Birds” by Attar.

Dr. Kazazi has studied the links among Haft Zinehaye Mehri (Seven Grades of Initiation), Haft Khan-e-Rostam (Seven Labors of Rostam) and Haft Shahr Eshgh by Attar in the second volume of “Name-e- Bastan”.

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He believes that "if we measure the individual symbols in each grades of initiation, they do not seem so alienated from each other with no link can be found among them." [13].

This paper aims to find common links among Haft Zinehaye Mehri (Seven Grades of Initiation), Haft Khan-e- Rostam (Seven Labors of Rostam) and Haft Shahre Eshghy by Attar. These three themes each link with a specific area, (ritual, epic, mystic), but there are evidences recovered traces of continuity between them as a reflection of the Indo-European ritual. This bond can be found in Haft Zinehaye Mehri and Haft Khan-e-Rostam in the symbolic roles by myths. In this study, what is the similarity and consensus may be the results due to the effectiveness, or the sameness of the theme. However, similarity and consensus do not mean that the three are of the same essence.

*The sacredness of the number seven in ancient Iran:*

In ancient times, the goal of science including computation was to discover the mystery of existence and creation. The numbers, although have displayed quantities also indicated quality. Each number has dynamicity, context, and the specific role with a quality in the entire system of numbers, and this created numbers philosophy.

Some believe “the number represents the fundamental structure of the Universe. A Pythagorean text reads the number is the guide and mentor of human thought. The universe remained blurred and vague in case of absence of this power in the world, and we would not have lived in a world of facts but in a world of despair and delusion. We only and only can understand the meaning of the world in the realm of numbers.” [12].

The Aryans horoscope introduced the number seven: “The number seven symbolizes the essence of devotion, ethics, illumination and compassion, purity and brightness, the pure essence of Creator, the creation of the universe and spirituality. The magic number seven is along with mobility of the universe and ends in the victory of wisdom.” [9].

The number seven is sacred and important in Mithras ritual and the rites of the religion that are a sort of initiation ritual is based on the number seven, which is certainly rests, emanating from the mindset that the seven planets influence human character and action. So on each of the seven rites of the faith there is a planet guardian. “Each of Seven Grades of Initiation seekers must have passed is a symbol of the spirit through the seven heavens to the abode of light. And this apparently is the introduction to the Mystical union with the divine authority.” [6].

*Haft Zinehaye Mehri (Seven Grades of Initiation):*

“There were seven grades of initiation into the mysteries of Mithras, in ascending order of importance the initiatory grades were first, corax, it also called Courier; second, cryfios or cryptus, covered or hidden; third, Miles, soldier ; forth Leo; fifth, parsis / perses; sixth, Heliodro mas, the sun; seventh, pater or paterpattran, father or fathers. It should be noted that the Mithra followers ritual language was the Greek language and the Greek words used in naming the seven grades.” [5] there is no difference among researchers about the hierarchy of Seven Grades of Initiation other than the second, some researchers believe in “Nymphobus” rather than cryfios (covered) which was of the chosen wife.

*Haft Khan-e- Rostam:*

According to Ferdowsi in Shahnameh of, Kay Kāvus the stubborn Kayani king when drunk at debauchery was deceived by song played and sang a Mazandarani song decided to conquer Mazandaran, he said:

Man Az Jam O Zahak O Az Kay Qobād
Fozonam Be Bakht O Be Farr O Be Dad

[11]

The elders had warned him of this but Kay Kāvus did not give up . He heads to Mazandaran, and to the command of Mazandaran King, “Div-e Sepid” rushes to confront him and his expedition to Mazandaran fails, and the army are captured by the Div in the dark. Zal hears the news and he sends Rostam to Mazandaran. Zal tells him: There are two ways to go to Mazandaran: one is long and safe, the other is short but dangerous. Zal encourages Rostam to choose the risky path that is short. Rostam prepares himself and associated with Rakhs heads to Mazandaran. In this trip he faces with seven tough labors: first labor: to fight the lion; second labor: thirst and heat; third labor: dealing with monstrous dragon; forth labor: dealing with magic woman; fifth labor: dealing with Olad; sixth labor: killing the demon Arzang Div; seventh labor: killing “Div-e Sepid” the White Demon.

*Haft Shahre Eshghy Attar in the Conference of the Birds:*

The term "Haft Vadiye Tariqa," which has been recognized by the majority tribes and sects of Sofia represents the evolution of man; i.e. humans, migrated during an inward and spiritual journey change in stages and this changes form the whole nature of man. Attar classifies the mystical gifts in seven stages: quest, love, knowledge, self-sufficiency, unity, bewilderment and poverty and inexistence.
The Link among Haft Zinehaye Mehri (Seven Grades of Initiation), Haft Khan-e- Rostam (Seven Labors of Rostam) and Haft Shahre Eshgh by Attar:

1- The link among raven, killing the lion and quest:

This step in all three rituals can be interpreted as meant to live life and be renewed. Raven in Mithraism conveys the message of God’s to Mithras to slay a bull. When the bull runs away from Mithras, Raven tells to Mithras the bull place [18]. Mithras succeeds in bull slaying, and the life will occur from the blood of the bull (Ibid: 100).

First Khan-e Rostam is the Battle with lion. Fighting the lion resembled King of kings and their powers during Achaemenid and Sassanid empires, as was regarded as one of the symbols of virility. Lion, “in a negative symbolism is the ultimate sign of arrogance and egotism that the intensity of power illuminates from it and the light shines in the luster makes it blind. And since he finds himself as patron, he will become a tyrant dictator.” [8]. Lion when aggressive represents power, domination and death and overcoming the lion represents the new life and rebirth. On the other hand, Rostam deep sleep in first labor could mark the symbolic death of him and his waking his rebirth. Based on the rituals and rites of initiation, sleep or anesthesia is a sign of seeker’s death and his waking represents his rebirth in a higher stage.

Attar also represents quest as life in human that is associated with hardships:
Har Ke Ra Nabovad Talab, Mordar Ost
Zende Nist O, Sorate Divar Ost
Har Ke Ra Nabovad Talab, Mard An Boad
Hash Lellah, Sorati Bi Jon Boad

[10]

On the other hand another link between raven and first labor is the element of air and Mercury. Raven represents the element of air and the planet Mercury, is the first planetarium [18]. For this reason, the first Mithras ritual begins with raven. Abu Mahbub believes that: “lion, in fact, represents a kind of moving air or wind storm that attacks Rostam and Raksh. Now you should see if the lion is a deformation of Rostam anxiety. Rostam worries about Raksh and in the first stage his concern about Raksh should be lifted from his shoulders to relieve Rostam about the survival of Raksh. The Lion is also linked with the “air” or “mercury” [1].

The placement of raven and quest in the initial phase can indicate that the seeker is in the beginning of the path. He with high accuracy focuses on what he sees, and attempts to gain the knowledge and wisdom. Quest wadi is the wadi of awakening that “the seeker until in the quest wadi cannot avoid not readiness to awaken the heart and soul and stop struggling.” [13].

2- The link among hidden, terrible thirst and love:

Hidden represents the element of water. In Mithraism, hidden carries a light or a torch as the expression of new light associates with Mithra, the God of light [18].

The second Rostam labor is also associated with the element of water. Rostam is thirsty caught in the dry desert and his tongue was cut, Raksh legs could not walk. Rostam, get off Raksh asking for God’s help. Suddenly a Ewe appears and leads him to the spring. Ewe is the symbol of divine forgiveness that God sent for guidance in finding a water fountain that symbolizes the revival and revitalization of Rostam. Is the hidden carrying a torch is not the same blessed Ewe from the divine source to guide Rostam to life and light?

Love can also be measured with thirst. Love, as well as the thirst for knowledge seeker tears his heart apart. “Love is what men of the quest of the mystery called the “pain”, pain is the needs and quest ... so patience and endure burning, that the seeker would not rest until healed, love can be measured with thirst, thirsty is not satisfied until reached water.” [13].

3- The link among soldier, slay dragons and knowledge:

In Mithraism, those who wanted initiation into the ranks of soldiers had to go through difficult trials. These tests included sleeping in the grave; endure hunger and thirst, fighting wolves, walking barefoot on ice and snow in winter, swimming in a puddle of water handcuffs,… then he was permitted to be intiated into the mysteries of Mithras after undergoing several graduated tests. He was immersed in water and they brought him out of the water, a then new generative had h...

The third labor is also in connection with soil and dragon. In this labor the dragon comes out of the soil twice in the darkness of the night. The dragon hides itself every time Raksh awakens Rostam. The third time, God willing, earth dragon, then rings. And the third time, at the will of God, the soil throws out the dragon and
the Rostam with the help Rakhsh kills the dragon. Regarding the link between knowledge and the killing of the dragon we must say, the dragon is the symbol of sensuality. Self in mystical literature is a symbol of selfishness and rivalry in the peak of power and rebellion. Rostam when asleep is not aware of its existence. When wakes up he could grapple with the dragon and with the help of Rakhsh kills it. Attar in a narration of a Conference of the Birds argues that:

Anche Dar Tost Az Hsd O Az Khashm e To
Chashme Mardan Binad An Na Chashme To
Hast Dar To Golkhoni Por Ejdeha
To Ze Gheflat Kardeie Isha Raha

Wisdom and knowledge are achieved in the awakening and liberation from the shadow of Soul Dragon that has housed in fiery, roaring and insatiable in the man. This stage of haft Khan is the inception of Rostam to access knowledge and insight. In connection with the soldier and knowledge it should be noted that knowledge seeker's, like a soldier battle gallantry and saves him by defeating the soul dragon and pulls out wisdom treasure off the darkness.

“Carl Gustav Jung, the famous psychologist and mythology analyst finds the dragon as one of the forms of negative self mother that libido (psyche life force) embodied in . In his view, human reacts when encounters with external adverse realities one of them going back into the safe embrace of the mother or womb but the contrast between external reality and escape to the inside do not solve the problem, but there is that pesky force invaded the psyche. The result of the conflict sometimes causes the constructive motor movement leading to the development of character with the adaptation of the realities of the outer and the abilities of the inner. This makes the individual with sufficient knowledge face with its actual or constructive force. The psychological analysis is what has been the stage of self-discovery and self-knowledge, interpreted as the result of passing this step, foster spiritual, emotional character evolution and spiritual rebirth and resurrection [16].

4. The link among lion, magic woman and self-sufficiency:

The lion stage is the physical and material perfection. On who reached to this stage is called, "Lion Man". “Lion Men were Mithras arms and punished covenant-breakers, and Mitra's enemies with their fire and special lightning”[5]. The Lion represents the element of fire. The first four Mithras stages are material levels of seekers. Fire is the largest constituent element of the earth. Common ground of wind, water, soil and fire is that all corruptible. The ability to transform and destroy them is material and physical condition for achieving spiritual perfection. The fifth step onward starts the spiritual journey.

Mithras seeker, with the passage of these stages had achieved physical perfection and gained "lion man" title. He leaves behind all worldly desires and with aid of knowledge steps into the spiritual journey with lavish feeling and of disdain for the material world.

Rostam faces with Magic Woman in the forth khan (labor). This is the same as Mitra's is in connection with the fire. In Zoroastrian beliefs, this creature is the evil fairy with nasty traits, like magic, sensuality, aging and a bad odor. According to popular belief, the fairy is of Jinn and is associated with the fire element. "Naser Khosrow in “Jame O Al Hekmatein” talks of two groups of creatures, one Jinni, called fairy and another human, mean people.” [3].

Magic Woman in myths and epics is a symbol of charm and erotic material trying to seduce the hero ant acts as an obstacle to achieving his goals. Rostam fights erotic material things such as hunger, thirst and sleep at first, second and third labors. In the fourth labor he fights his lust; the only thing that helps Rostam and takes the veil of magic woman is the name of God. "Magic Woman, which is a symbol of the universe, with all the colors and deceives, is forced into revealing her inner being and the moment before though was a heavenly fairy, now becomes a hellish demon.”[13]. Rostam killing magic woman, like lion man, frees the self from the shackles of material belongings.

Tariqa path seeker by freeing from the shackle's material and attaining spiritual affiliation from God feels needless of the world:

Chon Hayat Az Hagh Begiri Ey Ravi
Pas Shavi Mostaghti Az Gel Miravi

Necessary for the attainment of spiritual life is leaving behind the whims and achieve independence from whatever except Allah.

Ghorao Al Maskan Ahazeroho Ana
The seeker, leaving behind the material world, steps into a stage of sense-wise. Unity wadi is the place of leaving behind the material world, as well. Sanaeei finds abstraction essential to unity:

- Dam Be Tajrid Zan Ke Bi Tajrid
- Naresad Kas Be Alame Tohid
- Attar also calls this wadi the place of abstraction:
  - Bad Az In Wadie Tohid Ayadat
- Manzel E Tafrid O Tajrid Ayadat

The seeker must disdain all the world regardless of whatever there is and become empty and of steps beyond the world of sense and disconnects the link the world of the soul with the material world, when discrete from the affairs of mortal God offers him with the fruits of unity, that time. Moulavi says:

Zan Soye Hes, Alame Tohid Dan

Gar Yeki Khahi, Bedan Janeb Beran

Rostam as soon as arriving in the fifth Khan reaches a place of absolute darkness, as if the sun and the stars are trapped. In the darkness he entrusts Rakhsh then reaches the land of light. He was in unfamiliar territory in need of the assistance and guidance, and someone should bring him Div-e Sepid underlying cache. Olad, Mazandaran border guard acts as a mentor and a guide for Rostam. Prerequisite to the victory in two other Khans is the unquestioning surrender to Olad orders. In the realm of unity, the seeker, and surrender to Hagh: “in this stage the great diligence goes away and satisfaction and surrender replaces it.”[17].

Rostam should release himself off selfishness to be able to steer ups and downs of two other Khans. In Unity, the seeker first is lost; he sees neither himself nor places. This disdain for material things is followed by exposing to the truth and light:

- Marde Salek Cho Resad Inja Yeganeh
- Jaygahe Mard Barkhizad Ze Rah
- Gom Shavad Zira Ke Peyda Ayad O
- Gog Gardad Zanke Goya Ayad O

Dr. Kazazi on the link between Persian and Unity, said: "The Iranians are the first people in the world who have turned to monotheistic religion even before the Hebrews."[13]. He quotes from the book of Zoroastrianism and Persian literature and writes: "Zoroastrian doctrine of monotheism attracted the attention of enlightened Jews. They thought “is Jehovah the God of heaven?” It is essential to note that the doctrine of monotheism for Jews appeared shortly after Zoroaster advent, the book of Isaiah the prophet stated: "I am Jehovah and besides me there is no God". If we assume that the idea of monotheism is not travelled from Iran to Israel, but this is obliged to accept that Iran helped to promote unity among the people of Israel [13].

The link among sun, killing demon Arzang Div and bewilderment:

In Mithras ritual, Heliodro is the sun goddess, as he is accompanied by Mithras and his alliances. Sol and Mithras is the same old sun peak. “Lights and rays of wisdom and mysticism, and liberation from material is emitting from anyone who reaches to the stage of sun courier. He is so close to Mithra that Heliodro / Sol were close to, the unity and oneness of the Creator and the creature[5]. Such an individual has achieved stability and internal stability. This stage is the nearest to. Mithras.

In the sixth Khan, demon Arzang Div is the closest to the white demon. Olad tells Rostam about revers activities of demon: he sleeps during the day and wakes at night. He asks him to attach demon when the sun rises with the grace of God. Rostam in daylight kills Arzang Div in darkness Chahsarf. This labor is similar to sun peaks when Rostam wins over darkness and eternal light shines and he knows the most mysterious facts.

The sun peaks associated with bewilderment: in sun peak that is the closest position to the sun light, seeker was completely clean of impurities and upon returning to classes the sky was ceded the result of his thought to
the sun. “Every spirit that gradually passed out of the gates slowly was purified and freed of impurities acquired during lifetime. After this purification he assigned to the sun his thoughts effectiveness.” [5]. Here, he is in this position, similar to the sun. In such a case, the intuitive understanding and revelation of its proximity to the sun is so deep that puts seeker in bewilderment. Zoalnon al-Misri said: “The one who knows his God better, his bewilderment of God is more, due to the fact that, whatever that was closer to the sun, the sun bewildered him more to where he did not exist.” Attar also believes:

Har Ke O Nazdiktar Heyrantar Ast
Kare Doran Paree Asantar Ast
[10]
The seeker of this path understands the mysteries of the universe in a moment of enlightenment.

Gar Kasi Inja Rahi Daryafti
Sere Kol Dar Yek Nafas Daryafti
[10]
The link between killing demon Arzang Div and bewilderment: Rostam in former labors is trapped in hunger, thirst, sleep, lust and anger. From the sixth Khan he was awakened and sought relief from the qualities of its own human and denial of self.

7- The link among pater or paterpatrān, killing “Div-e Sepid” or the White Demon and poverty and inexistence:

Pater is Mithras representative on the earth. He is a wise man who leads the truth seekers disorientation through the perfection. He is in unity with Mithras. The Outstanding work of Mithras is to slay a white bull in a cave. “Mithras slays a white bull for the sake of resurrection and to save mankind and increase prosperity and growth. He, by slaying bull, reveals his identity and nurtures nature. The bull is the symbol of the soul. Composure and harness it to the altar of sacrifice then it started getting rid of ascension and the beginning of real life; [18] slaying bull and a new life.

Rostam in seventh Khan passes seven mountains. In a battle kills Div-e Sepid in a dark cave down there. He dribbles three drops of Div-e Sepid liver blood in Kavos and his companion’s eyes and restores their vision. Rostam, passing of seven labors and killing Div-e Sepid, finds divine authority that guides and helps disorientation and lost in darkness to truth and restores their vision and frees them from the prisins and captivity of material word to salvation. To grasp Div-e Sepid liver is the point is to gain spiritual strength by killing the soul and spiritual actualization and realization of the essence of God. Rostam by dribbling Div-e Sepid liver blood in Kavos eye and his companion’s restores their vision, and then like an informed Morshed with their assistance frees the seekers from carnal lust and attachment into the mind and soul realm, i.e. Iran. ”[15].

The job of seeker in the realm of poverty and inexistence is dismantling everything that is not right. The seeker dresses in inexistence wearing and slays the self bull, and then frees himself of the attributes of human and animal interests, reaches to Fana Fi Allah (inexistence in God ) that underlie Bagh Fi Allah (existence in God). At this stage, dark eyes light up and give new life to the seekers.

Conclusion:

There are examples of the mystical journey in ancient Persian religion based on signs and literature of ancient’s regulations. Thoughts that every time gained new forms in contact with other faiths and creeds particularly manifested itself in such a way to maintain a central core. After embracing various forms of natural and spiritual nature, different attitudes when it comes to the practical application behavior, in spite of diversity in the behavior all start with a spiritual journey to gain mystical stages and spiritual gifts.

Ritual of initiation, with the India-European origin is one of the most important sources of ancient society’s customs. In this ritual, the hero was obliged to pass through seven difficult stages to achieve a high objective. the study of Haft Zinaye Mehri (Seven Grades of Initiation), Haft Khan-e- Rostam (Seven Labors of Rostam) and Haft Shahre Eshgh by Attar shows that the three issues though different, reflect a common motif called the passage and initiation rituals, each of which of the different areas (ritual, epic, mysticism), respectively. Passing seven hard stages with physical austerity and having a mentor and associate along the route are of the things that all share.

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