

Commonalities between *Yajña* Ritual in India and *Yasna* Ritual in Iran

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Abstract

Sacrifice ritual in India and ancient Iran has been of particular importance. This ritual is called *Yajña* and *Yasna* respectively in India and Iran. In Brāhmaṇas and later Avesta, it is considered as one of the most important religious ceremonies with commonalities and the same root. The most important commonalities in holding sacrifice rituals in Iran and India are fire elements, Iranian *haoma* or Indian *soma* drink after bloody or non-bloody sacrifices, and singing holy hymns [of praise] by spirituals who hold the rituals. Given the importance of these elements in both *Yasna* and *Yajña* ceremonies, we can find out their common root in a period before separation of Indian and Iranian peoples from each other and their settlement in India and Iran.

Ancient Indo-Iranians believed that there were many divinities in the world and these divinities had to be worshiped to be calmed so that order is established in the world; along with sacrifices and offerings. Sacrifices and offerings were made in mainly, (1) to please gods; and (2) to establish order in a better manner in the management of world affairs.

The ancient Indo-Iranians apart from performing their sacrifices to gods, they also worshiped two vital elements: water and fire, for they considered them vital and priceless in life. Indo-Iranians considered waters as goddesses whom they called *Ops*. Fire played a vital and valuable role in the life of Indo-Iranians who were faced with harsh winters. Like their Indo-European ancestors who were faced with harsh winter, they also worshiped fire as a god. Two rites *Yajña* and *Yasna* are still practiced as, sacrificial rituals among Iranian and Indian peoples. This paper aims to study the similarities between these two rituals in Iran and India.

Key words: Fire, *Haoma*, *Medha*, *Yajña*, *Myazda*, *Soma*, Sacrifice, *Yasna*

1. INTRODUCTION

Primitive man was afraid of natural events, and since he did not know the cause or origin of these events, it was thought they were due to the will of gods or invisible spirits. He tried to make sacrifices to gods and supernatural powers in order to please them and establish an order in the world. Many worships, offerings and sacrifices made by early man to gods and supernatural powers were at first because of his fear; however, with the passage of time and the progress in human

life he is attenuated with those beliefs. The word “sacrifice”, in the science of religion, means to kill a living being (including human, animal, plant ...) to get close to gods in order to please them (Mostafavi, 1990, p. 21). The word in Arabic is derived from *gharib* (closeness or proximity), and the goal of every sacrifice was to approach gods or natural forces (Dehkhoda Persian Dictionary). The word “sacrifice”, in Arabic, also means to “get close” and sacrifice is a means to that end. The influence of Sami culture and the

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importance of bloody offerings often make one think that the sacrifice means to slaughter an animal and offer it to a god, while sacrifice also includes non-bloody offerings, and bloody sacrifices are only one example of this ritual (Rainey, 1996, vol. 15, p. 639). Offerings in sacrificial rituals are divided in two bloody and non-bloody groups. The bloody sacrificial ritual dates back to times where human beings or animals were offered as ritual offerings, and bloodshedding was an essential part of this type of sacrifice. The bloody sacrificial ritual appeared first among farmers who believed in the magic of land fertility. This ritual was then accepted by breeders. The ritual probably emerged since independence of various primitive classes, such as the sacrifice of men and animals including goats, sheep, camels, horses and fowls. But human sacrifice was also common in most countries of the world in ancient times (Henninger, 1987, p. 456).

Bloody sacrifices were later replaced by other kinds of sacrifices especially in cases where humans were objects of offering. It is also possible that animal sacrifices also included men. In the non-bloody sacrificial ritual, non-bloody offerings were made including water, milk, honey, egg, wine... etc. The latter was offered as grape's and earth's blood to get close to gods. In addition, ancient Iranians believed that the spirit of ancestors and the earth goddess, Anahita, used these offerings. Water was offered as a source of life and the main substance of living things a different variety of which is still common among Iranians and other nations. For example, pouring water on earth when someone wanted to travel or water sprinkling ceremony known also as "*Abgiran*" or "*Mardgiran*" celebration (Mostafavi, 1990, p. 23).

2. SACRIFICIAL RITUAL IN IRAN AND INDIA

Rituals, related to sacrifice in Iran and India, were common since ancient times and were

specially characterized. Object of sacrifice is mentioned in Vedas and also in Avesta (Mostafavi, 1990, p. 77). Sacrificial ritual in Iran and India are one of the most important religious rituals. In Iran, this ritual is called *Yasna*, but it's known as *Yajña* in India. *Yasna* (or *Yasne*) in Avestan is used in two meanings: a very important religious ritual in Zoroastrianism, and one of the most important parts of current Avestan scripts. *Yasna* consists of seventy-two chapters known as *hāiti* in Avestan, an equivalent of *sāti* in Sanskrit, or *hāt* in Pahlavi, and *hā* in Persian. The Gathas of Zarathustra are also one of these 72 "*hā*". In these scripts, *Yazatas* were invited to a ceremony, and then the ceremony instructions were given. Such as other Avestan scripts, *Yasna* was also written like a hymn.

The equivalent for the word *Yasna*, in Avestan language, is *Yajña* in Sanskrit and *Yazišn* in Pahlavi, which meant adoration, worship, and/or a prayer which was said in sacrificial ceremonies. The root of the word is *yaz* in Avestan, *yaj* in Sanskrit and *ya* in Indo-European languages, and it means "to worship, to praise, and to sacrifice" (Poordavood, 1923, pp. 234-25).

Mary Boyce believes that, "...it follows from similarities between sacrificial rituals among Zoroastrians and Brāhmins that the origin of these practices should be sought during the Indo-Iranians' period. Offerings made by Zoroastrians include: milk, pure water, haoma plant sap (*soma* in India), fruits, vegetables, butter, and meat of animals... etc. The word that they used for this kind of offerings was *Myazda*, or *Medha* in Indian (Boyce, 1996: vol. 1, p. 148).

Ancient Āryans sacrificed all kinds of animal such as horse to their gods. Horse sacrifice was more important and effective than other offerings because it was precious and valuable for Āryans (Bayrnas, 2004, p. 96). Āryans made bloody and non-bloody offerings for sun, fire and Ahura Mazda, including bread, flower, fragrant substances, cattle, sheep, horse and deer...etc. Regarding the bloody sacrifices, only the smell

of the sacrifice was for gods and the meat was given to priests and worshipers (Lisan, 1976, p. 60).

When Zoroastrianism emerged, people worshiped various gods the biggest of them were Mehr, Anahita, land and fertility goddesses, and Haoma. Zoroaster rose against priests who accomplished prayer for these gods. He said that there was no god but Ahura Mazda in the world and that other gods are the latter's manifestation and an attribute of his attributes (Durant, 1999, pp. 426-431). Zoroaster was not only against *haoma*, an intoxicant wine, he was also opposed to animal sacrifice. He worshiped Ahura Mazda by thanksgiving and making a vow, and praised Anahita without sacrificing any animal contrary to Persians who praised her by sacrificing a hundred horses, one thousand cattle, and ten thousand sheep. But after the death of Zoroaster, that its time cannot be accurately represented, the sacrifice of animals was resumed (Edwards, 1979, p. 19).

The first question that comes to mind about the Iranian *Yasna* and the Indian *Yajña* ceremonies is that for whom these sacrifices and offerings were made. Ancient Indo-Iranians believed that there were many divinities in the world around them, who are responsible for the world. To please these gods, they had to be praised and prayed by making sacrifices and offerings. The latter were generally offered to gods with two main objectives: first to please and satisfy them, and second, to make them powerful as much as possible so that they could establish an order in the world in a better way. Consequently, sacrifice can be deemed as a certain contract between immolators and the god for whom sacrifices were offered. During this process, immolators offer their sacrifices in hopes of receiving a blessing and mercy from that god (Boyce, 1996, pp. 147-148). Ancient Indo-Iranians made their sacrifices not only to gods but also to two essential elements: water and fire (Idem, 145-153). They were steppe

nomads and shepherds, so they considered a special place for these two elements. Due to the lack of rain in steppes, water had a critical value. Indo-Iranians thought that water was a benediction from goddesses called *Ops*, so they prayed and made offerings and sacrifices for them. In Avestan, offering was called *zaoθra*. The offering made by Zoroastrians to waters included three elements: milk, sap, or leaf of two plants. These three elements are the symbol of plant and animal kingdom both of which needs water to survive. According to Zoroastrians, the offering (*zaoθra*) of water which was sanctified by invocation of god was able to return the reduced lifeblood of water. Fire is another element in Zoroastrian religious customs. Fire played also a vital and valuable role for Indo-Iranian steppe nomads who were faced with harsh winters. Like their ancestors, they also worshiped fire as a god. This god was called Agni among Indians and Zoroastrians called it Atur (Boyce, 2002, pp. 25-26).

3. THE PURPOSE OF *YASNA* AND *YAJÑA* CEREMONIES

Sacrificial ceremonies are linked with creation in Indian and Iranian traditions. In the beliefs of ancient Iran, *yazesh* is a symbol of creation. Zoroastrians believe that Ahura Mazda along with gods and Amshaspandans collectively participate in sacrificial rituals so that a steady stream of celestial force is run along with the human force protecting the world (Boyce, 1996, p. 221). Indo-Iranians believed to a natural governing law to guarantee regular movement of the sun, circulation of seasons, and existence durability in an organized way. This law was known as *Rta* or *Arta* among Hindus and as *Asha* among Avestan people. They considered offerings and sacrifices made by people as a part of this natural process. They believed that these practices helped gods by enabling them to keep order in the material world (Boyce, 2002, p. 30). In fact, indirect offerings to

gods through Mobeds could help strengthen and restore order to the world. In general, the four following cases can explain the purpose of holding *Yasna* and *Yajña* ceremonies respectively in Iran and India: (1) Establish world order; (2) Please gods; (3) Fulfill immolator's material needs; and (4) Fulfill immolator's spiritual needs. The main joint elements in holding the Iranian *Yasna* and Indian *Yajña* ceremonies include: Four elements of fire (Indian *Agni* and Iranian *Ater*), Iranian *haoma* and Indian *soma*, holy hymns, and priests who hold bloody or non-bloody sacrificial ceremonies. Given the existence of these elements in both *Yasna* and *Yajña* rituals, their common roots can be found during a period before the separation of the two Indian and Iranian people from each other and their settlement in India and Iran. Considering the importance of the sacrificial ritual, it is expected that such ceremonies and practices still remain in important Indian and Iranian rituals.

3.1 Fire

In India, fire is both earthly and divine. When they place their offerings or sacrifices on the flames, they believe that fire is intermediary between man and gods. *Agni* is a god who receives offerings or sacrifices in the form of fire and offers them as a *Dinmard* or *Dinyar* (assistant of religion) (Hinlz, 1994, p. 46). Indo-Iranians also made offerings to fire composed of three elements including firewood, smell (of plants' dry leaves), and animal fat. They offered firewood and smell probably three times a day during daily prayers (morning, midday and evening). Fat was offered to fire whenever a family has some meat to cook. It should be noted here that the first two offerings were a symbol of plant kingdom, while the fat was a symbol of animal realm. Offerings to water and fire formed the principle of daily religious rituals for Indo-Iranians. This principle is now called *Yasna* and *Yajña* respectively by Iranians and Indians. In this ceremony, a part of fire offering

(*zaoθra*) was made of a bloody sacrifice. This was regularly performed. Indo-Iranians felt a danger in killing animals and they never tried to do this without prior sanctification and invocation of gods (believing that this invocation would allow to the spirit of an animal continue its life) (Boyce, 2002, pp. 26-27).

3.2 Iranian *haoma* and Indian *soma*

In ritual offerings to waters, which were made at the end of *Yasna* ceremony, milk, a plant's leaves and another plant's sap were used. The plant rubbed for these offerings was called *Soma* in Sanskrit and *Haoma* in Avestan languages. But it may be better to say: "A plant which is pressed." We don't know the name of the main plant used by Indo-Iranians, but it may be a species of *Ephedra*. They considered the sap of this plant to be refreshing and tonic and believed that the offering of this plant would have the same effect to gods so that they keep order in the world and administer nature-related events in a better manner. Ritual compression of this plant to prepare the Iranian *haoma* and the Indian *soma* to offer it to waters is the most principal part of the Iranian *Yasna* and Indian *Yajna* religious ceremonies (Idem, pp. 27-28).

Indo-Iranian *haoma* is a nearly elusive but a much known vision in the Western mind. *Haoma* is both a plant and a divinity. The rites of pressing this plant are accompanied with celestial phenomena such as sunshine and rain. However, *haoma* was considered a divine Mobed who itself was a non-bloody sacrifice, but making a bloody sacrifice. Its death defeats evil and believers could achieve life by attending this ritual banquet. *Soma* is one of the main characters in the Indian Vedic rituals, and it's both a plant and a god. Its sap is passed through a woolen filter and poured in casks full of milk and water. Yellow color of this plant is likened to sunray and its fluidity is compared to rain. As a result, *soma* has been called the king of rivers and cause of fertility. They believe that this

beverage has healing power, so they think that it can cure a born blind or a lame. The Indian *soma* has a global domination and plays the role of man's religion and gives power to them. The Iranian *haoma* is completely similar to *soma* and it's now compared to an Ephedra. It is normally thought that this plant has the ability to exhilarate and heal, but it is more effective when it is sanctified and praised. The Iranian *haoma* is the son of Ahura Mazda. It is also a divine Mobed who makes offerings to gods, so like all earthly Mobeds it has to partake of the sacrificed animal. This way, it will be able to protect the spirit of that animal; otherwise, the latter's spirit will complain to the immolator in judgment day. Because when Zoroaster was squeezing the *haoma*, the latter's god came to him, so it is thought that whenever believers make an offering, this god is also present there. Thus, when *haoma* is being sacrificed, we can imagine in its character a warrior who fights against evil, a divine Mobed who itself is sacrificed in the sacrificial ceremony so that people can survive, and also the god Haoma (Hilnz, 1994, pp.50-52).

3.3 Bloody and non-bloody sacrifices in *Yasna* and *Yajña*

In current *Yasna* rite, animal sacrifice is not performed anymore and it is replaced by a non-bloody sacrifice, *haoma*. However, cattle or sheep were sacrificed in this rite not so long ago (Boyce, 1970, pp. 67-68), and it may yet be common in certain predominantly Zoroastrian villages. Zoroaster, in line with his religious amendments, cancelled animal sacrificial rites. In later periods, sacrificing animals again became current to some extent; even, some Pahlavi books explain how to make a bloody sacrifice to different gods. For example, two books titled *Shayest, Nashayest*, chapter 11, and *Revayat-e Pahlavi*, chapter 59, can be mentioned. In the Indian *Yajña* rite, sacrificing animals (except of some schools in which killing animals is indecent) remains common and is

considered a very important part of this rite. In studying sacrificial rites in India, we encounter some cases suggesting that Indians sacrificed also human beings until about a hundred years ago. Sacrifice of human beings in India is called *nara-medha* or *puruṣa-medha* (Aiyangar 1987, pp. 476-477, 479; Dubois, 2007, pp. 730-732). Another important ritual sacrifice that was prevalent in India is *aśva-medha* or horse sacrifice. In the big *Yajña* rite, where usually horses are sacrificed, it was believed that the god to whom a sacrifice was offered preferred human sacrifice or *nara-medha*. Sometimes, hog, sheep, elephant or other animals were sacrificed (Dubois, 2007, pp.578-580).

Sacrificing animals by slaughter can yet be seen in Zoroastrian mountain shrines around Yazd province in Iran. Such sacrifices are made in Zoroastrian shrines by anyone for any reason from worship and thanksgiving to regret and repentance of sin or fulfillment of a vow. The time of sacrifice is mentioned in *Yasht 5* from sunrise to sunset, and everybody who makes a vow to water between these two periods of the day has put its offering in the jaws of dragon (Boyce, 1975, p. 250).

3.4 Holy hymns

In both *Yasna* and *Yajña* ceremonies, holy hymns or litanies are sung. The hymn which is recited in *Yasna* among Zoroastrians is a part of the holy book of Avesta. The seventy-two chapters of *Yasna* can be linguistically and conceptually broken into three distinct sections. One section is the "last *Yasna*" 1 which includes *Yasna* 1-27 and *Yasna* 54-72; the other is "*Yasna Haptanghaiti*" 2 which includes *Yasna* 35-41; and at last, the "old *Yasna*" 3 or *Gathas* which consists of *Yasna* 28-34 and 42-53 (Reichelt, 1968: 168). In *Yajña* ceremony, some parts of sacred hymns or Vedas are recited. But contrary to *Yasna* ceremonies, the texts recited in *Yajña* ceremony can hardly be specified, because there are several *Yajña* ceremonies and their texts are also different. We

only mention to the extent that the hymns recited in sacrifice ritual ceremonies are parts of *Sāmaveda* and *Yajurveda* (Radhakrishnan 2008, pp. 63-65).

3.5 Priest holding the ceremony

The priest or Mobed holding these ceremonies represents another joint element of *Yasna* and *Yajña*. These ceremonies are held by seven (and sometimes eight) Mobeds the most important of whom is referred to as *Zaotar* in Iran and *Hotr* in India. In Iran, however, these ceremonies have been shortened and since then, the number of these Mobeds has reduced from seven to two; and second or assistant Mobed is responsible for other Mobeds.

3.6 Holding *Yajña* ceremony

The first thing that draws the viewer's attention in *Yajña* is the coordination of actions and litanies in this ceremony. In fact, we can say that every action is accompanied with its own litany in *Yajña* ceremony. The most important part of *Yajña* ceremony is its sacrifice in which substances such as milk, butter, bread, cereals, meat or *soma* are offered to the fire. This small portion of sacrifice is deemed as an independent practice in all *Yajña* rituals. A *Dinyar* (assistant of religion) and/or usually an *Adhavaryu* put the above substances on the flames. Although in more complicated sacrifices, this is done by several *Dinyars*. When *Adhavaryu* stands besides the offering fire, he shouts at another *Dinyar* called *Āgnīdhra*: *omśrāvaya*, which means "Hope it's heard"; and *Āgnīdhra* answers: "*Astu śrausṣat*", which means "So be it, someone is hearing". Then, it's *Adhavaryu*'s turn who calls *Hoter* so that he recites offering-related poems (*yājyā*). Poems' recitation begins in the name of the god to whom offerings are made, and they continue by inviting to worship (*yājyā*). In fact, *Hoter* says: "*ye yajāmahe*", namely, "We are worshipping." At the same moment, *Adhavaryu* puts offerings on the

fire and the immolator says: "*tyāga*", namely, "Devotion", and then whispers: "Not for me, but for the god to whom belongs the sacrifice."

In *Yajña* ceremony, actions related to the preparation of sacrifice are of special importance, including acceptance of a vow, selection of a *Dinyar* (assistant of religion), grooming the place of sacrifice, setting fire, preparation of vow substances... etc., but the expression of these complicated and long practices is not possible in this paper (Heesterman, 1986, vol.15, p.228).

4. TYPES OF SACRIFICE

Agnihotra is the simplest type of sacrifice, which means actually offering boiled milk in both the morning and evening time. *Isti* is the most complicated one which is, in fact, a kind of plant sacrifice composed of one or more slices of bread, cereals boiled in butter and milk, and a jar of butterfat. Before the sacrifices are ready, fire is ignited by using pieces of wood. *Hoter* sings a hymn, then, *Adhavaryu* puts the sacrifices on the fire. *Paśubandha* is another type of sacrificing an animal along with *Isti*. Two other priests attend this sacrificial ceremony, who are referred to as *maitrāvarun* who helps *Hoter*, and *Prati prasthātr* who is the assistant of *Adhavaryu*. The most complicated sacrifice is *Sāma* which consists of *Isti* and an animal sacrifice with its specific rituals. In this sort of sacrifice, *Sāmaveda* hymns are recited by four groups more than anything else. This sacrificial ceremony necessitates, in general, the attendance of sixteen or, according to scriptures, seventeen *Dinyars* (assistants of religion) divided into four groups according to four Vedas. Official sacrifice is called *śrauta*. This name had been selected based on Śruti which means "heard" and represents Vedic attributes. In *śrauta* rite, *Isti* sacrifice is made every two weeks in the form of new moon and full moon, and as *paśubandhe*, *sāma*, and *agni setuma* (fire worship) (Heesterman, pp. 228-229).

Another important sacrifice is *Aśvamedha* or the sacrifice of horse. In this sacrifice, *sāma* sacrificial rite is first performed in detail for three days, a horse is released along with several warriors so that it wanders around the desert for a year, and then it is sacrificed. *Puruśamedha* is another sacrifice in which a human being is sacrificed. This sacrifice is theoretically based on *Puruṣa* hymn in *Ṛgveda*. But it seems that this kind of sacrifice has never been common in *śrauta* system. However, it should be emphasized that the immolator itself attends the sacrificial ceremony (Ibid, p.230).

5. HOLDING OF THE *YASNA* CEREMONY

Yasna has been a sacred ritual during the long centuries of official Zoroastrian religion. It is based on preparation and consumption of a holy beverage called *haoma* that drives out the death. *Yasna* rite must be performed each morning by special religious leaders. Nowadays, this ceremony is held by two Mobeds or religious leaders called *Zut* and *Raspi*. In ancient times, this religious rite was held by seven Mobeds above all another Mobed attended who was called *Zut*. Each of the names given to these leaders represents the related function in holding *Yasna* ceremony. The name of these Mobeds in Avesta is as follows: *Zut* or *Zaotar*, *Hāvanan*, *Ātrəvaxš*, *Frabərətar*, *Ābərət* or *Frabərətar*, *Āsnātar*, *Raēthwiškara* or *Raspi*, and *Sraošāvarəz*. In the second book of *Nirangistan*, chapter 27, the function of each of these Mobeds is discussed: During *yazesh* (worship), *Zut* recited *Gathas*; *Havanan* pressed *haoma*'s branches in mortar; *Atrokhsh* had to provide services to the holy fire; *Frabərətar* was responsible for putting tools at the disposal of the bigger Mobed during *yazshen* (prayer and worship); *Asentar* had to wash *haoma* and *Abert* to provide service to the water; and the duty of *Sraošāvarəz* was to go and get things (Poordavood, 2001; annotations to *Khordeh Avesta* or small Avesta. p. 161; annotations to *Yasna*, vol. 2, pp. 16-18).

Zoroastrians not only do not offer sacrifice to demons, but reject any conciliation with demonic powers. This is what distinguishes a Zoroastrian sacrifice from an Indian one. Mary Boyce writes in this regard: "Brāhmanas performs rituals of intercession with evil spirits every day. Of the five "great offerings" (*Mahāyajnah*) which are obligatory for Brāhmanas householders twice daily, one is an offering for the demons, to be placed by the household rubbish-heap. One of the reasons for Zoroaster's strength and greatness is that he has severely, and without the least mercy, forbidden and condemned any forgiveness or compromise with demonic forces (Boyce, 1996, p. 170).

Since *Yasna* ceremony is held in a morning, *Havanan*, the god who protects the first "period" of a daytime, and his colleagues, namely *Sāvanghī* and *Visiyeh*, are the first gods who are mentioned in this ceremony. According to Mary Boyce, it is obligatory that this ceremony is held in the morning, because if held in other periods of a day, demons may steal the offerings made to gods. The book of *Nirangistan* reads: "Someone who makes an offering to the water between sunset and sunrise, it's like putting the offering to the jaws of a dragon." This ceremony is also held in India in the morning, with this difference, however, that it is not obligatory and may be held in other periods of the days than morning (Idem, pp. 170-171).

The sound of smashing the *haoma* in mortar has also been a sign of the ceremony beginning. This sound invited Zoroastrians to the place of worship. Then *Zut* and *Raspi* started reading the prayer text. *Yasna* ceremony starts officially by praising Ahura Mazda. Amshaspandan, the gods responsible for five periods of the day, six *gahambars* and the month of holy days and their fellow gods, and certain other gods including Geosh and Azar were also praised and worshiped. *Mithra* in the first period of the day and *Sraosha* at the last period were

always awake gods in Zoroastrianism, who protected creations of Ahura Mazda day and night (Amouzegar, 2007, p. 241).

In ancient manuscripts, the second *Hāt* in *Yasna* was called *Barsam Yasht*. In this *Hāt*, the same gods are invited and this time, they are worshiped by Ab-Zohr (liquid offerings such as *haoma*, milk...) and *Barsam*. *Ab-Zohr* was prepared by the milk mixed with two species of vegetables found in the world of plants. This liquid offering was poured calmly and unhurriedly in the water by Mobed and sometimes local women and girls who whispered *Avesta* texts: the way of combining elements in this offering could be a memento of Āryans speculation about the creation and development of plants. Water helps plants grow (the plant which is added to the mixture is a symbol thereof). Plants also help, directly or indirectly, with the breeding of animals (the milk which is added to the mixture is symbol thereof). As a result, elements of both creations return again to the water so as to increase the latter's life-giving ability (Boyce, 1996, pp. 157-159).

The *Hāts* 3 to 8 in *Yasna* are called *Drōn Sraosha*. Like the first *Hot*, they are dedicated for worshiping the gods. *Drōn* is a kind of unleavened small and white bread which was offered to gods. In the said chapters, the name of this bread has not been mentioned, except in the first paragraph of the third *Hot* of Myazdeh (*Medha* in Sanskrit meaning victim or sacrifice). This word indicates non-liquid offerings such as bread, meat, and fruit. *Hots* 9 to 11, called *Yasht Hot*, are one of the important parts of *Yasna*, and regard *haoma* plant and its pressing rite. When reciting these *Hots*, a few drops of *haoma* sap, prepared before the rite, are drunk. In *Hot* 9, the name of four people who pressed *haoma* for the first time and were given a good child as reward, is quoted. *Vivahvant* was the first person who was given a child named Jamshid. The second person was Atbin, Freydoun's father; the third person was Atrat, father of Orvakhshayah and Garshasp; and

the fourth person was Purshasb, father of Zoroaster (Boyce, 1996, pp. 97-99). In *Hot* 17 of *Yasna*, five types of fire are praised. We talked about the importance of fire and water among ancient Āryans. Fire in this sacrificial ceremony is a messenger who conveys offerings to gods. As seen, all offerings were placed on the fire in India. But in Iran, since fire is a very sacred element, it must be kept away from contamination. As a result, Iranians place on the flames only those things that belong to the fire such as wood or fat. Iranians roast offerings on the flames and offer the resulting smoke to the gods. In sacrificial ceremonies, offerings are often eaten collectively, that is a holy practice. It is said that the tradition of collectively eating foods is related to this same ceremony (Boyce, 1996, pp. 163-164). In *Yasna* ceremony, *Zut* and *Raspi* prepare *haoma* by reciting *Hot* 22, and continue until the end of chapter 26. The resulting sap of the *haoma* is not drunk during the ceremony. Gods are also worshiped and praised in these chapters.

6. CONCLUSION ON SACRIFICE

By studying the common points between Indian *Yajna* and Iranian *Yasna* ceremonies, their common root can be discovered; among these commonalities, we can mention the common lexical root of both *Yajñā* and *Yasna* words, common objectives in holding the two ceremonies, presence of common elements including water, fire, Iranian *haoma* and Indian *soma*, recitation of holy hymns and bloody and non-bloody sacrifices... in both ceremonies. Regarding the commonalities on sacrificial ceremonies between Zoroastrians and Brāhmanas, the common root of these traditions and ceremonies before the separation of Indo-Iranian peoples can be found out.

Ancient Indo-Iranians believed that there were many divinities in the world around who are responsible for various things; so offerings and sacrifices must be made to them. These offerings

and sacrifices were made to gods for two main purposes: first, to please and satisfy them; second, to empower them as much as possible so that they could establish an order in a better way in the world. In general, four goals can be sought for in holding *Yasna* ceremony in Iran and *Yajña* ceremony in India: (1) To establish order in the world; (2) To please gods; (3) To fulfill material needs of immolators; and (4) To fulfill spiritual needs of immolators.

Among things offered to gods by Zoroastrians are: milk, pure water, *haoma* plant's sap (Indian soma), fruit, vegetables, butter, animal meat... etc. *Myazda* was the common word used for these offerings, which is equivalent to Indian *Medha*.

With regard to differences in holding the two Iranian and Indian sacrificial ceremonies, it can be noted that Zoroastrians did not offer sacrifices for demons and rejected any kind of compromise with demonic powers. This was distinguished Zoroastrian sacrifice from the Indian rituals for its reference to evil spirits every day. Given the difference existing between these two ceremonies it appears that this may be the cultural climate factors of these two countries on beliefs of immigrant Indo-Iranian peoples.

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