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Water and Old Rituals of Ancient Iran

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ABSTRACT

Water, as a life giving element is a symbol of holiness, freshness, vivacity, and renewal of life has a special place in different cultures including the culture of Iran; and has been associated with great water Gods like Venus, Vruneh and so on. Long ago in ancient Persia, a lot of ceremonies were held with special rituals and mores at certain times of the year that showed the religious affiliations of the people to nature and respect for the elements. Among the famous authentic traditions that were held in Iran was "Abrizgan meaning Water Pouring" or washing, ablution, and water sprinkling that were performed on certain days of Nowruz and the summer. This tradition was held in other countries and nations that had Iranian origin, they followed and imitated it gloriously every year. In addition to this old tradition, other customs and rituals related to the water element have been popular in Iran indicating the respect Iranians had for holiness of water and used it in ritual sacrifice, punishment of offenders, baptism, thirst quenching of the dead.

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Preface:

Knowing the history and culture of every country and learning about its different issues is possible through recognition of some traditions and customs and investigating their content in explaining that culture, as well as using historical documents; traditions are considered as manifest cultural characteristic of the every country.

One of the rituals that reminded resurrection and rebirth of nature and life for men and glorious event were held in them was Nowruz celebration which is the beginning of year and it is considered sacred for Iranians.

Every year, special ceremonies were held during the Noruz and water Sprinkling or Abrizgan was one of them that was usually held on the sixth day of Farvardin, which was called the Great Nowruz. According to narration, it dates back to period of Jamshid and based on some other to Kay Khosrow. This holy action that was a kind of baptism and christening was repeated every year in order to keep disasters away from the people. Sometimes due to differences based on leap, this celebrations were held in Tir month of summer, and thirteenth day of every month which was called Tir, was the day of the execution of this tradition.

Fryjgan celebration of Isfahan that was particular of Isfahan city, was done on the shore of the Zayande rood river. At this time a large group of people went to the edge of wells and springs and rivers and splashed water on each other. This tradition spread to other countries in the Islamic period, Such as Egypt, India and Pakistan. Other actions taken by the Iranians enjoying water was applied Baptism was another action that Iranian did using water; it was for the particular religious orientation, such as Mithraism, Mandaean and Christian, because water entails concept of Life again, and there is a new birth in any inexistency, and diving in the water is the key of returning the state before formation; it is complete revitalization and new birth.

1. Water glorification rituals in Abrizgan feasts:

Nowruz celebration:

One of national and ancient feasts of Iranians is Nowruz whose glorification distant past. Correspondence of some feasts and celebration with the final days of the year gave special privilege to Noruz and expanded the celebration to the years before and after it. the reason that this nature celebration was changed to a religious motivation was that farvardin is month of holy "sprints: foruhars" and their special celebration, and these days got importance because of moderate weather, equality of day and night, day of resurrection and rebirth of nature after winter.

Foruhars had duty of supplying in Nowruz so that they could provide Water for their family, district and country, (Razi: 2005: 33 and 37). Special rituals and customs were common at this time of, an instance of them was "Abrizgan" Celebration. The origin of this celebration, according to narrations of Abureyhan Biruni, belongs to "Jamshid". In the era of Jamshid people believed that because of increase and abundance of human

beings, the God widened the earth three times and said people can baptize to Coming out of sin and from that time onwards, the Abrizgan celebration remained. In another description it is relates to the time of Keikhosrow who wanted to rest beside a spring , at that moment an angel appeared and Keikhosrow fainted at Seeing her. Then Bijan, son of gudarz got and sprinkled spring water on him and he woke up .from that time the tradition of baptism and washing and water sprinkling remained (Ibid.: 72). In Sassanian era people believed that the Prophet Solomon lost his ring and lost his kingdom, after 4 days of effort he found his ring; at that time kings went to him and birds came back to him; and at that moment Iranians told him that new day came and called that day "now ruz" .and Solomon ordered the wind to take him. Suddenly a shorebird came to welcome him and said: king, I have a nest in which I have laid egg, so come to my nest. When Solomon came down, the shorebird brought water with its beak and sprinkled on him and from that time water sprinkling got popular(nafisi: 1931: 198). Baptism was done during Nowruz on a special day of farvardin called the sixth day. Iranians believed that the sixth day of farvardin is the day of Creation and it is the day on which Allah completed the creation , and this day belongs to the Angel " Hrvza " The angel of water, and the water has association with this angel ;that is why people get up at the dawn of this day and wash themselves with water of pool water and sometimes pour some running water on themselves because of its consecration .On this day people pour water on each other , and the reason for this is the custom of baptism .Some have suggested the reason was that it did not rains in Iran for some time and then there was heavy rain and people sought blessings from that rain and sprinkled water on each other .Somewhere else it is said that the reason for Iranians' sprinkling water on this day is that since the in winter human body is polluted with smoke, and ash of fire, he water was poured to cleanse them. (Ex: 7) According to ancient narration from sasanian era, noruz ritual was held beside " kasava" lake or Hamun. Maidens wore white dress and came to hamun lake and preared themselves for reception of zartosh, i.e " sushiant", Because they believe that the Zoroastrian conception is in the Helmand River and when truth is replaced with dishonesty and lies, a maiden will be pregnant for Saoshyant. This practice has been common since ancient times until today and based on such belif Sistani girls practiced this as an ancient tradition. (Khorvash: 1963: 30).

Another rituals of Iranians , that is still alive in every point of Iran, is growing Cereal and grains different dishes and on the thirteenth day of Nowruz throw it into running water. Such tradition was present in celebration "Adonis" when plants grew in 8 days and after that they took it beside river with dead statute of Adonis and throw it in river. This was a kind of custom performed in magic rituals by which people asked for rain. But in ancient Iran throwing the plant to water is on the thirteenth day unlike eighth day of the eighth day, perhaps because of differences in climatic conditions and amount of growing the plant(Razi 2005:50).

Tirgan Celebration:

The celebration is another one of ancient Iranian celebrations. In ancient Iranian calendar, year is divided into twelve months of thirty days which is totally 360 days, and the remaining five days are added to the end of the eighth month. Each day of the month was called a special name with special meaning. Thirteenth day of each month called Tir And Tirgan celebration was held on this day. Celebration and ritual of sprinkling or Abrizgan is one of authentic ceremonies that was held on the thirteenth of Tir month. When Nowruz coincided with beginning of summer because of turning of year or due to determination of taxation time, beginning of year was set in summer, this correspondence has occurred, so in late spring and early summer it rarely rained to water field and for this reason allegorical ceremonies and rituals were performed for rain. (Taghizadeh: 1937: 157)

This party was a kind of asking for rain that dates back to the mads according to documents of Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud. According to the Jerusalem Talmud, Mads have three feasts including " Mutardi", " Turyaskai "and " Muharanekai "; that apparently Nowruz has been Tirgean and mehregan,(Houyan: 1382: 136). In Mzdysna religion, Tir is the name of God of "rain", this name is mentioned as Tysht in literature of Mazdysna, ""Tishrey" in the Pahlavi language and "Tisht" in the Persian language.

In Tyrysht of Avesta, praying of rain angel has come and with its blessings, fields are watered. And Tisht star is described as water bringing and carrying origin of water. Tishtar Has been translated as Prophet Michael and hence the rain Angel is said to be equal of Angel of provision which is indeed a Yamani star. (Poor David: 1967: 325). Iranians believe that in Tir month, that temperature reaches its maximum, tesht rose and promised moderate weather and raining. Tishtar rushed to Frakhrkt see to get water. this star turns into 3 forms to perform this action and flies during 30 days and 30 nights in Minutia. (Ex: 137) Abu Reihan knew the reason of holding Tirgan celebration, the fight between Turanian Afrasiyab and iranian manuchehr and throwing arrow by arash to determine the border of Iran and Turan and making iran out of the border. In this fight Manucher asks Afrasiab to give him land as much as for throwing an arrow. Arrow Thrown by Arash, was thrown from Tabarestan and launched in Fergana (a province in Khorasan), they considered it as enough and did peace. And have peace. So this day was announced as feast and was celebrated. Godrizi, historian of the fifth century, the holiday calles this celebration as "Sarshoy" and approves what aburayhan said and says in these days, people were happy and dancing and the Brok potteries and fireplaces batized inwater. (Ibid.: 141).

Aboureihan at the beginning of his narration about Tiregan celebration refers to "lily" celebration that is celebration of water.. According to him, the sixth day of Tir, was called khordad day And it is the feast that is called "celebrates of the lily" is called. Lily is inextricably bound with the water, and because its life depends on water And lives on the water, is considered as one of major Iranian mythologies. (Ismail Pur: 2002: 84).

"Pigoloskaya" talks about Syriac Tiregan ,that in seryani language this celebration is called "Shahrabgmud ". According to him, Adyabnh residents, were fire worshipers and put their children to into fire in big celebration. This celebrations was held in Ayary month and large group of people gathered around the fountain and pond and first washed themselves in a basin and began to prepare the food until did not eat food until they put one o f their children into the fire. (Ibid.: 82). One of the traditions in the night before Tiregan celebration is that , as person is called "dumb with wand" who goes to a house that is not known and has a (wand) his hand and pretend to be dumb because first sinks in cold water until he would hardly speak and hit the family members with that wand so that they give him something . They knew this hitting as good for health and well bing (ex: 146). today This celebration is common in most parts of Iran. In some areas of Iran in the night of the axed in the evening of this celebration, will give more product. Also in that day, some people filled the copper container with water and placed in a home where the celebration was held. then everyone of the present people intended and throw some signs such as earrings, bangles and Within the pot. At night an immature girls sat beside then pot of water and sings a poetry as the number people then puts his hand in water and gave out a sign. The owner Sign would understood from signs and symptoms of the sing that will obtain wishes or not, (ibid.: 149).

Afryjgan celebration of isfahan:

Aburayhan has brought Afryjgan celebration in his book with the same name and Gardezi named it zine al akhbar of isfahan abrizgah. Although this celebration is not specified for Isfahan by Aboureihan, , But it actually does not differ much from other regions ' celebrations. In Isfahan, on January thirtieth day is called Fryjgan whose meaning is pouring water and its reason is the same that caused celebration of Tirgan. Meaning that in Firoz time, ancestor of anushirvan, it did not rain, and drought came to people. So Firuz went to Temple in fars and prayed for rain and it was accepted and people splashed water on each other because of joy, and it got a common practice from that time. (Emadi: 1974: 584).

1.1. Abrizgan among Armenians and Zoroastrians:

Bryzgan celebration is held by some Aryan tribes, such as the Armenians, and it is called "Vartavar" .after accepting Christianity, Vartavar celebration was changed into Christianity religion and was held as the Christ presentation celebration. (Houyan: 2005: 152) Armenians hold this ancient rituals from old times and consider getting away from it as unpleasant and bad. this celebration is called vartava two words "wart" and " yuuvar" meaning " plateau river" and "plateau-like" and the Tigris and Euphrates for Armenian was like Holy Mother and indicates standing of water. Armenians have aligned in their mythologies associated with water and is called "Sanasar". This myth is a hero who finds meaning with water springs and its gets its mountain like figf re firm the sea springs. (Arif: 2011: 136) .

Armenians held Abrizgan celebration in the beginning of winter and Day month. Shortly after they move it to beginning of fdrvardin. Their pour a holy oil in the water, called "Meron" and Sanctified it to water of rivers and springs, then throw the cross in it and people took it home for curing their patients. (Razi: 155). Among Armenians someone who sprinkle water on another will be blessed by the God since he clears sins with water. Water sprinkling in culture and history of Armenian means guilt clearing, dusting, Enlightenment, refreshing and saying goodbye to nature hoping its return again. Water is sacred to Armenians, as it comes from narratives, Tirdad, king of Armenia, when was going to Rome, gave up his decision to have sea journey so that do not pollute water as a sacred element. (Ex: 137) .Zoroastrians name Tiregan celebration as "Tiru". on this day, women and children, wore their seven strands bracelets of colorful silk that was reflection of the rainbow and went to a high place; Then threw these bracelets to air to wind pull them. Then water play ceremony started and all the next day they dip each others' head in the water. as if the great importance of water for agriculture made it a great celebration and reserved it. (Ismail Pur: 2002: 80) Zoroastrian do traditions when it does not rain and these traditions were done in Sassanids era. One story of this procedure is as follows: it is said that drought happened in Kerman and people were starving. Anushiravan dreamed the light soul who orders for a rain in this way: when drought arrived, choose three sincere and pious people and go mountains where there is a spring called kabkan and pray there and pour milk and rosewater and sedab (A plant) in the water and ask the god for rain and it will rain a lot. (Razi: 2005: 100)

According to Assyrian records, "Tammuz" was God of life and closely linked to the growth of plants and crops And cattle and mutton. He was considered lover of Ishtar and dies from Ishtar's leve each year, and with his death dry season came. Therefore, Assyrians held a ceremony for the revitalization of Tammuz, one of which is water Sprinkling celebration. They , to convey the god Tammuz, when he went to the dead world, splashed water for his departure To return again soon. So the tradition that people pour water following a

travelers to his soon coming back safe, has root in The Assyrian tradition. Assyrians call This Feast 'new - cool - Il-' that means the water sprayed for the sake of god. (Ibid.: 158).

1.2. Abrizgan in other countries to emulate the Iranian:

water celebrations continued following pre-Islamic times. in Abbasid Caliphs and Fatemi this special rituals were performed in a special way. In Baghdad in the first morning of Nowruz People went to springs and wells and washed themselves with water, and to express his joy sprinkled water on each other. They believed that such washing at special time disposes sickness and pain lowers the body temperature. According to Tabari narrates, Motazed Caliph in 248 AD declared that water sprinkling and fire making is banned. But the next day, while two days remaining to the New Year, freed these customs, as people even splashed water on the police and the pious due to great happiness. (Ibid.: 253). In Egypt, the Fatimids followed this in a religious manner, and called it "eidolghotas". People who took part more in this Ceremony, were Egyptian Christians and on that day they washed themselves into the river. Christians came in large group and with a cross erected and prayers to Neil and baptized, (Metz: 1362: 161). the Egyptians called this event "mir Nowruzi". they chose a person and would ask people in alleys for money and whoever refused to give way, they poured water on him. School students followed them and rush to their teacher and hung him in well to make him give money. It was the custom of the Egyptians that was held in Egypt every year until the bargig Sultan of mamluki Sultans banned it the late eighth century. (Ibid.: 163). Water Sprinkling ceremony was held in India and Pakistan since ancient times. These traditions in the Islamic period extended Especially during the Ghaznavid sultans more widely. Draw a water sprinkling in local Drbarhay of Delhi and Timor Kings had a glorious feast that was called "pear" or "Turks" celebration and as every year it was held in Tir day of Tir month in the season, "Brsat" in India. Pakistan also emulated the Iranian people and on Nowruz table had a bowl of water and added golab to it. After the New Year, the of the head of the family put his hand in water bowl and sprinkle water to attendants And the rest in a corner of the yard or the garden. (Razi: 163).

2. Water and other ancient Iranian rituals:

According to ancient legends of Iran, among Pahlavi months, the month dedicated to the water and took its name from the Month is Aban. Aban is the name of water god and the name of the fifth Yasht that is called Yasht AbaN, in praise and Commemoration of water. In sub-Avesta one of the prayers on Water is "Aban praying" and it is a Religious ceremony held besides streams and springs. (: Chatrud: 2010: 20). Among the rituals left from Zoroastrians is, sprinkling water on the ground before sacrifice and it is worshipping ritual that is key of purity and cleanliness. Among Zoroastrians, taking water from wells and springs at night is prohibited Because they believed that evil commutes at night and may contaminate water. (Shams: 2003: 68). Zoroastrians used water as a means of testing the accused. They wanted the accused to put his head Under water, then threw arrow and sent a person not nimble and agile after him. If the charged was still alive when he returned, his innocence would be proved. (Ibid.: 69). In ancient history of Iran, the water had a direct effect on the dead to quenched their thirst. Death was not considered last point of Separation between the dead and living. The alive prepared food and drink for their dead because they thought that the souls of the dead are suffering from thirsty.

Water sprinkling on the graves of the dead, goes back to special job of world creation and His magic. in Allegories of Jesus Christ it is clearly stated. Jesus said: "A rich man wore precious robes and spent every day in mirth and wassail. there was a poor man name ilghaz that always Wished to eat her food residue. Finally the rich man died. The angels took him to Abraham and and Asked Abraham to send ilghaz to wet his finger with water and cool my tongue. "So the goal of Spraying liquid on the dead, is calming the dead and ending his suffering. (Shabani: 2007: 318).

One of the uses of the water, is utilizing its power in magic power. Because water in its mysterious aspect, links with snake and dragon, and this is a sign of renewal and the rhythm of life, so the omens and necromancy always would be near water, and belief was that divination power learning comes from water (Emerald: 1999: 12). In Mithraism rituals that is another Iranian religion, there are many legends about the the birth of Mithra, and because of this legend, the birth of Mithra was from a Maiden who got pregnant in the water and the view of Mithraism, so, in mitra symbols and signs there is special solidarity with water and what prolific in water. And most characteristic of them is, "Pearl" and "Lily" is. In this religion, and baptism has is a special place and before pray, during a complex ceremony and rituals, they washed themselves and baptized. They colored forehead of newcomer with sacred color and pours a few drops of honey on his language and then he would be baptized. This ceremony was called baptism and was base of Mithraism religion and later entered Christianity as a main tradition. (estakhri: 2002: 160).

Mandaean Faith followers (Sabean) that their teachings are attributed to the Prophet Yahya, did their traditions and rituals Like Mhrdynan with water. They by baptism settled many affairs, clear their sins with water, make food permitted by water, punish criminals with water and before getting soul out of the body of a dying person baptize him. Generally, Mandaean faith-is based on water and since water is of requirements of their religion, so they Always live along rivers and lakes. (elham: 1998: 82).

Water is very sacred for Indo-Iranian peoples and Indian company of water God is "veruneh". Indians believe that it is Vrvnh who brings whiteness of morning and denotes rain on ground. According to their belief, Vrvnh is present in water, therefore Vrvnh can be admired by water. Indians long before the did swearing ceremony with water, or if someone wanted to take the oath must have had some water in his hand. (Shams: 1382: 65).

Conclusions:

Water's ceremonial position, according to its importance in the life of every nation, is different. In Mesopotamia, the epitome of many Many myths like life is water in the ancient Iran from beliefs of the Aryans, influence of mythology and beliefs of Mesopotamia is evident. Sometimes they are in the form of customs that have been borrowed and sometimes traditions that are modified and got native. This element has long been a vital element in different practices and rituals in Iran and other nations of the world, and played a large part and it is symbol of great value of water in customs and rituals held in different parts of world. Water sprinkling celebration is one of the traditional Iranian celebration that began during the rule of the Medes in various forms and on special times of the Year due to popular culture and in the Sasanian period, it got to its peak. Then in next periods and after Islam religion it continued to be performed as before specially in Ghaznavian era more gloriously and could find a way for showing itself in other countries such as Egypt, India and Pakistan. This celebration is considered very sacred among Armenian people, who have the originality Aryan and today it is held in many states of Armenia.

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