

Original Research Article

A Study of Mithraism in the Culture of Bakhtiari People

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Abstract

One of the most important issues in preserving an area's indigenous values is finding traces of the past. Bakhtiari rituals, as an intangible heritage of the Bakhtiari people, have been passed down from one generation to another over a long time. The rituals are full of symbolic concepts that have originated from their myths, culture, and beliefs over time. The purpose of this study is to identify the symbols of Mithraism along with other pictorial symbols derived from the concept and stories of Mehr in the culture of Bakhtiari people. This study is based on a comparative study of documents and research on mythology, history of religions, and ancient Iran. Mehr ritual is one of the rituals in which symbolic images have been used as a visual language for conveying the concepts and principles of this ritual and its followers. Over time, these images have been preserved with the same hidden meanings in them and the following centuries have been used in the same way. However, they were modified and their concepts have developed and used in a wider sense.

Keywords: *Symbols of Mehr, Mithraism, Mitra, Rituals and Customs, Bakhtiari People.*

Introduction

The oldest history of the gods and the oldest attention to the creation of nature and man has been expressed in the form of myths and legends. The affinity of myths and legends allows us to go back to the traces of many ancient myths and rituals. Throughout the history of Iran, different religions have had many influences on the culture of this region. Among them, the Mithraic religion is one of the most influential and widespread religions in Iran, which is important both geographically and historically. Due to its powerful presence in ancient historical periods and also the mythical world, Izad Mehr has been able to continue its life in different areas of the human mind by having themes from the ancient world. Therefore, Mehr, one of the strongest gods of

ancient Iran, was able to continue his life in the texts of poetry and prose. The various manifestations of this god also have a prominent presence in folk legends, and this shows his permanence in the beliefs of Iranian man from ancient times to the present. Although the surviving beliefs are far from the original belief principle, the spirit inspired by these beliefs still lives on in various forms in the eyes of the people. Beliefs are inextricably linked to the culture of the people of ancient Iran as a whole and there are many different ways and forms in their lives. Bakhtiari people also have had their ancient customs, traditions, rituals, and beliefs during their ups and downs from very ancient times to the present day; which has a deep and meaningful connection with the myths and beliefs of the inhabitants of Iran and even Mesopotamia. The culture and customs of

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our tribes culturally attach us to our ancient ancestors and encourage us to respect them. Although it cannot be claimed that today's tribes are ancient tribes, many of their religions are certainly derived from the way and religion of the tribes. It is ancient. Rituals mirror people's culture, religion, feelings, emotions, thoughts, and totems through which the existence of different ethnic groups can be known. The beliefs of Bakhtiari people narrate pristine and meaningful images of the lost millennia of this land. These beliefs speak to us and take us to the ancient millennia and, on the contrary, bring these ancient millennia to our era and this world full of mysteries continues to lead its eternal life with us. Many current traditions, customs, and traditions have been formed among Bakhtiari people are related to the value, sanctity, and importance of some of the natural resources needed by them. They have their own ancient customs, traditions, and rituals, and beliefs which have a deep and meaningful connection with the myths and beliefs of the inhabitants of Iran and even Mesopotamia. These customs, which are rooted in the ancient culture of this region, have been passed down from millennia to generations and are now part of their culture. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of Mehr and customs and beliefs on the culture of Bakhtiari people. Although faint footprints of this group of people and their early inhabitants and their beliefs have been left over the millennia of history, the continuity of their live shows that this group of people has the capacity and competence to express their valuable ideas to others. Very beautiful and ancient beliefs dating back to human history have survived to this day. Although this heritage has never been written, it has been passed down from generation to generation. This study seeks to answer the question: have the mythological beliefs of this religion still been preserved for centuries? No research has been done specifically on the subject of research.

Theoretical foundations

• Sun

The companionship between the sun and Mitra's ally

has been highlighted. The sun, this life-giving element in the early and pastoral life of Bakhtiari people in ancient times, provided a connection between daily lives with the element of the sun, followed by the signs of the sun, which was one of the manifestations of Kish Mehr. For Bakhtiari people, the sun is a symbol of purity, holiness, and glory. It has a purifying and anti-demonic aspect. Some symbols are inspired by the symbol of the sun, which has played a special role in the lives of Bakhtiari people.

- Broken cross

The crucifix or broken cross is the oldest symbol of Mehr. The symbol belongs to the prehistoric period and the early Mehr, which represents the four axes (water, wind, earth, and fire). "This sign was first found around Khuzestan and dates back to five thousand years BC, and thus its historical background is probably much older than that of the Aryans in India. Hertzfeld called it the orbit of the sun" (Bakhtortash, 1972, 71). In Bakhtiari people (knitted), the role of the cross is also found in abundance. Among handicrafts, especially Bakhtiari women's spinning spindle which consists of two pieces of wood and an axis is in the shape of a cross. The cross, this mysterious symbol, has various uses in Bakhtiari culture and has been used in women's tattoos, on some objects such as knives, scissors, spindles, etc. (Yaghoubzadeh & Khazaei, 2019, 46). The symbol of the cross has been tattooed on the forehead, chin, and hands of Bakhtiari women. Hand and face tattoos, which are now common among Bakhtiari women and girls, are one of the conditions for entering the ritual of Mehr. In the way of Mehr, it was customary to draw a cross on the forehead of a person to indicate that his life was dedicated to the ritual of Mehr, and that person proudly pledged to devote his talents, forces, and his life to someone who rules the secrets (Niaz Kermani, 1985, 108-109).

-Sacrificing roosters

The rooster is a symbol of Soroush and the peak of the sun or Mehr, which promises the end of darkness and the beginning of light. Later, the courier became Ahuramazda, and until now, the rooster has been the

messenger of the early morning and the end of the night (Avarzamani, 2019, 46). It had a special place in the ritual of Mehr Khoros. “With the cock-a-doodle-doo of the rooster, the worshipers were obliged to stand up and pray and for this reason, the ceremony for the newcomer to the religion of Mehri was at dawn and early in the morning, and in the Mehregan celebration, a white rooster was given to Mitra during the religious ceremony” (Razi, 1992, 121). In sacrifice rituals in Bakhtiari, the rooster is one of the important parts of sacrifice. This bird is accepted by the sun god and is considered as the eternal psyche of the sun that awakens the sleepy world. Also, whenever a person died at sunset and night, a rooster was tied over the head of the deceased, which would not harm the psyche of the deceased due to the demon of darkness. Also, sometimes several people died from a family shortly after, beheading one of the rooster family and burying it completely near the cemetery.

- Sacrificing horses

“In Indo-European mythology, the horse is a special symbol of Iran, the sun, the moon, and the wind, and it is mentioned that some gods were mentioned, including the sacrifices of Kaykhosrow in front of the gods for victory over Afrasiab” (Poure Davoud, 1998). In the morning, the poems and mourning songs along with a kotal ceremony show as well as setting up a Mafegah, excluding its sad effect, presents mourning music and form a part of the culture of this great people. Kotal is actually a compound symbol that has lost its rider. It is customary to cut the mane and tail of the horse and place the saddle upside down and cover the back of the horse with black cloth and the weapons and hang the clothes of the deceased on it or place those clothes on its back. Moreover, women, families hang their headbands and hair on the horse’s forehead or neck (Fig. 1), the Kotal horse moves in front of the mourners or is kept in the front of the house of the deceased person during mourning days (Mansoorian Sarkhgarieh & Dehghan Ghasem Kheili, 2011, 131). Cutting the tail and the horse is a sign of being left without a rider and represents an orphan horse without an owner. In fact, this symbol of

the horse also experiences a kind of death as its rider at the same time and shows its poor performance. It is also not allowed to sell the kotal horse because it has been sacrificed in a way.

- Kel Sangi

One of the secondary symbols used by Bakhtiari is the whole or single stone column or pyramid, which stands for the axis of the universe and the tree of life, and the finger of the sun, with which they mark the holy place, which is in a direct connection with the sun (Fig. 2). Pilgrims and travelers, when they reach the neck in the road from which the old man or the shrine is visible, stand and bow to the shrine and put stones on one another.

- Fire

Fire is another symbol of the sun. The ancient Iranians considered fire as a symbol of life, their national identity, or a stove and were proud of it. For Bakhtiari, a man was considered a symbol of the family and if a man did not have a child, he was a stove. They said they were blind because they believed that men were the ones who started the fire in the family and a person who did not have a son would not have a fire in his family. It seems that the word heredity is derived from the same principle, that is,



Fig. 1. Kotal ritual in mourning. Source: Author’s Archive.



Fig. 2. Kel or Kehleh. Source: <https://www.aparat.com>.

the smoke that rises from the firehouse. Also, in the tribal classification, each tribe was divided into several tashes (in Bakhtiari language), meaning that each son who got married had his fire representing the plurality of families and identifying them. Each family was attributed to one tribe, just as in ancient Iran, the fire was a symbol of the division of power and family affiliation. In ancient Iran, “when the Shah passed away, the sacred fire was extinguished all over the country and the period of public mourning began. The Iranians cut their hair short and wore mourning clothes, and the horses’ mane was cut short” (Kuhrt, 1999, 95). In ancient Iran, they had a complete kinship with ancestors and when the head of the family passed away, he was buried in the fireplace of the house, and the holy fire was always burning on his grave. Bakhtiari people also lit fires around the grave of the deceased, but since it was difficult to keep it lit on the grave, they turned to symbolism and cryptography

and only lit a lamp that symbolized fire for a few days and sometimes up to forty days. After that, they used the symbol.

- Bardeshir

The lion was a symbol of protection and guardianship of fire. “In the oldest images, the lion was associated with the worship of the sun-god” (Hall, 2001, 61). “Lions were also the symbolic guardians of temples, palaces, and tombs, and their ferocity was thought to ward off harmful effects.” “Since the men were the guardians of the fire, on the grave of the great men of the family they placed a stone lion (Bardeshir) so that the fire would not always symbolically withhold its mercy and grace from the deceased (Fig. 3). On the other hand, others should know that in this tomb, on which a great man, the guardian of the family fire, is laying, standing on a lion because lions have a privileged position in Mithraic religion (Vermaseren, 2008, 180). Embossed carvings on stone lions (Bardeshir) in Bakhtiari people such as cups, swords, clubs, sacrificial animals, ... represents Mithraism belief highlighting that after sacrificing and pouring blood in the cup, it is returned to nature, and Cups and lions have been used extensively in Persepolis paintings. The face of Bakhtiari stone lions is facing the rising sun.

- Swear by the sun and its symbols

The ancient Iranians used to have an oath of allegiance to Mehr in the fire temple when deciding about legal issues, and therefore sometimes called the fire temple “Darmehr” or Dar Mehr. “It was believed that there was a connection between Mitra, the god of the covenant, and fire, and that fire represented Mitra, so it was customary for Mitra to strengthen the covenants concerning fire, God, the fire of the stove in the fireplace, or the perpetrator of the fire of the sun in the sky. They swore” (Rajabi, 2001, 208).

Bakhtiari people view fire as a sacred symbol to the extent that they swear by it, for example, they say I swear to you (I swear to this fire) or I swear to you and your hole (I swear to your stove and firehouse) and also whenever a person suspected of making a mistake or being accused

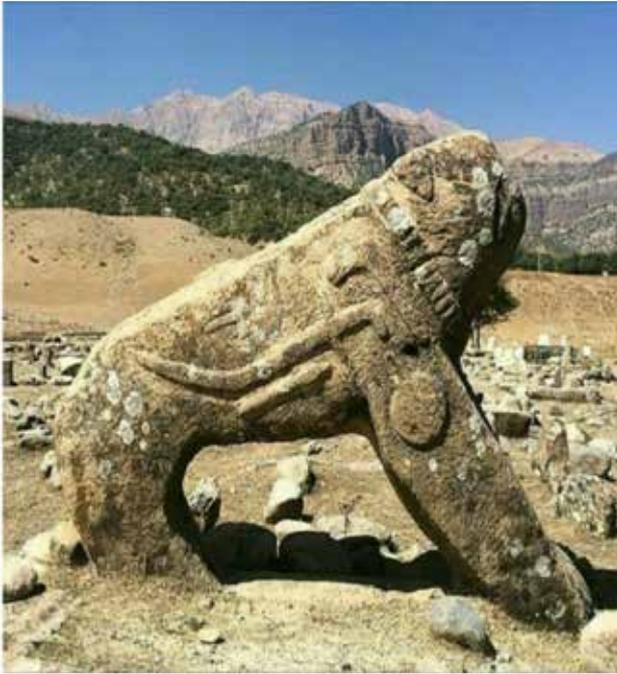


Fig. 3. Bardeshir or Stone Lion on the grave of the elders of Bakhtiari people. Source: Author's Archive.

was forced to swear an oath of allegiance to one of the sacred things, and one of these sacred things was the fire. Interestingly, if a person was a sinner, he would never be satisfied with swearing falsely. Remember the fire, because they believed that a false oath to the fire has an irreparable penalty.

It is common today to swear to someone, he swears by the old man or the white hair of an old and experienced person, which is reminiscent of the old man in the ritual of Mehr, as well as swearing by the light and the sun and by the lamp and the hole (stove fire) meaning The straightforward oath, without explicit text, is reminiscent of the covenant with Mehr, which is itself a pristine and pure light.

• Moon

The fifth-place of the Mithraic religion, apart from the symbolic aspects, is an irony that is related to nature and the growth of plants. The moon is thought to be responsible for the fertility and growth of animals and plants. "The resemblance of the crescent moon to the ox horn was an incentive to think of the moon as the guardian of stars and animals, especially cows, and to

consider the growth and fertility of plants as the function of the moon. In the excavations of Shahdad, the Mehr of a very interesting cylinder with the role of the moon god, the protector of plants and animals related to the third millennium BC, has been obtained, which shows the image of the moon as a female deity with clusters of possibly wheat growing from its body. "On the other hand, Mehr, the goddess is seen as an animal-protector with several animals beside him, in the form of a side view with horns above his head, and the crescent moon is seen between the two images (Avarzamani, 2011, 7). Thus, the idea of fertility of animals and fertility of plants by the moon led to the belief in the moon as the goddess of fertility. In the belief of Bakhtiari people, it has a special place. If the crescent of the moon is down, it is a sign of blessing, it will rain during the month. If a woman looks at the new moon in the last month of pregnancy, her baby will be a girl.

- Cow

In Mithraism, after Mithras is born and makes a covenant with the sun because Mithras wants to give life to the world so that animals and plants come into being, she has to kill a sacred cow that has eaten the sap of hum to let the resurrection of nature take place from the flow of its blood (Rezaei, 1989, 83). In the mythology of many nations, the cow is a symbol of fertility and new life. According to Bakhtiari people, if Varza sneezes, it is a sign of rain. They believed that the earth was on the head of a cow and shaking the cow caused an earthquake and made the earth move. When the earthquake occurred, Bakhtiari women did not run away and went to the bag of flour and bread and tapped on them and said, "Bless you, bless you" and they expect blessings. In times of droughts, to ask for rain, it was customary to sacrifice a male cow (Varza) through a special ceremony near the springs.

- Mountain Goat

One of the symbols of rain in ancient Iran is the mountain goat, whose turned horns are the symbol of the crescent moon, and because there was a relationship between the curved horns of the mountain goat and the crescent

moon, the ancient people believed that the curved horns of mountain goats are effective in precipitation. Among the paintings left from the ancient millennia, there are many paintings of mountain goats on the walls of caves, mountains, and rocks in Iran. The importance of the “goat” motif among the Iranian people is such that more than ninety percent of Iranian motifs are mountain goats. According to the Bakhtiari people, “If the goats gore each other, it is a sign of rain” (Davoodi Hamouleh, 2014, 512). “The role of rams and their horns, with long roots in Iranian beliefs and culture, in Bakhtiari art is a sign of fetishism that the noble Iranian people believe in this role and its applications. “During the Bakhtiari rituals, ram or ibex horns are sometimes used to commemorate the deceased” (Yaghoubzadeh & Khazaei, 2019, 74).

- Scorpio

Scorpio is also one of the signs of the moon with its tentacles that look like the crescent moon (Samadi, 1988, 24). The role of the scorpion as a sacred creature is seen in all altars and the scene of sacred bullfighting. In Iranian religions, it is a pure and non-demonic being (Avarzamani, 2019, 46). “The scorpion flower or the scorpion is one of the most beautiful and evolved motifs in Bakhtiari textures that has gone through its evolution and development as beautifully as possible and belongs to the category of abstract motifs. The infinitely beautiful movement and twisting of these patterns activate the negative space of the side and is created from the interaction of positive and negative space on the bed of hand-woven, endless rhythm and movement, especially in the sides of the hand-woven. This role is stylized as protection (amulet) from the bite of this biting and poisonous animal on the hand-woven fabrics of Lor Bakhtiari in the margins” (Ebrahimi Naghani, 2014, 32).

- Snake

In the ritual of the Mehr, the snake was a sacred creature, a symbol of fertility, fertility, production, and reproduction (Avarzamani, 2019, 46). In the scene of Mitra sacrificing a sacred cow, the serpent as Mitra’s attendant, by licking the blood of the sacrificial cow, reveals his desire to conceive and create life. And it

is a symbol of blessing. The snake is the guardian of the treasure, and this role is in the hands of Bakhtiari nomads, including “Veris” and “Sofreh Ardi”. In fact, the protection of the flour treasure. The role of the snake is compared to water, which is a symbol of purity and Malraux ways (Qaziani, 1988, 155).

• Star

The science of astronomy is one of the foundations of Mithraism. “The teachings of Mithraism are strongly intertwined with astronomy and astronomy. “Mithraists believe that the soul of man is Alawite and has descended from the highest heaven, which is the eighth heaven and the place of Mithras, by passing through the seven spheres of planets or celestial stars, each of which is a special place of God” (Ulansey, 2001, 22). “In Bakhtiari culture, there are manifestations of symbolism towards the stars, which show transcendental and magical beliefs, and are often used as symbols of a good omen and evil in the culture of this people. Seeing many stars, Bakhtiari people, started or left positive things related to migration or planting and harvesting, and so on. “The role of the star has been used many times in Bakhtiari handicrafts, which is mostly in the shape of an eight-pointed star and is used as an amulet” (Yaghoubzadeh & Khazaei, 2019, 48), (Fig. 4).

• The sanctity of the fountain

“Because the ancient Iranians, like other tribes, resorted to the goddess of fertility for blessings and fertility, the sacred spring and tree are symbols of fertility, the guardians of which were Mehr and Anahita. Most likely, the elders were the guardians of the tree and the springs, which were respected by the people (Javadi, 2007, 30). The springs near the holy shrines, which are known as Ab-e-Murad, are revered and honored by the people of Bakhtiari. The people respect them a lot. They consider it a sin to remove them. Kouman writes that an indestructible spring boils near the altars, and visitors worship it and bring vows to it (Moghadam, 2009, 64). Pouring money into the water “is an ancient term in the culture of the Iranian people. Pouring money into water is a kind of sacrifice, a kind of vanity and vows



Fig. 4. Symbols of Mithraism in the handicrafts of Bakhtiari women.
Source: Author's Archive.

and forgiveness and ransom. Women for easy fertility or childbirth and girls want to marry, wash themselves in these springs and resort to the goddess of fertility. Holding rituals next to water, springs, and holy shrines during the harvest seasons are all relics of antiquity, whose appearance has been preserved but its content has changed and is in line with new beliefs. The ritual of sacrificing bulls during the years of drought and low rainfall in holly springs, which is a symbol of the ritual of Mehr, is still part of the customs of the Bakhtiari people. Mehr, the great Aryan god, and possessor of the wide plains of Anahita, the goddess of fertility and pure waters, was always worshiped by sacred springs and trees, and many sacrifices were made for them.

• Revering trees

Trees have long been cherished by man, and primitive men of ancient times thought that trees, like animals and humans, had souls. "Revering trees and even holding special ceremonies to praise plants should be attributed to the ancient Elamites. The ancient Iranians shared a common revering method with their neighbors in this regard. In ancient times, breaking trees and damaging plants, and even separating unripe fruits from the

tree was an unforgivable mistake, and our ancestors believed that if someone cut down a large fruit tree or its branches, "He loses one of his relatives in the same year" (Khodadadian, 1978, 114).

In Bakhtiari, there are also old trees that are somehow mixed with the religious beliefs of the people of the region. Different types of these trees are scattered in different places. The sanctity of big trees in Iran is an ancient tradition that is associated with the life of our ancestors and is still in our beliefs. "The old trees that existed in the cemeteries and near the shrines were chosen by the people and in the ancient religious perception and experience, they are a symbol of supernatural beliefs, because behind the tree there is always a spiritual essence and never a tree has been seen as a tree. It is not worshiped, but it is accompanied by various and strange mysteries" (Javadi, 2009, 30). In the belief of the Bakhtiari people, "Some trees need miraculous power and a symbol of fertility. For some trees, we are supernatural. They believed in it, they were ecstatic and respectful of its tall stature, they tied their vows, wishes, and needs to it with pieces of colorful cloth ... from the tree waiting for miracles such as having children, recovery, and health, and fulfilling dreams. ... To remove the effect of the evil eye, mothers tie the wood of Murad trees to the cradle of the baby, do not throw stones at the sacred trees and do not break its branches" (Davoodi Hamouleh, 2014, 565-566).

Konar tree has a special and sacred place in the belief of Bakhtiari people. It has of significant use to women. "People believe that it has a life-giving power. They resort to the tree next to it and make a vow to have children, know about future, cure the disease, and recover" (ibid., 572). They believe that just as the branches of the garlic tree are ascending and moving towards the sky, the trees of their desire can also bleed into higher worlds through which God will fulfill their desire. Another of Bakhtiari's long-standing beliefs about the tree next to it is that they place a piece of wood similar to the English letter Y on the side of the corpse. The cypress tree is a symbol of eternity and immortality signifying Mehr. The presence of plant motifs in works of art is a testament to the beliefs

that these people have about this role. The role of cypress and pine in Bakhtiari carpets has been associated with sacred beliefs. Even today, a Bakhtiari woman sees her husband in the form of a strong, strong, and free cypress and wants the child in her womb to be brave, tall and free, and like a cypress one day (Yaghoubzadeh & Khazaei, 2019, 51).

• Pir

In Zagros, the word Pir refers to scientists, spiritual world, holy, and also elderly. There are holy shrines in Bakhtiari lands, most of which have the word Pir in their preface or surname, such as Pir Mongesht, Shah Pir. They are thought to be the tombs of elders with the official religion of Zoroaster and Mithraic beliefs, who were buried in this land. Pir is the seventh stage of the series of stages of Mehr worship. Pir is the representative of Mitra, the god of alliance and war-making. Not so long ago, each Bakhtiari tribe was run separately by a Mithraic association under the supervision of an elder. Some objective evidence for the attribution of elders to a particular tribe confirms this theory. The Zoroastrians of Iran had holy places for angels or gods, and it was easy to attribute some of these tombs, burial places, and the boundaries of sacred courtyards and shrines to Muslims. Zoroastrians may have given the name of Pir to these places, courtyards, and areas to protect them from being bitten, plundered, and destroyed, and this in itself made it easier to transfer these places from pre-Islamic to Islamic times (Frye, 1984, 156). The Islamic and Zoroastrian holy sites that sometimes exist throughout Iran today are relics from the Mehr prayer period that have continued to live according to the new belief. Many of Iran's shrines and ancient mosques were once the shrines of Mehr and Anahita, and some have become Islamic shrines. It is obvious that with the acceptance of the new religion, changes have been made in the building of this building and they have been gradually adorned with the decorations of the Islamic era so that its origin lies in the previous religions and it is difficult for the common people to recognize it. But many signs can be traced back to how the ancient sanctuary was transformed into

a new one (Javadi, 2018, 14).

• Yalda night

Iranians have been celebrating Yalda night for more than three thousand years, it is one of their many traditions. Historical studies show that the Aryans have celebrated this night since ancient times and this night was known as the night of "the birth of Mehr". "Yalda" is a Syriac word meaning "birth". Studies have shown that the night of Yalda has concepts such as birth, creation, coming, emergence and phenomenon and is directly related to such synonyms (Amoozgar, 2008, 29). The ancient Iranians believe that the day after Yalda night, the rise and shine of the sun make days longer. The end of autumn and the beginning of winter are increasingly divine and on the night of Yalda Mehr or the sun was born.

On the night of Yalda, which is called Shu Cheleh by Bakhtiari people, they cook, cut, and eat a large pumpkin symbolizing the sun for them.

• Mediation

Most orientalist have mentioned the main meaning of "Mehr" as a mediator. Mehr is the mediator between the Creator and the creatures. In the teachings of Mehri, we also see that they close the eyes of the novice. The mentor pushes the novice forward, then suddenly pushes him forward, and another person hugs him before falling, who is called the savior. The role of mediator between the Creator and the creatures can be seen in the rain-seeking rituals of the Bakhtiari people.

- Kol Elikuse

"Harunki" or "Hal Haleh Shark" or "Kol Elikuse" is the shark-turning ritual of the theatrical rituals performed at night during the rainy or rainless season. A person is chosen as a shark (symbolizing the demon of drought). The shark is dressed as a demon, his face is blackened and two horns are hung over his head. Many men and young people have been caught by sharks and go to houses and tents. This shark-eating process is a sign that people are overcoming drought.

"People who hear the sound come out of the tents and pour water on the shark's head and face, and the tent

owners give them some sugar or flour, and finally someone comes to sponsor the shark and the shark promises that the rain will start in two or three and it will rain the next day.

- Da Baron

This ancient religious rite, which is a prayer for rain, is performed by women and children in winter and spring. The way of performing this prayer and supplication ceremony can be described as follows: a beautiful and tall woman with a backpack on her shoulder and a sack in which there is dry musk and three pieces of wood, which she has taken from Malar house and tied to her waist with a special string. He goes to the mountain and Serena Nawazi starts playing a song (Do Dasmaleh) downstream. After a long distance from the village, they land in a suitable place and pray and ask God for rain. In the meantime, one of the old men and elders follows them and prevents them from going again and promises them that God does not withhold His mercy from His servants and brings them all home.

• Worship of natural factors

Mehr has been defined as a god who is located in the sun, not the sun itself, and associates the originality with the witch. "The basis of Mithraism is the belief that the Mehr of God is great and that other gods are smaller than him. Mithraism is based on the worship of fire and the worship of the forces of nature, such as wind and storm, date and spring, sky and mountains and forests and night, etc because the practice of magic requires the worship of the forces of nature and the belief in the evil and virtuous spirits that are involved in the world (Ghadyani, 2002, 96).

• Colors

Green color is one of the sacred elements in the ritual of Mehr worship. "In the Avesta, the color of the moon is considered green" (Jalalian, 2018, 39). This is evidenced by a large number of shrines called covered in green and the green cloth ribbons are put on the wrist by pilgrims who bring those ribbons as souvenirs as well when visiting holy places. In addition to the green color, the blue color is the sign of Mithraism. Blue beads, known

as beads the green, are used for decorating the house to eliminate the effect of jinx, or the blue beads called *lapak*, are associated with the signs left from the past. "According to Zoroastrian works, Mitra Forough Izadi, the guardian of the covenant of the people, fights against lies and enmity. Mitra is a golden chariot with four white horses, a color that is the manifestation of soil, wind, water, fire and four elements, the hoofs of their hands are golden while the ones of feet are silver, all of them have bridles that are joined to a slotted, well-made claw made of precious metal, and this makes the horses stand together" (Doostkhah, 1983, 228).

Conclusion

Mehr, one of the powerful gods in ancient Iran, has been in the subconscious of the creators of Iranian myths and it has been able to transfer its functions and selfishness such as blessing, fertility, healing, bonding, marriage, and coronation ... in various forms to the present age. Over time, with the metamorphosis of myths and gods in the form of myths and quasi-myths, the ritual of Mehr has also changed its face and functions have been transferred to mythical animals, and Mehr can be considered an animal in Iranian folk myths. In the ritual of Mehr, symbolic images have been used as a visual language in conveying the concepts and principles of this ritual and its followers. Today, thanks to symbolic indexes and myths, some mysteries of ancient history can be deciphered. Bakhtiari rituals, as the intangible heritage of Bakhtiari people, have been inherited from them over a long time. Undoubtedly, this passage of time has taken on a mystical and religious color and smell in some cases, which has added to their beauty. The signs and symbols of Mithraism can be seen in their culture. It has been of special importance for Bakhtiari to believe in the sun and the moon and water, fire and their ancillary symbols, and rituals such as sacrifice and worship at the foot of ancient trees and sacred springs and rely on them for human, plant, and livestock fertility and greenery of fields in the agricultural and livestock. They serve as a bridge between Bakhtiari and Mehr, the great Aryan god

and the possessor of wide plains and the god of fertility and pure waters who were always worshiped by sacred springs and trees, and many sacrifices were made for them. In any case, the Bakhtiari beliefs about the Mehr and its symbols have survived from ancient times to the present day.

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