

The Sanctified Fire From The Dim and Distant Epoch

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Like the Avestan Atash Niyaesh of the Zoroastrians, the Rig-Veda of the Hindus has the Hymns to the divinity Agni, but unlike the single hymn of the Zoroastrians, the Rig-Veda has several hymns addressed to the fire divinity.

Similar to Atash Niyaesh, one Rig Vedic hymn venerates the sacred fire as, 'O Agni, You are the life, you are the protector of man. In return for our praises bestow health upon the father of the family who implores you, O Agni. You are a prudent defender; To You we owe life, we are your family'

Like the Zoroastrians, the Hindu Brahmins are forbidden to throw any filth into fire and should not warm his feet by it.

In the Indo-European era the fire of the hearth enjoyed a tutelary power. The Greeks used to ask from the fire, 'Make the earth ever liberal to us', 'Grant that I may enjoy long life and that I may arrive at old age'. He even desired wisdom from it, 'O Fire, You place upon the good way the man who has wandered into the bad way. If we have committed a fault, pardon us'

To the ancient Greeks and the Romans, the fire of the hearth was essentially pure. And the guilty man could not approach the fire unless he has been purified, and was enjoined to offer the twigs only from certain trees to the sacred fire.

The worship of the sacred fire belongs not only to the population of Greece and Rome but also to the Eastern people the Iranians and the Hindus. One Greek prayer to the fire is preserved in the collection of Orphic Hymns 84 which runs as, 'Render us always prosperous, always happy, O Fire, You are eternal and beautiful, ever young; you who nourishes, you are rich, receive favorably these our offerings, and in return give us happiness and sweet health' (see also Plutarch Captiv. II)

Furthermore the Homeric Hymns 29 and Orphic Hymns 74 as well as Plutarch 795 tell us that in every Greek and Roman house there was an altar and on this altar they keep a small quantity of ashes with burning few coals and it was a sacred duty of the master of the house to keep the fire up night and day. Woe to the house where it was extinguished. Every evening they covered the burning coal with ashes to prevent them from entire consummation and every morning the first care was to revive this fire with few twigs. This ancient Indo-European practice of perpetual burning of the hearth fire has survived among the devout Zoroastrians in India

The fire ceased to glow on the altar only when the whole family had perished. Among the ancients, an extinguished hearth fire was synonymous with the extinguished family. Similar custom was observed in the Sasanian times when the Royal fire was extinguished on the death of the ruler to be rekindled again on the accession of the successor.

The antiquity of the belief and reverential practice of the sacred fire were common among people of the Mediteranian, and the Iranian plateau and the peninsula of India. proving once again that the Greeks, Romans, Iranians, and Hindus belong to

the same race, and in a very distant past, lived together in Central Asia. when there were no Greeks, no Romans, no Iranians, no Hindus but only the Aryans.

When the tribes separated, they carried this worship of fire with them. Some to the banks of the river Ganges, others to the Iranian plateau and some to the shores of Mediterranean. Later, when these tribes had lost the associations with each other, some adored Brahma, others adored Zeus while some others Janus, but the Iranians due to the advent of their Great Prophet Zarathushtra started adoring and worshipping one God, Ahura Mazda but even while the others have their own gods, all preserved this reverence of the sacred fire as their ancient legacy, the first religion which they had known and practiced in the common cradle of their race. The existence of the reverence to the sacred fire among all the Indo-European nations sufficiently demonstrates its high antiquity.