

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

From the First Pain to the Last Treatment: Mythological References to the Origin of Diseases and Their Remedy in the Book of *Bundahishn*

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Abstract

According to ancient Iranian mythology, the world is depicted as a battleground between the forces of good and evil. Ahuramazda is revered as the ultimate source of goodness, while Ahriman is portrayed as the creator of all things malevolent, such as darkness, ignorance, pain, and disease. These mythological concepts have been passed down through references in the Avesta texts and Pahlavi literature, providing insights into the beliefs of ancient Iranians. In a scholarly exploration of these themes, the research delves into the textual evidence concerning illness, treatment, and the origins of these concepts as presented in the *Bundahishn*, a reliable source for understanding ancient Iranian beliefs. Ancient Iranian cosmology posits that afflictions and maladies stem from the destructive influence of Ahriman and his cohorts, who seek to wreak havoc upon creation. Conversely, the forces of Ahuramazda strive to counteract this demonic evil by imparting medical knowledge to humanity and teaching healing practices. Within this dualistic worldview, pain and disease are attributed to demonic origins, while medicine and treatment are associated with Ahuramazda. The ancient Iranians viewed the pursuit of medical knowledge and the practice of pharmacy as integral components of the eternal battle between good and evil. In this framework, safeguarding health and administering treatment are essential in the ongoing struggle against evil forces. This holistic perspective underscores the interconnectedness of physical well-being with spiritual beliefs, emphasizing the role of individuals in preserving their health as an act of resistance against demonic influences.

Key words: Ancient Iran, *Bundahishn*, Ancient Physicians, Medical Plants, History of Medicine, Pain, Mythology

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Introduction

To understand the ancient Iranian perspective on the origins of disease and its treatment, it is essential to explore their mythological narratives. Myths serve as a conduit for elucidating the genesis of ailments and healing methods within the ancient Iranian worldview, as they encapsulate the foundational beliefs regarding the inception of humanity and the past, present, and future of both individuals and the world (Amouzegar, 2010, pp. 3-4; Cereti, 2015, p. 259).

The mythology of ancient Iran revolves around the eternal conflict between good and evil, spanning a twelve-thousand-year battle that culminates in the ultimate triumph of good. According to this belief system, humans were created to support Ahuramazda's forces in their quest for victory, while Ahriman and demons seek to bring destruction through disorder, disease, and death. To counteract these malevolent forces, Ahuramazda provides healing and protection to his soldiers, ensuring their survival in the ongoing struggle (Amouzegar, 2010, p. 13; Hinnells, 1997, p. 42).

The foundation of our understanding of Iranian mythology can be traced back to the ancient text of the Avesta, particularly the *Yashts* section, which delves into various mythological narratives and the exploits of deities. Yet, the most comprehensive accounts of Iranian mythology are found in Sasanian texts written in Middle Persian. These texts were meticulously recorded and revised by Zoroastrian priests known as Magi or *Mōbeds* during the Sassanid period and into the early Islamic era. Some of these texts serve as translations and interpretations of the original Avestan scriptures, shedding further light on the rich tapestry of Iranian mythological lore (Hinnells, 1997, p.8).

The Book of *Bundahishn* (or *Bundahišn*) in particular is a crucial text that recounts the mythological history of the world, tracing creation to resurrection. This study focuses on citing and analyzing textual references regarding diseases and treatments in the Book of *Bundahishn*. It aims to provide insight into historical perspectives on health, illness, and healing practices prevalent during the text's composition. This research probes cultural beliefs, medical knowledge, and societal attitudes toward well-being in the ancient Zoroastrian tradition.

1- *Bundahishn* and its History

The Book of *Bundahishn* is a significant Middle Persian text, recollected circa 10th A.D., often described as an encyclopedia of ancient Iran, encompassing narratives on creation, the battle between good and evil, and the historical evolution of Iran from the *Pishdadians* (or *Pēšdādī*, the ancient mythological dynasties) to the Arab invasion. It also delves into predictions of future events, the apocalypse, the arrival of the *Sushians* (or *Sušiant*), and resurrection. Additionally, *Bundahishn* features discussions on astronomy, the calendar, biology, medicine, as well as historical and mythological geography (Yarshater, 2006: p. 350; Gignoux, 2009, p. 91). Originally known as "*Zand ī āgāhīh*" (an interpretation for awareness), it was later renamed *Bundahishn* due to its focus on the genesis of creation (Tafazzoli, 2010, p. 141; Macuch, 2009, p. 137). The term "*Bundahishn*" comprises "*bun*", meaning "origin" or "foundation, beginning"



(Bartholomae, 1904, p.968), and “*dahišn*”¹ derived from the ancient Iranian root “*dā*”², signifying “to place, make, create”³ (Cheung, 2007, p. 45). Thus, *Bundahishn* can be understood as “the beginning of creation” or, more simply as “the initial creation.”

The author of *Bundahishn* is likely “*Farnbagh*”, with his lifetime estimated to be towards the end of the 10th AD. *Bundahishn* has two versions: the concise Indian *Bundahishn* with thirty-six chapters, reworked in India, and the extensive Iranian *Bundahishn* with forty-six chapters (Bahar, 2021, pp. 1-2). The primary source for this work, the “*Dāmdād Nask*”⁴, as outlined in the eighth book of *Dinkard*, explores the creation narrative and the emergence of the initial beings (Tafazzoli, 2010, p. 142; Agostini, et al., 2020, p. XXII intro).

2- Literature Review

Numerous books and articles have explored Iran’s medical history, from antiquity to the contemporary era. This overview highlights key publications that delve into the rich medical heritage of the region.

Khodabakhshi (1953) was the first to investigate thoroughly Iran’s medical history. During his decade-long tenure at the British Embassy in Iran, Elgood (1971) meticulously researched the country’s medical history using sources ranging from ancient to contemporary, a work later translated and published by M. Javidan. Tajbakhsh (1993) surveys the ancient era in the initial volume of his book “History of Veterinary Medicine and Iran.” Zarshenas (2009) scrutinized and dissected the various medical fields in ancient Iran by examining Avestan and Middle Persian texts. Sirajuddini (2010) explored herbal medicines and therapies in ancient Iran through an article scrutinizing ancient treatment methods in Iranian texts. Azkaei (2012) studied the history of medicine in ancient Iran based on ancient texts detailing renowned semi-historical and historical figures in chronological sequence. Abdollahi and Pourgiv (2012) probed medicine in ancient Iran, evaluating medical knowledge through mythological texts and historical works. Bazhdan, Abolghasemi, and Mirfakhrai (2014) conducted a survey on the figure of Athrat or Thrit as the first physician in Iranian mythology. Ghalekhani and Mahmoudi (2016) extracted and analyzed the names of various diseases in the Avesta text of *Vandidad*, providing insights based on their findings.

1- *dahišn* is from the same root as the New Persian *dādār* “creator.”

2- *√dā2* is cognate with New English do, deed.

3- There is another root with the same shape, identified by the number 1 (*√dā1*), which means “to give.”

4- One of the 21 Sassanid Avesta volumes whose Avestan text has not reached us, but a summary of “*Zand*” or its commentary is available in the eighth book of *Dinkard*.



Textual Evidence in the Book of *Bundahishn*

1- The First Patients and the First Death due to Disease after the Initial Creation in the Mythology of Ancient Iran

According to the *Bundahishn* text, following the creation of Earth, the first beings were Kayumarth (Middle Persian: *Gayō^(g)mard*, meaning “the living immortal”) and *Gāv-e yektā āfarīdeh* (Middle Persian: *Gāw ī ewagdād*, meaning “the first created cow”). Kayumarth, resembling a round, fragrant, and luminous entity akin to the sun, eternal and immortal, resided by the left side of the inaugural river (*Dāiti* River)⁵. The first cow, resembling the white and bright moon, stood on the right bank of the *Dāiti* River (Amouzegar, 2010, p. 13). Subsequently, Ahriman and his demonic forces launch an assault on the world to obliterate it. Consequently, in ancient Iranian belief, diseases are ascribed to Ahriman (Fekripour, and Heidarpour, 2022, p. 125). Following the onslaught of evil forces, Kayumarth, and the first cow endure severe injuries and illnesses before ultimately perishing (Amouzegar, 2010, pp. 13-14; Shaked, 2005, p. 13).

In Iranian mythology, the initial mention of the origin of diseases is found in the second paragraph of the 14th chapter of *Bundahishn*:

14.2) *ka Gayōmart wēmārīh abar mad pad hōy dast ōbast* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 180).

“When Kayumarth became sick, he fell on her left hand” (Bahar, 2021, p. 80).

In Iranian mythology, the concept of diseases is first introduced in the 14th chapter of *Bundahishn*, where Kayumarth and the first cow are depicted as the initial sufferers, succumbing to the first illness inflicted by Ahriman’s demons. Consequently, Ahuramazda is compelled to devise remedies to combat these malevolent afflictions (Cereti, 2015, pp. 261-262).

2- The First Pain and the First Medicine: A Plant to Prevent and Relieve Pain

In the 4th chapter, the 19th and 20th paragraphs mention the use of a pain-relieving remedy derived from the hemp plant to alleviate the injuries and distress experienced by the first cow (Amouzegar, 2010, pp. 47-48; Kazemi, et al., 2010, p. 171).

5- Avestan: *dāitiia-* (Bartholomae, 1904, p. 728)



4.19) *u-š āz ud niyāz ud sēj ud dard ud yask ud waran ud būšāsp pad gāw ud Gayōmart frāz hišt* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 61).

4.20) *pēš az madan ī ō gāw Ohrmazd mang ī bēšāz kē ast ī bang xwānēnd ō gāw pad xwardan dād ud frāz pēš ī čašm bē mālīd kū tā-š az zanišn ud bazag ud wizēnd duš-rāmīh kam bawēd* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 61).

“He (Ahriman) caused need, pain, sickness, desire, and sleepiness on (the body of) the cow and Kayumarth.”

“Before [the calamity] came to the cow, Ahuramazda gave the curative Mang (hemp), which is also called bang, to the cow to eat and applied it in front of [his] eyes so that he would be bitten and less disturbed by destruction” (Bahar, 2021, p. 52).

According to ancient Iranian beliefs, all negative occurrences are attributed to Ahriman and the demons, with surrender leading only to ruin and destruction (Kohansal Vajargah, 2022, p. 175). The Persian term “*gunāh*” originates from the old Persian “*vināθ*”⁶, pronounced as “*vinās*”⁷ in Avestan⁸, combining the prefix “*vi-*”⁹ and the ancient Iranian root “*nās*”¹⁰, meaning “destruction, disappearance,” to signify “ruin” (Cheung, 2007, p. 282). In essence, Iranian sin denotes being ruined by yielding to Ahriman’s influence or succumbing to the demons.

In this segment, a significant term related to illness is highlighted, which is infrequently encountered in texts. The term *yask*¹¹ (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 97) appears in Middle Persian alongside *wēmārīh*¹² (Ghalekhani, and Mahmoudi, 2016, p. 137), both signifying the same concept. However, of the two, only *wēmārīh* has transitioned into modern Persian, which denotes disease with a minor phonetic alteration¹³.

The pain-killing plant *Bang* (cannabis) was administered to Kayumarth and the first cow before the full array of plants had emerged on Earth, suggesting its heavenly existence. This potent remedy is foreseen to combat the agony induced by lethal demonic ailments, reserved for divine intervention when needed. As per accounts in the 56th paragraph of the 27th chapter, Ahriman’s essence is described as dark, tainted with contagion and impurity, inherently embodying pathogenic tendencies:

6- *vi-nāθ*- (Schmitt, 2014, p. 219)

7- *vi-nās*- (Bartholomae, 1904, p. 1055)

8- According to the rules of phonetic transformation from the ancient to the middle and modern periods, the prefix *vi-* is changed to *gu-*, and the consonant *θ/th* is changed to *h*. Therefore, the evolution of this word from Old Persian to Middle Persian is as follows: *vināθ* > *gunāh*

9- *vi-* (Schmitt, 2014, p. 278)

10- *√nas* (Bartholomae, 1904, p. 1056)

11- *yask* from Avestan *yaska-* (Bartholomae, 1904, p. 1269)

12- *wēmārīh* (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 89)

13- Another word for pain and illness in Middle Persian is *bēš*, which evolved from Avestan *ībaēšah-* or its older form *dvaēšah-* (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 18; Bartholomae, 1904, p. 816).



27.56) *gōhr ī Ahremanīg sard ud hušk ud gyāg tārīg ud gandag* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 328).

“Ahriman’s essence is cold and dry, a dark and dirty place” (Bahar, 2021, p. 122).

3- The Creation of Plants from the Body of the First Cow; the First Medicines

In the first paragraph of the 13th chapter, it is noted that following the demise of the first cow near the *Dāiti* River, a substance from its brain descends to the earth, giving rise to twelve varieties of healing plants.

13.1) *gōwēd pad dēn kū, ka gāw ī ēk-dād bē widard ānōh kū-š mazg bē fragast jōrdā abāz rust panjāh ud panj sardag ud dwāzdah sardag urwar ī bēšāz* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 167).

“It is said in the religion (texts) that when the first cow died, fifty-five types of seeds and twelve types of medicinal herbs were found there when its brain was scattered” (Bahar, 2021, p. 52).

According to the *Bundahishn*, the initial medicinal plants emerged from the first cow’s body to combat illnesses believed to be of evil origin. The sixth section lists various plant categories, highlighting medicinal plants. In Middle Persian, plants are collectively known as “*urwar*”¹⁴, with “*dārūg*”¹⁵, specifically denoting medicinal flora, preserved as “*dārū*” in modern Persian. Originating from Middle Persian “*dār*”¹⁶, signifying “tree” or “wood”, this term has evolved into its present form (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 24).

16.6) *urwar ēn and ēwēnag ōh bawēd: dār ud draxt ud mēwag ud jōrdā ud gul ud sprahm ud tarrag ud abzār ud giyā(h) ud nihāl ud dārūg ud zadūg ud ēzm ud bōy ud rōyn ud rang ud jāmag* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 210).

“There are several types of plants: branches, trees, fruits, seeds, flowers, asparagus, seeds, tools, grass, saplings, medicine, glue, firewood, scent, oil, paint, and clothes” (Bahar, 2021, p. 87).

4- The First Celestial Doctor in Mythology

In ancient Iran, the deity embodying bonds, friendship, tranquility, and recuperation is revered as “*Aryaman*”¹⁷, pos-

14- *urwar* (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 84)

15- *dārūg* (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 24)

16- *dār* from old Persian *dāru* (Schmitt, 2014, p. 166)

17- In middle Persian: *Ērmān* (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 31)



sibly signifying “humble” or “nobility of mind” (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 31).

Mythologically, his vital role involves safeguarding the heir’s lineage, as noted in the 26th chapter. Within paragraph 121, he is hailed as the divine patron of medicine and the inaugural healer (Amouzegar, 2010, p. 35).

26.100) *Ērmān Amahrāspand ān mēnōg kē bēšāzēnišnīh az hamāg dard ī dāmān dād* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 310).

26.101) *čiyōn gōwēd kū har(w) dārūg dard bē zadan rāy dāmān xwarēnd ud ka man Ohrmazd Ērmān pad bēšāzēnišnīh nē frēstē ān dard weh nē āyē* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 311).

“Aryaman the immortal is the celestial who gave the cure for all pain to the creatures” (Bahar, 2021, p. 115).

“It says that the creators take every medicine to eliminate pain. If Ahuramazda had not sent Aryaman to help with treatment, that pain would not have healed” (Bahar, 2021, p. 115).

Furthermore, these passages highlight the god’s responsibility for remedy, combating demonic ailments, and crafting medicinal concoctions.

This notion reinforces the belief that Aryaman likely aided physicians and healers in antiquity, earning their reverence.

5- The First Pharmacists and the First Mythical Medicinal Prescription

At the genesis, as mentioned before, a conflict unfolded between the forces of good and evil, with demons spawning pests and maladies to ravage creation. Deities like Aryaman were appointed to heal and alleviate suffering, yet others joined this therapeutic endeavor.

The *Amshaspands*, a group of Ahuric beings, were tasked with aiding beings, denoting immortal benefactors safeguarding creation. Among them, *Amurdād* or *Mordād* (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 8), symbolizing immortality, collaborated closely with *Hordād* or *Khordād* (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 44), symbolizing perfection, both tied respectively to water and vegetation. Notably, *Amurdād* specializes in nurturing plants, ensuring their vitality, and warding off decay (Hinnells, 1997, p. 44; Amouzegar, 2010, p. 18).

As the initial plants sprout from the residual essence of the first cow, malevolent forces swoop down, desiccating the tender growth. In this crisis, *Amshaspand Amordād* employs desiccated flora and rain brought by *Tishtar*, the deity of precipitation, to spawn new vegetation. These plants serve as the source for remedies combating numerous afflictions, numbering ten thousand. This account unfolds in the opening passages of the sixth chapter of *Bundahishn*:

6.d.0) *čahārom ardīg urwar kard.*

6.d.1) *ān ka hušk bē būd Amurdād Amahrāspand čiyōn-iš urwar xwēš ān urwar xwurdag kōst ud abāg āb ī Tištar stad be gumext ...*

6d.3) *u-š dah hazār aziš ēk-sardag ī mādagwar frāz rust hēnd pad abāz-dārišnīh ī dah hazār wēmārīh ī Gannāg-Mēnōg ō dāmān kirrēnīd* (Pakzad, 2005, pp. 105-106).



“The fourth battle was done by the plant(s) (with the demons). When it is dry, *Amurdad Amshaspand*, who owns the plant(s), crushed and softened that plant and mixed it with the water he had taken from the deity *Tishtar* [...]. Then, to stop ten thousand diseases that *Gannāgmēnōg* (=Ahriman) made against the creation, ten thousand [types of plants] grew” (Bahar, 2021, p. 65).

Here, *Amurdād* is introduced as a heavenly pharmacist who rushes to help the creatures to cure the diseases caused by the evil forces.

6- “*Hōm*” the Lord of Drugs and Medicinal Herbs

Hōm emerges as a captivating and enigmatic figure from antiquity. It embodies a multifaceted identity in mythos as an ancient deity, a revered botanical entity, and a mystical elixir. Its roots trace back to the era preceding Zoroastrianism in ancient Iran.

This sacred plant-God, known as “*Soma*”¹⁸ in ancient India, formed the essence of a ceremonial libation imbibed by Aryan priests and warriors. Archaeological findings within Aryan settlements suggest *Hōm* likely derived from ephedra¹⁹, containing the active compound ephedrine (Merlin, 2003, p. 300). Recent records hint at a blend that included poppy juice and hemp alongside *Hōm* extract (Russo, 2007, p. 1631). Described in Avesta texts as a potion imbued with “life-preserving”²⁰ properties, its preparation invoked a specialized ritual perceived to heighten efficacy through incantations by the Magi priests (Amouzegar, 2010, p. 18; Hin-nells, 1997, p. 33).

Bundahishn’s depictions of *Hōm* are an extrapolation from an ancient manuscript, preserved through translations of the Avesta literature during the Sassanid reign, shedding light on this intriguing narrative.

16.5) ... *Hōm ī spēd ī bēšāz ī a-winast rust ēstēd an-dar čašmag ī Ardvīsūr. har(w) kē xwarēd ahōš bawēd u-g Gōkarēn draxt xwānēnd. čiyōn gōwēd kū Hōm ī dūr-ōš u-š pad fraš(a)gird²¹ anōšagīh aziš wirāyēnd ud urwarān rad ast* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 210).

“Near that tree grows the white, remedial, pure *Hōm* in the spring of *Ardvīsūr*. Whoever eats it becomes immortal; they call it the *Gōkarēn* tree. As it says: *Hōm* that keeps away death. At the Restoration, they will prepare for immortality from it. It is the lord of plants” (Agostini, et al., 2020, p. 88).

18- Sanskrit *Soma*- (Mayrhofer, 1996, p. 748).

19- The ephedra plant has almost the same form in different Iranian dialects, e.g., Baluchi: *hum*; Pashtu *Omā* (Hasandoust, 2014, Vol. 4, p. 2922).

20- In Avesta *dūra.oša*- (Bartholomae, 1904, p. 751)

21- In middle Persian *frašgird* (MacKenzie, 1971, p. 33).



The paragraph introduces the concept of the celestial white *Hōm* tree, rooted beside the legendary *Ardivisūr*²² spring. It's believed to embody a transcendent essence, serving as the archetype for all flora, notably the earthly *Hōm* plant. Hence, ancient Iranians revered the *Hōm* elixir as a divine panacea, bestowing immortality and shielding against mortality (Serajoddini, 2010, p. 19; Zarshenas, 2009, p. 14). Additionally, the white *Hōm*, characterized by purity and therapeutic qualities, is emphasized in another passage.

26.95) *Hōm yazad andar Gōkarēn Hōm ī a-winast ī bēšāz kē-š fraš(a)gird kardārīh padīš bawēd* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 308).

“Divine immaculate *Hōm*, healing *Hōm* in *Gōkarēn*²³; the Restoration will come to be through him” (Agostini, et al., 2020, p. 138).

These paragraphs allude to the significance of the white *Hōm* extract (*Gōkaran*) in immortalizing beings during the *Frashkard*, symbolizing the eternal struggle between affliction and remedy. They foreshadow an imminent finale where healing triumphs over suffering in the prophesied culmination of the world's narrative, a theme to be explored subsequently.

7- Non-Herbal Medicines: About the Creation of The Xrafstars and the Therapeutic Properties of Some of Them

Within *Bundaheshn*'s accounts, healing substances are not solely plant-based; occasionally, therapeutic remedies stem from animal sources. The text suggests that certain remedies originate from a group of malevolent creatures known as “*Xrafstar*”²⁴ (pronounced as *Khrasf-star*), derived from the ancient Iranian root “*xrafs*”²⁵ meaning “to bite” or “to cut” (Hasandoust, 2014, Vol. 2, p. 1116). These entities, once benevolent Ahuric beings, fell prey to corruption by Ahriman, transforming into harmful creatures. Insects, scorpions, spiders, snakes, mice, toads, lizards, and wolves fall into this category of pests.

The narrative in the 7th paragraph of the 22nd chapter underscores the Ahuric essence of *Xrafstars* through their creation from the four elements, highlighting Ahriman's inherent inability to create matter, only to taint and dismantle what is created (Hinnells, 1997, p. 52). Through Ahuramazda's intervention, it is believed that a beneficial elixir can be fashioned

22- The Avestan name: *arədvī.sura* is also one of the important epithets of the goddess Anahita and shows the close connection between these two deities. The goddess Anahita herself is the goddess of freshwater springs, and the meaning of her name is “pure, undefiled” (Bartholomae, 1904, pp. 125, 194, 1584). This point shows a divine alliance to deal with pollution and disease.

23- In these two paragraphs, another name of this mythical plant is given in the form of “*gōkaran*” which means “cow's horn” - in Avesta *gao.karəna-* which can be associated with the uniquely created cow (Bartholomae, 1904, p. 480).

24- *xrafstar* (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 94).

25- In new Persian *Xrāstar*



from their bodies to aid living beings.

22.7) *u-šān kirb pad dārūg-āmēzišnīh darmānīhā andar šawēd ud sūd ī dāmān az-iš čē-š bawišn az ān čahār gōhr ud zāhagān ī Ohrmazdīg* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 257).

“Their body can be used to treat people in a medicinal composition, and the creatures benefit from it because their essence is taken from the four elements of the Ahuric world” (Bahar, 2021, p. 98).

In the 13th paragraph of the 22nd chapter, while probing descriptions of vermin, a passing mention is made of an unknown insect believed to yield an antidote. Still, further details regarding this insect and the antidote²⁶ preparation remain undisclosed. The excerpt implies that antidotes can stem from the toxins of these pests.

22.13) [...] *ud ān ī pāč-zahr* [...] (Pakzad, 2005, p. 258).

“... and that one vermin from which the antidote is made from ...” (Bahar, 2021, p. 98).

Similarly, the 29th paragraph of the same chapter introduces certain bees (namely honeybees), which are considered vermin, capable of producing medicinal food compounds:

22.29) *ēn xrafstarān Ohrmazd pad harwisp-āgāhīh was abāz ō sūd ī dāmān wardēnīd. čiyōn magas kē angubēn kunēd ...* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 262).

“Ahuramazda changed many of these vermin for the benefit of the creatures, like a fly that produces honey...” (Bahar, 2021, p. 99).

In Zoroastrian texts, the honey bee (Middle Persian: “*Magas ī Angubīn*” literally: “the honey fly” (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 53)) is described among bees due to its stinger, which was once painful and poisonous like others, until Ahuramazda intervened, transforming it into a vital honey producer. This dual nature provides sustenance and potentially medicinal benefits for the Ahuric beings. The significance of creating remedies, including antidotes, stems from demons constantly generating and spreading poison to endanger existence. Notably, *Tairi* and *Zairi*, malevolent demons opposed to *Hordād* and *Amurdād*, taint plants with their toxins. Within the 5th

26- In middle Persian *pāč-zahr* or *pād-zahr* (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 63)



chapter's initial paragraph, the term "*anōshag*" references antidotes, symbolizing both physical and spiritual preservation (Amouzegar, 2010, p. 38).

5.1) [...] *zahr ō anōšag* [...] (Pakzad, 2005, p. 70).

"... poison (against) antidote..." (Agostini, et al., 2020, p. 35).

The term "*anōshag*"²⁷ parallels the concept of *nectar*²⁸ in Greek mythology. *Nectar*, deriving from "*nek-*"²⁹ for "death and destruction"³⁰ and "*-tar*"³¹ for "passing through", symbolizes overcoming death and granting immortality. It served as the divine drink for Greek gods, echoing the theme of transcending mortality (Beekes, 2010, p. 1004). This comparison emphasizes the significance of antidote formulation as a crucial pharmaceutical practice intertwined with the mythical battles of ancient gods against demons.

8- The Final Confrontation of the Two Forces of Good and Evil: The End of Pain and Illness and the Final Treatment

Bundahishn, akin to numerous mythological tales, deals with the end of the world. Within its pages, the emergence of three successive saviors, descendants of Zoroaster, each appearing one thousand years apart leading up to the culmination of twelve thousand years, is prophesied. Throughout these millennia, Ahriman's emissaries assail the world in opposition to these saviors. This prophecy unfolds notably in the 36th paragraph of the 33rd chapter:

33.36) *pas ka hazārag ī Ušēdar sar bawēd Malkūs ī sēj-čih̄r az tōhmag ī Tur ī Brādarō(x)š ī ōš ī Zardušt būd ō paydāgīh̄ rasēd ...* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 371).

"So, when the millennium of "*Hushidar*" arrives, "*Malkus*" the nature destroyer demon, from the generation of "*Tur ī Brādarōsh*", who was the cause of Zoroaster's death, will emerge..." (Bahar, 2021, p. 142).

Malkus, the evil spirit embodying cold and winter, emerges during the era of the first savior named "*Hushidar*". This onset brings forth a wave of afflictions and calamities, necessitating the quest for remedies and healing. The thirty-seventh paragraph of the thirty-third chapter documents this pivotal event:

27- *anōšag* (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 10)

28- Greek *νέκταρ/nectar* (Beekes, 2010, p. 1004)

29- Greek $\sqrt{\nu\acute{\epsilon}k/nek}$ - "to vanish, die" (Beekes, 2010, p. 1003)

30- Related to the ancient Iranian root $\sqrt{\nu}nas$ - "death" (Cheung, 2007, p. 282)

31- Related to the ancient Iranian root $\sqrt{tar}H$ - "to cross over" (Cheung, 2007, p. 380)



33.37) *ēn-iz kū pad ān hangām bēšāzišnīh andar hazār sardag urwar ī pad hamēstārīh, hazār sardag wēmārīh dād ēštēd ō bē dō sardag urwar ud ēk sardag zamīg rasēd. kas pad wēmārīh nē mīrēd bē pad zarmānīh ayāb ōzanēnd* (Pakzad, 2005, pp. 371-372).

“Ten thousand plants sprouted from that one unique plant to counteract the ten thousand diseases that the Evil Spirit fabricated against creation. From these ten thousand, another one hundred thirty thousand different species of plants grew” (Bahar, 2021, p. 48).

Supported by the deities, *Hushidar* crafts a potent remedy using medicinal flora prevalent in his era to counter the newfound demonic afflictions. As recounted, the text reveals a consolidation of the healing attributes from a thousand plants into two and eventually into one, culminating in an effective medicine. This saga illustrates the escalating empowerment of benevolent forces in the closing millennium of the world’s mythic chronicles.

The imminent arrival of the ultimate savior, “*Soshians*,” signifies the impending climax, where the final showdown will transpire in the physical realm under her guidance.

34.23) *yazišn ī pad rist-wirāy Sōšyāns abāg ayārān kunēd. ud gāw ī Hadayōš pad ān yazišn kušēnd ud az pih ī ān gāw ud Hōm ī spēd anōš wirāyēnd ud ō harwisp mardōm dahēnd ud harwisp mardōm a-hōš bawēnd tā hamē-ud-hamē-rawišnīh* (Pakzad, 2005, p. 384).

“*Sōšāns*, with his helpers, will perform the rite of the Restoration of the dead. In that sacrifice, they will kill the *Hadayōš* Bull, and from its fat, they will prepare white *Hōm*, the elixir of immortality. They will give it to all people, and all people will be immortal forever and ever” (Agostini, et al., 2020, p. 181).

Conclusion

Myth, a crucial component of ancient people’s thoughts and culture, encapsulates tales of heroes and gods battling the world’s destructive forces. Embedded within are profound worldviews and primitive philosophies that elucidate the origins of creation and phenomena beyond human comprehension. Ancient Iranian mythology revolves around the eternal struggle between good and evil, chronicling the cosmic history from Ahriman’s assault to Ahuramazda’s ultimate triumph at the world’s end. Each epoch witnesses the unending conflict between these opposing forces, culminating in the eventual victory of good during the apocalypse. Individuals in every era are forced to combat malevolence and safeguard creation from its pernicious influence. According to *Bundahishn*, evil’s initial and most significant affliction upon good is disease and death. Ahuramazda and deities have diligently sought solutions since time immemorial, emphasizing the importance of medical knowledge encompassing medicine and healing. Within ancient Iranian religion and belief, the sanctity of medicine and pharmacy is revered for its divine origins and pivotal role in combating evil. Through the celestial remedy derived from the fusion of white *Hōm* plant sap and holy cow tallow, the devil’s creation of death can be thwarted, granting eternal life to the deceased.

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