

Significance Of The Winged Bull

Those who pass by Parsee Agiaries and Atash Behrams are intrigued at two winged human headed bulls guarding, as it were, the entrances to these places of worship.

In the extant Avesta scriptures as well as in the Pahlavi literature, there are plenty of references to what are ostensibly animals, like cow, bull, horse, camel, etc. That each one of the 'Avesta' words used for them has a much deeper connotation is a topic which is beyond the pale of this articles. What remains to be considered by us is the bull, particularly the one depicted on the palaces in Susa and Persepolis of the mighty Achaemenian monarchs, Darius I and Xerxes, and which is found on Parsee places of worship even to this day.

Almost all western Iranologists consider the winged bulls as of Babylonian and Assyrian origin. For example, Prof R. Ghirshman, the famous archaeologist, explorer and historian, in his book "Iran", talking about the "Art" of Achaemenian Iran, says that Xerxes "resembled the Assyrian monarchs whom he also imitated by erecting the propylaeum of all the nations on the terrace of Persepolis. This was a massive structure flanked by winged human headed bulls, huge replicas of those guarding the entrances in Assyrian palaces".

The difference between the Susa and Persepolis winged bulls is that the former did not have a human head, but the bulls were shown with wings.

In the 89th of the 92 questions asked in the Pahlavi text. Datistan-i-Denik "The Religious Decision" the questioner, among

other things, asks "who are they who cannot be destroyed and who are immortal? How many are they?" The answer, given by Manushchihr, son of Yavanyam, who flourished in the 9th century A.D. and who became the high priest of Iran, was: "Those possessing the immortal aura, belonging to the Khanirath Bami, are seven. First Yoishto-e-Fryan, second, as mentioned in the Avesta, names Khamayusht son of Humfryan, third Fradhaksht bin-Khumbik, fourth, Ashvasda, son of Pourudashtas, fifth, Van-e-Zaveet -Bish, sixth name, Gopat Shah of importance. Besides Datistai-i-Denik, another Pahlavi work, Danak-u-Minok-i-Khrat (The Wise Man and the Spirit of Wisdom), also states that Gopat Shah is immortal. In the Bundahishn, the Book of Genesis, both Agreras and his son are called Gopat Malka or Gopat shah. There it is stated, "Agreras, son of Pashang, was the rad (spiritual lord) of Sakigastan and is also known as Gopat Shah.

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To all intents and purposes, although both Agreras and his son are known as Gopat Shah, it is the son, who in the Minok-i-Khrat (Mino Kherad) is described as having the form of a cow or a bull, waist down, and of human from head to waist.

Mino Kherad also mentions that Gopat Shah consistently performs the Yazishna ceremony, and pours the consecrated waters of the Zareh (normally, Zarseh is translated as "Sea". In reality, the Zarehs are huge waves in the vast expanse of space, not of water, but of super-ether. We may call them cosmic waves, allegorically called seas), so that all **Khrafastras** (noxious creatures of the evanescent, mortal worlds, of which our earth is a very tiny part) are destroyed. If Gopat Shah does not perform the Yazishna ritual and destroy the Khrafastras during the monsoon, only Khrafastras would rain! Datistan-i-Denik further adds that Gopat Shah protects the cow, Hadyanash, who, finally, will be the ambrosia for all mortals.

What is one to make of all this? Once again, Dr. Framroze S. Chiniwalla comes to our help. According to the pristine esoteric Zoroastrian science, which rightly avers that the Avesta and Pahlavi texts are loaded with allegories and that it requires the science of Khshnoom (literally science that brings about inner delight and ecstasy) to unravel their secrets, the seven immortal persons mentioned in the Pahlavi texts are the seven immortal astral forms (Kehrps) that arise out of the deeds and actions of the seven Amshaspands (Aves, Amesha Spentas = literally, 'immortal' beings) in the evanescent worlds.

For example, Yoishtofryan is the name of the immortal Kehrps of the deeds and actions of Ahura Mazda. Khamayusht is the name of the immortal Kehrps of the deeds, etc. of Ardibehesht Amshaspand. Asnvazda is the name of the deeds and actions in the evanescent worlds, of Sheherevar Amshaspand. Gopat Shah is the Kehrps of the actions in the ephemereral worlds, of Bahman Amshaspand. It is this allegory

of the Kehrps of Bahman Amshaspand that has been described in Mino Kherad as having the form of a human headed bull with wings. The bas relief of this form are to be found in Persepolis. The historical personages, mentioned in the above mentioned Pahlavi books, also bore identical names, as these cosmic Kehrps of Amshaspands, because they (the historical immortal persons) were always in tune with the relative Kehrps of the Amshaspands. Thus, Agreras and particularly his son, were called Gopat Shah or Gopat Malka because the father and son were always attuned to the aforementioned Kehrps of Bahman Amshaspand, who presides over the animal kingdom on earth.

Again, the Mino Kherad says the Gopat Shah sits near the sea (Zareh), performs the Yazishna ceremony continuously and pours the consecrated waters in the seal, so that the noxious creatures are destroyed. By this is meant that the Kehrps of Bahman Amshaspand, called Gopat Shah performs a very vital function in one of the Zarehs (vast expanse of space), called Zareh Keyanse, namely of constantly guiding the wicked energy or force in Nature of a human headed bull with wings-the replica or Gopat Shah as described in the Mino Kherad.

It is interesting to note that in ancient Iran, when a cosmic or celestial object was to be depicted in stone or marble, the earthy form invariably had wings attached to it, as we have seen in both the cases of the winged human figure and the winged bull, which are to be found to this day adorning the facades of Zoroastrian places of worship.

Courtesy-'The orient'-1980-82
Adi. F. Doctor.