

# ANCIENT SUPER POWERS THEIR INFLUENCE ON OUR DAILY LIFE

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The Roman and the Persian Empire were two superpowers that ruled the ancient world and their beliefs were based on two different ideologies, they tried to influence each other for the better or the worse and each one took what they chose from the other and converted it to fit their beliefs.

The Romans believed in super natural beings they called gods. Some of these gods were shaped like human others were half human and half animal. They had basically a god for everything and did nothing without the blessings of these gods; which could only be obtained by performance of rituals and sacrifices at a cost.

The Persians on the other hand followed the words of Wisdom of their teacher and sage Zarathushtra who spoke of nothing but facts, the absolute truth. Words that will be better understood with the increase in knowledge and the mustering of the courage and the moral fiber to recognize the truth. Zarathushtra has given a road map for achieving of perfection and creating paradise on earth. Under the influence of his teachings, the Persians Empire in its short history of 250 years changed the course of human history. As a proof of their belief they left behind signs of progress of the human race, progress that equals modern science & technology. Signs like the first highway that stretched over 1500 miles, or a canal joining the Red Sea to the Mediterranean by way of river Nile or archeological evidence showing that they had measured the depth of the water from the Indus River to the Red Sea. From the social point of view they believed in Human Rights that are denied even today in many countries and ironically also denied to the followers of Zarathushtra in the land of his birth. The stories about the good deeds of the Persians are documented in the Bible and the archeological evidence of their belief - the charter of Human Rights, lies in the British Museum with its replica in the UN.

To understand and grasp the importance of the teachings of Zarathushtra and the role of the Iranians, in shaping the ancient civilizations and the future of World at large, we need to look at these ancient super powers. We need to see the world as it existed before 550 BC and then we can see how the teachings of Zarathushtra were instrumental in guiding the initial steps of the World out of ignorance. We also need to examine the Romans and the Greeks before and after their contact with the Persians for at the end of the game the Romans were the victors and their way of life was imposed on the world.

#### THE ROMANS AND THEIR INFLUENCE

Among the Romans knowledge was vested in the gods. The priest was the intermediary between man and god and that gave him wealth and power, so he kept whatever knowledge he had as a secret and passed it only to those he chose to. If a stranger or outsider learned about it, his days were cut short by the gods. The Romans being the victor in the war between the super powers - this trend still continues and our schools and colleges make the acquiring of knowledge difficult. To get higher education is not easy, those that make it into the system are guided and trained to be of service to a few who will make use of their knowledge to create more wealth for themselves. Science is protected; it is patented and hidden and made difficult to understand, we have names of medicine and parts of bodies in the form of un-understandable Latin words.

So also has our education system made war sacred for us, as it was to the Romans who had a god for it. Today all governments around the world, without exception, allot the biggest slice of their budget to WAR. The Film and Television industry is dedicated to war and violence. Even imaginative Aliens are shown as our enemies.

Our political values are also based on that of the Greeks and Romans. The Greeks lived in large families and each family independently controlled its own affairs. They were protective and were not friendly to their neighbours. Only when it came to defense against a common external enemy, they saw the need for unity but at the same time they were not ready to give the overall control into the hands of a person from another family group, because of their diverse cultures and different patron gods. The solution to this was to form a council, where each

family group would be represented by its appointee or an elder who would take care of issues that were of common interest.

Rome, which was formed in 753 BCE had a similar geographical and social setup. It consisted of seven hills protected by the river Hallis. Each hill took care of its own affairs and even fought against each other, but when it came to an external enemy wanting to cross the river they would unite.

The same was true on a larger scale between the Greeks, the Spartians, the Corasians, the Sardians, the Sicilians and others who lived very close to one another over a comparatively small stretch of land and formed the Roman Empire. They had diverse cultures and beliefs, and therefore were constantly at war against each other. Even against a common enemy they were not able to unite effectively. Finally they agreed to set up a council and send in their generals to represent their country in that council. **To create unity they were all given equal voting powers and named it Democracy.**

Xenophon in his book " The Persian Expedition" has this to tell us about the various qualities required to be a leader and represent ones country in that democratic set up.

'I gather that you Spartans, Chirisophus, -I mean the real officer class--study how to steal from your earliest boyhood, and think that so far from it being a disgrace it is an actual distinction to steal anything that is not forbidden by law. And, so that you may become expert thieves and try to get away with what you steal, it is laid down by law that you get a beating if you are caught stealing. Here then is an excellent opportunity for you to give an exhibition of the way in which you are brought up, and to preserve us from blows, by seeing to it that we are not caught stealing our bit of mountain.'

'Well,' said Chirisophus, ' what I have gathered about you Athenians is that you are remarkably good in stealing public funds, even though it is a very risky business for whoever does so; and your best men are the greatest experts at it, that is if it is your best men who are considered the right people to be in the government. So here is a chance for you too to give an exhibition of the way in which you were brought up.'

This trend continues to this day, for which we get unduly upset. Not realizing that it is part and parcel of Democracy. Without which the political system would collapse.

Xenophon who had marched with Kurosh in the army of Clearchus, introduces Clearchus the famous Greek general as; '... a man devoted to war. He could have lived in peace without incurring any reproaches or any harm, but he chose to make war. He could have lived a life of ease, but he preferred a hard life with warfare. He could have had money and security, but he chose to make the money he had less, by engaging in war. Indeed, he liked spending money on war just as one might spend it on love affairs or any other pleasure. .... he was also well able to impress on those who were with him that Clearchus was a man to be obeyed. He achieved this result by his toughness. He had a forbidding appearance and a harsh voice. His punishments were severe ones and were sometimes inflicted in anger, so that there were times when he was sorry himself for what he had done.'

So also, Xenophon has this to say of the other Greek general Menon who accompanied them with his army. 'Menon the Thessalian made it perfectly clear that his dominant ambition was to get rich. He wanted to be a general so that he could earn more pay; he wanted honours so that he could make something extra out of them; his wish to be friends with the most influential people arose from his desire to avoid punishment for his misdeeds. He thought that the shortest cut to the satisfaction of his ambitions was by means of perjury and lying and deceit; consequently he regarded sincerity and truthfulness as equivalent to simple-mindedness. It was obvious that he felt no affection for anyone, but if he said he was anyone's friend, it was pretty clear that he was intriguing against him. He never laughed at his enemies, but in conversation he never took any of his own people seriously. He had no design on the property of his enemies, as he considered it difficult to get hold of what belonged to people who were on their guard; but as for his friends' property, which was unguarded, he thought he was most remarkable in knowing how easy it was to get his hands on to it. When he saw that a man would break promises and do wrong, he regarded him as well equipped and was frightened of him; but he tried to treat a man who was scrupulous and had regard for truth as though he were a half-wit. In the same way as some people take pride in being god-fearing and truthful and upright, Menon took pride in his ability to deceive, in his fabrication and falsehood, and in sneering at his friends. He always looked upon a

person who had scruples as being only half educated. When he wanted to stand high in anyone's friendship, he thought that the way to achieve this end was by running down those who already occupied the position he wanted. His scheme for ensuring his soldiers' obedience to him was to be a partner in their crimes. He considered that, by making a display both of his great powers and his willingness to misuse them, he was entitled to honours and deference. When anyone left his service, he used to say that it was kindness on his part to have made use of him and not to have made away with him.'

#### THE PERSIAN WAY OF LIFE

Now in the same book let us see what Xenophon has to say about a Persian. The Persian in question is Kurosh the younger brother of King Ardeshir II, whose Babylonian mother instigated him to claim the throne from his elder brother, so he gathered mercenaries and went to war against his brother.

According to Xenophon, while Kurosh was marching against the king, two of his mercenary generals, Xenias the Arcadian and Pasion the Megarian deserted him, taking with them all the valuables and their soldiers. The Greeks thought that Kurosh would pursue and punish them. But Kurosh collected his generals and this is what he said.

'Xenias and Pasion have left us, but they can be sure enough that they have not got out of reach. I know the way they have gone and they have not escaped me, since I have triremes, which could overtake their ships. But, by Heaven, I am certainly not going to pursue them. No one shall say that I make use of man while he is in my service, and then, when he wants to leave, that I arrest him and ill-treat him and take away his property. No, let them go, with the knowledge that they have behaved worse to us than we have to them. It is true that I hold their children and women under guard at Tralles, but they will not even lose them. No, they will get them back again in return for the good service they did me in the past.'

Xenophon has further analyzed the character of Kurosh son of Ardeshir I as under.

'The cities which were in his command trusted him and so did the men. And the enemies he had were confident that once Cyrus had signed a treaty with them nothing would happen to them contrary to the terms of the treaty.' 'If any one did him a good or an evil turn, he evidently aimed

at going one better. Some people used to refer to a habitual prayer of his, that he might live long enough to be able to repay with interest both those who helped him and those who injured him. It was quite natural then that he was the one man in our times to whom so many people were eager to hand over their money, their cities and their own persons.' ' As for justice, he made it his supreme aim to see that those who really wanted to live in accordance with its standards became richer than those who wanted to profit by transgressing them.'

'When he saw that a man was a capable administrator, acting on just principles, improving the land under his control and making it bring in profit, he never took his post away from him, but always gave him additional responsibility. The result was that his administrators did their work cheerfully and made money confidently. Cyrus was the last person whom they kept in dark about their possessions, since he showed no envy for those who became rich openly, but, on the contrary, tried to make use of the wealth of the people who attempted to conceal what they had.'

' He thought that the reason why he needed friends was to have people to help him, and he applied exactly the same principle to others, trying to be of utmost service to his friends whenever he knew that any of them wanted anything.'

' When people send him fine things to wear, either armour or beautiful dresses, they saw that the remark that he made about these was that he could not possibly wear all this finery on his own body, but he thought the finest thing for a man was that his friends should be well turned out.'

' Often, when he had particularly good wine, he used to send jars half full of it to his friends with the message: " Cyrus has not for a long time come across a better wine than this; so he has send some to you and wants you to finish it up today with those whom you love best." Often too he used to send helpings of goose and halves of loaves and such things, telling the bearer to say when he presented them: " Cyrus enjoyed this; so he wants you to taste it too." When there was a scarcity of fodder, - though he himself, because of the number of his servants and his own wise provision, was able to get hold of it,- he used to send round to his friends and tell them to give the fodder he sent to the horse they rode themselves, so that horses that carried his friends should not go hungry.'

Kurosh (Cyrus) was an example and not an exception. Xenophon narrates another incident, which is an example of other Zarathushties.

' Cyrus made some of these marches extremely long, when it was a case of wanting to reach water or fodder. And there was an occasion on which the road got narrow and muddy and difficult for the wagons, when Cyrus halted with the noblest and the richest of his company and ordered Glous and Pigres to take a detachment of native troops and help in getting the wagons out of the mud; and when he thought that they were going slow on it, he looked angry and ordered the most important Persians in his company to give a hand with the wagons. Then certainly one saw a bit of discipline. Wherever they happened to be standing, they threw off their purple clokes and rushed forward as though in a race, -down a very steep hill, too, and wearing those expensive tunics which they have, and embroidered trousers. Some also has chains round their necks and bracelets on their wrists. But with all this on they leaped straight down into the mud and got the wagon on to dry ground quicker than anyone would have thought possible.'

This was how all the Iranians were brought up and there is no doubt about it because it was part of their culture. All these men lived in the same age and time and even worked with each other but had different cultures and upbringing. Xenophon in the same book knowingly or unknowingly shows us the cause of the difference when he reports: ' All the children of the Persian nobles are brought up at the Court, and there a child can pick up many lessons in good behaviour **while having no chance of seeing or hearing anything bad.**'

The Persians had a mission in life and that was based on the teachings of Zarathushtra.

Knowledge when you gain  
With minds good use  
Having realized wisdom  
The path to righteousness  
The ultimate message of Wisdom  
Through words excellent  
We shall turn (convert)  
Those who do not know  
(With tongue) By speaking  
Zarathushtra - Gatha Yasna 28.5 (FR)

They wanted to spread knowledge among all humans and thus initiate progress even among those that were not considered friends. For they believed that a wise enemy is better than a foolish friend. We see this happening for philosophy and science is slowly recognized among the Greek after their contact with the Persians, although initially men like Socrates were put to death for their thoughts, which were considered against the gods. After the Peace treaty of 449 BCE signed by Ardeshir I there is a sudden influx of science and philosophy among the Greeks and Athens becomes a center of learning.

With the downfall of the Persian Empire in 330 BCE at the hands of Alexander Rome took control of all the lands up to India and the ways of the west was imposed on all including the Persians. The course of human history was changed, temples were rebuilt and progress and science was put on the back burner. Even the simple knowledge of chemistry and physics that the Magi's used were termed as Magic and shunned. Science and knowledge that existed was thus lost and worse still scholars were punished for seeking the truth. For example the Persian had vast knowledge with regards to the solar system, for they knew how to calculate the equinox and celebrated the vernal equinox as a New Year, they had also calculated the phenomena of Nou Rouz or New Day and celebrated it in 487 BCE,<sup>i</sup> all this knowledge was lost and two thousand years later when Galileo tried to prove that the earth went round the sun he was condemned of heresy by the church and given a term of life imprisonment.

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, finally science has progressed but not in the Persian style. There is no benevolence in modern science; today science is used to create wealth for a few at the expense of the environment and human health. For the Persians, according to the teachings of Zarathushtra, science was to be kept in tune with nature and not be used against nature by creating pollution and disease. The Persians were taught that since every thing that was created or would be created is first in the form of a Thought that has been spoken and made known, so they were advised to keep their Thoughts Good and in tune with the Wisdom in Creation. Only good thoughts were to be uttered and discussed, as a result, Good Deeds and good creations would come into being.<sup>ii</sup>

It is a pity that the world has no knowledge of the true teachings of Zarathushtra and it is unfortunate that those that claim to be the heirs to the teachings of Zarathushtra



have lost their ancient language and have no knowledge of the true meaning of the Gathas of Zarathushtra. The Scholars who try to decipher the Gathas cannot do justice for they have become learned under the Roman system of education and thinking.

No doubt Alexander is called the great for he not only reversed the clock of progress but he also changed the standard of progress.

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<sup>i</sup> See Iran Zamin Vol-1 No 2 Feb 2001 - What we are never told about Nou Rouz and Haft Seene. [www.ancientiran.com](http://www.ancientiran.com)

<sup>ii</sup> See Gatha Yasna 28.11 on page 6 of this issue of Iran Zamin