

# Mehr, the Landscape of the Sun

Among the decorations in the art and architecture of Iran, the Sun is one of the most repeated samples. The sun, in the ancient Iranian art works, has appeared as the form of Cross and in Islamic art works in the form of sun-shaped motif (Shamseh); both of which have been considered as focal decoration patterns, symbolizing and giving sense to the art works as well as the architectural spaces. Shamseh was transferred by Muslims to the East and West territories of the world that were under their control and slowly became known as a symbol of Muslims and even the symbol of Islam.

The history of the sun's pattern goes back to the Mehr religion, Iranian's religion before Zoroastrian. A religion that was extended in a large region of the world and reached the Roman Empire during the Parthian era and was accepted there as the official religion with the name of Mithraism. In the East It was also spread throughout parts of India. The pattern of lion and sun on the Iranian flag is derived from the same culture.

Sun in the Mehr ritual, was known as the source of mercy. In the Zoroaster era, the dual of light and darkness shapes their worldview within which the pattern of light was equivalent to mercy and blessing. During the Islamic period, the Quran's interpretation of God as the light of heaven and earth, helped to perpetuate this culture and it was so that Iranians had a meaningful and loving view towards the sun throughout the history. The word Mehr and its derivatives, meaning goodness, mercy, grace and love expresses their viewpoint of the Sun.

Islamic Revolution painter, Iraj Eskandari, is also inspired by the symbol of sun to represent the cultural environment of the war between Iran and Iraq. In one of his paintings warriors who carry their wounded comrade to a direction in which the circle of the sun can be seen in the horizon, are illustrated. Here too, the sun is the warrior's destination. This approach makes sense in a land where the sun is the center of norms. Emphasis on the shape of circle refers to the significance of the sun and also the direction of light, in order to make the painter's aesthetics more indigenous. If the direction of light in the spiritual and especially Christian samples is known as the symbol of a higher realm, in Iran not only is adverted to heaven but also the sun refers to a landscape phenomenon: Mehr and all goodness.

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