

YAZDEGARD I (CE 399-420) son of Shahpur III

(Silver Drachm)



Coin:

Obverse: *'MaZDISN BaGI RAMShaTRI IeZDKaRTI MaLKAN MaLKa AIRAN'* (**Defender of the Faith-Mazdayasna, delight of the realm, Yazdegard, King of Kings of Airan**).

See "IZ" for Yazd (Iezd symbolically inscribed just above right shoulder) embroidered onto the cape. Tiara has two turrets (one on each side) and a crescent attached to the front. Orymbos is small. Tiara, necklace and earrings bear gemstones. Ribbons hold curled locks of hair at the back. Beard-tip is tied with ribbon, holding gemstones.

Reverse: *'ATURI YaZDKaRTI'* (**Fire of Yazdegard**) Crescent is on either side of the flames. (**'Rast'** meaning 'just') inscribed on Altar shaft, which is decorated with ribbons. Mint monogram is **'AIR'** (Airan Khurra Shahpur). Attendants are King and Priest, both holding a large bundle of Barsom rods (tied with 4 knots of palm

leaf strips) with both hands. Short Cape falls behind over shoulders.

*Yazdegard I was nicknamed '*The Sinner*' because he **persecuted the Zarthushti priesthood** and showed an extremely liberal attitude towards Jewish divines and Christians bishops. He assisted in and financed the building of churches. He even became the president of the Council of Bishops at Seleucia in CE 410. He married a *Jewish lady Gasyandukht*, daughter of Galuta (the Patriarch of the Jews) and mother of Varahran V.

***CE 400:** Induced by Abdaas, the Bishop of Ctesiphon, he even **contemplated baptism**. But when the Great Atur Varahran at Ctesiphon was burnt down and over-zealous Romans were implicated, the Bishop in turn refused the financing of the new Fire Temple. This triggered off riots and several churches were burnt down. Yazdegard realized his life could be at stake and reversed his decision. The persecution of the Christians lasted 5 years.

***CE 408:** His rule was **tyrannical against the Nobles**. He dissatisfied them by exhibiting an overtly friendly disposition towards the Romans and entering into a non-aggression treaty with Arcadius.

***CE 407:** The aged Byzantine Emperor Arcadius (CE 383-408) even appointed him **guardian of his son**, Theodosius II of tender age. He executed a testamentary deed and a legacy of 1000 pounds of gold to take effect after his death. When Arcadius died the wish was conveyed to Yazdegard.

*He was credited as having **founded the City of Yazd**.

***CE 412:** Yazdegard's brother, Varahran-Shahpur, governor of Armenia died leaving a 10 year old son, Ardeshir. A deputation of Bishops entreated him to release Khusru, the previous governor (languishing in prison since ACE 391) and reinstate him. Yazdegard gladly obliged but Khusru died in 413. Yazdegard thereupon appointed his own son, Shahpur governor.

***CE 420:** Shahpur relinquished his post as governor of Armenia and returned to Ctesiphon upon hearing of his father's sudden

death. He tried to gain the throne but he was treacherously murdered by the nobles, who put as a puppet, a distant cousin, Khusru, much against his will.

Yazdegard **died under suspicious circumstances** while on an expedition in the Nishapur Mountains. He was reported as having been kicked by his own horse as he alighted. It is just possible the Council of Nobles eliminated him because of his unpopular activities and persecutions.

Contemporary Roman Emperors



Arcadius CE 383-408

Theodosius II CE 402-450



**VARAHRAN V (ACE 420-438) son of
Yazdegard I
(Silver Drachma)**



Coin:

Obverse: *'BaGI RAMShaTRI VaRaHRAN MaLKaN MaLKa'* (**Defender of the delightful realm, Behram, King of Kings**). The word *'AIRAN'* is omitted and appears no more after this period. Tiara has two turrets (one front and back). A Crescent clip (rather than ribbons) holds the small Orymbos. Ribbons hold curled locks of hair. Beard-tip tied with ribbon, holding gemstones. Necklace and earrings bear large gemstones. Embroidered border of Cape, which is open in front.

Reverse: On the right is abbreviated *'VaRaHRAN'* and on the left is **Mint mark** *'ZFRI'* (Zafrania, near Balkh). Bust of King identified by Crown is engulfed in flames. Attendants are King and Prince each with a two-turreted crown. Both hold long Barsom rods (tied with 4 knots of Palm leaf strips). Fire altar decorated with ribbons is small in comparison with outsize busts.

Behram, like his father, was also unpopular for liberal views. Even as a prince he was **forced to live in exile** under the protection of a powerful **vassal Arab king, Al-Mondhir of Hatra**. On the death

of his father his elder brother, Shahpur, who claimed the throne was deposed and murdered by the nobles, who placed a distant cousin, Khusru on the throne. Behram, with the help of a large army of Arab tribesmen of Al-Mondhir, laid siege to Ctesiphon. Khusru gave way peacefully.

Campaigns:

***CE 421:** The persecution of the Christians, which had occurred during the last 5 years of his father's reign, continued. Many Christians fled to Antioch and Constantinople. Varahran demanded their return. When Theodosius II refused their return Varahran prepared to invade.

***CE 422:** The persecution of Zarathushtis in the Roman Zone of Armenia obliged Behram to *brake the peace of CE 408*. Under commander Mir Narseh he took Nisibis. Around this time a synod of the Churches held in Airan separated from their Byzantine counterpart on doctrinal grounds and established Nestorian Church. This minority group in Airan did not collude with the Byzantine Emperors. Theodosius II, then, arranged a **peace treaty**. The terms were 1. freedom of worship, both to Christians and to Zarathushtis in the two Zones of Armenia and 2. Contribution by Rome to the defence of the Mountain Passes in the Caucasus against the invasion by the Huns.

***CE 429:** After his brother, Shahpur, Governor of Armenia relinquished his post and returned to Ctesiphon in time to claim the throne, there was no rule of law in Armenia. Anarchy reigned for 9 years until Varahran invaded and placed Ardeshir (now 26), whose father Varahran-Shahpur (brother of Yazdegard I) as Governor of Armenia had died in ACE 413. The Zarathushti Zone of Armenia was made a Province of Airan.

*In the east Behram conquered and ceded Gandhara and Sindh. While in India, he married *Princess Sapinud*, daughter of King Shankar Vasudeva of Maghadha and Kanouj. There is a reference to this Gandharva Dynasty in the Agni-Purana. The Persian King in the court, shown in a fresco in Ajanta Caves, is Behram. Even the **Gandharva Rupiya** (see **Photo under**) has, on both sides of

the coin, the Star and Crescent motif in Behram's honour. On the reverse there is a **Vedic Fire Altar** with the Vedic 6-pointed Star on the Altar and the Avestan **Star to the right and the Crescent to the left of the Agni.**

***CE 435:** A large **Hephthalite army under King Tatan** (a nomadic tribe from the Siberian region - the '*Hiong-nu*' of the Chinese, the '*Huna*' of the Indians and the '*White Huns*' of historians) crossed the Oxus and overran Khorasan. He drove them out of Khorasan but they persisted.

Behram took to the field, defeated the King and appointed his brother Narseh, as Governor with Balkh as the Capital.

*Varahran was **well versed in the Arts, Humanities, Agriculture and Sports.** He gave liberal grants to men of letters. Having lived in exile with the Arabs for many years and in close contact with the Greeks and Romans through his friendship with Arcadius and son, Theodosius II, he was **learned in Arabic, Greek and Roman arts, language and culture.** He excelled in **Archery and Hunting** and was nicknamed '*Behramgaur*' because of his love of hunting *the Gaur* - the wild ass.

He died of **drowning in a boggy marsh** containing quicksand during a chase, while hunting the Gaur.



Gandharva Rupiya



Theodosius II CE 402-450