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**Invulnerability in Greek and Persian Mythology:
A Comparative Study of Achilles and Esfandiar**

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ABSTRACT

From the very beginning of life on earth, men have learned that life by itself is valuable. The notion of *invulnerability* is a reflection of human beings' desire to live as longer as possible in this world, to achieve immortality. The idea may as well be approached in terms of man's desire to achieve supremacy over other human beings. There are a few heroes in the world mythology who are famous for their invulnerability, among whom one may name Achilles—the famous Greek hero in the Trojan War, who, according to myths, was invulnerable except for the back of the heel—and Esfandiar, the legendary Persian prince and a heroic figure in Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh*—the national epic of Persia—who owed his invulnerability to Zoroaster, the ancient Iranian prophet. It seems that, from among the invulnerable heroes in the world mythology, these two, respectively, Greek and Persian heroes, possessing certain distinguishing characteristics, look more similar than others in many respects: For instance, enjoying a distinguished royal origin; being young, brave, adventurous, arrogant, and unrivalled; enjoying supernatural, divine attributes; being out for fame, or *arête*; being vulnerable in a certain point of the body; and, finally, dying a tragic, premature death. This study attempts to compare and contrast Achilles and Esfandiar on the basis of Greek and Persian myths handed down since ancient times.

Key words: Greek mythology; Persian mythology; Invulnerability in world mythology; Persian heroic epic; Homeric epic poetry.