

## CREATION IN ZARATHUSHTRIAN TRADITION

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Before we start a discussion of creation, it is perhaps apt to ask ourselves ‘**who created God?**’

Fascinated by the precision in the miraculous order of Nature, mankind, the only creation that has the strength and ability to think, reason and express, began to wonder. The beauty and awe concomitantly manifested in Natural events has mystified man since the inception of time. Mankind began to recognize their own limitation. Their imagination turned to the belief in a **POWER** beyond their bounds. With time they evolved reverence for that **UNKOWN FORCE**. Gradually their reverence turned into generation of rituals and worship of the Order in that Force of Nature.

The rituals were designed to appease the UNKNOWN and with the hope of harnessing some of the strength from the mysteries of Nature. This resulted in a struggle for survival, domination and supremacy of the strong among the mankind in the wild.

It was at that time, when humanity was still struggling with bronze, to make the implements of war, when man was not able to distinguish cause from its effect, when they were too primitive to comprehend the doctrine of a **single Supreme Divinity**, a voice arose from among a Persian tribe.

A voice that acclaimed against domination and tyranny. A voice that hailed freedom from bondage, sovereignty of one's choice, and moral justice. It was a voice that fully understood **the Goodness of absolute Global Truth in the face of evil**. That was the voice of Asho Spitama Zarathushtra. It was through his spiritual consciousness that Zarathushtra recognized the **Infinite Wisdom** in that Order of Nature and acknowledged it as his God - Ahura Mazda- Lord Wisdom. Thus man evolved worship of Nature, that Zarathushtra focused as his God - **the Wisdom incarnate**.

So the answer to the question '**who created God?**' is, Zarathushtra depicted in words what man struggled to create for time immemorial, his God –Lord Wisdom – Ahura Mazda.

The Creation Myths has pervaded through societies over many millennia and they help shape the life experiences individually and collectively. The first known accounts of the creation are found in the mythology of the early civilization of Sumaria and Babylonia. The Creation Story, as any other doctrinal topic of Zarathushtrian tradition, must emanate from the Gathic Hymns. Early in the Yasna (Ys 29.1,2) we see the premier reference to the Soul of the Universe (interpreted by some scholars as “soul of the Cow”) which is clearly in context to the temporal world. In Yasna 44 (verses 3-7) the Prophet, in a series of rhetorical inquiries addresses various aspects of the physical and moral nature of the world and recognizes (Ys 44.7) **personification of Wisdom – Mazda Ahura** - as the creator of entire Universe including light and darkness (Ys 44.5).

Zarathushtra also makes a clear reference in Ys 28.2 to a dual existence, that of the material and of the spiritual or mental. Thus creation in Zarathushtrian theology is a composite of dual complements built within its Oneness. The first is the existence of Mainyava (Ph. Menog) - the Divine

domain of the Mind, that is eternal, and absolute in all respects which is beyond defilement. Following that is the creation of the temporal world Gaethya (Ph. Getig) - the world of actuality, the one we live in, the one that is corrupted by the undesirable choices ( Anra Mainyu) of mankind. The two together make up the Whole or Complete creation. The two existences represent the spiritual and the physical counterparts of the universe. This in Zarathushtrian Faith represents a form of cosmic dualism of the type later elaborated by Plato through his concept of the “World of immutable Ideas” (spiritual) and the “World of Sense” (physical).

It is important to note that Zarathushtra follows up the concept of *Mainyava* and *Gaethya* with the notion of the *Chinvato Peretu* - the Bridge of the Separator or of Sorter (Ys 46.10,11; 51.13). It is believed, that the Judgment, is rendered here, consistent with the Gathic theology of Reward for the righteous and Retribution for the deceitful. It is clearly apparent that this notion, bridges the Spiritual and the Corporeal existence, and the consequence here is experienced by the individual soul, the spiritual counterpart, that has shed the physical body, to initiate its journey to the Abode of Song (Ys 46.10, 45.8, 51.15) or House of Deceit (Ys 46.11, 49.11, 51.14) based on its action in life.

We have in this world of actuality the images of the perfect creations of Ahura Mazda, viz., the majesty of open skies (heavens and luminaries), the lofty mountains (earth), the deep seas (water), the dense forests (plant kingdom), and the wildlife (animal kingdom). The book of creation –Bundahisn- in Chapter 3.8 states that the corporeal creation was static. Waters did not flow, plants did not grow, and there were no vital signs until they were pervaded by the Divine Universal energy to bring them to life. This divine agency was none other than the Divine energy of Fire, the energy through Ahura Mazda associated in his Gathic hymns with Global Truth (*Asha*). All these creations exist in complete harmony complying with the immutable law of Nature. A part of Yasna Haptanhaiti (Ys 36-39) is dedicated to the reverence and veneration to Ahura Mazda and his creations.

The last and the most pivotal creation of Mazda is that of mankind. **Humanity is uniquely endowed with the essence of its creator – Vohu Manah the Good mind and the Freedom of Choice**, the choice between two Primal ways of using that Mind, or two ways of being as mentioned in Ys 30.3. We note this clearly elaborated in Ys 31.11 where it says, “Wise one, in the beginning , by your Mind, you fashioned for us thinking creatures, conception and intentions, put life in that physical framework whereby Human can make a choice through freewill”. The concept of the freedom of Choice is inextricably tied with **the heavy responsibility that mankind must burden to be the steward of all the other creations.**

All Creations that carries within, the innate Divinity, deserves to be held in reverence, and be used in moderation, never to be abused with excess or be defiled with pollution, or be diminished with greed. This is a strand of religiosity, that makes Zarathushtrian tradition, the first, to hold the ‘Ecosystem of the Creator’ as Sacred.

Zarathushtrian tradition holds human beings as the co-workers of the Creator, as Zarathushtra states, “May we be among those who rejuvenates this world” (Ys 30.9). Bundahisn, the later

Zarathushtrian text of the Pahlavi era, reflects (3.24, B.T.Anklesaria) **“the Fravahrs of man saw, by means of the Wisdom of all knowledge, the evil that would arrive in the material world on account of the wicked Ahri-man, and the final inoffensiveness of the Adversary; and they agreed to go to the material world, in-order-to become perfect and deathless again, in the final material-life, up-to eternity and eternal-progress”**.

Mankind is truly unique in its creation, it is a synthesis of temporal and eternal, of finite and infinite and has immanent within the power of creation and transmutation that operates in the entire universe. Unfortunately despite this extraordinary benefaction of the creator, we note that humans are often ignorant of the potential, either of their immense strength or of their weaknesses. The humanity has clearly strayed away from the Trust invested in them by the Creator. The evidence of the present day war-torn world speaks for itself.

Zarathushtrian creation story of Pahlavi and the Middle Persian era has undergone significant remythologation. Bundahisn written sometime in sixth century C.E. speaks (Bd. Ia.6-13 B.T. Ank.) of the creation of sky, water, earth, plants, animals and human in vivid terms. Furthermore it also assigns the period (Bd. Ia.14-21, B.T.Ank.) in days and provides the numbers of the days over which each of these creations came into existence, with precise name of the days by Zarathushtrian calendar. It is on this basis that tradition has fixed our High Festivals of Gahanbars in the annual cycle.

Today however, the sacred eco-system we are gifted with, is continuously devastated and defiled. The acid rain, the greenhouse effect, the depletion of ozone layer, accelerated deforestation of plant kingdom, rapid exploitation of our non-renewable resources, spills and burning of millions of gallons of oil endangering plant and animal wildlife, are but a few examples of the havoc inflicted upon the creation today. All these occurrences are largely due to the **erroneous judgment of human beings**. As Prof. Carl Sagan once said, “.....there was a general consensus that humans have become predators on the biosphere, always taking never giving. We have not inherited the earth from our ancestors, but have borrowed it from our children”. Mankind therefore must make a concerted effort to conserve with care the legacy of the future generation.

In Yasna 29.10 we read the soul of Universe praying, “ Grant ye Oh Lord, to these mortals strength and power through Righteousness and Good mind, by means of which one shall create peace and tranquility”. **If only Humans can listen to the cry of Geush Urvan (soul of the universe) today, it would be no different from that raised, in the era when prophet Zarathushtra lived. The logic thus leads us to conclude that the Universal Message of Asho Zarathushtra is as relevant, and as fresh today as it was some 3500 years ago when he first proclaimed it.**