

THE SIX ORIGINAL CREATIONS

By

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According to Bundahišn, 18, 5 sq., and, allusively, Dēnkart, 278, 7, the material creation took place in the following order: the sky, water, the earth, the tree, the bull, and man.

Now, in his excellent *Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, 1961,¹ p. 258, R. C. Zaehner confesses to finding this order puzzling as it does not tally with the correspondences between the Amshaspands and the material creation. I think the difficulty can be solved as follows.

The Amshaspands and their material counterparts reflect an analysis of the world in its present state and, we may add, on the basis of the old socio-religious tri-partition,² whereas the other series, that of the six original creations—is a genetic one, telling how the world was produced. "The sky, for one thing", Zaehner writes comparing the two orders, "has no counterpart among the Entities, whereas the metals, the counterpart of the Kingdom, and, much more strangely, fire, the counterpart of Truth, do not appear among the original six creations at all". Now, the sky does not appear among the Entities because, I think, they *are* the sky, so to speak, or at least are all of them *in* it. Similarly fire is absent from the 'six original creations' because it is the very

1. For a detailed review, see *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 1964.

2. cf. Dumézil, *L'Idéologie tripartite des Indo-Européens*, Bruxelles, 1938. The same doctrine is expounded in English in my *Western Response to Zoroaster*, Oxford, 1958 (Ratanbai Katrak lectures) and, more briefly, in my *Hymns of Zarathustra*, 1952 (now a paper-back, Beacon Press, 1963).

basis of them and is in fact present in each. Here is how it works: *fire* is present, notably in the form of lightning, in the *sky*, which is called *asrōk karp* 'the fire-form'¹ it comes down as rain—as a result of the fight between the Vazišta fire and the demon of storm, Spənjagrya—in the form of *water*, which falls down on to the *earth*, on which grow the fire-containing *plants*²; then it passes into the *animals* and *man*, at once because they feed on plants and because of the fiery semen which is the source of their animal warmth.

That Fire was the creative principle is told in Yt. 19, 10: it is through the *x^varənah*, whose fiery nature I have recently vindicated³, that Ahura Mazdā creates the universe.

As for the metals, since they have no active part to play in the gradual unfolding of life, they are not counted among the 'six original creations' and only mentioned, Bundahišn, 20, 3, as pertaining to the earth.

The enumeration in Y. 19, 2, although it seems at first glance to be the basis of the doctrine reflected in the Bundahišn, is in fact something different. Its purport is to proclaim that the Ahuna vairya existed before anything else: "What is the word, O Ahura Mazda", it says, "which thou hast told me before the existence of the sky, of the water, of the earth, etc." But it does not have strictly to adhere to the order of the original creations: it can go on to enumerate, in a more detailed if less systematic fashion, the various creatures, including the Bull, fire, the demons, all of them posterior to the divine word.

1. On this interpretation of *asrōk karp*, see my article in the *Unvala Memorial Volume*, Bombay.

2. Pahlavi Rivāyat, 52: the eighth difficult thing for Ohrmazd to do was that *andar urvarān ātaxš bē dāt*.

3. In detail, in French, in the AION (*Annali Istituto Orientale Napoli*), sez. linguistica, V, 1963, 19; more succinctly, in English, in *East and West* (Journal of the Istituto per lo studio del Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Rome), 13, 1962, p. 198. See also Gherardo Gnoli in AION, sez. Orientale, 12, 1962, p. 95, and Dumézil, *Le Puits de Nechtan, Celtica*, VI (1963), p. 50.