

# Human Creation in Iranian and Indian Myths

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## خلق الإنسان في أساطير إيران والهند

الدكتورة شكوفه دارابي

الأستاذة المساعدة جامعة فرهنكيان - قسم اللغة الفارسية وآدابها - طهران - إيران

**Abstract:**

As the noblest creature, man has a special place in the creation of the universe and among all nations, there are myths about human creation. Myths also represent the ideas of different ethnic groups and are the best source of knowledge of early thinking, worldviews and aspirations of the former people. On the other hand, the two Iranian and Indian tribes have numerous similarities in their ancient religious and epic beliefs because of the interconnectedness of their culture and civilization. Therefore, the various aspects of the story of human creation in Indian and Iranian myths through a comparative study explains the resemblance of the ideas of these tribes and comparing the myth of creation in these works reveals remarkable similarities in terms of structure and content. By comparing these myths, we can find a single universality in them. Therefore, the story of human creation in two narratives of Iranian and Indian myths has been studied in a comparative fashion to reach the common intellectual and cultural backgrounds and special perspectives of these tribes through similar elements of mythical thinking.

Key words: Creation, Human, Myth, Iran and India.

**المخلص:**

كأشرف المخلوقات ، يتمتع الإنسان بمكانة خاصة في عالم الكون، ومن بين جميع الأمم، تم العثور على أساطير حول خلق الإنسان. تمثل الأساطير أيضاً أفكار المجموعات العرقية المختلفة وهي أفضل مصدر لمعرفة كى فئ النزعة الأولى والنظرة العالمية وتطلعات الشعوب القديمة. من ناحية أخرى، نظراً للتعايش بين الثقافة والحضارة، فإن لشعبي إيران والهند العديد من أوجه التشابه في معتقداتهم الدينية والملمحة القديمة؛ لذلك، الأبعاد المختلفة لقصة الخلق البشري في الأساطير الهندية والإيرانية من خلال الدراسة المقارنة؛ تبين تشابه أفكار هذه الأقوام؛ والدراسة بين أسطورة الخلق في هذه الأعمال تظهر تشابهاً مذهلاً فى الهيكلية والمحتوى، ويمكن الحصول على وحدة العمومى فيها. لذلك، تمت دراسة قصة الخلق البشري في روايتين من الأساطير الإيرانية والهندية بطريقة مقارنة من أجل العثور على خلفيات فكرية وثقافية مشتركة ووجهات نظر محددة لهذه القبائل من خلال عناصر مشابهة للفكر الأسطوري.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الخلق، الإنسان، الأسطورة، إيران والهند.

## Introduction

The description of natural phenomena such as the formation of the sky, the earth, the water, the manner of the emergence of the plant and the first human being has always been a subject of debate and has always occupied the mind of the seeker and has been the source of many myths. No one really knows the date when these myths were formed, but whatever it is, it goes back to the oldest layers of human life. Understanding the manner of the creation of man, as the supreme creature possessing the power of thought and reason, has always been a central concern of human beings in history, and myths work as guides, providing people with knowledge regarding this matter.

Curiosity about how human beings are created is not unique to some people and to a particular era and time, and myths reflect the intellectual challenge of any nation or race. Since in mythological times, the tools that humans possessed were almost similar, so there is a common belief about human creation; in many cultures, for example, human beings were deemed to be created from soil, and some attributed man's creation to God or to a sacred being, and others believed man to have a plant origin. Iranian myths appear to have had a similar origin to Indian myths at first, but over time, significant differences emerged, distinguishing them from Indian myths.

## Human creation in Iranian myths

“According to ancient Iranian myths, Zurvan is the father of Urmazd and Ahriman. These two have been incompatible since being in the womb. Ahriman is born a little earlier and rules the world for nine thousand years. The two divide the material and spiritual world, each working on the creation of creatures proportional to their nature and function; but the last creation, man, is the realm of both. Such divisions are also found in Zoroastrian myths in the divisions of the outside world: first the upper world, which is the world of light and belongs to Ahura, then the middle world, which in Pahlavi literature is called the world of emptiness, and then the underworld, which is the world of darkness and the realm of Ahriman's rule” (Hinnells, 1989: 68).

In Iranian mythology, man is God's creature, and man is created by Ahura Mazda's command and desire. The way of the creation of the universe and man is stated in Pahlavi texts as such: "There was a tool like a blaze of fire with which Hormozd created the universe as the infinite brightest of all and made all the creatures out of it and because he had made it, he transformed it into a body. He kept it in that form for three thousand years, then added things and made it better. So he started creating creatures one by one from that body. First, he created the sky from the head and made it a jewel-like crystal, created the earth from the foot and the plant from the hair. He created the cow from the right hand, and Kaiumers was created from his left hand and he created the fire from his mind" (Bahar, 1996: 134).

Another narrative of Adam's creation is that "the sixth creation of Urmazd (after heaven, water, earth, plant and sheep) was a human being who came to be materialized after being an abstraction" (Rashedmohsal, 1987: 3-1). The creation of the creatures from the earth was the first creative pattern that could come into the human mind. Looking at the stories of human creation, what stands out most is the human relationship with soil. We see this relationship either in stories of religious origin or in human myths. The idea of human creation from soil is inspired by the creation of creatures by nature, as well as by the daily life and reproduction of organisms.

In many myths, the earth was regarded as the mother and the sky or a sacred being was the father and man was the result of this bond and the offspring of the earth. The seed from which the first man was born was trusted with the goddess of the earth; the seed of Kaiumers was also thrown to the earth, and it grew as a plant and the first pair of humans was created from that, and this is anecdotal of human connection with the earth and soil. "Sepandarmaz (Amshaspand, the client of the earth) is called the mother of Kaiumers, and since Sepandarmaz is the daughter and beloved of Urmazd, Urmazd is to be considered the father of Kaiumers, and it must be admitted that in the Mazdisena religion, Kaiumers is the son of God" (christiansen, 1984: 40).

"In the religion of Mazdisena, the first human mother was a divine being, because his fiery seed was nurtured and perfected in her and was born of her. Also in the above narration, God is his Father, who

created the seed from his own infinite light. With all things considered, what came out of them was a material being, a material human being, but he had no problem with nutrition, perhaps because he was both a spiritual or a divine being and an earthly and material being; he was both alive and dying. (Jalali Moghaddam, 2004: 59).

After the murder of Kaiumers by Ahriman, the first couple were found by him, and the human descendants came from them. In fact, Kaiumers is a prototype of mankind, and the first real humans were Mashya and Mashyana, who, like Adam and Eve, were considered all humans' parents. "When he died, Kaiumers left his seed. It was purified by sunlight, and two-thirds of it was kept by Neryosang, which in Middle Persian is called Narseh, meaning "man's manifestation", and is one of the messengers of Ahura Mazda. One-third of it was accepted by Sepandarmaz (Lady of the Earth). After forty years, Mashya and Mashyana emerged from the ground as a rhubarb plant with one stalk and fifteen leaves indicating their age of fifteen, so that their hands were on their shoulders and intertwined in growth and outlook. They were both high and so interconnected that it was not possible to find out which one was male or which one was female. Both were then transformed from plant to human. This life, which is the same as soul, entered it in the form of minoo. Each of them first thought that they would like to look pleasing to the other, because each one was a real human in the eyes of the other. The first thing they did was go and urinate, and the first thing they said was that Ahura Mazda created water, earth, plants, animals, stars, the moon, the sun and all the good things that come from the manifestation of holiness. But after that, the enemy invaded their minds and infected their thoughts, and they said that Ahriman created water, the earth, animals and other things. They told this lie because the demons liked it so. Ahriman was the first person to be happy they said such things. Following this lie, both were guilty and their souls were damned until doomsday" (christiansen, 1984: 22).

The creation of Mashya and Mashyana, like Kaiumers, is also associated with the earth and Sepandarmaz. In fact, "Mashya and Mashyana are the sons and daughters of Kaiumers and the earth (Sepandarmaz) (Ibid: 37)."6 sons and 6 daughters were born of Mashya and Mashyana and they created all the people" (Jalali Moghadam, 2004: 44).

Ferdowsi deals with the creation of man, after expressing the creation of wisdom and the four elements and the seven skies and the twelve towers, and he considers the creation of the inanimate object, the plant, and the animal as a result of the marriage of the four elements and the seven skies.

### **Human Creation in India**

"In Hinduism there is no definitive theory of the creation of being. The famous hymn of creation in Rigveda considers nothingness as the origin of the universe and the emergence of being. Water means the raw material of the universe, from which the great creature and unique, vibrant and glorious Lord creates himself with the aid of heat (abstinence)" (Shayegan, 1996, Vol. 1: 810).

Indian myths about human creation are very diverse. The deep construction of the mythical thinking of these people regarding human creation is established based on several basic axes.

### **Man's Creation by God**

In Hinduism, man and God have a direct relationship, and the creation of man in this religion, like Zoroastrian texts, was done by God. "Brahma, the creator god of Hinduism, at the beginning of creation, breaks the seed of the first cosmos to revive the world. He first creates water, fire, air, wind, sky, the earth, mountains and trees on the earth, then he becomes the creator of gods, demons and humans. He first creates demons, then casts his body away and makes darkness out of it which we call night and belongs to the enemies of the gods. Then he obtains another body and creates gods from his face. Afterwards, it again casts his body away and creates light out of it which we call day and belongs to the gods. He casts his body away several more times and forms humans, snakes, and birds with his power of concentration. Then he creates goats from his mouth, sheep from his chest, cows from his stomach and plants from his hair" (Rosenberg, 1996: 21).

In Bhagavad Gita, which is part of the great Mahabharata poem, all human beings are created by God, and man, like all other things, is formed and made of divine nature. There, in reference to Krishna, one of the manifestations of Vishnu, the great Hindu god, we read, "Thou art not born from a mother and are the origin of all beings" (Movahed, 2006: 145).

Krishna replies: "It is I who is responsible for every occurrence: what has been and what will be. Whatever seed there is, it belongs to me. No creature or object can exist without me. Existence and nothingness belong to me, and they were all born of my thought, and the Creators came from them" (Ibid: 143-150).

### **The Creation of Human from Water**

The creation of the world from water is the basis of many cosmological myths of the nations. In Indian, Greek and Roman mythology, the early oceans are believed to have been created at the beginning. Water, a source of growth and life, has been sacred among all Nations.

The Hindu people believed that humans were created out of water along with other entities. It is important to note that Vishnu - the Indian god of preservation – has existed with water since the beginning of time. In Mahabharata Vishnu is introduced as Narain (which means moving in water).

"This very early concept of Aryan India and the natural environment of India enclosed by the seas from three fronts, later led to the spread of the idea of creation from water, so that during the time of Brahman, the first two creatures, the Hindu god Vishnu and water, which represent the preservers of the world exist and it is quoted from the Brahmaic age that " once all was water, and above this endless water, God, Vishnu, which was the form of the wind existed; At the bottom of this vast expanse of raging waters, he saw the earth and wanted to create the world, but he was thinking of how to pull the rough earth out of these raging waters and Keep it at the surface of water. Suddenly his eyes fell on a lotus flower that had grown on the surface of the water. He turned himself into a giant boar, went deep into the water, and with his mighty muzzle, brought the earth from the water's depths to the surface of the water and spread it like a lotus leaf on the water's surface. Perhaps this is why the earth is called Prithiri (what that has been spread) (Zekrgu, 1377: 110).

In the Mahabharata we read of the creation of the universe from water "when there was no sky, and there was no sun and moon, and there was no wind, and no fire, and no water, and no earth; First there was water from the sky, and from that water, there was wind, and from that wind a great sound appeared, and both sound and

wind went toward the sky, and there was a fire that was very shiny and appeared from the collision of water and wind, and with that light, darkness in the universe was removed, and from the working of fire and wind, The water came to a boil, and its components get out of it, and rains and seas were found, and the dirty parts that had been left and compressed; the rest of the earth was created from it and from which all tastes and smells came. And all the animals were created from it. Because all the creatures of the lower world come from these elements, and these are the principle of creation, they are therefore called great beings” (Qazvini, 1375, Vol. 3: 208-206).

Another version of creation from water states: "When Prajapati or (Brahma) ascended out of the primal ocean, he looked around and cried. From the tear that fell from his eyes, the air and space appeared. From the tear that fell into the ocean, the earth came into existence, and from the tear that went up, the sky formed. So Prajapati shed his skin and the darkness was born. Man, moonlight, seasons, dawn and dusk, gods, days and finally death was created” (Younes, 1373: 51).

### **Creation from the sky and Earth**

In the Indian traditions of the language of man, sky is addressed as the father, and earth as the mother, as we read in Rig-Veda: "Sky is my Father and the Creator, the navel of the earth is my kin and my vast land is my mother" (Zomorodi, 1382: 5).

### **Human emergence from the primordial seed**

In Indian mythology about creation, the universe and man are related to the primordial seed: "The universe is the creation of the Vishnu god. From the umbilical cord of Vishnu, comes out a lotus where Brahma is located and Brahma is responsible for creation. Creation is described with the golden egg floating on the primary ocean which is containing all the phenomena and gems of the universe and eventually making the universe populated ”(Dalapicula, 2006: 24-23).

In Mahabharata, too, the creation of all beings is considered to be from one seed. “At the beginning the universe was dark and then a testicle appeared, and this testicle is the seed of all creatures. The one who brings the light and the one who is permanent and everyone

is amazed by him and cannot imagine him and cannot see him, from such an entity this testicle appeared and from this testicle brahma was created; then water, The skies, the wind, the ten sides, the air, the year, the moon, and the day and night and other things were created by it." (Qazvini, 1375, Vol. 1: 3).

### **Human pregnancy from fruit or vegetable seeds**

Because of the sacredness of the plant to its primordial nations and its importance in their beliefs, they sometimes regarded creation to be associated with it. In Indian mythology, a lotus comes from the navel of Vishnu, perhaps it can be interpreted as the root of this belief, which is the Brahma being born from the sacredness of the plant and re-creating the world "(Younes, 1373 : 67). In Mahabharata Raja gets married to two sisters together, but neither of them has a son. Eventually Raja goes to a priest with both women, and priest tells her: "Ask me something, Raja!" The Raja, crying out, makes his wishes, and to get the priest persuaded, he spends some time in his service. At this point a mango falls from the tree under which the priest sat and priest puts a charm on the mango and tells Rajah "bring the fruit to your wife, to achieve your goal." Raja halves mango, gives two wives, women become pregnant after eating fruit "(Qazvini, 1375, Vol. 3:35).

### **Human's creation from man**

"Raja, desiring to have a son, left the kingdom and went to the forest and worshiped. One of the Brahmans gave him water-filled jars and charmed it for Raja to give his wife so she becomes pregnant, but Rajah accidentally drank the water and became pregnant. That child stayed in his father's abdomen for a hundred years, and after coming out of his father's left side, he shone like the sun. Indra put his index finger in the child's mouth and the child grew big the same day, as it doubled in size, and his name became mandhata because of Indra's saying that he would suck my finger "( Qazvini., 1: 339).

The first man

The first Iranian man

"There is disagreement among researchers about the first human being. Although in some Iranian myths, Kiomars is the first human being, but just as Saoshyant's is not the last human, Kiomars

is not the first human, all the evidence suggests that for the author or authors of Farvardin Yasht, Kiomars is the prototype that existed before mankind "(Christine Sen, 1363, Vol. 1:43). In the Zoroastrian religion, Kiomars is the first human being. "He was created in the same time as the first livestock, which was a cow: Kiomars was created on the left bank of the Daitya River, on Iranwicheh, and the cow on the right bank. The cow was the fifth creation of Mazda and the sixth was Kiyomars. The devil destroyed the cow and Kiomars' (Kazazi, 1379: 232).

In Shahnameh, Kiomars is not the first man; he is the first king, and the idea of the first man in the Shahnameh was changed to the first Shah. He reigns for thirty years and, after taking revenge on the death of his son Siamak, from the devil, he dies and leaves the throne to Siamak's son, Husheng. According to some stories, after the death of Kiumars at the hands of the devil, after forty years from his seed a plant (rhubarb) emerged from the earth. Mashya and Mashyana are the result of this plant. And from then on, man emerges. But in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh there is no mention of Mashya and Mashyana. Perhaps because it is in opposition to Adam and Eve. It should also be noted that in the Avesta, Jamshid is the first king, but not in the Shahnameh. "To some, Jam is an example of the first man and the first king of the earth. They believe that when Kiomars, Hooshang, and Tahummers take his place as the first man, he retains his role as one of the first kings on earth "(Christine Sen, 1363, Vol. 1:43).

### **The first Indian man**

There is a great deal of Indian stories about who the first human being is. "In Bahgod Gita, Mano is the father of man. The Mano is the first of their kind and their ancestors; he was also the first to make sacrifices. (Jalali Moghaddam, 1383: 22).

The Mano is presented in another way: "Mano is a wise man who survives the great disintegration that occurs at the end of every period of life in the universe to re-create the world. In this myth, Mano is superior to Brahma. Mano is a self-created spirit created by the desire for creativity. Mano first created the Nara or the original ocean from its own body. In the early ocean it produces seeds, and from this seed, a golden egg shines like the sun. So the self-created spirit,

which they call Brahma, was embedded in the egg. After a year, Brahma divided his body into two parts, half male and half female. From the female half, a male creature called Viraaj was created and from the Viraaj, Mano came into being and Mano created the world" (Evans, 1373: 50).

"The Mano plays the role of Noah, who saved humanity and other animals from destruction by a ship. One day when Mano was bathing, he saw a fish in the palm of his hand and put it in a container, but the fish grew and inevitably dropped it into a bigger place and then into the lake and finally into the sea. The same fish informed Mano that a massive flood was near, a flood that would engulf the world. He instructed Mano to build ships; in other narratives, he sent him a large ship; when the time of the prophecy of fish came, floods swept the world. The ship was beside and supported by the fish and, in other narratives, took the fish to the northern mountains, where Mano tied the ship to a tree till the water was calm. The flood destroyed all creatures, but in this way, humans saved animals and plants from destruction "(Jalali Moghaddam, 2004: 23).

"Me was a brother or a brother who was the Yamah, while the former ruled over the living, the latter ruled over the dead. I am also called "our Father" because of the menu and therefore both must be first humans "(Ibid: 24).

The flood destroyed all creatures, but in this way, humans saved animals and plants from destruction "(Jalali Moghaddam, 1383: 23). "Mano had a brother who was the Yamah, while the former ruled over the living, the latter ruled over the dead. Because of Mano being called "our Father", so both of them must be first humans "(Ibid: 24).

In Indian mythology, as in Iranian Mashya and Mashyana, humanity came from the first couple who were siblings. "Yameh and his sister, Yami, the first human couple in Indian Aryan mythology, were children of the Sun. At the request of Yami, Yameh and Yami became husband and wife, and the human race emerged from them. Yameh was the first to travel to the land of the ancestors, the post-mortem world, and become the ruler of the kingdom and become the prince of the dead" (Younes, 1373: 52).

Mahabharata describes and portrays Yameh like the immortals. "There is no hunger, sorrow, disability, old age, misery and death in his palace. Whatever they want to eat or drink, it is found in it" (Qazvini, 1375, Vol. 1: 214).

The purpose of human creation

The purpose of human creation in Iranian mythology

Many myths have no reference to the philosophy of human creation, but few have implicitly answered this question. In some myths, man is created to serve the gods, and man is so powerful that he helps the gods to bring order to the world and eliminate the manifestations of evil. "In the Zoroastrian beliefs, the main purpose of human creation is to help AhuraMazda overcome the Demons (Divan). Ahuramazda creates human beings and encourages them to marry to increase the number of people and to assist Ahuramazda in the final battle between Ahuramazda and the devil at the end of twelve thousand years of life. (Rezaei, 1384: 175).

The basis of Iranian people's thinking about the purpose of human creation is based on a combination of combating evil and testing the creatures. According to Iranian belief, creation began when Ahuramazda became aware of the evil and the battle with him. The two, always at odds with each other, divide the material and spiritual worlds between each other and work to create creatures commensurate with their nature.

The good and evil battle in the Shahnameh is cosmic in style, and as in other elements of the universe, man is involved in this struggle, and as the supreme creature of Ahuramazda, has the ability and opportunity to choose one of these two fronts, and if one turns away, He can be on the other side, of course, and Ahuramazda's attitude towards man is that he will ultimately choose Ahuramazda because man is equipped with the weapon of wisdom, on the other hand he is the only creature that must be brought to justice by Ahuramazda. He is accountable for his deeds and has such authority that the ultimate victory over the devil is possible by human help.

The role and mission of man is to illuminate the evil half-darkness of one's own existence and to depart to the higher world of Ahura by participating in good deeds, and sometimes it receives heavenly approval from Ahura.

## The purpose of human creation in Indian mythology

"In the Hindu religion, man carried teachings and patterns of divine and important laws are attributed to him; he received the method of austerity and meditation and religion from his divine father and passed on to other people" (Jalali Moghadam, 1383: 63).

In Behgodgita's book, the purpose of human creation was the worship of the Great God, and Kreshna himself acknowledges that his purpose in bringing creatures into the world is not for gain or dependency, but the owners of the great spirits turn to him in worship. Eventually they become attached to him, which is absolute perfection (Movahed, 1385: 136).

In Mahabharat, the army of virtue represents the gods and the army of evil represents the devils. Because the evil corps endangers the divine system of honor and lies and when corruption pervades the world, the good army rises up and destroys it. (Qazvin, 1375, Vol. 1, p. 29).

## Conclusion

The myth of human creation for Iranians and Hindus have common backgrounds and roots. In these traditions, creation has begun eternally, and the quality of human creation and the first human couple (Iranian Mashya and Mashyana as well as Indian Yameh and Yamy) are similar in some ways. Another similarity is the existence of a god in creation, who orders the creation of Adam, the great God who is in heaven.

The many similarities found in the ancient religious and epic beliefs of Iran and India indicate the connection of these nations. The most similarities can be found in the epic of Mahabharata and Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. The creation of the world begins with the confrontation of good and evil and the end of the world will be followed by the victory of good. This contrast is well illustrated in the Shahnameh and the Mahabharat. Man in epic Persian poems, especially in Ferdowsi's mastery, has a very lofty position. In the Shahnameh, the human being is the only who has divine spirit with willpower and wisdom, his rank in superior than nature and skies, and it is referred to as the first of its kind. In Hindu mythology man is ascribed to God, and since he is derived from the essence of God, he is related to the higher world and has abundant sacred aspect.

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