



## AMURDĀD

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**AMURDĀD** (Pahl. form of Av. Amərətāt, NPers. Mordād, Amordād), one of the seven great *Aməša Spəntas* of Zoroastrianism, the hypostasis of the concept of “not dying,” that is Long Life on this earth or Immortality in the hereafter (cf. Ved. *amṛtatva*). Amurdād/Amərətāt is regularly linked with *Hordād*/Haurvatāt, Wholeness or Health, and is the guardian of plants, as Hordād (NPers. *Ḳordād*) is of water, two creations which are themselves naturally associated. These are the most readily comprehensible of the links between the *Aməša Spəntas* and physical phenomena, since there exists “an entirely clear causal connection in the everyday world between water and plants and the divinities of life and health” (H. Lommel, “Symbolik der Elemente in der zoroastrischen Religion,” *Zarathustra*, ed. W. Schlerath, Darmstadt, 1970, p. 260). As Zarathushtra says to Ahura Mazdā: “Truly in Thy Kingdom of Good Thought, both Wholeness and Immortality are for sustenance. Together with Truth, Devotion has increased endurance and strength” (Y. 34.11). In Y. 45.10, 51.7 likewise “endurance and strength” are used in parallel to Haurvatāt and Amərətāt, to state, it seems, qualities with which these two great beings can imbue their worshipers. Further, when the Kingdom of Ahura Mazdā is established at last upon earth, there will exist unfailing health and immortality for the future body (*tan ī pasēn*), presided over by these two *Aməša Spəntas*. The concept of Amurdād appears of particular significance in this connection, since in ancient Indo-Iranian idiom “not dying” thus used meant, it seems, salvation in Paradise with the gods, as distinct from bleak “death” in the underground realm of shadows.



The Avestan Aməratāt and Haurvatāt are female, and according to the tradition preserved in the Pahlavi books they stand on Ahura Mazdā's left, together with the female Spendarmad/Spəntā Ārmaiti (*Bundahišn*, tr. 26.8). Both in the Gāthās themselves and in the later Zoroastrian literature it is these three Aməša Spəntas who are most constantly named with, or as representing, the creations which they guard, as in the following Pahlavi passage: “These are the souls of those women who heeded not their menstruation, and injured . . . fire, and the earth Spendarmad, and Hordad, and Amurdad, and looked upon the sky and sun and moon” (*Ardā Wirāz-nāmag* 62.5-6).

In the developed Zoroastrian theology Amurdād has for helpers or *hamkārs* the divinities Rašn and Aštād (both linked with men's hope of salvation), and Zam, *yazata* of the earth which nourishes plants (see *Bundahišn*, tr. 26.115). In the myth of creation it is told how, after Ahriman had withered the unique Plant, “because the Plant was her own, the Amahraspand Amurdad pounded that Plant to pieces and mingled these with the water which Tištar took; and Tištar caused that water to rain over all the earth. Over all the earth plants grew up” (ibid., 6d.1). So in the present state of existence “the deathless Amurdad is chief over innumerable plants . . . and causes plants to grow and herds of beneficent animals to increase, since all creatures eat and live from her” (26.113). Hence part of a Middle Persian benediction runs: “May Hordad give thee abundance and prosperity. May Amurdad give thee herds of cattle” (*Šāyest nē-šāyest* 21.6-7).

Because of their association with what sustains life, Hordād and Amurdād are connected with drink and food; and it is held to be out of respect for them that Zoroastrians, having taken an appropriate *bāǰ*, should eat in silence. “To eat while chattering” is regularly mentioned as a sin, and Wirāz saw a man undergoing punishment in hell because “in the world he had consumed Hordād and Amurdād—water and plants—unlawfully, chattering as he chewed, and had not maintained silence, and had not asked a blessing, such was his contempt for the water of Hordad and the plants of Amurdad” (*Ardā Wirāz-nāmag* 23.6-8).

In the story of Zarathushtra's birth, as related from Avestan sources in the Pahlavi *Dēnkard* (7.2.19ff.), the prophet's physical substance, his *tan-gōhr*, was entrusted to Hordād and Amurdād. They caused the clouds to let rain fall, plentiful and warm, to nourish the grasses. Six white heifers grazed on the fresh grass and their udders became full of milk, which the prophet's mother drank. She thereby absorbed his *tan-gōhr*, which became united within her



with his *xwarr* and *frawahr* (M. Molé, *La légende de Zoroasrre selon les textes pehlevis*, Paris, 1967, pp. 18ff.).

In the Zoroastrian calendar the seventh day and the fifth month are named for Amurdād, who accordingly has her special feast day on the seventh day of the fifth month annually. In the religious dedications of each fifth day (see *Sīrōza* 1.7) she is invoked together with the Gaokarəna or White Hōm. According to the Pahlavi books this is the “chief of plants,” “created for keeping back short-breathed old age” (*Bundahišn*, tr. 6d.6). “And from it they will prepare ambrosia at Frašigird. . . . Whoever shall eat it, will become immortal” (ibid., 16.5, cf. 26.93). Parallel to this is the statement that “at Frašigird they will prepare ambrosia from Amurdad” (ibid., 26.113), the great Aməša Spənta being represented in the plant. The “white hōm” is evidently to be used instead of the ordinary *hōm/haoma* at the last *yasna*, to be solemnized at the end of time. The blessed who then partake of the juice of Amurdād’s special plant will become immortal in body as well as soul.

The names of the two Aməša Spəntas appear in a glossary of Sasanian or post-Sasanian times, in which Middle Persian *’mwrđ’d hrwd’d* is rendered by Sogdian *hrwwt mrwwt* (see W. B. Henning, *Sogdica*, London, 1940, p. 16). It is suggested (ibid., p. 19) that there may be a connection here in usage with Armenian *hawrot mawrot*, the names of two flowers (see [Armenia: Religion](#)). In Qur’ān 2:96 the Aməša Spəntas appear as two angels, [Hārūt and Mārūt](#).

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