



GAYŌMART

GAYŌMART (Gayūmart, Kayūmart; Mid. Pers. Gayōmart/d, Av. *gaya marātan* “mortal life,” Man. Gehmurd; Ar. Jayūmart), the sixth of the heptad in Mazdean myth of creation, the protoplast of man, and the first king in Iranian mythical history. The particulars of Gayōmart’s life and death are given somehow differently in Middle Persian books. Our main source of information on this first righteous man is the *Bundahišn*, of which the essential features are as follows:

Gayōmart, like other creations, was fashioned forth to assist Ohrmazd in his fight against the Evil Spirit (Ganāg mēnōg; *Bundahišn* 1a.4). He was created in Ērān-wēz (q.v.), in the middle of the world, on the left bank of the river Good Dāitī (see [DAĪTYĀ](#)), facing the Uniquely-Created Bull (*Gāw ī ēwdād*, q.v.), on the opposite bank. He measured four medium reeds (*Zādspram* 2.10) in height and in breadth; he was round and shining as the sun (an anthropomorphic representation; *Bundahišn* 1a.13), with physical features as men born of his seed. His body was created by Ohrmazd from earth, i.e., through Spandārmad, its divinity, thus of the next-of-kin marriage of father and daughter, and his sperm was fashioned from the light and brightness (*zargōnīh*) of the sky (*Bundahišn* 1a.13). When creations were placed under the custody of Amahrspands (see [AMĒŠA SPĒNTA](#); [ELEMENTS](#)), Ohrmazd took to himself the Holy Man, Gayōmart, the pre-eminent element of material beings (*az gētiyān bun*; *Bundahišn* 3.12; cf. *mardōm gētīg pahlom dahišnān* “Man the foremost of material creations”; *Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 43). Because the *frawahr* of Gayōmart took upon himself to contend with the Ahriman (q.v.), Ohrmazd



conceded to grant him perfection and immortality at the Renovation (*frašegird*; *Bundahišn* 1.23-24). On the creation of Gayōmart, Ahriman laid low in his awe for 3000 years, till the arch-demon Whore (Jeh, q.v.) came and roused Ahriman from his stupor, promising him to destroy Gayōmart and the creatures of Ohrmazd. Commencing the second cosmic stage, the Mixture (*gumēzišn*), Ahriman attacked the creations and sent Astwihād (q.v.), the demon of death, to assail Gayōmart with Want, Sloth, Lust, and 1000 diseases (*Bundahišn* 4.19). But his misdeeds were of no avail, since Ohrmazd had brought Sleep in the form of a radiant youth over Gayōmart; and Time (i.e., *Zurwān*) had destined him to live for thirty years (*Bundahišn* 4.25). In the end, in accordance with the aspect of his horoscope, when the malefic Saturn returned to its exaltation, and Jupiter was in descension, Gayōmart succumbed to his injuries and passed away (*Bundahišn* 6F.7), while his sperm was in two parts purified by the rays of the sun and entrusted for safe-keeping to the deity Nēryōsang and in one part fell upon the earth and was received by Spandārmad, his creator and mother. His seed remained for forty years in the earth, out of which slowly grew the rhubarb plant, the stem of which developed into the first human couple, Mašīa and Mašīānag (*Bundahišn* 6F.9), the progenitors of all human races, the ten (twenty-five in *Bundahišn* 14.38) species of mankind (*Bundahišn* 14.1) that inhabit the Xwanīrah, the central continent of the earth. On Gayōmart's passing away, Ohrmazd took his ideal form (*ēwēnag kerb = frawahr*) and entrusted it to the sun-station; which ever since shines through the sun. And seven (eight in *Zādspram* 3.69) kinds of metal developed from the members of his body. Gayōmart the protohuman, with the first human *frawahr*, is also the first Zoroastrian hero to be raised at the Resurrection to bring about the Renovation (*frašegird*) in association with Sošyāns, the savior and the last man (*Bundahišn* 34.6). The cause of Gayōmart is safe-guarded by the fire of Warahrān (*Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 538), because the seed of man is said to have originated from fire, not water.

Gayōmart as one of the foremost heroes of Zoroastrianism, ranking with Zoroaster and Sōšyans, and being the first to embrace the message of Ohrmazd (*Dēnkard*, pp. 28, 519; tr. de Menasce, chap. 35, p. 50), was ordained by Ohrmazd the first Mazdean prophet to transmit the divine word to men (*fradom aštag ī az dādār Ohrmazd ō mardōm; saxwan abar barišnīh hammōzišn andar axw ī astōmand fradom gayōmart*, *Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 313; tr. de Menasce, chap. 312, pp. 298-99). The *Dādestān ī dēnīg*, chapter 63 (tr. West, pp. 197-98), in line with the *Bundahišn*, recounts the creation and life of the first man, and extols him (2.10) as a man of divine prowess in whose



keeping is the whole of creation. In the *Frawardīn Yašt* (87), his *fravaši* is celebrated as the first righteous man who embraced the will and commandment of Ahura Mazdā (q.v.), and from whom developed the family of Aryan lands; and in *Yasna* 23.2, his *fravaši* is exalted together with those of the preeminent heroes of Mazdaism such as Zoroaster, Kay Wištāsp, Sōšyāns, and all ancient teachers of the faith. As he had no flock to preach his revelation, the Word of God and prophetic counsels addressed to his mind (*mēnišn*) were subsequently revealed to Mašīa, and through their son, Sīāmak, to mankind (*Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 313). A few philanthropical precepts are also attributed to him: “The praises offered to me would be more favorably received from those who recognize men of noble character (*meh*) within commonalty (*keh*), and the low (*keh*) among the high society (*meh*), as well as from a brother who would forgive the misconduct of his junior brother” (*Pahlavi Yasna* 68.22, p. 281). Ṭabarī also ascribes to him the apothegms: “Pay heed to what is said, not to the speaker. Look up to advice and wise words, no matter who says it. Acknowledge the truth, no matter of what provenance” (Bal’amī, ed. Bahār, p. 123).

According to the *Čīhrdād nask* (*Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 688) the original Avestan text had contained an account of the creation of Gayōmart in bodily form, the manner of the birth of Mašīa and Mašīānag, and the establishment of monarchy on earth by Hōšang, wherefore his epithet *pēšdād* (Av. *para-dāta*—“the first to establish [sovereignty]”; *Yt.* 19.26; *Yt.* 5.21; *Pahlavi Vidēvdād* 20.1). Ṭabarī (I, pp. 147 ff.) and Bal’amī, (ed. Bahār, pp. 112-28) with more details, recount at some length the creation of Gayōmart who is identified as Adam. He is represented as a peaceable and pious primitive king who renders the world prosperous and habitable.

There are various traditions in regard to the sequence of Gayōmart’s descendant. The Middle Persian books generally give his posterity as: Mašīa (Mašīānag), Sīāmak, Frawāk (Ar. Afrāwāk), and Hōšang (*Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, pp. 231, 613; *Bundahišn* 14.31, 31.1, 35.4; *Zādspram* 7, p. 54), which is followed by Ṭabarī (I, p. 154). But his translator Bal’amī (ed. Bahār, pp. 124-25) passes over Frawāk. Iranian legendary history, however, being based on a secular tradition recorded by the *Šāh-nāma*, derived from the *Xwadāy-nāmag*, refers to Gayōmart as the first world king. He is depicted as a prehistoric cave-dweller who brings forth the rite of royalty, founds the Pēšdādīān dynasty and, clad in leopard-skin, rules over men and beasts by natural disposition. In this version his son, the noble Sīāmak, is killed by Ahriman, whereupon his grandson



Hōšang, the second Pēšdādīān king, avenges himself on his father's killers, the demons (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, I, pp. 21-25, Moscow, I, pp. 29-31).

The epithet attached to Gayōmart is inconsistently reported by Middle and the New Persian materials. The *Dēnkard* (ed. Madan, p. 29; tr. de Menasce, p. 50) refers to him as *gil(TYN)šāh* (lit. clay king), but the Pahlavi *Aogamadēčā* (JamaspAsa, p. 85) knows him as *garšāh* (king of the mountain). The Islamic historians call him variously *garšāh* or *gelšāh* (Bal'amī, ed. Bahār, pp. 12, 113). It is with good reason suggested that *gil (gl)* may be a misreading for *gar (gl)*; Yarshater, p. 420). In contrast with these readings the *Šāh-nāma* gives *kayšāh*, which is an obvious error since *kay* (Av. *kavi*) is the title of the kings of the second legendary dynasty, the Kayanids (ed. Khaleghi, I, p. 22, Moscow, I, p. 29).

The Gayōmart's creation myth is also cursorily reported by Šahrestānī, the heresiographer, under the sect of Kayūmartīya (pp. 182-83), characterized as a syncretic doctrine, combining what seems to be popular dualistic beliefs blended with Mazdean account of the first man. Its novel features are creation of Ahriman (Darkness) from an inappropriate speculation of an eternal god (cf. the conception of Ahriman from Zurwān's doubt), and the puerile statement that the ensuing combat between the forces of Light and Darkness comes to a head by the arbitration of the angels, providing that god wholly surrenders the world of mixture to Ahriman for 7000 years, a senseless modification of the 6000. It is evident that the absurd tale lacks the makings of a serious sectarian doctrine. Schaefer (Reizenstein and Schader, p. 238) is justified in disputing the existence of the sect. The parallel Vedic Mārtāṇḍa is taken to suggest a common Indo-Iranian myth attempting to explain the origin of man (Hoffmann, p. 100; Boyce, p. 140). In classical Islamic historiography, Gayōmard is often associated with Adam. "There is a tradition that Adam chose from among his numerous offspring two sons, Šīt (i.e., Seth, Gen. 4.25) and Kayūmard, and he conferred on them forty canonical scriptures (*ṣahīfa*) to act upon. Šīt was entrusted with the maintenance of the religion, and Kayūmard with the kingdom and worldly affairs" (Ġazālī, pp. 81-85). The author of *Borhān-e qāṭe'* also knows Kayōmart as a son of Adam and the first king (ed. Mo'in, III, p. 1760).



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