

What is Ahura Mazda?

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In Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda is the supreme divinity, the creator of all existence, and the authority under which the world will progress towards its ideal state. It is the primary object of worship for Zoroastrians, who venerate fire and the natural elements as extensions of the divine. However, it should not be understood as a supernatural entity or an impersonal, judgmental God but instead as the supreme intellect of all the energy in the universe, the divine mind that first conceived of a perfect existence and sought to actualize it in the material world. As such, Ahura Mazda exists fully in the realm of mind and potentialities and is ever-present throughout the universe, intrinsic to the very nature of existence. In this way, it is obtainable by every living being, available to all who search for truth and wisdom, primarily through its seven component aspects, the Amesha Spentas.

Ultimately, Ahura Mazda is seen as the creator and designer of the fundamental laws which govern reality. In Zoroastrianism, this concept is referred to by a single term: Asha, or the order of existence. Within Asha, Ahura Mazda infused his very nature and embedded his vision for a perfect reality. As such, existence is seen as an outgrowth of the will of Ahura Mazda and a progressive realization of the laws which govern existence. Moreover, Asha is iteratively actualized by the inherent force or potentiality for life to grow, nourish, and advance. This progressive force, or Spenta Mainyu, is the very means by which Ahura Mazda created the current existence, and it is the primary mechanism by which it acts in the material world.

The concept of Ahura Mazda originated from the term *Mazdā Ahura*, a descriptive name chosen by Zarathushtra to encapsulate the nature of the Supreme Intellect he saw at the core of all existence. The word *mazdā* means 'wisdom' or, to an extent, 'intelligence' while *ahura* primarily means 'Lord', but, at the time of Zarathushtra, it carried strong connotations of 'that which constitutes one's divine nature'. Together, *mazdā ahura* means something like Divine or Supreme Wisdom. Some time after Zarathushtra, this name became formalized as Ahura Mazda, and it was exalted as the supreme deity and creator god. The worship of Ahura Mazda would eventually spread across ancient Iran and Central Asia, constituting many different denominations and often adapting to local beliefs.

Originally, the early followers of Zarathushtra's teachings solely worshiped Ahura Mazda, as well as the Amesha Spentas, fire, and the natural world, all of which they saw as being imbued with divine nature. In those days, the Gathas were the core spiritual and religious text, which they used as a guide for the attainment of the divine and the advancement of life. As Zoroastrianism spread, it began to incorporate many of the older beliefs of ancient Iranians, and Ahura Mazda was given a number of sub-deities, called Yazatas, which he created to help him manage the world.

However, one of the ancient Iranian nations, Persia, still followed the earlier ways of worshipping just Ahura Mazda. They would eventually unite nearly all of the known world under the Persian, or Achaemenid, Empire and spread the concept of Ahura Mazda to all they

encountered, most notably the Ancient Jews and Greeks, inspiring the idea of a single creator in Judaism and many ideas in Greek Philosophy. However, these times would not last. Centuries later, Ahura Mazda would merge with Spenta Mainyu and subsequently be placed in direct conflict with Anghra Mainyu ('the destructive force'), giving birth to the dualistic version of Zoroastrianism so familiar to many today.