

# THE CREATION (Mayan)

In the beginning, only the sky above and the sea below existed in the eternal darkness, and they were calm and silent, for nothing existed that could move or make noise. The surface of the earth had yet to rise forth from the waters. Grass and trees, stones, caves and ravines, birds and fish, crabs, animals, and human beings had yet to be created. Nothing could roar or rumble; nothing could sing or squeak; nothing could run or shake, for there was nothing but the vacant sky above and the tranquil sea below.

Hidden in the water under green and blue feathers were the Creators. These great thinkers talked quietly together in the water, alone in the universe, alone in the darkness of the eternal night. Together they decided what would be. Together they decided when the earth would rise from the waters, when the first human beings and all other forms of life would be born, what these living things would eat in order to survive, and when dawn would first flood the world with pale light.

"Let creation begin!" the Creators exclaimed. "Let the void be filled! Let the sea recede, revealing the surface of the earth! Earth, arise! Let it be done!"

And so they created it. The Creators made it. Out of the mist, out of a cloud of dust, mountains and valleys rose from the sea, and pine and cypress trees took root in the rich soil. Fresh water ran in streams down the mountainsides and between the hills.

And the Creators were satisfied. "We have thought about it and planned it," they said, "and what we have created is perfect!"

Then the Creators asked, "Do we want only silence beneath the trees we have created? Let us create wild animals, birds, and snakes. Let it be done!"

And so they created them. The Creators made them.

"You, deer, will walk on four feet through the thicket and the pasture. You will multiply in the forest, where you will sleep in the cool shade of the ravines and in the fields along the banks of rivers. You, birds, will live in the branches of the trees and in the vines. There you will build your nests, and there you will multiply." This the deer and the birds were told, and this they did.

And the Creators were satisfied. "We have thought about it and planned it," they said, "and what we have created is perfect!"

Then the Creators asked for more from the living creatures they had created. "Speak, call, cry, as each of you can. Call us by name, praise us, and love us."

But all this the birds and animals could not do. They could scream, hiss, and cackle, but they could not call their creators by name.

The Creators were disappointed with the living creatures that they had made. They said to them, "We will not take from you that which we have given you, However, because you cannot praise us and love us, we will make other beings who will. These new creatures will be superior to you and will rule you. It is your destiny that they will tear apart and eat your flesh. Let it be done!"

And so they created them. The Creators made them. They decided to fashion an obedient and respectful creature who would praise and love them. First they tried to model him out of muddy earth, but the material was too soft. He was limp and weak. He could speak, but no mind gave meaning to the words he spoke.

"Creatures fashioned from mud will never be able to live and multiply!" the Creators exclaimed. So they destroyed this creature.

Next the Creators tried to carve their new creature out of wood. "This material seems to be just right! It is firm and strong," they said. "These creatures look and speak like human beings. Let us make many more of them. Let it be done!"

The wooden creatures lived and multiplied, but no mind gave meaning to the words they spoke, and no soul existed within them. Their faces lacked all spirit, their hands and feet all strength. Their flesh was yellow and dry, without a bloody moisture pulsing beneath the surface to nourish it. They wandered aimlessly on all four limbs and did not think of their creators.

"Creatures fashioned from wood are not good enough to be able to live and multiply!" the Creators exclaimed. So they determined to destroy these wooden creatures.

The Creators caused a great flood of sap to form in the sky and fall to earth, striking the heads of the wooden creatures and felling them like trees. Then an eagle descended upon them and tore out their eyes. A bat descended upon them and cut

off their heads. A jaguar leaped upon them and broke and mangled their bones. The face of the earth became covered in darkness, and a black rain fell without ceasing.

Once they were powerless, these wooden creatures were beset by enemies. Animals, both large and small, attacked them. Sticks and stones, plates and pots attacked them. Dogs they had starved and taunted now tore into their faces with their teeth. Stones they had used for grinding now ground them. Pots and griddles they had burned upon the cooking fire now burned their faces.

Desperately fighting for their lives, the wooden creatures tried to climb to the roofs of their houses, but the houses collapsed and tossed them back to the ground. They tried to climb the trunks of trees and find safety in their branches, but the trees shook them off and threw them to the ground. They tried to enter caves, but the caves closed and refused to shelter them.

All but a few of the wooden creatures were destroyed. The others survived with mangled faces and jaws, and their descendants became known as monkeys.

The Creators then took counsel together in the darkness of the night. The sun, the moon, and the stars had yet to appear in the sky above them. "Let us try again to create creatures who will praise us and love us. Let it be done! Let noble creatures live on the surface of the earth. Let us search for the substance we can use to fashion them."

Four animals-the mountain cat, the coyote, the crow, and a small parrot-came before the Creators and told them of yellow ears and white ears of corn that grew abundantly nearby. The Creators took the road the animals showed them. They found the corn, ground it up, and fashioned their noble creatures from this food. "Let it be done!" they exclaimed.

And so they created them. The Creators made them.

So it came to pass that the four First Fathers were created. The Creators fashioned their bodies from cornmeal dough. They made corn drinks from ground yellow and white corn and fed them to their new creatures to give them muscles and flesh, and with these strength.

And the Creators were satisfied. "We have thought about it and planned it," they said, "and what we have created is perfect!"

These four First Fathers looked and talked like human beings. They were attractive, intelligent, and wise. They could see far into the distance. Mountains and valleys, forests and meadows, oceans and lakes, the earth beneath their feet, and the sky above their heads all revealed their natures to them.

When the four First Fathers saw all there was to see in the world, they appreciated what they saw, and they thanked their creators. "We thank you for having created and formed us," they said. "We thank you for giving us the ability to see, hear, speak, think, and walk. We can see what is large and what is small, what is near and what is far. We know everything, and we thank you!"

The Creators were no longer pleased. "Have we created creatures who are better than we intended? Are they too perfect?" they asked each other. "Have we made them so knowledgeable and wise that they will be gods like ourselves? Should we limit their sight so that they will see less and know less? Let it be done!"

So the Creators spoke, and they changed the beings they had created. They blew fog into their eyes so they could see only that which was close to them. In this way, the Creators destroyed the original knowledge and wisdom that the four First Fathers had possessed.

After the Creators had created and formed our grandfathers in this way, they said, "Now let us carefully create and form wives for the First Fathers. Let their wives come to them while they are asleep and be there to bring them joy when they awaken. Let it be done!"

And so they created them. The Creators made them.

And the Creators were satisfied. "We have thought about it and planned it," they said, "and what we have created is perfect!"

So it came to pass that the Creators made many more human beings like the First Fathers and the First Mothers. They lived and multiplied in darkness, for the Creators had not yet created light of any kind, neither sun, nor moon, nor stars. These human beings lived together in the east in great numbers, both light-skinned and dark-skinned, rich and poor, speaking different languages.

They made no images of their gods, yet they remembered their creators and were loving and obedient. They raised their faces to the sky and prayed, "Oh,

Creators! Stay with us and listen to us! Let there be light! Let there be dawn! Let there be day! Let dawn flood the world with pale light, and let the sun follow. As long as the sun shines from the sky, brightening each day, grant us daughters and sons to continue our race. Give us good, useful, happy lives, and give us peace!"

With these words the people begged the sun to rise and to light with its golden rays the steps of those whom the Creators had made.

"So let it be!" the Creators said. "Let there be light! In the dawn of the universe, let the light of early morning shine upon all that we have created! For we have thought about it and planned it, and what we have created is perfect!"

And so they created it. The Creators made it. The sun rose from the waters and cast its golden rays upon the surface of the earth. And the animals and the people were joyful because of it. Large and small animals rose to their feet in the cool shade of ravines and along the banks of rivers and turned to face the rising sun. The jaguar and the puma roared, and the snake hissed. The birds stretched their wings and broke into song. The people danced around their priests, who were burning incense and making sacrifices. For the Creators had illuminated the earth with light, and it was perfect.