

## ZOROASTRIANS

**Zoroastrianism**, religion founded in ancient Persia by the prophet Zoroaster, also called Zarathustra. The doctrines preached by Zoroaster are preserved in his metrical Gathas, (psalms) which form part of the sacred scriptures known as the Avesta Tenets. His teachings became the guiding principles of Persian civilization.

The Vendidad is a part of the Avesta. And gives the laws of the religion. It contains some useful laws of hygiene, which were available before the days of modern medicine.

The Gathas and the Seven Chapters form part of the liturgy called the Yasna. This incorporated the Aryan polytheistic paganism into Zoroastrianism. Among these deities is Anahita, a fertility and river goddess.

Probably the first Persian king to recognize the religion proposed by Zoroaster was Darius 1. His inscriptions are full of the praises of Ahura - Mazda; he stresses rationality and seems to regard Lie as a world force. His son, Xerxes 1, was also a worshipper of Ahura - Mazda. Artaxerxes 1 (reigned 465-425BC) was also a worshipper of Mazda. Artaxerxes 2 (reigned 409-358 BC) venerated Ahura - Mazda, Mithra, and Anahita; in his reign the first Persian temples were built. The new Persian dynasty of the Sassanids (AD 224-641) established Zoroastrianism as the state religion of Persia.

After Alexander the Great conquered Persia, Zoroastrianism began to die out, but was revived during the early days of Christianity. The teachings of Zoroaster are the basis of the Parsi religion in India. Some still recite the Avestan liturgy and tend the sacred fires, and a few still follow the Magian doctrine of placing corpses on raised edifices (called towers of silence) to be prey of vultures.

There are a number of sects of Zoroastrians. One group are fire worshippers in Iran called Ghebers.

Persia was gradually converted to Islam after its conquest by the Arabs in the 7th century. Zoroastrianism survived, however, in small communities of Gabars (a derogatory term coined by the Arabs) in the mountainous region of Yezd and Kerman.

There is a mix of various religious thought in these religions and influence from one religion to another, but they do not follow from a source from the creation of mankind, or provide a savior for the sins of mankind, or a promise of a future with God in the here-after. Would these religions be as good as any other? What was the source of religious ideas by Zoroaster?