

Zarathushtra **(Life and Teachings)**

Ali A Jafarey

*“Hear the best with your ears
and ponder with a bright mind.
Then each man and woman, for his or her self,
select either of the two, the better or the bad mentality.
Awaken to this doctrine of ours
before the great event of choice ushers in.”*

(Zarathushtra's Gathas: Song 3.2)

Tradition says Zarathushtra was born on 6th of Farvardin, 30 days before Zarathushtrian Religious Era (26 March 1767 B.C.E.). Zarathushtra's father Pourushaspa of the Spitama clan, an Iranian tribe, raised cattle and was famous for his horses. His mother, Dughdav, was known for her enlightened ideas. The family lived near the bank of the Oxus River in present day Central Asia.

Zarathushtra, inquisitive by nature, was a consummate thinker. He kept asking questions concerning the world and its creator. The priests of the ancient polytheistic cult could not provide him with satisfactory answers. His father invited the head priest to talk to him. The ensuing arguments enraged the priest so much that he is said to have dropped dead, evidently, from a heart attack while driving his chariot back home.

Disappointed by the response from the priests, Zarathushtra turned to his inner self and the thought-provoking nature around him. His search for the truth, for creation, and its creator led him to God with Whom he communed. At the age of thirty he proclaimed his mission and began preaching the new message to humanity.

That message, fresh today as it was 3800 years ago, shattered myths and established beliefs by challenging rites and rituals related to superstition and sacrifice and made Zarathushtra an enemy of the rulers and priests. For over ten years, he and his small fellowship of companions were harassed and tortured. With determination and innate wisdom, and with great risk to his life, he decided to bring his divine doctrine to the chief ruler, Vishtaspa. Ancient Iran was vast. It included Afghanistan, Central Asia, eastern Iran, and Pakistan and was divided into many kingdoms with a council of kings. The council, a loose federation bound by mutual treaties, was presided over by the most heroic leader. The kings were known as khshathras or “habitation authorities”. Some of these rulers were both warriors and intellectuals and were called kavis, or sages.

Kavi Vishtaspa of the Helmand valley in southeastern part of the land was a powerful person and, like other kavis, a man of learning. His court was full of sages, and he derived his power from the many conquests to his credit. Zarathushtra's enemies had already reached the court of Vishtaspa to doom his mission. Zarathushtra, undaunted, faced the King and his court, but it was a struggle of epic proportions. It took two years of rigorous perseverance to deliberate and deliver the divine message to the king and the queen, their court and their people. It took two full years to eradicate all evil ideas, intoxicating rituals, bloody sacrifices, and duping doses, and to replace them with: "Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds". Zarathushtra was 42 years old at that time.

King Vishtaspa, Queen Hutaosa, their children, and the people underwent a complete transformation. The princes forsook the throne and became zealous missionaries. The result was that the Good Religion spread far and wide within the lifetime of Zarathushtra.

His mission was a great success. Satisfied that he had his "best wishes come true", Zarathushtra passed away peacefully at the ripe age of 77 years and 40 days. By tradition his birth is hailed and celebrated every year, yet his demise has never been mourned into a rite.

His trained missionaries preached the divine message far and wide. The Zarathushtrian fellowship widened to include people of many races and nations. For the first time in history, a universal religion was born with a message to inspire all of mankind.

His divine message was a unique revelation, a fresh outlook, a new philosophy, a novel doctrine. It cleansed the human mind of prejudices, superstitions, and evil thoughts. It denied multiple illusory deities and proclaimed Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, as the only God, creator, maintainer, and promoter of the cosmos, the good, beautiful, and orderly universe. Zarathushtra's message stood for peace, progress, and prosperity on this good earth and a blissful life beyond.

His message is a living message. It is divine. It is based on the triple principle of "Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds". It promotes the human mind and provokes its thinking faculty. It solves the complicated problem of Good and Evil by placing them in the human mind as two opposing "mentalities", not entities. Good serves and promotes human society in an ecologically sound world, while evil damages and retards society's good progress.

A human being, endowed with a discriminating mind, is born free to choose between good and evil. This places a heavy responsibility on an individual. A person is good if he or she chooses to think good thoughts and, in turn, speaks good words and performs good deeds. One is evil if one chooses to think evil and consequently to speak and do evil. Good deeds lead a person to wholeness and immortality, and evil deeds make one suffer and grope in darkness until light is found and truth realized.

Moral rectitude, the good and the bad consequences of one's deeds, follow every act one performs. Zarathushtra's divine message advocates that every person should choose to serve God, the society, and the living world. It advocates human progress through harmony with the beneficial nature. It accords perfect equality to men and women.

Society is based on home, district, state, country, and world, or in other words, on family, community, nation, and world fellowship. There exists no racial superiority. Superiority belongs to the virtuous wise, who can lead the world to spiritual and material completion, and consequently to the Source of Creation and Totality of Wisdom.

With the wise leading the world, the message is ever fresh and ever present. The religion of Zarathushtra is a self-renovating religion. It is a timeless guide to humanity. The message of Zarathushtra is aimed at knowing God, loving people, caring for animals, plants, water, air, and minerals and at promoting the spiritual and material world. The message provokes the mind, sweetens the tongue, and invigorates the body to make life mentally and physically, spiritually and materially progressive, prosperous, peaceful, refreshed, happy, and loving. The message is Divine and Zarathushtrian.