

The Zoroastrian Faith

Introduction

The Prophet Zarathushtra or Zoroaster was the founder of the Zoroastrian Faith and its followers are known as Zoroastrians. Zarathushtra was the first prophet to preach monotheism or the presence of one God. Whilst there is much debate about the dates of Zarathushtra's life (ranging from 6.000 BC to 1.200 BC) it is generally agreed that he was born near the Caspian Sea, in what was ancient Persia at the time.

At the age of 20 years, Zarathushtra left home and spent 10 years in voluntary exile, during which time he is said to have communed with the Divine Archangels and finally with the Creator Himself, whom he called Ahura Mazda (Ahura – Creator of Life, Mazda – Creator of matter). The divine message was immortalised by the Prophet in his famous teachings called the Gathas, which is based on truth, righteousness, order and justice (asha), and the good mind (vohu manho). To this day the Gathas with many other prayers are recited in Zarathushtra's own spoken language, the ancient Avesta, and are translated into modern languages purely for the purpose of understanding their meaning.

The Message

Religion should play an active role in our lives in such a way that our daily routine is governed by its principles, regardless of our station on Earth. Each person by virtue of his God-given right of Free Will is able to choose between good and evil. The balance between these good and evil deeds will ultimately decide the individual's destiny. In the final analysis, by dint of good thoughts (humata), good words (hukhta) and good deeds (havrashta), salvation will be achieved by the Righteous. There is no eternal damnation of the soul, and at the Final Resurrection all souls will be redeemed, Time will cease to exist, and all the Creations of the Almighty will live together in everlasting joy and happiness.

Places of Worship

Traditionally, Zoroastrian places of worship are known as Fire Temples because a consecrated fire burns perpetually inside them. The fire in each Temple has many sources of origin, one of which is the Sacred Fire brought by the faithful from their original homeland of ancient Persia to India in the 10th Century.

Zoroastrian men and women must cover their heads when praying and perform the kushti ritual in the entrance to the place of worship. There is a consecrated chamber where the fire is housed and into which only priests may enter. Worshippers may bow before the fire and take some clod ash to place upon their forehead in order to receive the divine blessing and then pray.

Fire

Fire is used in Zoroastrian ceremonies, and many individual Zoroastrians keep an oil lamp burning in their homes. This centrality of fire in Zoroastrian worship has led some people to describe Zoroastrians as "fire worshippers". This is, however, a misunderstanding and offensive to Zoroastrians. Zoroastrians do not worship fire but worship Ahura Mazda (the Wise Lord) and venerate Amesha Spentas (Bounteous Immortals) and the Yazatas (adorable ones). Fire is respected as a symbol representing

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