

## History: Zoroastrains

Zoroastrianism is a faith subscribing to the teachings of the prophet Zoroaster. One of the prophet's teachings describes Ahura Mazda as the one true divine creator of all. From the one God, as proclaimed by Zoroaster, came Mazdaism. It is not uncommon to hear the two terms, Zoroastrianism and Mazdaism, used interchangeably or synonymously. While once dominant all over Central and Western Asia, the religion's congregations has shrunk to around 200,000 believers with its highest concentration of members in India.

The exact age of Zoroastrianism is disputable, but is believed to correspond with ancient Iranian society; however the first recorded history of the religion date to the mid-5th century BCE. The religion has eleven major core beliefs among which include: 1) The belief in one non-gender specific God, (as indicated by the mixed gender name) Ahura Mazda; 2) All of creation will be attacked by destruction, and that a universal war will ensue and Ahura Mazda will win which will signify the end of time; 3) Free will is prevalent and not subject to good or evil. Everyone must either choose to conform to morals, or choose not to; 4) Good and evil are represented by two counterparts, Angra Mainyu (Bad Spirit) and Spenta Mainyu (Good Spirit); 5) After death the soul is allowed three days of meditation on his/her past life and afterwards, if their good outweighs the bad, they will be taken to heaven: If their bad outweighs their good, then their soul is taken to the equivalent of Catholic Purgatory; 6) Time is finite, rather than infinite or eternal, and will end with the war that is won by Ahura Mazda; 7) The progression of the universe is such: creation, the existence of the universe while it is under attack, the final state after the war between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu when the universe reverts back to its pure state; 8) All people are equal; 9) Adherents are expected to show respect and kindness to all living things; 10) Hard work and charity are moral values; and 11) Loyalty and faithfulness to family and country are valued.

Perhaps one of the most well-known contributions of the faith is the religious calendar, which is also a close approximation of the solar calendar, called the Zoroastrian Calendar.

The months and the days of the month in the Zoroastrian calendar are dedicated to, and named after, a divinity or divine concept. The religious importance of the calendar dedications is very significant. Not only does it establish the hierarchy of the major divinities, it ensures the frequent invocation of their names since the divinities of both day and month are mentioned at every Zoroastrian act of worship (Zoroastrian Calendar - Wikipedia).

There are 30 divinities ranked in the following order, in accordance with the Yasna Liturgy:

1. Dadvah Ahura Mazda
2. Vohu Manah
3. Asha Vahi
4. Khatra Vairya
5. Spenta Maiti
6. Haurvatat
7. Ameret
8. Dadvah Ahura Mazda
9. Tar
10. Mithra
11. Hvar
12. Mithra
13. Tiashtra
14. Geush Urvan
15. Dadvah Ahura Mazda
16. Mithra
17. Sraosh
18. Rashnu
19. Fravashay
20. Verethragna
21. Raman
22. Vata
23. Dadvah Ahura Mazda
24. Dagna
25. Ashi
26. Arshant
27. Asmni
28. Zam
29. Manthra Spenta
30. Anaghra Rao

The 2nd through 7th days are dedicated to the six divine sparks, known as Amesha Spenta, through whom it is believed all of creation was accomplished: The Amesha Spenta are the Archangels of Zoroastrianism. Days 9 through 13 are dedications to Yazatas of the five Nyashes of the Khordeh Avesta: Fire, Water, Sun, Moon, the star Tiashtra that here perhaps represents the firmament in its entirety. Day 14 is dedicated to the soul of the Ox, linked with and representing all animal creation.

Day 16, leading the second half of the days of the month, is dedicated to the divinity of oath, Great Mithra (like Apam Napat of the Ahuric triad). He is followed by those closest to him, Sraosh and Rashnu, likewise

judges of the soul, the representatives of which - the Fravashi(s) - come next. Verethragna, R man, V ta are respectively the hypostases of victory, the breath of life, and the (other) divinity of the wind and 'space'.

The last group represent the more 'abstract' divinities: Religion, Recompense, and Justice; Heaven and Earth; Sacred Invocation and Endless Light.

In present-day use, the day and month names are the middle Persian equivalents of the divine names or the concepts, but in some cases reflect Semitic influences (for instance Tishtrya appears as Tir, which Boyce (1982:31-33) asserts is derived from Nabu-\*Tiri). Moreover, the names of the 8th, 15th and 23rd day of the month - reflecting Babylonian practice of dividing the month into four periods - can today be distinguished from one another: These three days are respectively named Dae-pa Adar, Dae-pa Mehr and Dae-pa Din, middle Persian expressions meaning 'Creator of Atar, Mithra and Daena respectively.

The divinities to which month-names are dedicated are twelve of the thirty to whom days of the month dedicated, but the month-name dedications additionally establish which of the twelve divinities were/are considered to rank higher than the others. The list of month-names does not occur anywhere in the texts of the Avesta, but are known from commentaries and translations of those texts, from various regional Zoroastrian calendars of the Sassanid era and from living usage. In addition to Dae (middle Persian for Avestan Daena) and thus a dedication to Ahura Mazda and six dedications to the Amesha Spentas, the remaining five are considered to be the most significant of the Yazatas: Farvadin (Avestan: Fravashi), Tir (Tishtrya), Mehr (Mithra), Aban (Apo), and Adar (Atar).

There is some evidence that suggests that in ancient practice Dae, and not Fravardin, was the first month of the year. In a 9th century text, Zoroaster's age at the time of his death is stated to have been 77 years and 40 days (Zadspram 23.9), but this age cannot be verified unless Dae was the first month of the year. It is also worth noting that Pateti - the day of introspection - is on the first day of the month of Fravardin - which, as New Year's day, is a day of celebration (Zoroastrian Calendar &dash; Wikipedia).&rdquo;