



Spitaman Zarathushtra,
also known as
Zoroaster
was a great Iranian
Prophet who founded
the Zoroastrian religion in
ancient Iran



THE BIRTH AND LEGENDS OF ZARATHUSHTRA



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A Historical Overview:

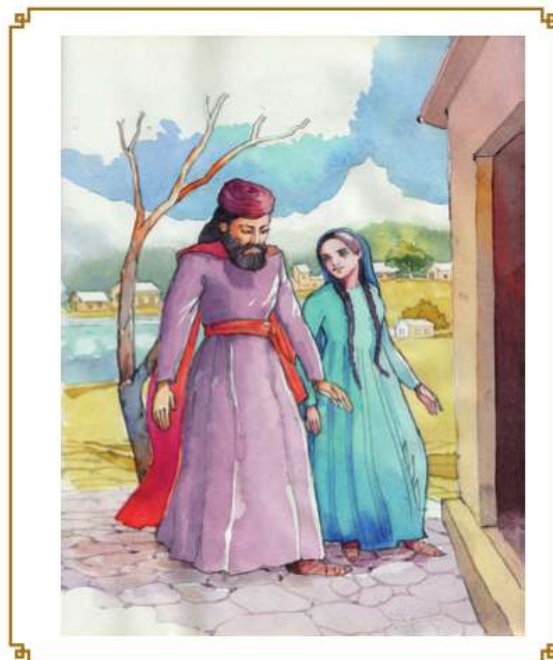
Spitaman Zarathushtra (Av. *Zarathuštra*, Pahl. *zrtw(h)št*, Man. MP. *zrdwšt*, and NPers. *Zardušt*, Sogd M. *zrwšc* and Parth. *Zrhwšt*) or Zoroaster as he is known in the West, is the Prophet of ancient Iran, whose teachings and life-enhancing belief system, transformed into the religion known as Zoroastrianism. The faith counted as the oldest revealed religion in the world, became the dominant faith of the Eastern Iranian homelands of the Avestan speaking people. Scholars have suggested that Zoroastrianism developed in the middle of the second millennium BCE (1500 – 1200 BCE) and Zarathushtra, after whom the religion takes its name, was the bearer of a faith which was passed down orally, it is believed by Zoroastrian priests for well over a millennium. It became the state religion of three mighty Persian Empires, the Achaemenians, Parthians and Sasanians from, 550 BCE - 651 CE. With the defeat of the last Zoroastrian Sasanian King Yazdgird III in 651 CE, the faith came under threat and systematic persecution marginalised the Zoroastrian population which declined over the centuries. In the 10th century CE, a group of Zoroastrians fleeing from intense persecution arrived in India and were given sanctuary. They came to be known as the Parsis. They settled on the western

shores of India, arriving in Bombay in the 17th century. Today in Iran, the religion is practised by small pockets of Zoroastrians, living mainly in Yazd, Kerman and Tehran.

Since the advent of the faith, its religious beliefs have over the centuries influenced the eschatology and some of the practices of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The spread of Mithraism in Europe, with distinct elements of Zoroastrian beliefs and thought, have been attributed to the interaction of Roman soldiers with the Iranian population, in Western Iran. Later medieval European texts, also note the existence of Prophet Zarathushtra, evident in the manuscripts, paintings and music of the European civilisation.

Zarathushtra remains a historical figure, a genius, a first teacher (Av. *paōirīiō.tkaēša*) and a sage whose teachings brought a new vitality and understanding among his followers. The faith in present times is practised by over 118,000 Parsi Iranian Zoroastrians in the world.

The birth and place of Zarathushtra remain speculative and cannot be ascertained with certainty, but linguistic evidence



suggests that Zarathushtra was born somewhere in the region around the Aral Sea in a settled pastoral society in Eastern Iran, a part of Airyana Vaejah, the ancient Land of the Aryans.

This land is described as being ringed by mountains, and traversed by the rivers Amu and the Syr Darya; the Avestan texts refer to the legendary river Vanguhi Daiya on the shores of which Zarathushtra is said to have received his first revelation. Most of Zarathushtra's family names reflect a pastoral background. Zarathushtra's father's name was Pourushasp (Av. *Pourušaspa*) – 'possessor of grey horses,' his mother's name was Dughdōv (Av. *Duγdōvā*) – 'milkmaid'; while the meaning of Zarathushtra's name is speculative, but it may be translated to mean

"possessor of golden camels" while his followers prefer the meaning to be "He of the Golden light." His people raised livestock, comprising camels, cattle, horses and sheep. The dog was accorded a special status in the faith and given a role in the eschatology of the religion. They relied on their livestock as a way of life and for economic survival. The *Gāthās* indicate that Zarathushtra's people were attacked continuously by raiding parties who destroyed their peace and robbed them of their material possessions. In pre-Zoroastrian times, the ancient Iranians were animistic in their worship and through instinct, propitiated many nature gods and goddesses and made sacrifices to these divinities.

The Pre-Birth Legend of Zarathushtra:

The Pahlavi *Dēnkard* which is a 9th century CE compendium of Zoroastrian beliefs and customs throws light on the allegorical legends surrounding the birth and life of Spitaman Zarathushtra. It is stated in the *Dēnkard*, that three spiritual elements came together for the conception of baby Zarathushtra. His *khwarr* (Av. *xuvaranah*, Phl. *xwarrah*) or divine glory, his *fravahr* (Av. *fravastī*) or guardian spirit, and his *tan gāhr*, his physical body were united in his future mother, Dughdōv, to form the baby, created and guided by Ohrmazd's (Av. *Ahura Mazda*) divine forces. The *khwarr*, it is said, came from the light of the sun and moon and then passed onto the stars. From there it descended to the hearth-fire of Zarathushtra's maternal grandfather, Frāhīm.ravāna zōish's home. This fire was said to have burned perpetually, without any fuel. From the hearth fire, the *khwarr* passed onto Frāhīm.ravāna's wife Freni, (Av. *frānay*) the mother of Dughdōv. From her, the *khwarr* radiated brightly onto Dughdōv's body from where he was to be born. It was a light so bright that those around her were puzzled and afraid. The *Dēvs*, (the evil ones) had afflicted the minds of those in their society and not being able to comprehend the luminous light enveloping Dughdōv, they believed that she would grow up to be a sorceress and make people suffer. Those in the community became increasingly afraid and turned against her and there was pressure on her father to send her away. Her father sent her to the chief of the Spitaman clan who was the father of Pourushasp. Some years later, Pourushasp of the Spitaman clan married Dughdōv. The divine glory was now ready to enter the world through the body of Zarathushtra whose mother and grandmother had nurtured the *khwarr* awaiting his birth.

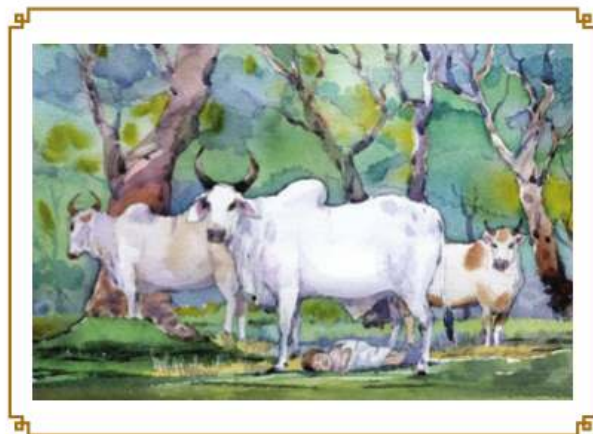
Zarathushtra's *fravahr* which pre-existed in the abode of Ohrmazd was escorted by Nairyō.sangha, the divine messenger and Yima- Khshaēta the radiant one from heaven accompanied by the Amesha Spentas, Bahman (representing the Good Mind) and Ardibehesht (representing Righteousness, Truth and Order). On Ohrmazd's instructions, they placed the *fravahr* of Zarathushtra, in the stalk of the *Hām* plant, which was the height of a man. The *fravahr* of Zarathushtra sat within this beautiful and tall stem, which was radiant and luminous, bathed in endless light. The divine beings placed the stem upon a tall tree which was vibrant and green with shining leaves.

According to tradition, after Pourushasp and Dughdāv were married, they were walking in the meadow, when Bahman and Ardibehesht took Pourushasp towards the tall tree on which the *Hām* stalk had been placed. Pourushasp seeing the beautiful *Hām* stalk, growing on top of the tree, wanted to cut down the tree so that he could take hold of the *Hām* plant. However, Bahman persuaded Pourushasp to climb the tree, instead, and bring the *Hām* stem down. Pourushasp gave the spiritual stalk with the *fravahr* to his wife, Dughdāv. In this way, the *fravahr* of Zarathushtra came into the possession of Dughdāv, before the conception of Zarathushtra. The radiance of the *khwarr* had earlier entered Dughdāv's body through her mother, Freni. Likewise, the third component, that of the *tan gāhr*, the physical body, was entrusted to the *Yazatas* Khordad and Amardad, the divine guardians of the waters and the plants. They created rain through the formation of rain-bearing clouds, so that rainfall brought joy and prosperity to the world of cattle and man. Pourushasp, saw the rich pastures nourished by the rain and led six cows out to graze, and they became full of milk. He milked the cows, and in the milk, he pounded the stalk of the *Hām* plant, together with the spiritual *tan gāhr* of Zarathushtra. Both Dughdāv and Pourushasp drank the milk mixed with the crushed stem of the *Hām* plant. In this way Ohrmazd transmitted the spiritual essence of Zarathushtra to Dughdāv, and Zarathushtra's *khwarr*, *fravahr* and *tan gāhr* became united in her, through the actions of the divine beings Bahman, Ardibehesht, Khordad and Amardad. These celestial beings or *Yazatas* are the guardians of the creations, Cattle, Fire, Waters and Plants. Shehrevar and Aspandamad, the guardians of the skies and the earth, joined the *Yazatas* to create the perfect transformation from which the miraculous conception of Zarathushtra took place. To this day, the birth of

Zarathushtra is symbolically celebrated by the pounding of the *Hām* twigs in the *Yasna* ceremony performed by Zoroastrian priests in the fire temples.

Fearful of this divine birth, Ahriman (Av. *Ajra. mainiāv*) the evil spirit tried his best to prevent the birth of Zarathushtra while he was in his mother's womb. He made Dughdāv very ill, forcing her to go to a wicked physician for a remedy which would have killed the yet to be born baby. But a voice from heaven called out to her and told her not to go, as the wizard's medicine would be harmful to her and the baby. The voice then told her





to wash her hands and offer some meat and butter to the holy fire and to make a broth of meat and butter and consume it. She followed the instructions given to her by this divine voice and was soon cured and in this way, the baby Zarathushtra was safeguarded. The Middle Persian texts record many such miracles linked to the birth and life of Zarathushtra.

It is believed that the coming together of these three spiritual elements formed the ordination of the priest, warrior and herdsmen, in ancient Iranian society. For Pourushasp, said to his son, Zarathushtra, that I begot a priest, warrior and herdsmen (Yst. 13.89). The *khwarr* was linked to divine grace, representing the priesthood. The *fravahr*, the guardian spirit was the protector against all the forces of evil, representing the warrior class; and the *tan gāhr*, the body, was seen as a link with the herdsmen and of all human society, transmitted through the world of plants and cattle. With the birth of this miraculous baby, a new era began for the Iranian people.

The Birth of Zarathushtra:

Supernatural signs accompanied by miracles surround the birth of many prophets, as it foretells the coming of a divine being and Zarathushtra's birth and early life were filled with these miraculous happenings. In the sacred text of the Avesta, it is said that he was born a priest, *ustā nō zātō āšrauua yō spītāmō*

zara@ustrā (Yst. 13.94) and on his birth, all of nature, including the waters and plants, rejoiced and increased in strength and prosperity, *yehe zq@āēca vaxsāēca uruuāsən āpō uruuarāscā*. (Yst. 13.93) As a consequence of his birth, Ahriman and his evil legions took flight and hid in the depths of the earth. The Pahlavi writings of the *Dānkard*, *Selection of Zādsparam* and the Persian *Zardusht Nāma* are the primary texts that give an account of his birth and childhood. While babies cry at birth, he was the only child who smiled when he was born. It is stated in the texts, that he smiled because he knew of the eventual defeat of Ahriman and his evil forces and that at the end of time, all evil will be defeated and peace and harmony will prevail as the world will be restored to a perfect immortal state. It is this fore-knowledge that made him joyous at birth. According to tradition, baby Zarathushtra was born on Rāz-e Khordad, Māh-e Fravardin, and this day, came to be known as Khordad Sal – the symbolic birthday of the prophet.

Early Childhood:

The evil forces of *dēvs*, *kavis* and *karapans* did everything in their power to kill baby Zarathushtra. They sought to corrupt the minds of his people, including that of his father Pourushasp, who tried to harm his son. The *dēvs* convinced his father that Dughdāv's radiance from her *khwarr* was a sign of evil. Dūrāsōb, the evil magician, convinced Pourushasp to do away with his child. First, Pourushasp laid the child on a pyre of wood and then tried to set it aflame, but he did not succeed. Next, the father put his baby in the path of a herd of cattle, but miraculously a white bull stood over the baby and protected the baby from being trampled upon by the cattle. In his third attempt he placed the baby in the path of stampeding horses, but again miraculously, as the herd of horses passed by, a stallion stood over the baby-protecting him. Finally, the baby was left in the lair of a she-wolf, hoping that the she-wolf would kill the baby, as she was with her cubs. Bahman Yazad intervened to safeguard the baby and brought a ewe to the den of the wolf, and the ewe nurtured the baby, and the she-wolf did not harm the infant. It is said, that the *Yazatas* Adar and Gosh protected the baby from fire and animals.

Young Zarathushtra:

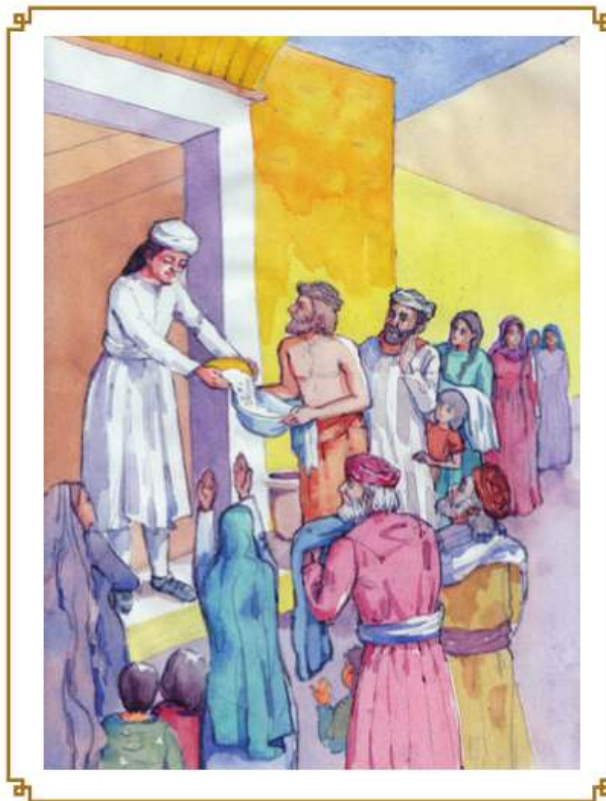
There are many stories about the prophets' childhood about his excellent understanding and wisdom and his strong opposition

to the wicked *dēvs* and *karapans*. The Pahlavi tradition is replete with stories of how *Dūrās-rōb* the evil magician, tried to kill young Zarathushtra but in trying to do so, found that he lost strength in his arms and was unable to kill the young boy. There is another story of the priest of the *dēvs*, who came to the home of Pourushasp as his guest. He was asked to recite a *mantra* before the meal. Zarathushtra objected to the recitation much to the annoyance of his father. The priest annoyed by this left the house, and as he departed on his horse, he fell and died. Such was the power and protection that young Zarathushtra enjoyed from the spiritual world.

According to the *Zardusht Nāma*, when Zarathushtra was seven years old, he was placed under the tutelage of a wise and venerable tutor, Burzin Kurush, who guided the young boy to uphold and follow the path of truth. Zarathushtra grew up to be a happy and kind child, and he wanted others to be happy and content in their pastoral lives. However, two evil magicians *Dūrās-rōb* and *Brāt-rō-rēsh* continued to connive against the young Zarathushtra, whenever the opportunity arose. Once when young Zarathushtra was ill, they visited his home dressed as physicians and gave Zarathushtra a poisonous potion to drink. Zarathushtra, through the protection of Divine grace, knew of their evil intentions and refused to drink the medicine. He ordered the evil sorcerers to leave and gently admonished his father for having invited these two evil magicians to their house. When the wicked sorcerers were returning home, they were both attacked by a fatal crippling disease suggesting clearly that Zarathushtra was under the protection of divine beings, and those who intentionally conspired to kill him would themselves be destroyed.

Zarathushtra – the Seeker:

Legend has it, that when Zarathushtra was fifteen years old, the ideal age of man according to the Iranian tradition, Zarathushtra and his brothers asked their father to divide and allocate their inheritance among them. The Spitaman family were well to do herdsmen but the only thing Zarathushtra chose as his share, was the *kustī* (girdle) as his inheritance, leaving all the other wealth to his brothers. The legends that surround Zarathushtra developed over a period to indicate his spirituality and his close contact with the Divine.



The *kustī* he received from his father, became the internal spiritual sign of what was to follow in the subsequent years of Zarathushtra's mission. From his fifteenth year, Zarathushtra's religious development began to take form. The *Selections of Zādsparam*, a ninth-century CE Pahlavi text, contains some legends associated with Zarathushtra. According to the text at the age of fifteen years, he gave away all the cattle fodder from his father's supply to other herdsmen who were suffering because of a famine in the area. There are several references

in the *Zardusht Nāma* about the goodness and compassion of young Zarathushtra.

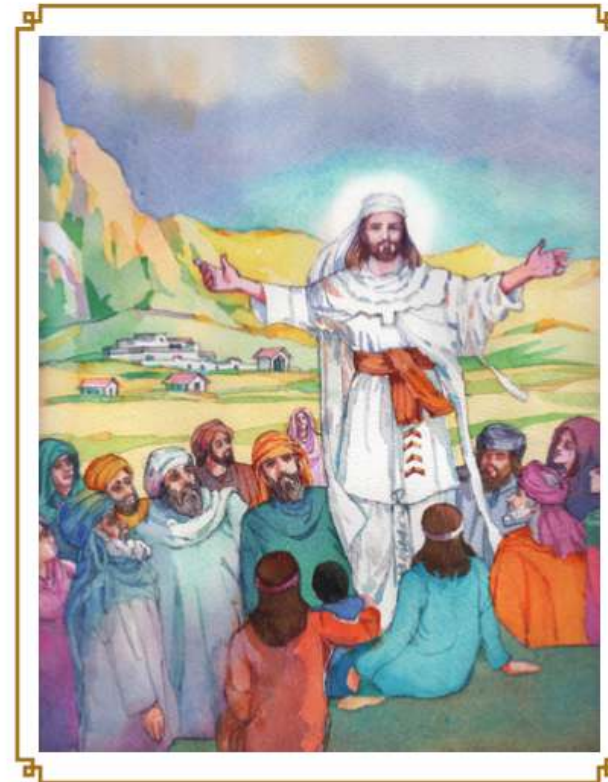
According to the *Zādsparam*, at the age of twenty, he departed from his parents' home in search of the truth and inquired thus: "Who is most desirous of righteousness and most nourishing of the poor?" His compassion also extended to the animal world; he once saw a starving dog who had just delivered five puppies and wanted to give it bread. Unfortunately, by the time he found some food, the dog had died, and so he fed the hungry puppies. On his journey, Zarathushtra's innate kindness led him to help the poor and save many injured and hungry animals. He could endure long periods of solitude and contemplation because of his childhood training as a priest in the pre-Zoroastrian faith his family followed. In his thirtieth year during the spring festival, Zarathushtra went to fetch water from the good river Daitya, for the sacred strength giving *haoma* ceremony. As he waded into the clear waters of the river, he saw the Amesha Spenta, Bahman as a shining being standing on the other side of the river bank, so bright was his presence that it did not cast a shadow. The Amesha Spenta Bahman took the young Zarathushtra into the celestial court of Ohrmazd (Av. Ahura Mazda) from whom he received a series of seven revelations over a period of ten years. During this period, he had no followers, and his only disciple was his cousin Mēdyōmāh (Av. Maiiōiōi.māñhay). Zarathushtra also had to battle against the temptations and assaults that came his way from the forces of evil. However, he withstood these attacks and succeeded in not deviating from the revelations, as contained in the Avesta and the all-important sacred formula of the Ahuna Vairya (Av. *Yāθrā Ahū Vairiā*) prayer given by Ohrmazd to Zarathushtra. These experiences nurtured his character and nourished his soul as he embarked upon his journey to become the great Iranian Prophet Spitaman Zarathushtra.

Zarathushtra's Struggles:

In the course of his life, Zarathushtra was wooed by the Evil spirit to give up the laws of Ahura Mazda and betray the forces of Good. In the *Vendidad* (Fargard XIX) this discourse between Zarathushtra and the Evil spirit is recorded. It is said that from the regions of the North, Angra Mainyu sent the deadly *druj* upon Holy Zarathushtra to destroy him. On seeing the *druj*, Zarathushtra chanted aloud the Ahuna Vairya prayer and proclaimed, 'the will of the Lord is the law of Holiness; the

riches of Vohu Manah shall be given to him who worked for this world for Mazda and who according to the will of Ahura, wields the power that he gave him to relieve the poor. Offer up prayers to the good waters of the Daitya, and profess the laws of the worshippers of Mazda.' The *druj* on hearing this rushed to Angra Mainyu and said to him, 'I see no way to kill him so great is the glory of Holy Zarathushtra.'

Angra Mainyu turned to Zarathushtra and said to him 'Do not destroy my creatures, O Holy Zarathushtra. Renounce the Good Law of the worshippers of Mazda, and you will gain the



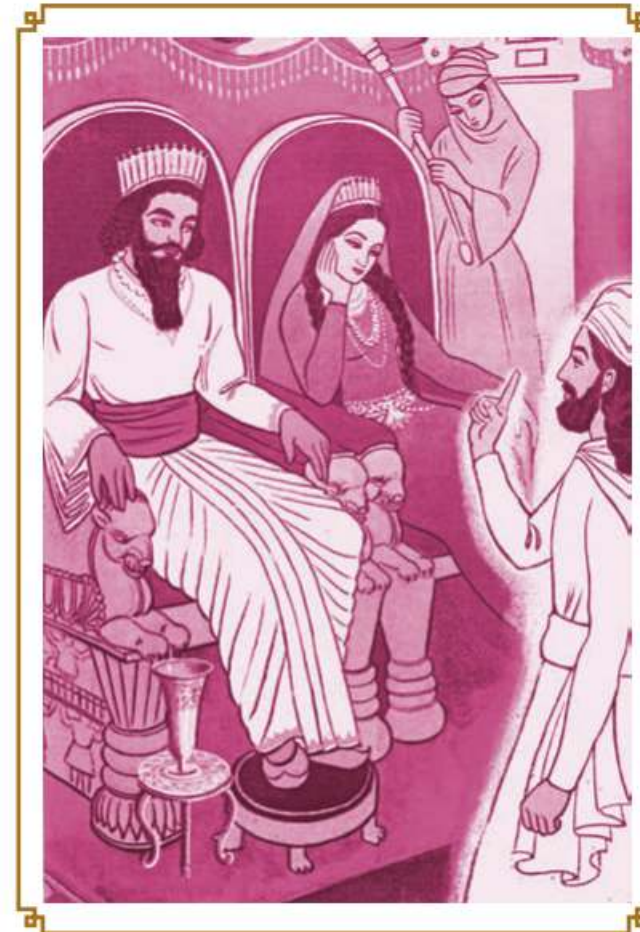
boon to rule nations. To this, Zarathushtra replied, 'No! Never will I renounce the Good Law of the worshippers of Mazdā, though my body, my life, my soul should be burned'. The evil one retorted, 'By whose word will you strike and repel my evil creations'. Zarathushtra replied, 'I will strike the evil creatures with the sacred mortar, the sacred cup, the Haoma, the words taught by Mazdā, these are my best weapons with which I will repel all the evildoers and he chanted aloud the Ahunavar-The Truthful Utterance.

The Court of Kavi Vishtāspa:

At some point on his journey, he came to the Eastern Iranian lands ruled by King Vishtāspa. At first, his teachings did not meet with favour with the people or in the court of King Vishtāspa, despite Zarathushtra having performed many miracles. He faced considerable opposition from the courtiers who saw Zarathushtra as a threat to them; nevertheless, he found favour with Queen Hutaosā. The courtiers resentful of his popularity with the Queen, planned to implicate him. They informed the king that Zarathushtra was a sorcerer and a skilled magician, and accused him of keeping a secret hoard of bones and hair and other items associated with witchcraft, which the courtiers themselves had planted in his house, as material evidence against Zarathushtra. The kavis and the karapans convinced the King of Zarathushtra's alleged misdeeds, and despite the King having heard Zarathushtra's deliberations for three days, he believed his courtiers when they showed him proof of the objects that had been hidden by them in his home. The King, trusting his courtiers, thought Zarathushtra to be a wicked sorcerer and a servant of evil and had him thrown into prison.

Zarathushtra and the King's Favourite Horse:

As in all legends there comes a turning point, when the forces of good, triumph over evil. According to the tradition, sometime later, the king's favourite black horse fell ill. The kavis and the karapans did everything in their power to cure the horse, but they failed. It was Queen Hutaosā who remembered that Zarathushtra had said during his religious discourses that disease and suffering were not the work of God but the work of evil. She requested the King to call Zarathushtra from prison and ask him to cure the paralysed limbs of his favourite horse. In desperation, the King agreed to the suggestion, and Zarathushtra was brought from his prison cell to the court, in a sense to test his teachings and his divine status.



According to the account narrated in the *Zardusht Nāma*, Zarathushtra succeeded in curing the horse with the recitation of the *Yathā Ahū Vairya* prayer and the king's favourite horse regained its health. For this miracle, Zarathushtra asked the King to grant him four favours. First, that Vishtāspa should accept the teachings; secondly that Vishtāspa's son Isfandīar (Av. Spāntōdāta) should promote and support the new religion;

thirdly, Queen Hutās (Av. Hutaosā) should also accept the new faith and fourthly that those who had conspired against him should be put to death. King Vishtāspa granted all four boons to Zarathushtra.

In return, the king asked Zarathushtra for four favours as well. Firstly, Vishtāspa wanted to know the final fate and place of his soul in the hereafter. Secondly, he wanted to know all things past, present and future (i.e. to be omniscient) and fourthly that his soul should not leave his body until the resurrection comes about, so that he may be immortal. Zarathushtra asked King Vishtāspa to choose anyone wish for he said, that all four requests could not be granted to one man. The King chose the first wish, which was to know the fate and place of his soul. Soon afterwards, the Yazatas Bahman and Ardibehesht, together with the celestial fire of Ohrmazd, visited the King and his courtiers. The Fire spoke out loud: "We have been sent by Ohrmazd to tell you to take care of Zarathushtra, to listen to his teachings and never to dissent from him". The king beheld the radiance of the fire, and it is said that Ardibehesht gave a bowl containing *hām* juice mixed with "*mang*" (an intoxicant). When the king drank the potion, he lost consciousness and saw by way of a vision, the glories of heaven which awaited his soul in the hereafter. Upon coming out of his trance, the King readily accepted the revelation of Zarathushtra and requested Queen Hutās to accept the revelation, as well. According to the *Zardusht Nāma*, the three other wishes conceded by Zarathushtra were also granted. Vishtāspa's son Peshōtan (Av. *Pəšō.tanā*) received a cup of milk from Zarathushtra, and upon drinking it, he became immortal. Vishtāsp's minister, Jāmāsp by inhaling divine perfumes attained all-knowledge of things past, present and future. And finally, Isfandiar ate the pomegranate, and his body became immortal until the resurrection so that he could defend the Mazdayasni Zoroastrian faith.

Upon King Vishtāspa and his people accepting the new religion, there was opposition from neighbouring kings. One such King was Arjāsp (Av. *Arjāsp*) the King of the Turanians who refused to accept the religion given by Ohrmazd to Zarathushtra. A bitter war was fought in which Vishtāspa's brother Zarir was killed, but the invasion was repulsed by Vishtāspa and his son Isfandiar. Arjāsp died in the second battle, and according to the Pahlavi sources, at the age of '77 years and 40 days,' Zarathushtra was killed while

praying, by an assassin, named Brādrēs, who was a Turanian. Greek and Latin writers report of a miraculous passing away of Zarathushtra. They refer to a fiery shaft of light, which it is believed carried Prophet Zarathushtra to heaven. "The term used in Pahlavi for the passing away of the prophet is: "*vihēz-ī-zartusht* [Phl.*wihēz ī zardust*] — the rising up of Zartusht or the ascension of Zartusht", suggesting that Zarathushtra was not just a mortal man but also a divine being worthy of worship—a *Yazata*. (Hormazdyar Kavyji Mirza, *Outlines of Parsi History*, Bombay, 1974, p.375) states - Zarathushtra's death anniversary is traditionally commemorated, on Rāz Khorshed, Māh Dae, known as *Zartōst* - *nō dlsā* which falls on the eleventh day, of the tenth month, of the Zoroastrian religious calendar.

Zarathushtra's Family:

Zarathushtra's father's name was Pourushasp and mother's name was Dughdāv. Middle Persian sources note that Zarathushtra had two brothers Ratushtar and Rangushtar who were both older than him and two brothers younger to him, Nādrīgā and Nivedis (Zsp. Ch.15, v.5). However, in his hymns, there is an explicit reference to his youngest daughter Pouruchistā of the lineage of Haēchat.aspa of the Spitaman clan (Y.53.3). There are also references to Jāmāsp, the vazier of King Vishtāsp, and Frashaoshtra, the brother of Jāmāsp, both of the Hvōgva family (Y.51,17-18). Hvōvi, the wife of the Prophet was Frashoshtra's daughter (Dk. Book 9, ch.6-8, v.58) and his brother Jāmāsp married the prophet's youngest daughter Pouruchistā. Great importance is given to the Iranian lineage of all Zarathushtra's family members, as found in the hymns of the Prophet, declared in the *Gāthās*: "Do thou persevere Pouruchistā of the lineage of Haēchat, aspa and Spitama, thou young one among Zarathushtra's daughters. For I shall join in marriage her among you, the one who shall serve father, husband pastor and family" (Y.53, 3-4).

It is also believed according to the later tradition, as found in the Middle Persian texts, that Zarathushtra had three sons. The eldest was Isat.vāstra (Desiring Pastures) and was the head of the priestly class. His second son was Hvare.chithra (Sunfaced One), and the third was Urvatat.nara (Commanding Men), and who were recognised as heads of the warrior and farming classes, respectively (Yst.13.98). Zarathushtra is also said to have had two other daughters Frēnī and Thrītī whose *fravashis* are remembered in the *Fravardin Yast* (Yst.13, v.139).

In the apocalyptic tradition, Zarathushtra is said to have three sons born, posthumously. According to the sacred texts, the seed of Zarathushtra is preserved in Lake Kāsaoya (Yst.19.92), and at an interval of a 1000 years, a maiden will bathe in the lake, and a child will be miraculously born to each maiden. Each child born in this manner will be seen as the *Saoshyant* (Redeemer/Messiah), infused with divine grace and sent by Ohrmazd to renovate and restore the world. The first son born, posthumously, was *Ukhshyat.ereta*, 'he who makes righteousness grow'. The second messiah also born, posthumously, was *Ukhshyat.nemah* – 'he who makes reverence grow'. The third son of the seed of Zarathushtra, who is yet to be born, will be *Astvat.ereta* – 'he who embodies righteousness'. He will be born 57 years before the "Making Wonderful", (Av. *frasō. karāfay*) when the forces of evil will be weakened, made ineffective and relegated to the station of darkness, by the Good forces of Ohrmazd.

At this point in Zoroastrian cosmology, it is told that time as we know it will cease to exist at the allegorical end of year 12000, when the world will be restored to a perfect undying state, with the advent of the third and final *Saoshyant*.

In conclusion, it is difficult to provide historicity to legends, but it conveys rich Imagery and underlines essential principles around which the narrative is created. Zarathushtra was both a divine being and a mortal, and the range of stories which have developed around him, are meant to explain allegorically, his divine presence, his close contact with Ahura Mazdā and his prophethood. He was the revealer of the oldest religion in the world, and 3500 years later, the faith is followed by the Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians living all over the world.



The beautiful paintings of Spitaman Zarathushtra appearing in this Chapter are prepared by: Atul Panase, Dubai, UAE



A priest holding *Barsom* twigs in his hand, mainly used in the performance of inner ritual ceremonies in the Fire temple

The Sources

The Avesta does not give much information except for a few stray notations in the *Gāthās* and as found in some of the *yashts* and *litanies* of praise; however, the *Vendidad* does give some information about the prophet's birth and life. It is the Middle Persian texts which give the most information about the life and times of Zarathushtra. The *Dēnkard* books 4,5,7,8 & 9, the *Selections of Zādsparam*, the *Pahlavi Rivayats*, the *Bundahishn*, *Bahman Yasht* and the *Zardusht Nāma* in Persian, are the primary sources which throw light upon the life and legends of Zarathushtra.

Story from the Coffee Table Book
 "Zarathushtra & the Origins of Zoroastrianism"
 By: Meher Bhesania