

# MAZDAK

## THE PROPHET THAT FAILED

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What was the reason that after millions of years God decided to send in prophets in succession over a very short period of time? Moreover all the prophets were sent to the same region with each one of them trying to woo the followers of the other.

The human mind has a short memory and as such it does not learn from history. It is easily programmable to believe in things without questioning or trying to reason. The sheep mentality makes the mind believe that the majority is always right.

Looking back at the history of the world's major religions we see a common factor in their emergence, "*The Persians*". No other land has produced as many prophets as Iran and no other culture has had such direct influence on the emergence of prophets as the Persian Culture.<sup>1</sup> The Persians predominantly represented by the Magi's (the scholarly & priestly class) were present and played a major role in the creation of all the major religions.

### THE PERSIAN CULTURE

What was the reason that the Persians were so involved in trying to bring good order among the people of the world? The answer is in the origin of Persian culture, the teachings of Zarathushtra as given in the Gathas.

Unfortunately different people at different times have understood the Gathas differently. Like in this modern age all the translations of the Gathas make it look like another Semitic religion, and portray Zarathushtra as another confused helpless prophet asking God for help, which is far from the truth.

In fact Zarathushtra was a renowned mathematician and astronomer who has to his credit the pre-calculation of the coinciding of the **sunrise with the equinox** at Sistan in 1725 BCE which he called New Day (Nou Rouz). This is a phenomenal event that happens at the same longitude once in about 1328 years. He also was the inventor of the concept of the Meridian. His calculations showed him that when it was mid-day at Sistan (62degrees longitude) there was sunshine all over the hemisphere

from Japan to Africa. So he called his meridian Nim Ruz (mid-day). A part of Sistan which is now in Afghanistan is still called Nimruz province. This meridian was more logical than the politically motivated Greenwich of today.

The Persians knew that the earth was not the center of the universe 3500 years before Galileo was executed for saying it. In the Avesta we are repeatedly told of “Haft Keshwar Zamin” – seven continents, while in the twentieth century children were taught that the earth was made up of five continents (Asia, Africa, America, Europe and Australia). The existence of land masses of the Arctic and Antarctic were not known in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to be considered as continents like it was done in the days of the Avesta.

Zarathushtra a sage, a mathematician, an astronomer, a scholar, a philosopher whose teachings were based on Asha - the absolute truth - the laws of the universe, has given a recipe for progress towards perfection in his Gathas.

Truly the knowledge of Asha derived  
By the good mind  
Never before known  
Among the wise and among creation  
With it form good rule, never waning  
And make society righteous  
Leading us towards perfection  
Zarathushtra – Gatha – Yasna Ha 28.3

He advises that the mind should be used in a good way to study nature and discover the laws of nature and with them formulate good never waning rules to conduct ourselves whereby the society following such rules would become righteous and its people would move towards perfection.

During the Akhemaneshian period (550-330 BCE) the Iranian nation understood and followed the true teachings of Zarathushtra and we see healthy progress not only within but also beyond its borders. It was a period when philosophers and scholars were born instead of prophets.

#### CREATORS OF PROPHETS

The Persian culture required its followers to bring good order in the world. In history we see the Persians practicing their culture by influencing the existing religions and bringing about changes in the belief systems of the people. We have in the Torah & the Bible documented proof of the Persians influence. We read in the Old Testament how the Persians influenced the Jews around 500 BCE.

*“Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: **for we seek your God, as ye do;** and we sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.” (Ezra 4:2)*

*“But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, **Ye have nothing to with us** to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD GOD of Israel, **as king Cyrus, the king of Persia hath commanded us.**” (Ezra 4:3)*

Here it is absolutely clear that the way of seeking God by those Jews who were in contact with the Persians had changed.

Again later we see that Ardeshir-I king of Persia is directly involved in the approval of the law of God and the commissioning of Ezra, the leader of the Jewish community of Babylon to go to Jerusalem and bring order and good regulation among the Jews.

*'And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand, appoint magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the law of thy God; and teach ye him that knowest them not. And whosoever will not do the LAW OF THY GOD, and the LAW OF THE KING, let judgment be executed upon him with all diligence....' (Ezra 7:25-26)*

We also have the observation by Herodotus on how the Babylonians had stopped worshiping idols and going to temples within a generation of coming in contact with the Persians. We have to remember that when Cyrus the Great conquers Babylon he pays homage to the Babylonian god Marduk, this is a well documented fact. This shows that the Persians used peaceful means and education to bring about changes in the religious beliefs of the people.

With the coming of Alexander the Macedonian all the progress made was wiped out and he reintroduced the human mind to paganism. The Parthians who became rulers of Iran were influenced to reintroduce an ancient Aryan god Mithra. It is interesting to note that it did not take long for the Iranians to **export Mithra to Europe** through the Roman soldiers and traders. In Europe Mithraism became a very important religion and was known as the religion of traders and soldiers. Mithraism is still seen mingled with Christianity and has become an inseparable part of it.

During the next three centuries (330 BCE onwards) the teachings of Zarathushtra lost ground and wisdom was replaced by faith. The reign of philosophy came to an end, but in close quarters the Magi's were still active. We see in the Bible that the wise men from the east, the Magi's, were the ones who publicly introduced baby Jesus as the Prophet.<sup>2</sup> The Persians were always interested in the west so to bring good order to the west they introduced the teachings of Zarathushtra through Christianity but the Romans crucified Jesus and paganised his teachings.

In Iran the Sassanian's led by the priests in 250 CE started reorganizing Zarathushtrism to make it a faith based state religion. Socially they divided society into classes with no social interaction allowed between them. These reorganizing caused dissatisfaction among the masses and caused the rise of thinkers like Mani & Mazdak who came up with their interpretation of religion to solve the problems of society. But they and their followers were persecuted.

With the failure of Mazdak in Iran we see another Magi venturing out to a backward, weaker and safer environment to bring good order among them. "Salman-e-Pars" (Salman of Persia) a Magi went to Arabia in search of a person with specific signs<sup>1</sup> and found Mohammad with those signs. He was with Mohammad before the Arabs recognized him as a prophet.<sup>3</sup> It was Salman who helped Mohammad fight against the Arab tribes and bring about their surrender. Islam means to surrender, to submit. The religion is also called Mo-Salman, Mu-Salman the plural of which has become Moslem.

## MAZDAK

Mazdak the son of Bamdad was born in Khorasan in Iran. He was the high priest and also the chief justice of his town. He did not claim to be a prophet but his ideas and teachings attracted many followers. King Ghobad who ruled over Iran at that time (488-541 CE) became one of his followers. Part of what he preached became the basis of communism in the 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> century. The overall social and spiritual situation in Iran during the Sassanian era created the need for leaders like Mani and Mazdak to appear. His ideology about all man being equal made him many enemies among the rich and affluent in society. During a seven year draught in Iran Mazdak influenced the king to open the royal

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<sup>1</sup> The three signs that Salman was looking for in the person who would be a prophet were:- 1-That he would not accept charity. 2-That he would accept gifts and 3-That he would have a birthmark on the right shoulder.

granary to the public; this won him many followers among the masses. Kai Ghobad was dethroned because of his close relation with Mazdak but he managed a comeback having promised to curtail his relation with Mazdak. After Ghobad the crown prince Kavooos who was a supporter of Mazdak did not receive the blessing of the priest and the aristocrats to become king. Instead Khosro Anoshiravaan the youngest son of Kai Ghobad became king; he did not favour Mazdak and persecuted him and his followers.

Khosro Anoshiravaan with the help of some Christian priest who were also not happy with Mazdak, for he converted a lot of Christians to his fold, called a religious discussion meeting. As many Mazdakis as possible were invited to be a witness to the triumph of their leader Mazdak in the discussion. The discussion meeting soon took the form of a court where Mazdak was the accused and had to answer to charges. As planned Mazdak's answers were not taken as satisfactory and the already waiting soldiers were called in with drawn swords, tens of thousands of the Mazdakis and Mazdak himself were captured and executed. Some believe that Mazdak fled and took refuge in Balkh which was ruled by a Mongol king.

Mazdak's views were collected in a book called "Mazdak Nameh". The book seems to have survived into the Islamic era for some Iranian writers of that era have commented on it, but most of those writers were against Mazdak and we have negative comments and some misrepresentations.

Mazdak lived at a time when society was divided into classes and the rich and affluent were exploiting the workers. **Mazdak preached that all men were equal in the eyes of God and so all should be treated equally he also believed that all the natural resources should be used equally by all men.** He was against the affluent having excess to unlimited wives in their harem, he demanded that the doors of the harem be opened and the women released to freely marry. He was also against a woman not being able to marry a man of a lower class if she so desired. All this of course has been grossly misrepresented by those against him by claiming that Mazdak preached that women should be common property for all.

Mazdak's theory of equality and equal use of natural resources inspired Karl Marx and other communist thinkers but communism like Mazdakism did not succeed.

## DUALISM

Mazdak had expounded on Mani's teachings of dualism. It is important to note and realize the difference between the dualism of Zarathushtra and that of Mani & Mazdak, because in modern day Zoroastrianism we have an admixture of it and a majority of the scholars on Zoroastrianism do not differentiate between the dualisms and wrongly attribute all of it to Zarathushtra.

Zarathushtra's message is on a constructive note he talks about VohuMana - the Good Mind - and how to use it to achieve perfections. The word Ahrimana (devil or evil mind) does not exist in the Gathas. Although latter the word AhriMana has been rightly coined meaning Evil Mind, it has become a misnomer meaning the devil, the Satan.

Zarathushtra's dualism is limited to the human mind. He says there are good thoughts and bad thoughts and only the unwise choose to materialize the bad thoughts.

And these thoughts in the beginning  
Their opposing nature revealed themselves  
In the mind and in the words also  
In the deeds and these were good and bad  
And of these the wise  
Rightly choose, not so truly the unwise  
Zarathushtra Gatha Yasna Ha 30.03 (FR)

On the other hand Mani & Mazdak divide the whole universe between good and evil, between light and darkness, with the end result of the victory of light over darkness, except in comparison to Mani, Mazdak maintained that light acts on purpose and voluntarily and darkness at random and by chance, and light has insight and is perceptive, and darkness is ignorant and blind. The mixture has come to be by chance and at random, not on purpose and by free will. Likewise the deliverance of light from darkness takes place at random, not by option.<sup>4</sup> This elaborate theory of dualism has had its effect on the culture of the Persians. It has also wrongly crept into the translation of the Gathas and we see the word "two" used in the translations where in the original Gathas "two" does not exist.

Listen with your ears to the best  
Consider with open mind  
**Among the paths** before deciding  
Person by person for his own self

Before greatness of this message  
Is truly spread understand each one  
Zarathushtra Gatha Yasna Ha 30.02 (FR)

For the third line in this verse, most translation say "choose between the two paths" meaning the two paths of good and evil. Although the word "two" does not exist in the original they quote grammatical reasons for calling "Paths" "Two Paths". No attention is paid to the first line which says "Listen with your ears to the best (the highest truth) (Vahistem)". My question is how can one listen to the highest truth and then choose evil, does evil dwell among the highest truth - the best. Here is where the dualism Mani & Mazdak has influenced the translators. For if we look at verse 30.01 we see that Zarathushtra is talking of discovering more and better ways towards perfection.

And of these shall I speak to those eager,  
That quality of wisdom that all the wise wish  
And call creative qualities  
And good creation of the mind  
The all-powerful truth (Asha)  
Truly and that more & better ways are discovered  
Towards perfection  
Zarathushtra Gatha Yasna Ha 30.01 (FR)

Appropriately in the next verse (30.2) he says there are many paths that lead towards perfection and each person should choose with an open mind, from among the best, that path which suits him/her the best. Evil cannot lead to perfection. Thus we see that there is no dualism involved in this choice and that the dualism of Mani & Mazdak has been incorporated into modern day Zoroastrianism.

## CREATOR OF GOOD & EVIL

In many quarters it is believed that in Zarathushtism Ahura Mazda is the creator of all that is good and Ahrimana of all that is evil. But as we have seen before Ahrimana cannot be found in the Gathas of Zarathushtra.

According to philosophy in the Gathas there are two types of creation.

### **One is the creation by Ahura Mazda - the God.**

The Creator of Wisdom (Ahura Mazda) created The Wisdom in Creation (Mazda Ahura)<sup>5</sup>. In other words Ahura Mazda created Mazda Ahura. In the Wisdom in Creation there is Asha, the Law of Nature the Law of the Universe. Galaxies, Stars, suns, moons, planets etc. are created and

destroyed according to these laws, everything functions according to these laws; we have earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons, sand storms, fires etc. all of which can harm us humans and has nothing to do with the whims of God. They are not meant to punish us humans nor are they created by some evil force like the devil - Ahrimana. We should not blame God for it, nor should we give up by saying "it is the wish of God". Instead we have to use our mind and strive to overcome these furies in nature, by researching about them and formulating rules and guidance, to overcome them. Like the Japanese have done with regard to earthquakes. They have found ways to live with it without loss of life and property.

These, you, not Ahura Mazda  
Asha also brings fury

Mind also is the best  
That which strives' to give good guidance  
For you to be worthy  
Mighty, satisfied, also worthy of praise  
Zarathushtra - Gatha - Yasna HA 28.9 (FR)

### Second is the creation by humans.

We are surrounded by things that are created by us humans, some of which are good and some are harmful. Zarathushtra has given advice with regard to such creations by humans.

He says everything that is created was first a thought so keep your thoughts good forever. Thoughts are good **only** when they are in tune with nature. Since thoughts that are not discussed vanish, let others know only of your Good thoughts, thus if your thoughts were to materialize they would be good deeds and good products.

Truly with these facts  
We shall keep our thoughts good forever  
In tune with the Wisdom in Creation

I instruct that  
You all declare your mind's findings  
Through the word of mouth  
Whereby creation first comes into being  
Zarathushtra - Gatha - Yasna 28.11

So according to Zarathushtra earthquakes and hurricanes are part of nature they are not sent by God to punish humans, nor are they created by the devil. It is we humans who have to study nature and find ways to live with them, just like we have learned to live with rain and snow and even learned to entertain ourselves with them.

According to the dualistic theory of Mani & Mazdak there are two creators one for everything good and the other for all that is bad. This belief has infiltrated into modern Zoroastrianism. In fact we find a lot of such beliefs in Zoroastrianism that are not according to the Gathas they have evolved from Mithraism, Zurvanism or Mani and Mazdak.

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<sup>1</sup> See "Influence of Zarathushties on other religions" at <http://www.ancientiran.com>

<sup>2</sup> According to the Bible the Magi's were with Jesus guiding him all throughout, for detail please see "Influence of Zarathushties on other religions" at <http://www.ancientiran.com> or see IRAN Zamin Vol-3 No-1 October 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Salman finds Mohammad in 622 CE bearing the three signs of prophet hood.  
\*In 624 CE Mohammad leads 300 warriors in a raid on the Meccan merchant's caravan. The Meccans defended them-selves successfully and decide to send a small army of 800 people against Mohammad in the famous war of Badr on 15March624CE. Mohammad with his 300 men wins the war.  
\*625 CE The battle of Uhud- Abu Sufian of Mecca attacks Medina with 3000 men to redress the loss.  
\*627 CE Battle of Gandar (trenches) Once again Abu Sufian attacks Medina. Salman advises Mohammad to dig defensive trenches and they win the war.  
\*628 CE Mohammad marches on Mecca & signs treaty but parties are not faithful to it.  
\*630 CE Mohammad marches with 10 thousand men to Mecca takes over the city destroys the idols in the Kabba shrine and declares it the house of Allah.  
\*632 CE June 8 Mohammad dies.

<sup>4</sup> As related by Al-Warraq - The Cosmogonical & Cosmological Teachings of Mazdak – By- Mansour Shaki.

<sup>5</sup> "The Meaning of Mazda & Ahura in the Gathas" See Iran Zamin Vol-1#1 October 2000. [www.ancientiran.com](http://www.ancientiran.com)

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