

## ZOROASTRIANISM: ORIGINS AND HISTORY

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**Abstract:** This article provides information about the emergence and reasons for the development of Zoroastrianism, as well as its beliefs. One of the main aspects discussed is the deities in Zoroastrianism. Finally, the article presents comprehensive information about the important sources of Zoroastrianism, their structure, composition, and the circumstances under which they were written.

**Keywords:** Zoroastrianism, Zoroaster, monotheistic, Ahura Mazda, Ahriman, Persia, Zarathustra, Zardust, Ozarxurra, Airyanem-Vaeja, Eran-vej, Zand, Avesta.

One of the oldest national religions is Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism has a unique and long history, and its followers are numerous. One of the main differences from other religions is that it is one of the oldest religions and is based on monotheism, founded by Zoroaster. Zoroastrianism holds a significant place in human history. Its origins date back to the 6th to 5th centuries BCE and it primarily developed in the region of Iran, specifically ancient Persia. The founder of Zoroastrianism, known as Zoroaster (or Zarathustra), conveyed important ideas to humanity through his religious teachings. Zoroastrianism is fundamentally built on monotheistic beliefs, with a central theme of the ongoing struggle between good and evil, light and darkness. The core ideas and beliefs of Zoroastrianism have greatly influenced humanity's moral and spiritual development. This religious doctrine deeply explores issues such as the purpose of life, ethical values, and human social responsibility. In Zoroastrianism, the one God believed in is Ahura Mazda, symbolizing goodness and light. In contrast, Ahriman represents evil and darkness. The struggle between these two forces constitutes the essence of Zoroastrianism and calls upon individuals to pursue goodness. Zoroastrianism is not limited to religious beliefs; it has also significantly impacted culture, art, philosophy, and social life. The teachings of Zoroastrianism have influenced the social structure and politics of ancient Persian civilization. Many traditional rituals and ceremonies of this religion continue to this day and maintain their place in modern life. Therefore, Zoroastrianism is significant not only as a historical religion but also for its moral and spiritual ideas in the contemporary world. This article will provide detailed information about the history of Zoroastrianism, its core ideas, its development, and its place in modern life. A thorough analysis will be conducted on the ancient roots of this religion, its influence, and how it continues to evolve today [1].

**Zoroastrianism: History and Foundations:** Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest religions, emerging in the 7th-6th centuries BCE primarily in Central Asia, specifically in the Khorezm region. Its prophet, Zoroaster (Zarathustra), was a historical figure who reformed the Mazdakism religion and created a new monotheistic faith based on it. The era in which Zoroastrianism emerged was characterized by the early development of class society, specifically slavery, where tribal structures were disintegrating, leading to divisions among the population into slaves and masters, oppressors and the oppressed. This religion first established itself in Central Asia and subsequently spread to Iran and Azerbaijan. The Khorezm region,

known as the cradle of material and spiritual culture in Central Asia, was home to various Turkic peoples, including the Uzbek people. Zoroastrianism, as a religion dating back to the 7th-6th centuries BCE, arose from earlier tribal religions based on monotheistic beliefs. It continued to exist in various forms until the 7th-9th centuries CE, when it was eventually supplanted by Islam. Initially formed in the Khorezm region, Zoroastrianism spread to the Near and Middle East, with some remnants still preserved today.

The teachings of Zoroastrianism represent a monotheistic doctrine in contrast to the ancient beliefs that existed in Central Asia, which involved the deification of natural forces (the "old religion" of the ancient inhabitants of Central Asia). Zoroastrianism condemned unnecessary bloodshed, military conflicts, and conquest wars, advocating for settled, peaceful living and encouraging agriculture and animal husbandry [2]. As mentioned earlier, Zoroaster is the founder of this faith, although his name appears in various forms in research, such as Zarathustra, Zardust, and Zoroaster. Scholars have differing opinions on whether Zoroaster was a historical figure or a mythical one. Some consider him a historical figure, while others regard him as a legendary character. According to sources, he is believed to have lived approximately between 1200-570 BCE. The English researcher M. Boys suggests he lived between 1500-1200 BCE. Zoroaster reformed ancient religious beliefs rooted in polytheism prevalent in Central Asia and laid the foundation for a new religion. There are two main theories regarding the place of his birth and initial religious activities. The first theory, referred to as the "Western theory," posits that Media (in present-day Iran) is Zoroaster's homeland and the initial place of Zoroastrianism's spread. Proponents of this view argue that Zoroastrianism was widely disseminated in ancient Iranian territories and that commentaries on its sacred text, the Avesta, were written in ancient Iranian-Pahlavi language. It should be noted that Zoroastrianism served as the state religion during three great Persian empires: the Achaemenids, Parthians, and Sassanids, from the 6th century BCE to the 7th century CE. The second theory, known as the "Eastern theory," claims that Khorezm is Zoroaster's homeland and the initial place of Zoroastrianism's spread. Many scholars support this latter theory. Khorezm is considered the site where the sacred fire Ozarxurra was first ignited and is linked to Ahura Mazda, the supreme god of Zoroastrianism.

The primary source of Zoroastrianism is the Avesta, which states: "The sacred fire was first lit in Ozarxurra in Airyanem-Vaeja (in some sources referred to as Eran-vej) [3]." There is a legend about the emergence of Zoroastrianism that tells of a day when Zoroaster went to the riverbank to fetch water in the early morning. In the clear water, he saw the figure of one of Ahura Mazda's messengers, who showed him the way with a radiant light. Following this magical light, Zoroaster soon found himself before the supreme deity, Ahura Mazda. The god revealed that he had chosen Zoroaster to spread knowledge of good deeds. Thus, at the age of 30, Zoroaster became the prophet of a new religious teaching. The very word "prophet" means "one who brings news of good deeds [4]." The primary source of Zoroastrianism is the Avesta, which is a historically rich text that has spread not only throughout Asia but also across the entire world. The earliest parts of the Avesta emerged in the 9th to 8th centuries BCE. The texts of Zoroaster's teachings were compiled into 21 books by the 3rd century BCE, forming the foundation of the Avesta. The commentary on the Avesta texts is known as "Zand." Thanks to scholarly research, we now have the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism, the Avesta. The French scholar A. Duperron was the first to translate specific sections of the Avesta [5] The Avesta has emerged as a great universal human value. It has become a pinnacle of

infinite thought and progress, significantly contributing to the development of universal human values within world civilization. The philosophy of the Avesta is a profound and unique value that invites humanity towards perfection, urging for excellence and maturity. From this perspective, efforts are being made to study the Avesta and to implement its life-affirming ideas into practice. At the UNESCO General Assembly conference in November 1999, a decision was made to celebrate the 2700th anniversary of the creation of the Avesta on a global scale. This was followed by historical decisions from the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan on March 29, 2000, regarding the commemoration of the 2700th anniversary of the creation of the Avesta. Accordingly, jubilee events were held on November 3, 2001, in Khorezm, the homeland of Zoroaster, marking a new phase in Avesta studies worldwide. Simultaneously, a new perspective towards this historical monument began to take shape. The unity of "Good Thought," "Good Word," and "Good Deed" in Zoroastrianism encompasses not only their philosophical and ethical worldview but also the spiritual and moral values of all humanity. The sacred texts of the Avesta teach people to worship goodness rather than evil forces and emphasize moral perfection over brute physical power. This serves as a historical foundation for the relevance of President I.A. Karimov's statement that "we must fight against idea with idea, thought with thought, and ignorance with enlightenment [6].

In conclusion, Zoroastrianism possesses a rich and long history, and its followers have promoted goodness and virtue.

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