

Glossary: Zoroastrian worldview traditions

This glossary is also available on our website. We also have an accompanying in-depth subject knowledge essay, available both on our website and for download.

[In-depth subject knowledge essay](#)

[Glossary](#)

Ahura Mazda

DEFINITION: The Wise Lord, the one God, for those who follow Zoroastrianism. Ahura Mazda is all good and he created the world which is therefore also good. This was taught by the Prophet Zarathustra, Zoroaster in Greek. Ahura Mazda has a series of attributes which those who follow Zoroastrianism are taught to try and emulate such as the good mind, justice and truth.

Angra Mainyu

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Ahriman

DEFINITION: All misery, disease, suffering and death are the assault of the evil one, Angra Mainyu.

Atash

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Atash

DEFINITION: The perpetually burning sacred fire in the temple, in which Zoroastrians believe God is physically present.

Avesta

DEFINITION: The sacred text of Zoroastrians is the Avesta. It was preserved orally for some time and then written down in a specially designed alphabet, Avestan.

For Zoroastrians religious authority rests fundamentally on the vision of the prophet Zarathustra/Zoroaster contained in his hymns, known as the Gathas. These are found in the Avesta. There are other texts included in the Avesta including the Khordeh Avesta, or the “smaller Avesta” which contains the daily prayers.

Farvardigan

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Fravardigan, Muktd

DEFINITION: The last 10 days of the year when the souls of the departed are welcomed and entertained and during which time the Gathas of Prophet Zarathustra/ Zoroaster are recited.

Khordad Sal

DEFINITION: The birthday of Zarathustra/ Zoroaster. It is customary on this day to visit the Fire Temple, to give thanks to Ahura Mazda for giving humanity the Prophet Zarathushtra/ Zoroaster, to participate in a thanksgiving ceremony, known as a Jashan, to listen to stories of the miraculous birth and life of Prophet Zarathushtra/ Zoroaster, and to share in a happy community meal, a drink and a dance.

Kusti

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Kushti

DEFINITION: The sacred cord, which, along with the sacred shirt (Sudre), all Zoroastrians, male or female wear next to the skin like a vest throughout life (except when bathing). It is given as part of the Navjote/Sudreh-Pushi initiation ceremony which occurs just before puberty.

Manthras

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: mantras

DEFINITION: Prayers (manthras) are recited in the Avestan language whilst standing and are said aloud in order to remain 'alive'; there is not really a tradition of silent prayer.

Mobed

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: mobeds

DEFINITION: A Zoroastrian priest, the priesthood is hereditary. Priests wear white caps and long flowing robes as a sign of purity.

Naujote

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Navjote, Sudreh Pushi

DEFINITION: The initiation ceremony for Zoroastrians which usually occurs just before puberty when the child of Zoroastrian parents chooses to undertake the obligations of the religion. The sudre is a white cotton garment worn next to the skin and the kusti a lamb's wool cord tied around the waist. These are then worn next to the skin throughout life.

No Ruz

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Nowruz, Navroz

DEFINITION: The Zoroastrian new year. As Zoroastrians have 3 religious calendars there are 3 new year celebrations.

Parsi

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Parsi

DEFINITION: Zoroastrians who originally come from Pars in Iran and fled from religious persecution to India.

Prophet Zoroaster

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Zarathustra, Zoroaster

DEFINITION: Prophet Zarathustra or Zoroaster, dated somewhere 1500-1200 BCE, lived and taught in Persia, now North-East Iran.

He was a priest, had visions of God (Ahura Mazda meaning 'Wise Lord') and believed he had been set apart 'from the beginning' to work as a prophet to his people.

His teaching is contained in 17 hymns known as the Gathas which are located at the heart of the Yasna, liturgical writing found in the sacred book, the Avesta. He taught a code of 'good thoughts, good words and good deeds'.

Zarathustra/Zoroaster is considered to be human not divine although he is more than simply a role model. He was chosen by Ahura Mazda to be the divinely inspired teacher of 'the Good Religion'. Zarathustra /Zoroaster's life came to an end at the age of 77, when he was murdered by his enemies.

Sudre

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Sudreh, Sudrah

DEFINITION: The sacred shirt which together with the Kusti (sacred cord) which all Zoroastrians, male or female wear next to the skin like a vest throughout life (except when bathing). It is given as part of the Navjote/Sudreh-Pushi initiation ceremony which occurs just before puberty.

Sudrekusti

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Sudrehkusti

DEFINITION: A series of sacred recitations performed daily whilst untying and retying the kusti cord.

Urvisgah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Urvisgah

DEFINITION: Ritual room within the temple where the higher ceremonies are performed by the priests on behalf of the laity, for example in memory of the deceased. Laity may attend these ceremonies but rarely do.

Yasna

DEFINITION: The main Zoroastrian liturgy is the Yasna, which may be attended only by those who have been initiated into Zoroastrian. The Yasna, which consists of 72 chapters of text, is performed as the sun rises in order to symbolise the fire of asha (the empowering force of Ashura Mazda) scattering light and heat over creation and dispelling the darkness of ignorance and evil.

Zartusht No Diso

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Zartosht No Diso

DEFINITION: The death anniversary of Prophet Zarathustra/ Zoroaster. Tradition records he was assassinated at the age of 77. It is customary to visit the Fire Temple, participate in special remembrance prayers to him and to the Fravashis (the guardian spirits of departed ancestors), and ponder upon the Gathas or Hymns of Zarathushtra, which embody his eternal message to humanity.

Zoroastrianism

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Zoroastrism

DEFINITION: Zoroastrianism originated from the teachings of Zarathustra, Zoroaster in Greek, in Persia (now Iran) between 1500-1200 BCE. Good thoughts, good words and good deeds are central to lived Zoroastrianism.

There are several thousand Zoroastrians still in Iran but most Zoroastrians are now concentrated in India. There are also significant numbers of adherents in Canada and the USA, but London has the largest Zoroastrian community of any city outside Iran about 5,000. The total number of adherents worldwide is between 150,000 – 200,000.