

**Fast 19: Muslims extended belief in prophets to include prophets not mentioned**

- Reverting to our main theme, that Muslims are required to believe in all prophets who arose before the Holy Prophet Muhammad, we have earlier discussed that this also includes prophets who are not mentioned in the Quran. During the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, Muslims encountered Jews and Christians, and some other related sects, in Arabia. Their prophets are explicitly mentioned in the Quran along with some details of their histories. The Jews and Christians are called “People of the Book” in the Quran because they possessed scriptures which the Quran recognised as having been, originally, revealed by Allah to their prophets.
- When Muslims expanded to countries outside Arabia, they encountered other religions whose founders were not mentioned in the Quran. But from the very beginning Muslims realised that the followers of these religions may also be in the category of “People of the Book” if they possessed scriptures containing teachings of their ancient sages. And the founders of these religions were prophets and messengers of Allah.
- Zoroastrianism, named after its founder Zoroaster, is a most ancient religion which was the religion prevailing in Iran when this country was conquered by Muslims shortly after the death of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Something of this religion was already known to Muslims since Salman, a famous Companion of the Holy Prophet, was a Persian. The Quran itself mentions “the Magians” (*al-majūs*) in a list of followers of different religions and says after it: “surely Allah will decide between them on the day of Resurrection” (22:17). Magians are considered to be the same as Zoroastrians, known as Parsis in the Indian subcontinent. Also, there are striking similarities between some of the teachings and practices of Islam and those of the Zoroastrian religion.
- It is recorded in ancient Muslim literature that the Holy Prophet Muhammad had himself given instructions to Muslims that they must treat Zoroastrians as “People of the Book”. (*The Preaching of Islam*, by Sir T.W. Arnold, p. 207)
- Zend-Avesta is the name of the Zoroastrian scripture. An English translation of it was published in 1895. In the Introduction the translator, James Darmesteter, writes that this scripture contains many stories very similar to those in the Bible. “Perhaps the very idea of an Avesta was suggested by the Bible”, he writes. Then he adds:

“When Islam assimilated the Zoroastrians to the People of the Book, it evinced a rare historical sense and solved the problem of the origin of the Avesta.” (p. 69 of the Introduction; *Sacred Books of the East*, v. 4, second edition)

- **Vedas of the Hindus:** Mirza Mazhar Jan-e-Janan (1699-1780) was a famous Sufi poet of Delhi. He is recognized as one of the four pillars of eighteenth century Urdu poetry alongside with Sauda, Mir Taqi Mir and Khwaja Mir Dard. He believed that the Hindu religion and its scriptures were of Divine origin. His views were summarised a few years ago in an English article in *The South Asia Tribune* ([see link](#)). That article states that he declared unequivocally:

“that prior to the birth of Islam, God had indeed sent Prophets to India and that their activities have been recorded in the holy books of the Indians.”

If we look up his original writing, he writes that this is because of the verse of the Quran “And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them” ([see link](#), and go to p. 92–95). The *South Asia Tribune* article also quotes his following views:

“... at the birth of the human species, God had sent a holy book by the name of Veda for the correction of their world through an angel called Brahma, who is an instrument of the creation of the world.”

“... from the remains of the Hindu books, it seems that they had attained the stages of perfection and completion and that the general mercy of God did not forget the humanity of this vast landmass.”

- **Buddha:** Around the year 1545, a Mughal general and historian, Mirza Muhammad Haidar, wrote a history of the Mughals in Persian entitled *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*. He had fought for the Mughal emperors Babur and Humayun. This book was translated into English and published in 1895. Mirza Haidar unsuccessfully attempted to conquer Tibet. In his book he mentions meeting the people of Tibet and finding out from them about their religion, which was Buddhism. During this conversation, they also told him that Buddha had prophesied that after him there would arise 124,000 prophets, the last of whom would be an orphan, without father or mother. They told him that Buddha had said about this last prophet:

“When he is sent it will be necessary for the whole world to submit to him, and blessed will he be who hastens to adopt his faith. I bequeath my own religion in order that it may be handed down from generation to generation until the blessed time of his appearance. ... People should believe in him before all other men.”

Mirza Haidar writes that they said that Buddha had given his followers an image of this prophet, and they have an idol of him in their temple. Mirza Haidar told them that what Buddha said refers to the Prophet Muhammad. But they replied that the 124,000 prophets had not yet all appeared. “I earnestly insisted that they had all appeared, but they would not admit it.” ([See link](#), and go to pages 414–416 of the book.)

This shows that at this contact with Buddhism 500 years ago Muslims discovered that Buddha was a prophet, who had prophesied the coming of the Prophet Muhammad.