

The Universal Religion of Zarathushtra

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“Keeping the two principles [of good and evil] of Yours [God] in mind, we shall teach the hitherto unheard words to those who destroy the righteous world by their wrongful doctrines. No doubt, the two principles will prove the best for those who are devoted to the Wise One.

Since it is not easy for the soul to find the better course, I, whom the Wise Lord knows, come to you all as the leader of the two parties [the righteous and the wrongful] so that we may all live in accordance with righteousness.

The happiness You [God] grant, has been promised to the two parties through Your mental fire and righteousness. It is a matter of principle for the discerning, O Wise One, for our knowledge, speak with the very words of Your mouth. It will help me guide all the living to choose [the right religion].”

(Gathas: Song 4, stanzas 1–3¹)

Religion of Right Choice:

Song 4, consisting of 22 stanzas, is the song of guidance to enlightenment. The three stanzas quoted above highlight six points:

1. Zarathushtra’s teachings are, first of all, addressed to the persons whose wrong doctrines are harmful to the human society.
2. The teachings are clearly very good for the devoted.
3. Ahura Mazda knows Zarathushtra for his listening to the Divine Teachings and being prepared to proclaim the Message through his songs, the Gathas. (Song 2.8²).
4. Zarathushtra comes as a leader to make it easier for both the wrongful and rightful to take the better course in life.
5. The better course is taken by means of fire, symbolizing a bright mind and by following the proper means of accomplishing a job.
6. Inspired by the divine words, Zarathushtra wants to guide all living beings to choose the right religion.

¹ Yasna 31.1–3

² Yasna 29.8

The universality of his message lies at the very core of the above six points. A play in the Gathas (Song 2³) portrays the world, which suffered from aggression and oppression, and wanted a redeemer and leader. The living world wanted a strong and aggressive person but was, instead, introduced to a weak-looking person who believed that only good wisdom, best righteousness, and peaceful actions can bring the desired change. Convinced of the new doctrine and enjoying the full freedom of choice, the world chose Zarathushtra. The play is still fresh. Much of the living world is still suffering from aggression and oppression. It must choose Zarathushtra to truly enjoy divine serenity and progressive peace.

A perusal of the Gathas will show that the Zarathushtrian religion is a, in fact, THE religion of choice. It is choice alone. Zarathushtra chooses for himself “the very mentality of God, which is the most progressive.”⁴ While some religious leaders advocate force, he says: “We shall, with the greatest thought-provoking words, convince the barbarians to choose the right.”⁵

Many religions have their initiations with baptism, confession, profession, or conversion. The Good Religion has its initiate state: “I, with my appreciations and convictions, *choose for myself* (*fravarane*) to be a worshipper of the Wise One and a Zarathushtrian. I appreciate good thoughts, I appreciate good words, and I appreciate good deeds. I appreciate the Good Religion of worshipping the Wise One, which overthrows yokes yet sheaths swords, teaches self-reliance, and is righteous. Therefore, of the religions that have been and shall be, this is the greatest, best, and sublimest. It is divine and Zarathushtrian. I do attribute all good to the Wise God.”⁶

This choice of the Good Religion is in accordance with Zarathushtra’s advice. It says, “Hear the best with your ears and ponder with a bright mind. Then each man and woman, for his or her self, select either of the two (the “better” and the “bad” mentalities). Awaken to this Doctrine of ours before the Great Event of Choice ushers in.”⁷

Zarathushtra’s Mission:

“Wise One, I am who venerates away inconsideration and evil mind from You; perverse-mind from the family; related wrong from the community; revile from the fellowship; and extreme evil counseling from the world settlements.”⁸ Zarathushtra’s foremost task is to purify every unit in the world, from family, the smallest, to the inhabited world, the largest; from the ills that plague the society. Song 6 speaks about his universal mission. He wants to guide humanity on the righteous path of the highest wisdom. Having formed the nucleus of his Great Fellowship of his companions, he wants to go beyond this circle, to the settled people on the earth. He prays for more strength and more enlightenment for his expanding mission. To achieve his objectives, he dedicates his to God his life, mind, words, deeds, communion, and the very power and endurance he was asking God to serve the divine cause.

³ Yasna 29

⁴ Song 3.6 (Yasna 30.6)

⁵ Song 1.5 (Yasna 28.5)

⁶ Yasna 12.8–9

⁷ Song 3.2 (Yasna 30.2).

⁸ Song 6.4 (Yasna 33.4)

Zarathushtra mentions four units of human society—family, community, fellowship, and the world—several times, but he never speaks of any particular race, tribe, class, category, profession, nationality, country or land. He is not concerned with the artificial political, economical, and social divisions that divide the world. His mission is to fuse the units into a wise bond of universality.

His followers hail his coming, because “henceforth the Good Religion of worshipping the Wise One shall spread on the seven regions of the earth.”⁹ Thousands of years later, we still hear Zarathushtrians pray, “May we be co-merited with all the good people of the seven regions of the earth, and ultimately reach as wide as the earth is, as long as the rivers are, as high as the sun stands.”¹⁰

This, of course, means that the Good Religion was the first and foremost missionary religion. However, the texts in Avesta show that, compared to many later missionary movements, it was a moderate one. Zarathushtra addresses the wise only and it is his thought-provoking message that stimulates one to understand his words. No blind following. No dictating prescriptions. No aging Traditions.

In order to make the people wise, it is Zarathushtra who started the first “literacy” movement to teach people to become wise first and then seek the truth with a bright, discerning mind. His followers advise that one should first acquire wisdom, practice its virtues, and then teach others what they have learned so that they too practice and preach.¹¹ It was through this zeal that the Good Religion spread far and wide and became the leading religion until the fall of the Sassanian Empire in the 7th century CE.

Let us join the fellowship. Learn to discern and choose. Practice and spread good. Teach others to do the same. All through wisdom, good thinking, righteousness, and dedication to the divine cause.

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⁹ Farvardin Yasht 94

¹⁰ Persian *Peimân-e Dîn* and Parsi Gujarati *Dîn no Kalmô*

¹¹ Haptanghaiti Song 1.6 (Yasna 35.6)