

Things I Love About Zarathushtra.¹

By

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This Thanksgiving, thinking about what I am grateful for, I would like to share 27 things I love about Zarathushtra's teachings and what they embody for me.

* He was born laughing – JOY is exalted over suffering. While probably a myth, I love this tradition which expresses the idea that physical incarnation can be associated with delight and not fear.

* There is no notion of original sin in Zoroastrianism, but only original blessing.

* Zarathushtra was a Reformer – meaning that he probably was trained as a priest, but whether as priest or a secular person, he chose to reform what was no longer serving Humanity's needs for growth and a good life. As a result of his courage and integrity, he was initially rejected, became an outcast, wandered for years, and met with great hardship. Many of us can identify with this.

* I love that he didn't give up!

* Nor did he take up the sword to defend himself and force his new understanding on others.

* He persisted and eventually, the truth spoke for itself. Eventually, as he preached his message, he found support in a King.

* I love that he was not an ascetic: he married a woman and had children and believed in living an abundant and productive life in the here and now.

* I love that he valued women: he called his own daughter Pouruchisti, which means 'full of illumined understanding'. Zoroastrian initiation rites have always been for both girls and boys – this is not a modern adaptation.

* He made the distinction between good and evil a distinction between Truth and the Lie. I like evil being equated with just a big fat lie. Meaning it's not true – that "evil" is not even true.

* I love that he was married with one woman, and not multiple. It's more than enough to learn to love well *one* woman (or one man) at a time.

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* I love that he was a human being, not set apart from us. The implication is that we can all attain spiritual mastery as he did – that we can all become *Saoshyant*, “one who brings benefit.”

* I love that he emphasized our free will, choice and responsibility in the ongoing Creation: that it is up to each of us to *choose* the truth and turn away from the lie. There is no one else to blame. The buck stops here.

* I love that he emphasized that each of us also has the innate right and freedom to choose even our faith – that we are all to follow our own Conscience. No one is to interfere with this divine-given birthright of freedom of choice.

* At the same time, we have help, including from the *Yazatas and Farohars*– our eternal soul, guides, and angelic guardians.

* I love that he emphasized the importance of our thoughts: it isn't enough to *do* good, or even to *speak* good words. He instructed us that the quality of even our thoughts matter. This wasn't about being strict. This was about being smart.

* I love that Ahura Mazda is a God of Wisdom (Light and Truth), of Goodness (*vahishta*), that our religion is called *Mazdayasna*, “the worship of Mazda”, of Wisdom, Light, Truth.

* I love that Zarathushtra did not die with a sword in his hand, and I love that he never took a human life. He died like Jesus, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, though I wish that humanity had been more enlightened, and that he hadn't suffered. I love that he was nonviolent to the end.

* I love that Zoroastrians don't commemorate or memorialize his suffering or death, and that our religious rituals are by and large about celebration. I love that Zarathushtra's notion of 'worship' is a celebration!

* I love that it connotes unabashed gratitude toward the Creator and for Creation.

* I love that Zarathushtra made Fire and the Sun – the source of all energy, light, and life on Earth – the symbolic cornerstone of *Asha* and Ahura Mazda.

* I love that he emphasized that we have powerful assistance if we wish to call upon them: the *Amesha Spentas*, Beneficent Beings, the numinous ones, are our immortal allies who are here to support us in caring for the natural world and Creation.

* I love that life on earth is valued and considered *sacred* as is the Earth herself.

* I love that he emphasized the critical importance of caretaking Mother Earth – that She must not be exploited or polluted and must be cared for like a mother.

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- * I love that humans are considered collaborators and co-creators with the Divine energies – we are not considered, pitiful, insignificant, or devalued.
- * I love that Zarathushtra spoke to Ahura Mazda as if he were speaking to his best friend, his beloved, and caring benefactor, and not to some distant, intimidating Lord on high.
- * I love that he emphasized the innate nobility and dignity of being human, and freedom as a birthright. These are not recent western notions; these are ancient principles.
- * I love that he did not preach superiority and inferiority, and that he saw the wisdom he espoused as the birthright of ALL human beings, not just those of one faith over another.

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¹ Around Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 22, 2018), I was lucky enough to be a recipient of an email from my friend, Sousan Abadian, in which she expressed a number of reasons why she was thankful for Zarathushtra. I liked it so much that I asked her if I could use it as a chapter here in *Part One*, and she generously gave it a little fine tuning and agreed. So here it is.

² © 2018 Sousan Abadian. Dr. Sousan Abadian holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University, an M.P.A. in International Development from Harvard's Kennedy School, and an M.A. in the Anthropology of Social Change and Development, also from Harvard University. She has served as a Fellow at M.I.T.'s Dalai Lama Center for Ethics & Transformative Values as well as at the Harvard Center for Public Leadership. Currently, she has a one year fellowship as a Franklin Fellow at the U.S. State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Her portfolio includes preventing violent extremism, cultural heritage protection of religious minorities in the Middle East, gender issues, atrocity prevention and recovery. Her research on indigenous collective trauma and cultural renewal has been described by Nobel laureate in economics Amartya Sen as "pioneering" and "highly original work" and featured in a 2008 Harvard Magazine article ["Trail of Tears, and Hope."](#)