

Gathas Study Circle (GSC) Presentation -July 18, 2020

My Thoughts and Reflections

### **Thus Speaks Zarathustra To Me....**

*A brief summary of my thoughts and understanding about the teachings of Zarathustra and how that shapes me and my actions.*  
~ Shahrzad Yazdani ~

I must start by saying or rather confessing that I have not studied the teachings of Zartosht in any depth. I owe most of my understanding of his teachings in the Gathas to my dear husband, Jamshid; either through the process of him teaching our children about the Gathas prior to their Sedreh Pushi (that he performed) or through discussions that the two of us or as a family we've had, especially in relation to these GSC meetings in the past six years or so.

I've always been proud of being Zoroastrian. Having grown up in Iran, I always knew I was part of a minority religion. I also knew, as I was told by my parents and other family members, and later by non-Zoroastrian friends, that we Zoroastrians have a reputation for honesty and for being "good" people. That alone made me proud. I also always proudly spoke of our belief in Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds; what I later taught my children as the way Zartosht has taught us to live, offering them to choose it as their "way of life."

I now know that Zartosht never used that expression to teach me how to live. He also never told me what to do, or what not to do to be a good Zartoshti. He did a lot more than that... He gave me freedom to think and to choose. He told me to learn, to think, to analyze, to ponder and to come up with answers. He didn't want to direct me on specifics. He didn't want to micro manage me.

All religions say you have to be good to others and to love thy neighbor, and with that, they also specify how to be a good member of the religion, what specifically to do or not to do. I've always thought that prescriptive religions had to prescribe things based on their time, and hence as time goes by, the guidance might become outdated and not as relevant.

So the fact that by not prescribing specifics, Zartosht leaves it to my wisdom, he also makes me responsible for my actions. He also leaves it to the advance of times, to human beings becoming smarter. He sees me, as his follower, as an "able" individual, and enables me and encourages me to make good choices. Responsibility to make good choices is a big one. As Ann Van Seventant puts it in her book "Thus Replied Zarathustra", "Besides human rights, we need human responsibility". And once we accept the responsibility to make good choices, we have started our path for doing our part in making the world a better place.

The human kind is far from perfect. I know I certainly am. Can we reach perfection? I don't believe I ever will! Based on what Zartosht tells me, what I can do is to be self-aware, constantly examine my doings and re-evaluate my way of life. If I can do that on a regular basis and even if I sometimes succeed, I can learn from my experiences, make myself better, make the world around me better, and hopefully leave this world a better place than I found it.

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In these trying times, with so much to think about and choose from about the pandemic and how to protect ourselves and others, about the equality movements and how to support those movements, about how we can make society better, about how to protect the environment, ... there are so many big decisions, so many choices to make and so many ways to do the right thing. And I ponder as to perhaps, one of the most righteous things to do, is to be accepting of other people and the choices they make. These are times that we all need friends more than ever. While we must speak our mind, we must also strengthen relationships and patiently help one another become better. The reality is that we don't all change the world in the same way. If the path I take follows Zartosht's teachings, and improves harmony in the world, then I've made a good choice and I've taken one step forward in the quest to make things better.

I am so proud of being Zoroastrian, being a Zartoshti. I am overjoyed to hear my daughter tell me whole-heartedly "Thank you for being Zartoshti." I am so proud that nearly 4000 years ago, Zartosht, my teacher, had the wisdom to show me a "way of life". I know there are different interpretations of what Zartosht has said in the Gathas. I choose to believe that *he believed in me, and he believed that I would find the right path to make the world a better place.*