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Article

The Zarathustra: Exploring the Interplay of Marriage, Faith, and Social Life

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Abstract. This paper explores the intricate interplay between marriage, faith, and social dynamics within the framework of Zoroastrianism, commonly referred to as the Zarathustra religion, offering a succinct exposition of its historical origins and cultural significance. The aim of this study is to examine the impact of the Zarathustrianism belief system on the institution of marriage, the formation of social connections, and the development of individual and communal practices. The methodology employed in this study entails a descriptive qualitative approach that involves an extensive analysis of textual sources, anthropological studies, historical records, and data gathered from surveys

conducted in 2004 and 2012. The findings of this research uncover the religious rituals associated with marriage, the influence of faith on marital relationships, and the consequences of religious teachings on social norms and customs for most worshipers of this religion who live in India, Iran, and the USA. It casts light on the complex relationships between marriage, religion, and social life within the context of the Zarathustrianism religion, offering insightful information about the real-world experiences of its adherents and the enormous relevance of these components within their community.

Keywords: Zarathustrianism, Religion, Marriage, Social Life, Funeral, USA.

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a multifaceted and complex concept that encompasses various beliefs, practices, rituals, and moral codes followed by a group of individuals (Hill et al. 2000; Moberg 2002; Schlehofer et al. 2008; Hertog 2010; Johnson et al. 2011; Gervais 2014; Malone and Dadswell 2018). It frequently involves the interpretation of sacred writings or scriptures and generally entails the worship of one or more deities or a supreme being (Eliade 1987; Netland 1999; Cavanaugh 2011; Pinter et al. 2016). The purpose of marriage is to create a committed partnership between two people, often a man and a woman. Marriage is a social and legal institution (Hafen 1983; Cherlin 2004; Cherlin 2020). It encompasses a variety of legal and personal rights, duties, and obligations that differ between cultures and legal systems. A person who has faith in religion believes in and has faith in the theories, teachings, and tenets of a specific religious system (Cohen et al. 2008; Khoei et al. 2008; Huy et al. 2022). It's a steadfast commitment to religious principles, rites, and practices, as well as a close relationship with a higher power or heavenly being. The collective actions, rituals, and interactions that take place inside a religious community or organization are referred to as religious social life (Campbell 2005; Sosis 2005; Knottnerus 2010). It includes all of the social aspects of religious life, such as communal gatherings, religious ceremonies, rituals, and ritualistic activities. Zarathustra was an ancient Persian preacher and promoter of Zoroastrianism (Bausani 2003; Hartz 2009; Humbach et al. 2015; Stausberg 2015). Zoroastrianism is a religion that was the religion of the nations of the *Achaemenid*, *Parthian*, and *Sasanian* empires of ancient Iran and is mainly observed by the Zoroastrian community of present-day Iran and the *Parsi* community of India (Nigosian 1993; Hintze and Art 2004; Price 2005; Rose 2011; Cerulli 2013; Kaim and Komacka 2016; Lopez et al. 2017). Zoroastrianism originated in the eastern region of the ancient *Achaemenid* Empire (Strouve 1960; Daryae 1995; Jong 2008). The philosopher Zoroastrian began to explain the ancient Iranian theory of God in simple terms. He describes two forms of God. The preacher Zarathustra is a generally accepted historical figure, but little is clearly known about his contemporaries. According to many Scholars, he was a man from about 1200 BC who was one of the founders of

ancient religions, although many others believe that he was a preacher between 1800 BC and 6 BC (Boyce 1990; Corey and Ochoa 2013; Herrero 2021). Zoroastrianism is an ancient Iranian monotheistic religion or religious doctrine (Stepaniants 2002; Kreyenbroek et al. 2006). It is also known as Persian religion in the Indian subcontinent (Choksy 2006; Langrial and Baig 2014, Aramesh 2019). According to his name, this religion is called Zoroastrianism in different languages around the world. In this religion God is called *Ahura Mazda* (Fox 1967; Sims 1997; Shannon 2007; Kiel 2017). Their scriptures are called *Avesta* or *Zendavesta* (Jackson 1893). Those who feed the body after death with vultures in religious faith. Zoroastrianism was the royal religion of *Persia*. At that time, basically everyone practiced this religion. Then, with the advent of Islam, the Arabs hated them as fire worshipers. When the Muslims conquered *Persia* in 635 AD, the Persian religion was on the verge of extinction (Tomass 2016). As a result, many *Parsis* fled to India at that time to protect their religious lives (Seshadri 2020). The followers of the Persian religion are fire-worshippers (Scott 1984). They considered the sanctity of fire to be comparable to the sanctity of God (Hejazi and Sarbakhshian 2019). The *Vedas* have a lot in common with these scriptures, the *Zendavesta* (Graham 1993). Some *Parsis* remained in the Iranian cities of *Yazd* and *Kerman*, paying the *jizya* tax, numbering about 25,000 in Iran today (Stausberg 2012). As of 2014, about 69,000 *Parsis* practice their religion in Maharashtra and Gujarat, India (Chaubey et al. 2017). A total of 137,00,0 followers of Zoroastrianism exist in Afghanistan, India, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and the United States. *Indira Gandhi's* husband, *Feroze Gandhi*, is also said to have followed the *Parsi* religion (Somervill 2007; Falk 2016). Several studies have been done on this issue, including (Table 1).

Table.1. Available studies on Zarathustra

Aspect	Area	References
Zarathustra community and center situations and progress, threats to survival, community response, problems, and future	IN, IR, UK, North America, Illinois	Adkins (2012)
Zarathustra's philosophy, principles, and beliefs	IN	Mayakuntla (2018)
Ancient Zarathustra's moral and ethical teaching	IR, IL	Jackson (1896)
Zarathustra's faith and dwindling, and speeches about it by scholars	IN, ZA, IR	Goodstein (2006)
Theology and identity politics in the <i>Parsis</i> community	IN	Luhmann (2002)
A comparative analysis between Zarathustra and Islamic house design in Iran	IR	Mazumdar and Mazumdar (1997)
Zarathustra's rituals of conservation	-	Herrenschmidt (2003)
Zarathustra's basic themes	-	Stacy-Davis (1987)
Zarathustra's love, hate, and war	DE	Siemens (2023)
Zarathustra and the child of Abraham	-	Luchte (2009)

Here, IN for India; IR for Ireland; UK for United Kingdom; IL for Israel; ZA for South Africa and DE for Germany.

However, the exact practices, rites, and beliefs connected with Zarathustra marriages have not yet been thoroughly studied, despite the importance of marriage within the Zarathustra faith. For a complete understanding of this religion, it is essential to look into how marriage functions within Zarathustra societies and how it affects social dynamics and family structures.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the rituals and traditions surrounding marriage within the Zarathustra religion and explore how these practices contribute to the formation and maintenance of strong familial bonds within the community.
2. To investigate the role of faith in the everyday lives of Zarathustra followers, including how religious beliefs and practices shape their interactions with others in social settings and influence their decision-making processes
3. To assess the impact of the Zarathustra religion on social norms, values, and behaviors beyond the scope of marriage and family life, and to determine how these factors contribute to the cohesiveness of the Zarathustra community and its interactions with the wider society.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a qualitative approach to explore the interplay of marriage, faith, and social life in the Zarathustra religion. This research has been done using only Google Scholar, research papers, book and Census analysis. The findings will provide insights into the relationships between marriage, faith, and social life within the Zarathustra religion.

THE SAYINGS AND IDEALS OF RELIGION

Zarathustra propagated the concept of Oneness. He never considered himself an angel sent by the Lord. He did not assert himself. He did not even say that the message he preached was from the Lord. He propagated the philosophies derived from his wisdom and auspicious thoughts among the people. Zarathustra did not mention any specific actions or rituals for human dharma. Therefore, His preached view can be called a philosophy of human liberation rather than a religion in the conventional sense. His doctrine speeches in sequence: He discouraged slavery, and opposed the prevailing caste system. He talked about equality between men and women. His advice also included keeping the earth, air, water, and fire pure. Laziness should be avoided. He discouraged ownership of other people's hard-earned results. He used to say that everyone should be dependent on the earnings of their own labor. He strongly opposed the establishment of any temple or temple. He also denied the concept of miracles (magic). He further identified any form of violence

as a common crime. Zarathustra is believed to have been a wise priest in *Persia* during his time (Boyce 2001). There are 17 hymns in his '*Gatha*' (Irani 1998). He says that '*Ahur Mazda*' or '*Asur Medha*' is the only Creator, Mighty, and Wise God (Malandra 1983). All natural forces are subordinate to Him. Zarathustra identifies Mazda as the star-gazing luminous energy. He asked people to enlighten their hearts. He considered light and fire to be pure, wonderful things that could never be corrupted or impure. Hence, he referred to it as the symbol of '*Ahur Mazda*'. In this universe, there are two streams of instruction between all actions: '*Spent minu*' or auspicious aspect, and '*Enkerah minu*' or inauspicious aspect. The driving forces of these two streams are '*Ahur Mazda*' (auspicious energy) and '*Angar Mainyu*' (evil energy). A dualism exists in the doctrine of Zarathustra. There exists a complete distinction between auspicious and inauspicious regions. Interconnected ways of instruction are found in Cosmic Dualism and Psycho-cosmic Dualism.

MARRIAGE IN ZOROASTRIANISM

There are two phases to a Christian marriage. In the first phase, the bride, groom, and their guardians sign a marriage contract. The second phase lasts from three to seven days, depending on the family. A lot of feasts are organized during this time. Some other wedding rituals are observed during this phase. One of them is that the veil is held over the heads of the bride and groom, their hands are joined together, and a lump of sugar is rubbed between them to sweeten their married life. The bride and groom are dressed in white at the wedding ceremony. Zoroastrians consider the color white to be a symbol of purity. Zoroastrianism has historically supported endogamy because it encourages marriages within the community to uphold religious and cultural identity. However, opinions about interfaith marriages have changed as a result of shifting social dynamics and the diaspora (Khatun and Islam 2023). Many Zoroastrians today recognize the significance of personal preference and love as considerations in marriage. If the non-Zoroastrian partner is willing to adopt Zoroastrianism and bring up their children in the faith, interfaith unions may be taken into consideration. The function of conversion in Zoroastrian weddings across different faiths. To preserve the continuation of Zoroastrian religion and cultural traditions, conversion is necessary for non-Zoroastrian partners. The partner's absorption into the community is facilitated through conversion, which denotes a dedication to the Zoroastrian religion. It is important to understand that different Zoroastrian groups view interfaith weddings differently (Khatun et al. 2023). Even without conversion, some Zoroastrians are more receptive to interfaith unions as long as the couple consents to partake in Zoroastrian religious and cultural practices. This suggests that some groups within the Zoroastrian community are becoming more accepting and flexible about interfaith unions.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ZARATHUSTRA *DHARMA* AND CONCEPT ABOUT CREATOR

The followers of Zoroastrian religion believe that the Great Creator sent this religion through Zarathustra to save the human race from idolatry, the futility of rituals, and various forms of lawlessness and wickedness. Zarathustrianism is a monotheistic religion (Moore 1912; Boyd and Donald 1979; Barr 1985; Hintze 2014; Dafni et al. 2020). *Ahura Mazda* is regarded as the only God. In Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda is considered to possess supreme power (Tatu 2011). This Ahuramazda is formless and the ruler of all goodness. His worship through fire is done. According to Zoroastrianism, the world is a battlefield. There are good gods and evil gods. A good God does good things, and an evil God is responsible for bad things. In this religion, one can accept the god of good deeds or the god of evil deeds as per his will. In this case, the individual is completely independent. Zoroastrianism advocates the belief in life after death. That is, according to this religion, death is not the end of life. The life that begins after the earthly life is the eternal and original life. According to Zoroastrianism, the Great Creator created special messengers to deliver His message, perform various tasks, enforce peace, etc. For example, *Bahumanu* is a special devotee of *Ahuramazda*. Also, this religion has many other characteristics. Among them are the cremation of the dead body, begging is the great sin, the victory of the auspicious power is inevitable, the purity of the fire, the immortality of the soul, etc. Zarathustra declared that, just as light and darkness, good and bad, are two creations of different natures, so the creators of these two creations of different natures are two. These are *Ahuramazda* and *Ahriman*. *Ahuramasdai* is the only Lord, and man's duty is to worship Him. *Ahuramashda* is the god of goodness, the god of the righteous, and the god of the beautiful (Russell 2001). He appeared in the form of the sun and fire. That is why he is worshiped through fire. There are seven minor gods assisting *Ahuramazda*. *Ahriman* is the creator of evil, untruth, dishonesty, and falsehood in Zarathustrianism (Elsas 2021). All that exists in the world is responsible for sin. There is a constant battle between *Ahuramazda* and *Ahriman*. But one day Ahriman and his evil power will be destroyed.

IDEAS ABOUT SOCIAL LIFE AND FUNERAL WORKS

Zoroastrianism has various instructions about social life. Marriage is considered mandatory in this religion. Emphasis is placed on educating children. Social morality, human service, and love for animals are talked about. Here, the market is considered an inferior place, but one can go there if necessary. Family life is necessary, and all immorality (stealing, adultery, usury, gambling, and drinking) must be avoided. Farming as a means of livelihood, irrigating it, and not leaving the land fallow are mentioned. Regarding cremation, it is said that the dead body will be left in a tower built away from the locality. Zoroastrianism describes personal

education, family education, social education, economic education, benevolence, teaching about time, and metaphysical or spiritual education. Although it is one of the oldest religions, some followers of Zoroastrianism live in Iran, Bombay, and Maharashtra in India. The *Parsis* consider the sun and fire to be the creators of all things. So for 24 hours, the fire kept burning in their place of worship. They arrange the corpse so that it can easily be eaten by the vultures, and after the meat is eaten by the vultures, the bones of the deceased are thrown into the holy well. Their belief is that on the 4th day after death, the soul reaches *Ahura Mazda* for judgment. This 4-day feeding of the dead with vultures is a very fulfilling act. If a vulture eats one's body, it is unlucky. However, since this religion is the most populous in India today, a huge 'Uma, or Tower of Silence (Pillar of Solitude), has been built in the middle of 57 acres of forest-gardens in South Mumbai's *Malabar Hill*. They built a huge tank on top of the hill, put a stone in the middle of the tank, and put dead bodies on it. Vultures sit in or near this tower to feed on the dead body. After a 3-day meal, the bones were collected and placed elsewhere in a mixture of coal and sand. Its name is *Hardani* (Ossuary), followed by the holy well. Currently, zoologists living in the US, Afghanistan, UK, Canada, Singapore, Australia, Gulf countries, and New Zealand are not allowed to build such vulture towers, so they fly the bodies of the dead to Mumbai, India, to be sanctified by vultures after their deaths as per their wishes.

NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS

A ritual called *Navjot* is performed to formally initiate Zoroastrianism. No one is born before the age of seven. But there is no upper age limit for *Navjot*. History of Persian Zoroastrians in India Editing Zoroastrian Persians migrated to India from Persia (present-day Iran) in the 9th century AD. When they came to India, they first set foot in the *Sanjan* area of present-day Gujarat. A wonderful story about their arrival is known, according to popular legend. After the arrival of the Persians, the ruler of *Sanjan* sent a vessel full of milk to the Persians. That is, he meant that there was no place to accommodate anyone else in his kingdom. The Persians poured sugar into the pot to show that it was not overflowing. In other words, they try to explain that they will be in harmony with the people of that area, just like sugar is mixed with milk. Then the ruler gave refuge to the *Parsi* 100. Currently, the number of Zoroastrians in the world is about 130 thousand. They live in a few countries (Fig 1), including India, America, Canada, Britain, and Iran (Table 2). But the followers of the religion, or the *Parsis*, are currently living in India. 10 percent of these *Parsis* living in India live in Mumbai. The remaining 10 percent is spread across India. The Persian population of Calcutta is four hundred. As recently as 2015, 100,000 people from Iraq's Kurdish tribe converted to Islam (Ismael and Ismael 2015; Lister 2015; Luna and Zoltan 2015; Penny 2015).

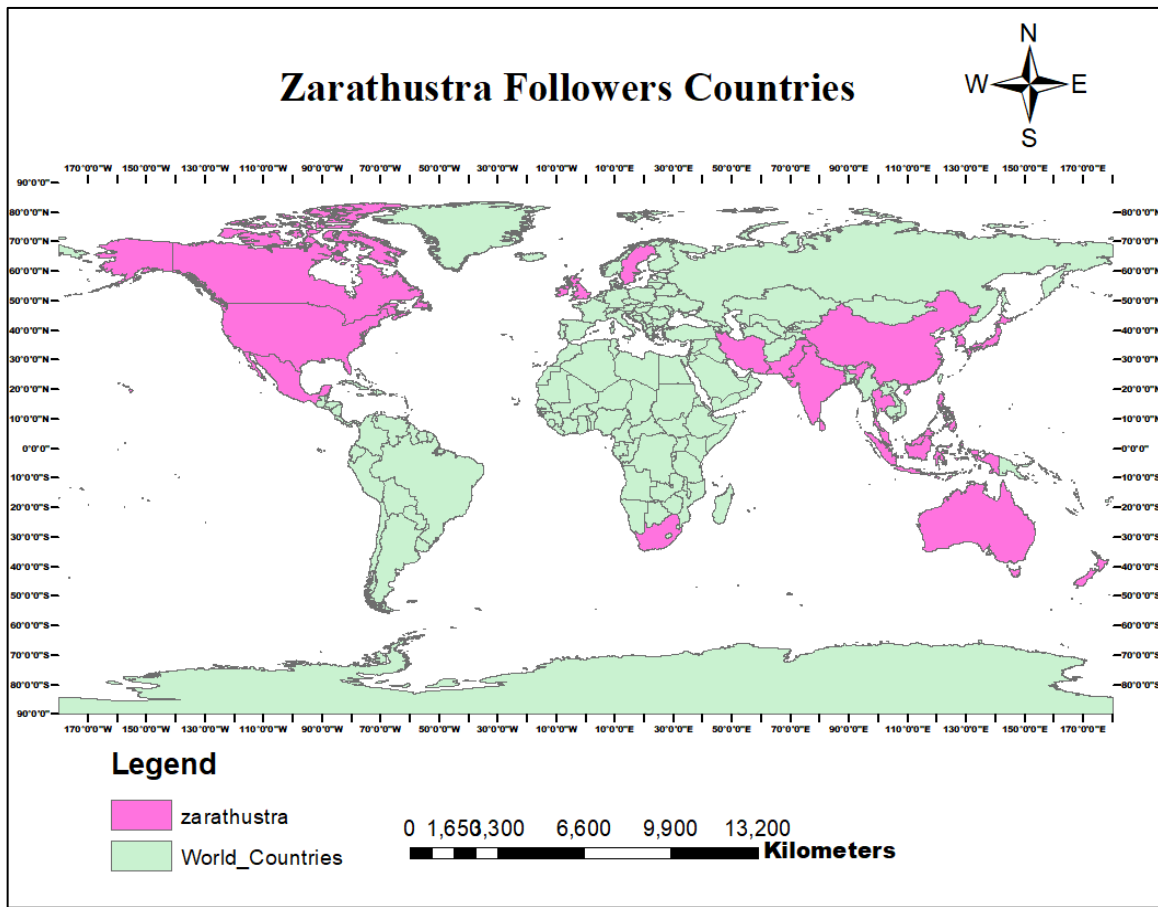


Fig.1. Indicate Zarathustra population countries. It was created by Mr. Amirul through ArcGIS.

Table.2. Zarathustra population status (Rivetna 2012).

Area	Country	Population		References	Decrease	Increase	(+/-)%	Status
		2004	2012					
SA	S. America	10	10	Rivetna (2004 & 2012)	-	-	0.0	Equal
	MX,cam & isl	10	10	Rivetna (2004 & 2012)	-	-	0.0	Equal
NA	USA	10794	14405	Survey (2004); Rivetna and Jesung (2012)	-	3611	33.5	Up
	Canada	5975	6442	Survey (2004); Rivetna and Jesung (2012)	-	467	7.8	Up
AS	Iran	24000	25271	Cencus (2012)	-	1271	5.29	Up
	India	69601	61000	Census (2004); Desai and Raju (2012)	8601	-	-12.4	Down
	Pakistan	2121	1675	Cowasjee (2004 & 2012)	446	-	-21.0	Down
	Singapore	162	372	Ghadialy and Doctor (2004); Vasania (2012)	-	210	129.6	Up
	Hong Kong	210	204	Shroff and Parekh (2004); Parekh (2012)	6	-	-2.9	Down
	Sri Lanka	66	37	Choksy (2004 & 2012)	29	-	-43.9	Down
	Malaysia	30	43	Doctor (2004); Tyabji (2012)	-	13	43.3	Up
	Japan	30	21	Parekh (2004 & 2012)	9	-	-30.0	Down
	China	20	21	Parekh (2004 & 2012)	-	1	5.0	Up
	Thailand	0	16	Parekh (2004 & 2012)	-	16	100.0	Up
Philippines	0	15	Parekh (2004 & 2012)	-	15	100.0	Up	

	Korea	0	5	Parekh (2004 & 2012)	-	5	100.0	Up
	Indonesia	0	5	Parekh (2004 & 2012)	-	5	100.0	Up
	Gulf	2200	1900	Bhesani (2004 & 2012)	300	-	-13.6	Down
EU & AS	C. Asia & EU	1000	1000	Dastoor (2004 & 2012)	-	-	0.0	Equal
EU	Gr. Britain	5000	5500	Dalal (2004 & 2012)	-	500	10.0	Up
	Ireland	10	10	Dalal (2004 & 2012)	-	-	0.0	Equal
	Sweden	0	3000	Stewart et al. (2016)	-	3000	100.0	UP
OC	Australia	2601	2577	Kerr (2004); Chubb (2012)	24	-	-0.9	Down
	New Zealand	900	1231	Mistry (2004 & 2012)	-	331	36.8	Up
AF	S. Africa	114	134	Shapurji (2004 & 2012)	-	20	17.5	Up
	E. Africa	78	37	Dalal (2004); Vatchha (2012)	41	-	-52.6	Down
	Seychelles	21	21	Oliaji (2004 & 2012)	-	-	0.0	Equal

Here, SA for South America; NA for North America; AS for Asian; EU for Europe; OC for Oceania and AF for Africa Continent.

HISTORY OF THE PARSIS- ZOROASTRIAN IN INDIA

Zoroastrian Persians migrated to India from Persia (present-day Iran) in the 9th century AD. When they came to India, they first set foot in the *Sanjan* area of present-day Gujarat. A wonderful story about their arrival is known, according to popular legend. After the arrival of the Persians, the ruler of *Sanjan* sent a vessel full of milk to the Persians. That is, he meant that there was no place to accommodate anyone else in his kingdom. The Persians poured sugar into the pot to show that the pot was not overflowing. In other words, they tried to explain that they would be in harmony with the people of that area just like sugar is mixed with milk. Then the ruler gave refuge to the *Parsis*.

CONCLUSION

The Zarathustra religion places a high value on marriage since it helps build up the community and spread the religion. The idea of "*ashem vohu*," which emphasizes the value of a virtuous spouse, emphasizes the significance of selecting a mate who upholds similar beliefs and principles. The preservation of religious traditions and the passing on of spiritual lessons to future generations are ensured by this emphasis on marital harmony. Faith has a significant impact on the marriage and social dynamics of the Zarathustra community. People's faith in *Ahura Mazda* as the supreme deity and the embodiment of truth and righteousness influences their marriages and social interactions. In marriages and other intimate relationships, the tenets of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds foster peace and moral behavior. The Zarathustrianism religion promotes a sense of belonging and group duty. The emphasis on reciprocal assistance, hospitality, and care for one another aids in the promotion of social cohesiveness and unity. These principles transcend romantic partnerships and contribute to the general welfare of the community, fostering a strong sense of belonging and a common goal.

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