

Zoroastrianism

1. Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zoroastrianism was founded by Zoroaster approximately 3500 years ago. It was the official religion of Persia (Iran) from 600 BCE to 650 CE. ▪ From the 10th C CE Zoroastrians have also been living in Gujarat in India (Parsees). ▪ There are about 200,000 adherents dispersed across the world and approximately 4,000 in the UK. Most UK Zoroastrians have Indian roots and practice their faith traditionally. This includes not allowing others to convert to their faith.
2. Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant languages are English, Gujarati, Farsi and a Persian language called Dari.
3. Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zoroastrians believe there is one God called Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) who created the world but is opposed by the God of darkness Angra Mainyu. ▪ They believe that Ahura Mazda revealed the truth through the Prophet Zoroaster. ▪ They also believe that the elements are pure and that fire represents God's light or wisdom. ▪ The Zoroastrian book of Holy Scriptures is called The Avesta and teaching is also found in 17 hymns called The Gathas. ▪ People should practice good thoughts, good words and good deeds. ▪ There is belief in an afterlife, with expectations of reward, punishment and also eventual universal salvation.
4. Birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are no initiation ceremonies until between the ages of 7 to 12 when "Navjote" is celebrated and the child recites prayers.



5. Prayer & Customs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zoroastrians pray 5 times a day but worship is not prescriptive. Prayers are usually said before meals facing the sun, fire or other sources of light; these represent Ahura Mazda's divine light and energy. ▪ The Zoroastrian calendar is full of holy days, feasts and festivals. Noruz is the New Year celebration, and occurs on the spring equinox.
6. Diet & Fasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some Zoroastrians practice vegetarianism. Bread may be the main staple of the diet instead of meat.
7. Clothing & Washing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ After initiation as a child a Zoroastrian receives a vest / shirt (<i>sudra</i>) and a girdle (<i>kusti</i>), which they wear for their whole life. They traditionally also practice head covering. ▪ Water may be thrown over exposed parts of the body when getting up in the morning, after answering the calls of nature, before meals and saying prayers. Keeping clothes and person clean are very important, including washing the head regularly.
8. Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No particular medical requirements. ▪ There may be reluctance for blood transfusion or donation.
9. Care of the Dying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relatives may send for two or more priests to assemble at the sick bed and pray for repentance. ▪ Just before death the person may be given a drink of consecrated water or pomegranate juice.



10. Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Advice from UK Zoroastrians: “When a Zoroastrian (Parsi) dies, the body should be washed and a fresh clean religious vest (Sudra) placed on the body and the Kusti tied three times round the body on top of the Sudra with a reef knot in the front and one at the back. The body should be clothed in clean fresh clothes but without shoes. If we are informed of the date of burial or cremation, we can arrange a priest for recitation of prayers.”▪ There are no objections to post-mortems. There are no specific instructions with regard to organ / tissue donation and transplantation.▪ Although the body was once disregarded after death, burial and cremation are becoming increasingly popular alternatives. The corpse is considered to be impure and there may be a reluctance to touch it. The body is cremated or buried quickly, though rites for the soul may go on longer.
11. Contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Chaplaincy Dept. has contact numbers for obtaining further advice.

