

## Renewal.

Noruz (Navroz, Nowruz) ~ the start of the new year ~ occurs at the spring equinox (around March 21), the day when the sun (figuratively speaking) crosses the equator before re-entering the northern hemisphere. On Noruz, night and day are everywhere of equal length. The significance of Noruz as the beginning of the new year, is that it marks the point after which the days become longer than the nights in the northern hemisphere, and we emerge from the cold and dark of winter, to a period of warmth, light and growth. So Noruz marks the beginning of renewal.

But its roots go back to around December 21 – the winter solstice – the day celebrated in ancient Iranian traditions as Yalda. On this day, the sun reaches its southernmost point – the tropic of Capricorn – and starts its journey back to us in the north (figuratively speaking). December 21 (Yalda), is a time when we are in the grip of winter, with many weeks of winter still to come. Yet, after December 21, (when the nights are still longer than the days) the daylight hours slowly but surely, start to grow longer. A paradox, in that the seeds of renewal and light are born in the midst of darkness and ice.

Noruz is the budding of that process – the day after which there is more light than darkness. So it is a good time to think about our own renewal. I sometimes think that on my own path, I am closer to Yalda than to Noruz, but that does not matter. Yalda is a good beginning. And whether we are at Yalda, or at Noruz, or beyond, with each step, the light increases. But unlike the movements of the sun and the resulting seasons, our renewal is not automatic. We have to figure out how to bring it about.

In the very first Gatha, Zarathushtra asks Wisdom for a blue-print: ["...instruct me ... through the eloquence befitting Thy \[\*mainyu\*- 'way of being'\] ... the things by means of which the foremost existence shall come about here."](#) Y28.11, Insler 1975. The path which Wisdom reveals to Zarathushtra is indeed eloquent. And it befits His way of being (*mainyu*-), because it is the path of His beneficial way of being. Renewal, and the path to renewal, are the same, as you will see.

In the next Gatha (Y29), Zarathushtra reveals the first step – good thinking (*vohu- manah*-). When a cry for assistance from cruelty, violence, bondage, is made to Wisdom, He turns to good thinking to help bring about the solution.<sup>1</sup> As Zarathushtra later says, ["...Through good thinking the Creator<sup>2</sup> of existence shall promote the true realization of what is most healing according to our wish."](#) Y50.11, Insler 1975. Given the freedom to choose, the Divine cannot abolish evil and the suffering it causes. There has to be another solution. That solution is good thinking. It is through good thinking that we can discover and understand truth (the true order of existence *aša*-) and its component parts ~ its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule ~ all attributes of the Divine (*amesha spenta*) which are the path of renewal. This thought is repeated throughout the Gathas.

In the next Yasna (Y30), Zarathushtra gives us the second step ~ individual choice in thought, word and action. It is not enough to have good understanding. We have to do something about it. And it is not enough to do what others tell us. We must reflect and choose for ourselves, even if we make mistakes ~ mistakes are a great way to learn. In Yasna 30, Zarathushtra says:

["...Reflect with a clear mind – man by man for himself – upon the two choices of decision..."](#) Y30.2, Insler 1975.

"Yes, there are two fundamental [*mainyu-* 'ways of being'], twins, which are renowned to be in conflict. In thought and in word, in action, they are two: the [*vahyah-* 'more-good'] and the bad. And between these two, the beneficent have correctly chosen, not the maleficent." Y30.3, Insler 1975.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting (and enlightening) to note that in Yasna 30.3, the beneficial way of being (*spənta-mainyu-*) is the object of a good person's choice, in Y30.5 the most-beneficial way of being [*spəništa-mainyu-* chose the true order of existence (*aša-*). "... (But) the [*spəništa- mainyu-*], ... chose the truth [*aša-*]..." Y30.5, Insler 1975. In the Gathas, the beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*) and the true order of existence are equated.<sup>4</sup> And the beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu*) exists not only in man, but is also the way of being of the Divine, Wisdom (*mazdā-*).

**In man:** "...those who are properly truthful from this [*spənta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being']..." Y47.4; **In the Divine:** "...Him who is beneficent through His [*spənta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'] to those who exist..." Y45.6, Insler 1975.

What does this tell us about the nature of 'God' and man in Zarathushtra's thought?

Returning to Yasna 30, which gives us the second key – individual choice in thought, word, and action – Zarathushtra points out in that choices made with truth and good thinking bring about renewal.

"But to this world He came with the rule of good thinking and of truth, and ... enduring [*ārmaiti-*] gave body and breath (to it)..." Y30.7, Insler 1975.

"Therefore may we be those who shall heal this world! ... Y30.9, Insler 1975.

The healing referred to here is healing an existence afflicted with the results of wrongful choices. The healing is accomplished through thoughts, words and actions which bring to life (give "body and breath to") the true (correct) order of existence and its comprehension, good thinking as Y30.7 states. This concept of embodying truth with our beneficial thoughts, words and actions, is *spənta- ārmaiti-* (an attribute of the Divine, which man also has, although incompletely). So once again we see that both renewal, and the path to renewal, are the same. They are attributes of the Divine – the true order of existence (*aša-*), its comprehension good thinking (*vohu- manah-*), its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action (*spənta- ārmaiti-*), its good rule (*vohu- x šaθra-*), its complete attainment (*haurvatāt-*), which results in an existence that is no longer bound by mortality (*amərətāt-*). These qualities of the divine, (*amesha spenta*), comprise a wholly, beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*) – which is Wisdom personified (*mazdā*).

The next step is what I call the law of consequences. Taraporewalla called it the law of action and reaction. It is hinted at in Yasna 30 and 31, and expressed more clearly elsewhere in the Gathas. The law of consequences is part of the true order that governs existence (*aša-*). Through its operation, everything we do comes back to us – the good and the bad – we reap what we sow. When we ourselves are on the receiving end of the kinds of wrongs we have dished out to others, we realize that this is not how we want things to be. These experiences change our preferences, so that we prefer to not make such wrongful choices again – not out of fear of punishment, but because that is the way we want things to be. Zarathushtra's solution for defeating evil is not punishment, but enlightenment, changing minds, changing preferences.<sup>5</sup> That is why he says that the law of consequences is administered through a "beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*)," and results in distributing "the good" for both types of choices.

"... when the distribution in the good shall occur to both factions,<sup>6</sup> through Thy bright fire, Wise One." Y31.19, Insler 1975. In the Gathas, 'fire' is a material metaphor for the true order of existence (*aša-*).

"Wise Lord, together with this [*spənta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'], Thou shalt give the distribution in the good to both factions through Thy fire, by reason of the solidarity of [*ārmaiti-* 'embodied truth'] and truth [*aša-*]. For it shall convert the many who are seeking." Y47.6, Insler 1975.

The 'conversion' here is the conversion of our wrongful preferences to good ones.

It is important to remember that not all of the hardships and difficulties which we experience are the consequences of past wrongful conduct. If life is a spiritual evolution towards completeness (a state of being that becomes the true order of existence), as Zarathushtra teaches, then it stands to reason that we will have to experience many different experiences for this learning and evolutionary process to be realized. The difficulties we experience – both earned and unearned – are the refiner's fire, without which pure gold would not be possible. As such, they are heavy blessings, but still blessings.

However, the refiner's fire alone is not enough to bring about renewal. Sometimes those who are exposed to abusive behavior, repeat in their own lives and actions, the abusive patterns to which they have been subjected. And unjust experiences often fuel a desire for revenge. Clearly, something more is needed to break the destructive pattern of wrongdoing generating more wrongdoing, which brings us to the final step to renewal. It is mutual, loving help. None of us can make it on our own. Each of us, to make it, must both give and receive help. Often in the Gathas, the Divine is described as a friend (or beloved), as a source of solicitude and help. He helps with truth and its comprehension, good thinking; "What help by truth hast Thou for Zarathushtra who calls? What help by good thinking hast Thou for me,..." Y49.12, Insler 1975.

In later texts, the attributes of the Divine ~ the amesha spenta ~ are called 'angels'. The angels that Wisdom sends to help us are His thoughts, His understanding. Other angels come to help as well. They are those angels who express these divine qualities, in whatever degree, with their thoughts, words and action – some full time, some part-time. So, with the loving help of these assorted angels – Wisdom, His divine qualities, and each other – we make it through the refiner's fire, and also become "world-healers". In the Gathas, the term "world-healer" is used to describe Wisdom himself (Y44.16), and Zarathushtra (Y31.19), and also the loving man who is beneficial (*spənta-*), who watches over the heritage for all and is Wisdom's ally in his way of being (*mainyu-*).

"... the loving man ... for such a person, [*spənta-* beneficial] through truth [*aša-*], watching over the heritage for all, is a world-healer and Thy ally in [*mainyu-* '(his) way of being'], Wise One." Y44.2, Insler 1975.

A world-healer is one who is loving (Y44.2), one who does not cause suffering with wrongful choices, one who acts to stop cruelty, violence and deceit (Y48.7, 48.11). This concept of a world-healer is also reflected in Zarathushtra's idea of a redeemer, a savior (*saošyant-*) as one who turns Wisdom's teachings into actions that accord with the true order of existence (*aša-*), and its comprehension, good thinking (*vohu- manah-*) which actions are the divine quality *ārmaiti-* 'embodied truth').

"Yes, those men shall be the saviors [*saošyant-*] of the lands, namely, those who shall follow their knowledge of Thy teaching with actions in harmony with good thinking and truth, Wise One. These indeed have been fated to be the expellers of fury." Y48.12, Insler 1975. The 'enemy' to be expelled is not another tribe or religion, but a wrongful state of mind ~ fury.

It is through such actions of truth and good thinking (which is the concept of *ārmaiti-*) that we bring about Wisdom's good rule.

"... The Wise One is Lord through such actions stemming from good [*mainyu-* 'way of being']." Y45.5.

"...The Wise One in rule is Lord through [*ārmaiti-*]." Y47.1, Insler 1975.

And the rule of Wisdom brings renewal, (the *frašō.kərəiti-* of the later texts).

"By your rule, Lord, Thou shalt truly heal [*fərašām*] this world in accord with our wish." Y34.15, Insler 1975.

*In conclusion:* when we follow the path of truth, the path of the qualities that make a being divine, we heal ourselves, and our world, because each good thought, word and action benefits both ourselves and also the people and circumstances that are affected by them. We bring about renewal.

Just as Noruz has its roots in Yalda, so too the path to spiritual renewal has its genesis in the darkness and suffering caused by the hardships that sculpt our souls. Without such difficulties, there can be no growth. Without growth, there can be no perfecting. Just as the buds of Noruz are turned by warmth and sunlight into the glory of summer, so too, with the loving help of the Divine and each other, our souls (and our world) evolve into the glory of completeness (*haurvatāt-*). The "endless lights"; the healing of existence *frašō.kərəiti-*. Renewal.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Part One: The Solution of Yasna 29*.

<sup>2</sup> Zarathushtra's notions about 'creation' are unconventional and are discussed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Creation*.

<sup>3</sup> I translate this verse a bit differently but I give you the Insler 1975 translation here. For a detailed look at this verse, with comparative translations, see *Part Six: Yasna 30.3 and 4*.

<sup>4</sup> See *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

<sup>5</sup> See *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution* for a more detailed discussion of this teaching.

<sup>6</sup> The stem *rāna-* (forms of which appear in both Y31.19, and Y47.6, quoted in the main part of this chapter) is a GAv. word that has not yet been decoded, and linguists disagree on its meaning. Insler 1975 has translated it as 'faction' and (when used in the dual as 'both factions'). But (with respect) I do not think that 'faction' is a good fit in the micro context of either the verses in which *rāna-* words appear, or the macro context of Zarathushtra's thought as a whole. I think the word 'type' is a better contextual fit and is as linguistically defensible as any other choice selected by our group of linguists. Thus when used in the context of conduct in the du. 'two types (of conduct)'. And when used in the context of choices in the du. 'two types (of choices)'. I have explained the reasons for my conclusion in *Part Six: Yasna 43.12* under the word *rānōibyō* where I give the translations of various linguists and each use in the Gathas of the various declensions of *rāna-*, to show how this meaning fits its contextual use.