

Understanding Nature

[Pronunciation symbols:-

a as in fun; **ā** as in far; **ə** as in fed, **ē** as in fade; **i** as in fill; **ī** as in feel; **o** as in for; **ō** as in fore; **u** as in full; **ū** as in food.

The nasal sounds are:- an as in āvān; **ən** as in the French ‘tres bien’, **īn** as in Ahīnsā (also pronounced ‘īm’ as in Sanskrit Ahīmsā and as also in Avestan and Gathic languages) and **ūn** as in Humayūn. The pronunciation of some consonants (as permitted by my software) are ‘ś’ for ‘sh’, ‘š’ for ‘ss’, ‘ṛ’ for ‘ri’, **n** for ‘ni’, ‘ž’ for ‘zh’].

Trying to fathom the vagaries of Mother Nature, with her vast resources, is all about respect for her measure in the vast scheme of things. The rushing rivers retain their right to flow onwards and empty into the oceans; the moisture laden clouds to move on and shed their contents earthwards; the earth to hold, to have and to shelter plants and all creatures, both great and small; and the opportunistic human earthlings to claim their rights as intelligent creatures; the atmosphere enveloping the Earth helping to sustain life continues to bear the burden of pollution, which seems to have been an integral part of living. Human exploitation of these natural resources, mostly indulged in, in speed and in bulk, has been done often without adequate return to help replenish whatever has been plundered in the name of the ‘harnessing’ of Nature’s bounty.

Being benevolent, Nature still continues to bestow but also strictly retains and guards her own rights with intense ruthlessness and uncompromising reprisal. At will, she frequently unleashes destructive lightening, fires, storms, floods, droughts, landslides, volcanic eruptionsto remind earthlings of their transient stay on Earth. Nature has always ultimately prevailed. All life and events are in a state of flux. Everything, good or bad, passes into oblivion. Nothing remains as is.

Scientific observations:-

In over-simplified terms scientific observations show that, moment by moment, as our good Earth spins and wobbles, it hurtles through space in a fixed elliptical trajectory around the Sun, about 150 million kms from the Sun at an approximate speed of 110, 000 kms /hour to make earthlings experience the time-honoured natural cyclical events - the Sun to rise each morning and set in the evening, the Moon to wax and wane, the seasons to begin and end. The Sun and our Solar System are about 4.5 billion years old, so the expert scientists say. The Sun has lost its mass in the process of producing energy and has, so far, shrunk a total of more than 100 times the mass of the Earth. As it loses mass and energy its gravitational pull on Earth will lessen as well, ultimately change the very nature of our Earth. The Sun will eventually die.

This end will come about 7.6 billion years from now, so the scientists say, following the depletion of the last of the hydrogen forged in its core. When this occurs, the core of the sun will shrink under its own gravity and become dense. The helium atoms will begin to collide to form carbon and oxygen atoms producing a lot more energy than what the sun currently does by fusion of hydrogen into helium. The extra energy will prove to be the beginning of the end for Earth. The core of the Sun will increase in temperature, causing the sun to swell to hundreds of times its present size, changing its status from a Yellow Dwarf to a Red Giant. It will engulf and incinerate the two innermost planets of our solar system, Mercury and Venus. The third in line - our Earth, it seems, in the light of present knowledge, may or may not be

spared. It could still be pushed out of orbit, away from the sun. Regardless, it will no longer be habitable to any form of life. The oceans will begin to boil and evaporate, the atmosphere will be blown away, lost to space forever, while all of the lush vegetation along with any surviving ecosystems will be destroyed. All that will be left is a charred barren wasteland not fit for life.

Zarathushtra's amazing vision of the end of life on Earth:

In our scriptures, Zarathushtra's '**Law of Āshā**' governs all natural events. All change on earth, obviously, appears to remain subservient to this decreed order. Modern scientific observations seem to point towards a clear cyclical order permitting us humans to experience a cyclical renovation of all events in Nature occurring after each. Such regular completion and predictably repetitive events are re-enacted. As ordained by the Law of Āshā they occur, end and renew as an integral part of living - the precise cycles of human physiology, the soil, the tides, seasons, days, nights, months, years and the timely movements of the planets within our Solar system. And, we notice such physical events occurring.

The true nature of almighty Time, in Indo-Iranian eschatology, is as supra divine as the Creative power itself, the originator and lord of all things. This eternally spiritual and limitless quality of Time - **Prajāpati** of the Vedas and **Zravānē Akaranē** of the Avesta has been in existence forever, without limits or boundaries, without a beginning and without an end.

We humans are created merely to fulfil the very purpose of creation during a **decreed limited period of earthly Time - Zravānē Daraēghō Khadātē being part of the total Zravānē Akaranē.**

And, as Mary Boyce puts it vividly, all through our Gathic, Avestan, Pahlavi and our Exilic periods there has remained a subtle reminder of the existence of a definite pattern of cyclico-linear division within this decreed framework of time. It was, clearly, during our latter Exilic period that this mental impression, retained through the ages, actually surfaced. For a while, Zravān became a Zarathushtrian divinity involving all humanity in a kind of cruel and destructive frame of mind, almost like a vice in an unreasonable and apprehensive state.

The reasoning seems to run as follows:

a) The ***Time before earthly Time***, in which the world, though already spiritually luminous was not perceptibly existential.

b) The ***Transitional Time*** of a purely primordial perception, as if life on earth was beginning to 'become'. The world is fashioned in a pure perceptible form on the basis of its already existing spiritual configuration.

c) The ***finite Conflict Time*** of a polluted perception of 'being' on earth. Here is a purposeful period of persistent opposition between the pure, righteous and the impure, polluting elements. It is as if, during this chosen set period, a cyclical rhythm of struggle, with a pre-ordained strong and unremitting antagonism, had been planned to keep the polluting adversaries constantly frustrated in their attempts. The cyclical repetition of confrontation and rest was, understandably, quite necessary.

d) The ***climactic End of earthly Time*** when all polluting elements have, at last, been exhausted of their powers of darkness resulting in an **apocalyptic cessation of all change.** A

blending with the original spiritual, glorious and static state of finite Timelessness (for all eternal duration *'yavoi vispai'*) then occurs.

This is Zarathushtra's vision of the ultimate final apocalyptic process of **'making afresh / making anew'** - **Gathic: 'Frashā'-kar'** (**Avestan: Frashō-kērēti / Pahlavi: Frashēkart**).

The end process is seen as a **cycle of re-purification or renovation**. It is a return to the original state of eternal light through a refreshed state of the spiritual gloriousness in which the pure elements, having served just obligations and a dutiful purpose, fuse imperceptibly in harmony with the supreme purity of the Infinite. The Earthly Time of the world (*Zravāne Daraēghō Khadātē*) is, once more dissolved into the frame of the endless Time of Eternity (*Zravānē Akaranē*). **This is taken to be the 'final cyclical change' on earth.**

In this, his amazing vision Zarathushtra not only becomes the first human to talk of the "end of time" but, clearly, to equate the measure of cyclical Time with human Destiny.

REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READING:

Boyce, Mary: *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour*, Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa, California, 1992.

Fackenheim, Emil L.: *The religious Dimension of Hegel's Thought*, Indiana Univ. Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1967.

Kerr, Sam: Ol'e Man Time, Serialized Essay on the nature of Time, Newsletter *'Manashni'*, Sydney, from April 1989 to April 1990.

Taraporewala, Irach J. S.: *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, Hukhta Foundation, Union Press, Bombay, 1993.

Sam Kerr, (Sydney, Australia)

24 April 2016