

GAHANBARS

Fariborz Rahnamoon

'The coming of the season at the proper time of the solar year.'

'Haptan Yasht' Ha-3[\[i\]](#)

'I learn about and I work with the solar year, the righteous period.'

Yasna Ha 1.9, Ha 3.11, Ha 4.14

Visparad Karda 1.4[\[ii\]](#)

The Zarathushti calendar was a solar calendar based on precise astronomical calculation. That the New Year starts exactly at the time of the vernal equinox is proof that the ancient Zarathushties possessed knowledge of astronomy.

Zarathushtra, himself a mathematician and an astronomer is credited for formulating the concept of Meridian, which he called Nim-Ruz (mid-day). Nimruz passed through ancient Sistan in Iran and was designated as zero longitude. When it is mid-day in Sistan the whole of the Eastern hemisphere from Japan and Australia to Africa has sunshine. Today across the border in Afghanistan the area is still called Nim Ruz Province.

Zarathushtra is also said to have calculated and coined the word "NOU ROUZ" (New Day) in 1725 BCE when the vernal equinox coincided with sunrise at Sistan on the Meridian.

Within the astronomically and mathematically precise calendar the festivals called Gahanbar, seems to have been unevenly spread. This is so because they are based on the seasons of two entirely different regions of the earth – initially of the harsh cycle of the soil of the primal Aryan homeland in the Arctic region and later, of the four distinct seasons of the more amicable temperate climate after migration.

ORIGIN OF GAHAMBAR IN AIRYANA VAEJA

Visparad Karda [1.2] talks of the year divided into six parts called '**Gahanbar**' during the Sasanian times.

1-Maidhyo-zarem - mid spring - when fresh vegetables are in plenty. (April 30 to May 4.) (10 to 14 Ordibehest).

2*-Maidhyo-shema - mid summer - the time for harvesting corn. (June 29 to July 3.) (8 to 12 Tir)

(The middle of the seven month long Arctic summer (Farvardin to Mehr)

3-Paiti-shahem - end of summer - gathering of fruits. (Sept.12 to Sept.16)(21 to 25 Shahrivar)

4*-Aya-threm -beginning of winter - sowing of winter crops – (Oct.12 to Oct 16) (20 to 24 Mehr)

(Beginning of the five month Artic winter (Aban to Esfand).

5-Maidh-yarem - the middle of perfect rest - when farmers, shepherds and their animals are resting. (Dec 31 to January 4.) (10 to 14 Dey)

6-Hamas-path-maedem - equality of heat and cold, day & night, - in preparation for the revival in Nature. (March16 to 20) (25 to 29 Espand)

* **Note:** The second Gahanbar, Maidhyo-shema (mid-summer) and the fourth, Aya-threm (beginning of winter) are the traditional Gahanbars of remote times, when the Aryans lived in *Airyāna Vaējah* in the Arctic, where there were only two seasons, five months of winter and seven months of summer. The middle of summer occurred, then, in June/July (Teshtar/Tir) and winter commenced in October (Avan/Aban). The summer festival was obviously celebrated in mid-summer since it would be the best time of the year for out door activities. The winter festival they celebrated at the beginning of winter because any time later the freezing Artic cold would make festivities difficult. After migration to the temperate climate, they did not discard these two Gahanbars (of remote times) and added four more to incorporate the four distinct seasons of their new settlements.

Each gahanbar was a five day festival of merriment marked by joyous exuberance and communal togetherness and was celebrated in the fields and orchards, communicating and interacting with nature, by dancing and singing and praising nature for the abundance of produce. Gahanbars as a thanksgiving festival was celebrated nationally till after the invasion of the Arabs who made

being a Zarathushti a crime. The joyfulness of the Gahanbars then became converted per force (like so many other customs) into rather somber occasion marked only by solemn recitation of prayers followed by low-profile consumption of food and quite dispersal. Such dismal practice continues to this day.

The origin and the real purpose of the Gahanbars were soon forgotten. Hoping to establish credence and to justify the latter day imposed changes several theories were put forward in scholarly works. One linked the Gahanbars to the 'Semitic creation theory'. Another assigned them to the creation of the sky, water, earth, vegetation, animals and humans. Others, to stop it from going the Semitic way, linked them to the Amesha Spentas. Then for those that argued that the Amesha Spentas included Ahura Mazda and were seven, the number of festivals was also increased to seven by adding Nou Rouz to it.

CONCLUSION

The true origin and purpose of the Gahanbars is very obvious from the names of the Gahanbars. Gahanbars were seasonal festivals dating back to the time when the original Aryan homeland was in the Arctic region, which had only two seasons. After immigration to the temperate region having four seasons, they introduced the celebration of the four new season and since the old festivals did not clash, date-wise, with any of the new ones the life-loving and fun-loving Zarathushties preserved the two old festivals as well, raising their number to six.

Gahanbars also served the Zarathushties very well in their days of oppression and persecution by the hands of Islam. It kept them together and those that did not have enough to celebrate due to the heavy taxation (Jaziya) got provide for by the affluent members of the community.

[\[i\]](#) Yashts in Roman script with translation By T R Sethna.

[\[ii\]](#) Yasna & Visparad English Version by T R Sethna