

# **NOU ROUZ & NIM ROUZ**

Fariborz Rahnmoon

“The coming of the season at the proper time of the solar year.”

Avesta Haptan Yasht (Ha -3)

The ancient Iranian calendar was a solar calendar. The fact is repeatedly documented in the ancient Avesta writings. One of the most important solar festivals is called Nou Rouz - the New Year. Nou Rouz literally means the 'New Day' and is celebrated on the vernal equinox in spring. It is the time of rejuvenation in nature, the beginning of a new life and what better time can there be to start the New Year than with nature itself.

Nou Rouz is celebrated by the people of the lands that once formed the Persian Empire, irrespective of their present day political borders or religious beliefs.

Nou Rouz according to the Persian mythology dates back to about ten thousand BCE, when Shah Jamshid the Pisdadian king celebrated the first spring after the end of the last ice age.

The ancient Mazdayasni Calendar was a 365/6 day calendar, which started with the vernal equinox and divided the unequal seasons into months. Spring with 92.8 days and Summer with 93.6 days individually or collectively divided into months resulted in six 31 day months while Autumn with 89.9 and Winter with 88.9 days resulted in 5 months of 30 days and the last month with the balance of 28 or 29 days, with the vernal equinox starting the next year. This system took care of the leap year automatically. They also celebrated the other significant positions of the sun which fell on the first day of the month of the respective seasons, like Tirgan the summer solstice, Mehregan the Autumnal Equinox and Deygan (Yalda) the winter solstice. This shows the depth of knowledge of the ancient Iranians, with regard to the solar system.

Having lost the ancient knowledge the modern Zarathushti calendar consists of twelve equal months of 30 days each and between the last day of the twelfth month and the vernal equinox there are five free days or six in the case of a leap year. The leap year is automatically

determined by the equinox and not by any belief or human agreement. Every year the equinox happens about 5 hours 48 minutes 20 seconds (.24190day) latter whereby automatically by the 4<sup>th</sup> year it happens 23:13:20 hour latter making that year a 366-day year.

## **NIM ROUZ & NOU ROUZ**

Nou Rouz is one of the only scientifically precise New Year celebrated in the world. The calculation and coining of the word **“Nou Rouz” (New Day)** as against “Sal e Nou” (New Year) was the work of Zarathushtra the sage of ancient Iran, who was also the first to envisage the concept of Meridian. Zarathushtra calculated the first meridian and called it **“Nim Rouz”**, which means **“Mid Day”**. The **Meridian of Zarathushtra** was located in ancient Balkh at 63 degrees longitude. Even today that location in Afghanistan is called the **Nimrouz Province**.

When it is midday at the Meridian of Zarathushtra (63 degrees longitude), there is sunshine from Japan the land of the rising sun to the western tip of Africa. What better location can there be for an intellectual and scientific meridian.

Similarly, the unequal relation between the revolution and rotation of the earth led Zarathushtra to calculate and derive the concept of Nou Rouz the New Day. **Nou Rouz is when the sunrise coincides with the vernal equinox at a predetermined longitude.** This event happens every year at a different longitude and has repeated itself in the vicinity every 72 years but not at the same longitude, which could be once in about 1230 – 1240 years and needs to be studied further.

The fact is that the earth goes round the sun in 365.24190 tropical days, thereby every four years we have an extra 0.9676 day ( $0.24190 \times 4$ ), so we can add a day in the fourth year, although by that we are starting the fifth year short by 0.0324 day ( $1 - .9676$ ) which means 46 minutes and 39.36 seconds short. To cover the short fall every 120 years we skip a leap year but even that results in a fraction  $120 \times 365 + 116 \div 4 = 43829$  days accounted for by our system of recording leap years. While in fact the earth has taken  $365.24190 \times 120 = 43829.028$  days. Thus the 120<sup>th</sup> year again starts short by 40 minutes and 32 seconds ( $1440 \times 0.028$ ). Apart from these there are other factors that effect the time on earth, like the gravitational pull of various planets when they come close to the earth once in a few years, or a comets passing close to the earth, even a strong earthquake has an effect on the time on earth. Since the advent of

the atomic clock, these factors have been recognized by the scientific world.

Zarathushtra was a sage whose wisdom was far ahead of our time and even times to come, for he understood the ultimate truth in nature – “Asha”. He may be called a prophet, as long as we do not categorize him and do injustice to his wisdom.

Zarathushtra always looked for solutions in nature. He realized that every year the equinox coincides with the sunrise at a different longitude and whatever fractional difference that remains in the calendar even after regular corrections can be zeroed out when the sunrise coincide once again at the same longitude.

**His calculation showed him that in the year 1725 BCE the vernal equinox would coincide with the sunrise at Sistan and so he named the New Year of that year as Nou Rouz the “New Day”.**

As recorded in history on the spring equinox of 487 BCE, Nou Rouz was celebrated at Takth-e-Jamshid (Persepolis), when the first rays of the rising sun coinciding with the equinox lighted the stone monument erected for the purpose and is today known as the “Kabe e Zarathushtra”.

The next Nou Rouz in Iran was missed around 750 ACE after the fall of the Persian Empire into the hands of the Arabs who followed the lunar calendar and the event went unnoticed. The ancient knowledge was lost and today Nou Rouz has become synonymous with Sal e Nou (New Year).

Nou Rouz has also been adopted as a religious new year by those modern Semitic religions that were started by Iranians in Iran. Like the Bahai’s and the Ismaili’s who have adopted it without knowing the real significance of the festival or the origin of its name.

Nou Rouz as a new year shall one day be adopted by the intellectual world when their attention is drawn to the science (truth) behind it.

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# **HAFT SEENEE**

## **THE SEVEN TRAYS**

### **ITS ANCIENT SIGNIFICANCE**

Fariborz Rahnamoon

Nou Rouz as a New Year festival is celebrated by symbolically arranging seven items on a green tablecloth. The Zarathushties in Iran, who were concentrated in the province of Yazd and Kerman, are known to have arranged the Nou Rouz table with seven trays, in which they put various items that were available to the family. Most of the items stood either as a sign of thanks giving for its abundance in the past year or for a wish for its abundance in the coming year. That which is of significance is the seven trays (Haft Seene).

Today in Iran seven items that start with the letter Sheen ش or Seen س are arranged on a table. The Iranian Muslims use items starting with the letter Seen because they cannot place wine (SHarab) on the table. In either case the items have been given positive philosophic meanings, which are not necessarily known to all the people, for they follow it as a tradition. Those who know the meaning may only know a version of the new philosophic meanings but not the real ancient ones. The new meanings are the ones that have been repeated over and over again to disguise the real ones and thereby making it possible to preserve the ancient intellectual Zarathushti culture and custom in Islamic Iran on a national level.

Like many other customs not only was the real symbolic meaning behind the seven trays disguised but also attention was diverted by bringing up the difference between SHeen and SEen and that wine (SHarab) was replaced by vinegar (SErkeh) to preserve the tradition. Oblivious to the fact that "Sharab" is an Arabic word that wine in Persian is "Badeh" and "Meh". A few generations having gone by even the Zarathushties of today are oblivious of the ancient meaning and significance of this culture. They also have started believing in some version of the new philosophic meanings given to the seven items.

**With a view to the fact that in the near past seven trays (seene) were placed with any number of items in them, and these days we have seven items starting with Sheen**

or Seen, and the bas-relief's at Takht e Jamshid (Persepolis) depict seven people from each country carrying Nou Rouz gifts,<sup>i</sup> shows the importance of SEVEN.

*The real significance of seven was to represent the Seven Eternal Laws, which embodies the Teachings of Zarathushtra in the Gathas.*

*It was a way of renewing the pledge to follow the path towards perfection and self-realization as prescribed by Zarathushtra in the Gathas and later tabulated as the "Seven AmshaSpanta".<sup>ii</sup>*

The ancient meaning of the seven AmshaSpanta is as follows:

1- **BAH-MAN** (Good Mind)

Zarathushtra in the Gathas wants us to *use our mind in a good way* and each one of us should use our mind to its maximum capacity. (**VohuMana**)

2- **ORDIBEHEST** (The Ultimate Truth)

Using the mind in a good way leads to the discovery of the Laws of nature – the laws of the universe - the *ultimate truth* (**AshaVahista**).

3- **SHAHRIVAR** (Good Guidance – Good Laws)

The knowledge so derived should be used to create *good guidance, good laws*, good invention, and good products (**Khashatra Vairya**).

4- **ESFAND** (Lawful Desire)

The person, the community, the nation following these good laws become righteous, whereby all *desires are lawful* (**Spenta Armaity**).

5- **KHORDAD** (Perfection)

The people living in such a society progress *towards perfection* (**Hurvatata**)

6- **AMORDAD** (Immortality)

Having achieved perfection one becomes *immortal (Amartata)*. Immortality has two aspect, one - while a person is alive he/she does not fear death, and two - after death such a person is immortal because he/she is remembered for the extra ordinary good deeds.

7- **KHOD-AH** (Self Realization)

A person who has gone through these stages in a life time achieves Self Realization (KHOD-AH) (*which is also the word used in Persian, Urdu, Hindi and many other languages to mean GOD*) and such a person sees and become one with the *Creator of Wisdom Ahura Mazda*, within oneself.<sup>iii</sup>

The ultimate goal of the teachings of Zarathushtra is to lead the world towards perfection.

Truly, the knowledge derived  
By the good mind  
Never before known  
Among the wise and in the universe  
With it, make good rules and never waning  
Increasing righteousness  
Leading us towards Perfection

ZARATHUSHTRA -Yasna Ha 28.3 (FR)

We need to truly understand the ancient Iranian culture and let others also know the truth about it. Truth and intelligence is a virtue and there should be no fear in advertising it. If you possess something good, which by sharing increases goodness in the world, why be afraid to share it.

Knowledge (of Asha<sup>iv</sup>) when you gain  
With minds good use  
Having realized wisdom  
The path to righteousness  
The ultimate message of Wisdom  
Through words excellent  
We shall change (convert)  
Those who do not know  
By speaking

Let us celebrate Nou Rouz with the knowledge of the real significance of this ancient Persian festival and the true meaning of Haft Seene/ Sheen/ Seen and resolve to use it in our daily life and help make the world a better place, a paradise, the heaven.

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<sup>i</sup> See picture on cover of Iran Zamin Vol -1 No.2 at  
<http://ahura.homestead.com/IRANZAMIN.html>  
<http://www.ancientiran.com>

<sup>ii</sup> The Seven Amsha Spantas are also to be found in the New Testament. The first three are mentioned by Luke and Mathew while giving the meaning of the symbolic three gifts by the Magi's who were the followers of Zarathushtra, to baby Jesus and the last four are mentioned and explained by Jesus who was helped and influenced by the Magi's. Go to <http://www.ancientiran.com> and read "Influence on other religions" for detail and quotes from the Bible. [http://ahura.homestead.com/files/IranZaminSeven/F\\_Influence\\_on\\_Religions\\_link.pdf](http://ahura.homestead.com/files/IranZaminSeven/F_Influence_on_Religions_link.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> For the ancient meaning of the "Seven Eternal Laws" in detail please check the web site <http://www.ancientiran.com>

<sup>iv</sup> ASHA means - The ultimate Truth – Nature - Universe -The laws of nature – The laws of the Universe.