

NOU ROUZ TABLE The Real Philosophy

Haft Seen – Haft Sheen – Haft Chin – Haft Seenie

NOU ROUZ the Persian New Year is the only scientific New Year celebrated in the world today. Nou Rouz is symbolized by the Nou Rouz Table. Over the millenniums, the items that constitute the Nou Rouz table have kept changing. Even today we see a variety of tables, spread by the diverse people that celebrate Nou Rouz¹.

Some call it Haft (seven) Seen and decorate their table with seven items whose names start with the letter “SEen” in Persian. Others use seven items that start with the letter “SHeen”. Still others use seven trays and put a variety of items irrespective of what their name starts with and call their table “Haft Seenie” or “Seven Trays”. It is said that in ancient times they called it “Haft Chin” (chin = to pluck) and decorated their table with seven items that were plucked.

For sure the “haft seen” and “haft sheen” are of recent origin. The proof being that, the followers of the Zarathushti religion, the religion of ancient Iran, call their table Haft Sheen and one of the items on their table which starts with SH is “Sharab” wine. Now the word Sharab itself is an Arabic word, the Persian word for wine is “MAI” or “BAADEH”. This by it self proves that this form is of recent origin. Then again since the Muslim could not put wine on their table due to religious constrains, they put “SErke” (vinegar) instead and to bring uniformity changed the rest of the items to those that start with SEen.

The present day Zarathushties of Iran, who were concentrated in Yazd and Kerman, long before they started believing in the new form, they used to lay out seven trays (Haft Seenie) on their Nou Rouz Table. In the trays were a variety of items with no relevance to their name but instead each item represented a philosophic value. Even today in addition to the seven items starting with SH they also put a variety of other items, like a new mini broom to represent cleanliness, a pomegranate to represent multiplicity, egg to represent fertility and so on.

All the items whether they start with Seen or Sheen have a positive philosophic meaning, although the real philosophy behind the Nou Rouz Table has for long been camouflaged so as to be able to preserve the custom in a hostile environment for the last 1400 years.

In this period the Iranians as well as the Zarathushties have become oblivious to the real philosophy like they are to the science behind the name Nou Rouz and Nim Rouz.

THE REAL PHILOSOPHY

That what is common in the various forms of the Nou Rouz table is “Haft” the number Seven. Haft Seen, Haft Sheen, Haft Chin, and Haft Seenie. Archeological evidence is also available at Takht e Jamshid, the location of the celebration of the real Nou Rouz of that era, in 487 BCE, where we see in the form of bas relief, the representatives of the various nations in groups of seven bearing gifts for the king.

Seven represents the “Seven Eternal Laws” of Zarathushtra. These seven laws were derived by Zarathushtra from nature and is part of his discourse in his Gathas. It is a guide to progress towards perfection.

Progress in nature, and humans being part of nature; is inevitable, understanding it helps us humans to progress in the right direction without causing hindrance to the process. We are witness to human progress, generation after generation. Like viruses survive by getting immune to antibiotics, we humans have survived. But our progress has caused wars, diseases and global warming; for it has been a progress which has not been in harmony with nature.

Zarathushtra in his Gathas shows the harmonious path of progress. Students of Zarathushtra latter called these the “Haft Amesha Sepanta” – Seven Eternal Laws. Much later under pagan influence it is translated to mean Angles, the seven Bountiful Immortals, etc, and those trying to rescue it, call it “Attributes of God”. A God with only seven attributes!

We find these laws mentioned in the Bible too. The three gifts given by the Magi’s (Zoroastrian priests of the time) to baby Jesus are the first three laws, the ones that have to be achieved, for the other four to become achievable. Unfortunately the world has lost the understanding of this simple truth and shrouded it with fiction. A fiction which keeps the wheels of religions greased.

On the first day of spring with the rejuvenation of life in nature, the Nou Rouz Table is meant to remind, renew and refresh our resolve to progress with nature in the right direction and achieve mental, physical and spiritual perfection. It is a reminder of what our philosophy in life should be; it is a way of renewal of our bond, an eye opener to the simple truth embedded in nature.

THE SEVEN ITEMS ON THE NOU ROUZ TABLE **HAFT AMESHA SEPANTA** THE SEVEN ETERNAL LAWS IN NATURE

The seven eternal laws are summarized in seven words which have latter taken the form of angles, bountiful immortals and attributes of God. In the Gathas

Zarathushtra explains the simple truth and we shall here deal with just that, before religion capitalized on it and made it complicated and heavenly.

AVESTA WORDS	MODERN USAGE	ENGLISH MEANING
1- VOHU MANA	BAH MAN	GOOD MIND
2- ASHA VAHISATA	ARDIBESHT	ULTIMATE TRUTH, NATURE
3- KASH ATRA VAIRYA	SHAHRIVAR	GOOD LAWS / GUIDANCE
4- SEPANTA ARMAITY	ESFAND	LAWFUL DESIRE
5- HURVATATA	KHORDAD	PERFECTION
6- AMERETATA	AMORDAD	IMMORTALITY
7- AHURA MAZDA	AHURA MAZDA	CREATOR OF WISDOM

Explanation in summary form

- 1- Use your GOOD MIND to inquire and learn the
- 2- The ULTIMATE TRUTH- the Laws of Nature- Use them to make
- 3- GOOD RULES – Good Laws- Good Guidance- Which will lead to
- 4- LAWFUL DESIRE – Righteousness – which will pave the way towards
- 5- PERFECTION – Mental, Physical and Spiritual – which will lead to
- 6- IMMORTALITY –a) losing the fear of Death (b) being remembered for your good work for generations–resulting in oneness with
- 7- AHURA MAZDA -The CREATOR OF WISDOM – through KHOD AH Self Realization- KHOD = Self AH = to come, to come to oneself.

Explanation in Detail

These seven laws are the natural stages of growth, applicable to the whole Universe and are therefore called the Eternal Law. It is true to the cycle of growth of a seed into a plant so also to that of the formation of the Universe. While in nature they are natural in humans there is the element of free will. But in either case a flaw will affect the end result. A right choice will create a Heaven and a wrong choice will create a Hell, right here on this Earth. Zarathushtra's concept of heaven and hell are both earthly.

These are the stages which will also lead each individual spiritually, to become a part of the whole. They are in tune with the practical day to day living of a normal life, there is no call for renunciation, or penance, or disruption of ordinary day to day living. One has only to guide and channel the daily activities in accordance with the Eternal Law. Zarathushtra himself lived a normal life and had a wife and six children. Moreover all these stages are attainable in one life period and do not require reincarnation. Zarathushtra never said he had reincarnated nor promised to come back.

1 – VOHU MANA

The First step mentioned is Vohu-mana or Bahman that is the Good Mind, Wisdom, the Wise Mind, to which one has to refer to find out the TRUTH and to make decisions.

In nature this wisdom is inbuilt and is limited to 'About Itself', it does not have to acquire it. While we humans have to look for it and, more important, unlike in nature, our wisdom is not limited to, 'About Ourselves', but we can acquire unlimited knowledge.

Zarathushtra preached and practiced the reference to Vohu-mana. He looked for the truth, found the answers to mysteries, understood nature, understood the universe, knew about human nature, and found answers to complex problems, which he shares with all in his Gathas. Having studied human nature, he emphasizes on the choice between the Good and the Evil and recommends the path of Righteousness.

Referring to Vohu-mana is a much more advanced stage of what scientists know as the Alpha level of the brain. Today with a little training a person can get into the Alpha level at will, memorize texts, solve problems and be a different person. Vohu-mana is a higher level and involves the use of a larger portion of the brain, which in the normal case is idle.

In opposition to Vohu-Mana is Ahri-MANA the Evil Mind². The same mind has two forces, the good and the evil; to follow the evil force is easier than following the good force. Zarathushtra places great emphasis on these two forces which are equal in strength, but if the mind succumbs to the evil force the end result will be the opposite, the undesirable.

Zarathushtra in the Gathas says that everything that is created is first a thought, so let your thoughts be good. He further defines good thoughts to be those that are in harmony with nature. Thoughts not converted into words will be forgotten, so convert only your good thoughts into words, resulting in good deeds, good creations. Thus giving the maxim, GOOD THOUGHTS - GOOD WORDS - GOOD DEEDS.

2- ASHA VAHISTA

The second step, Asha Vahista - Ardibehest - THE TRUTH, is what is obtained through Vohu-mana, and comprises of the Universal Truth, of knowledge about ourselves, of all that is around us; the laws of nature, the harmony in nature, human behavior, psychology, physiology, the knowledge about stars, galaxies and outer space (Dakhyu). In nature it is limited to 'Self Truth' each element in nature knows itself, it knows what course it has to take to evolve, we call it instinct. It has a limitation as far as acquiring knowledge about others is concerned. We humans can use our Vohu-mana and explore, have knowledge about everything around us and even cause changes in them. As is said in some of the ancient scriptures humans are the image of God.

3- KHASH ATRA VAIRYA

Khash atra vairya – Shahrivar – Good Laws, which are in harmony with nature. Harmony in nature is in existence and takes its natural course. We humans need to make use of the acquired Truth to evolve and advance. So once the natural laws, human behaviour, psychology, how the universe works and our place and role in it is known and once we recognize the harmony with which all this happens, we have to take the third step; make our own good laws and rules – Shahrivar – to conduct our worldly affairs in harmony with these natural laws, THE TRUTH - Asha. Doing nothing to disrupt the harmony but instead evolving and advancing in harmony with the rest of the universe by choosing the Righteous path.

4- SEPANTA ARMAITY

When the good laws, good guidance, and good way of life is followed, there shall be Sepanta Armaity, Lawful Desire that is Righteousness, love, harmony, peace and justice among men and in their relationship with the rest of the universe. All desires will be lawful. When the first three laws are followed Sepanta Armaity comes naturally. It is this fourth stage which creates a Paradise, a Heaven, right here on earth.

5- HURVATATA

It is in such an atmosphere of righteousness that one will achieve Khordad – progress towards Perfection, that is to become Complete; mentally, physically and spiritually. In this stage one leads a normal day to day healthy life which is full of righteousness, justice, law, order, peace and is in tune with nature and the universal laws. This is the fifth stage, which can be easily achieved in a Righteous society, a Heavenly society.

6- AMERETATA

Having achieved Khordad one becomes Amordad, Immortal, but not in the physical sense, for we are made of a matter that ages and every person including Zarathushtra has died. It is a mental stage where one is “Free from the Fear of Death”; thereby one does not belong mentally to the material world but to a timeless space less world where death has no meaning.

Ameretata, immortality has two forms the second form is when a person has no physical existence. A person who has done good deeds, benefited mankind, will be remembered in a positive way for generations to come and is therefore immortal in the memories of people for generations depending on the extent of the deeds.

7- AHURA MAZDA

A person having achieved these stages will spiritually understand and becomes one with Ahura Mazda - The Creator of Wisdom. The creator of Mazda Ahura –

The Wisdom in Creation, the force in nature, the cause of Universal Action and Reaction. Thus one melts in this boiling pot and become one with nature.

This is the principle and predominant canon, at the center of what Zarathushtra has to say, with the aim of making the world an ideal place to live.

Every Nou Rouz the Nou Rouz Table with the seven items or trays are a reminder of this law, a time to make a resolution to follow this natural law and in the process make this earth a better place to live.

¹ The diverse people that celebrate Nou Rouz naturally pronounce it differently some of the pronunciations are No Rooz, Noruz, Now Rooz, Novruz, Nuruz, Nav rooz, etc, which happens in all languages. Like English is spoken with different accents but when writing all the words are spelled in only one form. So is Nou Rouz when spelled in Persian but when writing it in English each one has tried to spell it in its own accent. Taking into consideration the alphabets used to write it in Persian the correct spelling will be NOU ROUZ. (The alphabets being N – OU and R – OU – Z)

² In the Gathas Zarathushtra does not use the word Ahri Mana it is a word coined latter. He uses the word Angra mainu to mean evil thoughts.