

HAFT SEENEE

THE SEVEN TRAYS

ITS ANCIENT SIGNIFICANCE

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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 even SHEen was changed to SEen so that wine (SHarab) could be replaced by vinegar (SERkeh) and the tradition preserved. 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. So while scholars are busy discussing if "Sheen" is correct or "Seen" the grocery shops make a few extra bucks selling both series of 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,ⁱ shows the importance of SEVEN.

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

It was a way of renewing the pledge to follow the path towards perfection as prescribed by Zarathushtra in the Gathas and later tabulated as the “Seven AmshaSepanta”.ⁱⁱ

The ancient meaning of the seven AmshaSepanta 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* **(Hurvata)**

6- **AMORDAD** (Immortal)

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.ⁱⁱⁱ

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^{iv}) 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.

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

ⁱⁱ The Seven Amsha Sepantas 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.

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

^{iv} ASHA means - The ultimate Truth – Nature - Universe -The laws of nature – The laws of the Universe.