

## Ancient Iran Celebrations

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**Abstract:** In ancient Iran many various celebrations and festivals were being held. Many investigations have been done and this research shows that sometimes ancient Iranians more than half of year were holding celebrations and festivals. In this research about five celebrations (or festivals) have been argued. This five celebrations (or festivals) now are holding in all or some regions in Iran. Although with some variations among mentioned celebrations (or festivals) two celebrations Mehregan and Nowruz are similar in customs, equality and procedure of performance. Both of these celebrations were being celebrated simultaneous with beginning of year. And because in some of historical era (for example Hakhameshian era), beginning of year had been in fall. Also in this investigation about two festivals have been argued. Chahar Shanbeh Soori festival that is before Nowruz and Sizdah Be-dar festival that is after Nowruz. It can be said ancient Iranians from ten days before Nowruz until two weeks after Nowruz were holding celebrations and all of these celebrations and festivals indicates that happiness in Iran's people, and importance of happiness and separation from sadness and distress.

**Key words:** *Gahamabar; Mehregan; Sadeh; Nowruz*

### 1. Introduction

In ancient Iran many feasts and celebrations were held. All of this feasts and celebrations were based on special events and a discriminant for Zoroaster religion that obligates to people honorable duty of being fortunate. In that celebrations worship was a necessary section. In that times there were many various festivals and celebrations. In all of that celebrations happiness was very important. One of the attractive features in these religious celebrations was gregarious attendance. Approximately all of the people in society took over in these celebrations. Now in this research from various celebrations only some of most important celebrations had been studied.

### 2. Nowruz Celebration

Nowruz celebration was one of seven essential celebrations for ancient Iranians. It was seventh festival. This celebrations made framework of religious year in Zoroaster religion and help to lithograph the instructions of religion in minds of followers. With advent Islam religion the first six celebrations that in Sasanian empires had been named Gahamabar, were eliminated and from seven essential celebrations only vernal Nowruz were held. Nowadays Nowruz is holding in Islamic Iran (Cambridge). The 'Jashn' word is extracted from Yasneh or Yasna that in Pahlavi language is Yazshaneh and means worship, praise, prayer and happiness. In Sanskrit language is Yajne with same

concept and meaning (Major Eurang). Nowruz celebration that was named Nogrutz was in the beginning of year and unceasing after Farvardigan festival (Kristian Men, Iran at Sasanian). In Albaghiyeh from Aboureihan Bironi and Shahnameh from Ferdowsi and many other books nowruz celebration is ascribed to Jamshid who was one of the main kings of Pishdari dynasty. They say Jamshid won over the Divan and made a gold throne and sat on it. One day his followers during a day removed his Divan and took it from Damavand to Babel. This day was first day of Farvardin that named Hormoz and people celebrated it. Hakim Omar Khayyam in Nowruz-nameh about Nowruz celebration wrote: "Nowruz appellation is that sun in every 365 day and a quarter returns at its first position. When Jamshid founded this note he named it Nowruz and established a celebration. After Jamshid many other kings and people follow him. Ajam kings were understood that time and for respect to sun celebrated that day. In ancient Iran Nowruz celebration were being continued to six consecutive days. In celebration days kings nitrified people and they accepted noblemen and members of their family respectively and gave to the audience gifts and presents. Undoubted Nowruz celebration is an ancient and public ethic and was related to being new phenomenon and nature revolution from a condition to another among various nations all over the world and nowadays being continues among many nations.

### 3. Philosophy of Haft Seen in Nowruz celebration

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Because Nowruz was the seventh celebration from septet celebrations, there were several tradition and custom belonging to it that pictured number seven. One of this customs was bunching things to septet groups to show various creations. For example seven species that have seed were been putting in a big silver tray and was been took for king. Also provided septet groups from twigs of seven different tree and was been took for the king (Cambridge). But about "Seen", some of the historians said that it has been derived from "Haft Emshaspand", Emshaspand means an everlasting sacred and in Avesta is "Amshah Sepanteh" and means sheer without any decline or useful. It can be said that the name of Haft Seen is a remember of "Haft Sepanteh" or "Haft Sepant", in other words Haft Seen is a indicating of septet Sepandan that is named Emshaspandan and according to tale of Zoroaster religion the story of Sepandan or septet Emshaspand is the pattern of Haft Seen in Nowruz (Nowruz and philosophy of Haft Seen, Seyyed Mohammad Ali Dadkhah).

#### 4. Mehregan celebration

After Nowruz, Mehregan was the biggest celebration in ancient Iran. It was bing held at 16<sup>th</sup> Mehr in zoroastrian year and in 10<sup>th</sup> Mehr at solar year. The history of this celebration is older than Median civilization. This celebration was important because it was in beginning of year. In Iran before Median and Hakhmaneshian and it began from Mehr and sometimes from Aban. Another reason was belief of Iranians to big angle Mehr (Mitra). Also harvest of some herbal and agricultural products was in this month. In this day people with their new cloth were visiting each other and gift giving each other. The kings in these days were wearing a golden crown for himself and his family. They were rubbing a kind of special oil to their bodies for well-being. For ancient Iranians Mehr was a symbol for agriculture, covenant, lighting and blaze. In their minds Mehr was a link between God and creatures and because was a symbol for light in past and meant sun. Mehr was a representative for warfare and bravery in defense and support from peace, serenity, friendship, agreement and covenant. For appearance of Mehregan it has been said that reason of this celebration was advent of angles to help Fereydoon. And Fereydoon won the Zahhak by Kaveh and enthralled him and incarcerated him in Damavand mount, since that time people were secured from Zahhak's evil and celebrated that day and was high tide. Fereydoon ordered people to praise God because after one thousand year fear and horror achieved to their estates and this work was a habit for them. Abureihan Biruni has written: In lands of ancient Iran people believed happiness and victories is a miracle from God and when win over a tyrant or a natural disaster such as fire, floodwater, drought, and illness and so on they would hold a big celebration. If in such happy days namely from 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>th</sup> Mehr a son had been born was being named

Mehrab, Mehrshad, Mehrpouya, Mehrbarzin, Mehras, Mehria and so on and if a girl had been born was being named Mehrafrouz, Mehrbanou, Mehrnaz, Mehrshid, Mehrara, Mehrangiz, Mehrazar, Mehrnoosh, Mehrvash, Golmehr, Mehrafarin, Mehrafarin, Mehrrokh, Mehrazin and so on. In this celebration was a custom for people that send gifts to each other and to the king. People everything that loved more much were offering to the king. The king in every year only twice days was meeting people. Those days were in Nowruz and Mehregan celebration days. In these days all of the people were meeting king. People that had complaint from each other were placating to lest the king understand from their complaint. Another story is that God in these days is spreading earth and is creating bodies to implant souls and said again that in this days God are blazing up moon, that was a black and without any shine.

#### 5. Sadeh celebration

Ancient Iranian chronometry says that hot season is from first of Farvardin until end of Mehr and Cold season is from first of Aban until end of Esfand that the coldest days are 100 days and are from first of Aban until 10<sup>th</sup> Bahman. Sadeh coming from "Set" word in Pahlavi language and means one hundred. And Sadeh is when that one hundred days pass of winter. In other words fifty days and fifty nights before Nowruz celebrations (Ancient Iran celebrations and religions, Ayyob Gabanchi). Sadeh celebration was a wintry fire celebration and it was holding to enliven sun and return heat and brightness to our world. They were making big fires in homes and were worshiping and praising God. They were making fire to repulse cold and dryness that was in winter. They were saying heat of fire would repulse everything that is harmful for plants (Cambridge). Some of the ancient people were saying that Sadeh celebration is related to the saga of Hooshang and detection of fire. Such was written that Hooshang had gone to desert and saw a black snake, he pick up a piece of stone and threw to it. The piece hit to another stone and from the collision fire was lit and Hooshang ordered for this action a celebration will be held. They reveled and in time of worship set it Kibla and praised toward the direction and didn't let get snuff. The ordinance of Sadeh celebration was in this way that after sunset, three Zoroastrian priests, that had worn white clothing were moving toward a mass of dry wood that before had been prepared. And a group of young that they also had worn white clothing were accompanying the priests with light torches. The priests were signing parts of Avesta. Priests with the fire in firebox and the worn white young with help from flames of the torches were firing firewood and music group were playing happy melodies from first until end of regulation.

#### 6. Chahar Shanbeh Soori festival

In ancient Iran days of a week was not prevalent and each day of a month had a special name and for this reason making fire on Tuesday at the last night of year were not been holding. Fire making was been doing right before "Panjeh" that means 360<sup>th</sup> day of year. In days that angles were coming to earth and were bringing felicity and prosperity for family (Recognition of Iran's mythology, John Ersel Henils). Based on scrip of Avestain in "Shitha" section, during of Farvardegan celebration was 10 day, two quintuplets. It has been said that first one that created this regulation was gallant Hormoz, boy of Shapoor, but German historians believe that base of this celebration is ancient Arian, such that first in top of king palace or big palaces fire were been making and after it people were making fire in top of their homes. And believed that all of evils and blackness would burn in fire, although some of people believed that reason of making fire in top of homes was for angles to would been guided to their homes, ancestry and positions. Another note is that number of fires that were been lighting in this festival, was seven fire that was indicating seven Emshaspand and sometimes three fire that was a symbol for good words, good deeds, good thoughts. Finally after rational Islam this festival was coinciding to last Wednesday in year that is named Chahar Shanbeh Soori festival.

### **7. Sizdah Be-dar festival**

In a tale from Dr. Bahram Farahvashi, the 13<sup>th</sup> day of year perhaps in ancient era had been a special day to demand vernal rain for new farms. The 13<sup>th</sup> day of month had been named and was belonging to Tishtar, God of rain that is in shape of a white house. He warns with Aposh, demon of drought that is in shape of a black horse and will win him and was for this reason that people in 13<sup>th</sup> Farvardin was getting out from their homes and when that Aposh was losing out they roast sheep and this was a ransom for rain angle to water down new farms from rain and people in this day were going to desert and plain for happiness merrymaking and much more pleading victory of Tishtar over Aposh. After implementation of demand for rain ceremony were spending day with happiness.

### **8. Conclusion**

In this paper it can be seen that some of celebrations and festivals in ancient Iran were religious and implementation of these celebrations was necessary. But some of these celebrations were based on changes and evolutions of earth and all of these celebrations were indicative that people in ancient Iran for genesis of each phenomenon such as weather variations, finding fire and so on, had worthiness for them and were celebrating it. Each of these celebrations had been with a special ceremony. Feast and stomp had been a non-separation section of these celebrations. One other feature was that for each of these celebrations there are a story and myth

and from historical view there are a convenient justification for these celebrations. For example for Nowruz celebration there are both of mythical view (predominance of Jamshid one of the Pishdadi kings over Demons) and historical view (birth of earth and quiet rotation of earth around sun), also for other celebrations it is similar.

### **References**

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