

WZSE – Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 44.

Hello all Tele Class friends:

After moving to Florida in 1993, while attending Orlando Navroze celebration in Yasmin Irani's home, Jo Ann and I were introduced to the age old custom of Hafta Sheen Table by our Orlando CFG friends, Sarvar Demehri and Yasmin Irani ! I was quite intrigued by this wonderful Iranian custom of spreading out seven important items all starting with the Persian letter – sheen! As we entered their home, Yasmin guided us to the Hafta Sheen “sofreh” (spread) on a table, held a mirror to look into it and sprinkled some rose water on our hands from a “gulaab daas”! This custom dictates that visitors who come to share the Navroze with you should be sprinkled with fragrant rosewater and asked to look into a mirror to make a wish. Some say that this ritual symbolizes that you smell as sweet as roses and shine as bright as a mirror throughout the new year.

Ever since we have seen Hafta Sheen tables in many homes, Iranis and Parsis, but in North America only. As far as I know, I have not seen too many Parsis putting up a Hafta Sheen table during the Navroze festival.

That made me think – Why so? Why only Iranis put up Hafta Sheen table but not the Parsis?

And how old are the customs of Hafta Sheen and Hafta Seen?

I asked these questions to my learned Dasturji Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary, Tehran:

“My Dear Dasturji Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary:

I have a question for you to answer:

I do not see any reference of Hafta Sheen Table custom during the Navroze celebration in Sasanian Times.

When did this custom of Hafta Sheen or Seen started?

Why Indian Parsis never celebrated Jamshedi Navroze with Hafta Sheen Table?

Please help me understand this.”

His answer:

“In my opinion, whereas the celebration of Nove Rooz is considered as very antique, and definitely goes back to the Persepolis Grand Feasts, the manner of observing the festivities have been different with respect to territorial regions, their individual tastes and limitations. The unvarying factors, for the Zartoshtis, be it the rulers or the laity; has been the Ten days, before the Solar Calendar year ending, with Prayers and dedicated ceremonies for those deceased – that ended with a

symbolic farewell to the visiting Fravashis on the ending (Night) of that period - as well as their utmost rejoicing and venting out of their winter hardships so as to acquire all the needed jest and vigor for an active life during the coming year.

Common amongst the celebrations have been lavish feastings as well as their belief in the piety of the figure of Seven. As such in order to display their belief and participation of the Feast to the household, family, friends and even to strangers and non-Zartoshtis the Haft Sheen and subsequently Haft Seen – each variety involving life prolonging and holy symbolic items – have been evolved.

The Haft (Or haftaa) Sheen items are much older, believed to go back to the 8th century, even. Amongst those 7 items (Shahd= honey, Shir e=syrup, shekar=sugar, shamme= candle, Shemshad= box tree branches, Shaaye=egg) was Sharaab=wine as well. One can, therefore see as to the reason for replacing the whole thing with the closest alphabetic phonetic S. (Samanoo= a cooked preparation of sprouted grains, sekke= coin, serke= vinegar, seer= garlic, seeb= apple, sabze= green sprouts; & senjed= mountain ash tree fruit)!

The present Haft Seen Table decorations is believed to be less than a century old.

Obviously the Parsees, of India, had to get accustomed to much different manner of displaying the formalities, including the use of Calendars, of Jamshedi Novroje where as they have strictly adhered to the Religious Rituals, all along,

Best regards,

Mehraban”

Thank you Dastoorji Firouzgary for your enlightening remarks on Hafta Sheen and Hafta Seen.

When Aapro Rustom Kevala was FEZANA President, he assembled a group of us and requested us to come up with some short prayers for the upcoming Naurooz in 2008. I was asked to lead the effort and the result was a Prayer book:

Hamaa Anjuman Prayers for Naurooz In English, Farsi and Gujarati, Assembled by

**Ervad Soli P. Dastur with the help of FEZANA Naurooz Planning Committee.
It has eight short prayers in English, Gujarati and Farsi with translations.**

Today, we will present the first prayer from this book, in praise of Dadar Ahura Mazda:

Yasna Ha 1 Verse 1:

(Please hear the [attached .mp3 file](#) for its recitation)

**Nivae-dhaye-mahi, Hankaa-raye-mahi,
Dathusho Ahurahé mazdaao!
Raé-vato Khare-nangh-hato,
Mazish-tahécha, Vahish-tahécha, Sraésh-tahécha.
Khraozh-dish-tahécha, Khrathvish-tahécha,
Hukerepte-mahécha, Ashaat apano-temahécha!
Hudhaamano Vouru-rafnangho,
Yo no dadha, Yo tatasha, Yo tuthruiyé,
Yo mainyûsh Spento-témo.**

Yasna Ha 1 Verse 1 - Translation:

**We announce and perform our prayers in honor of Ahura Mazda,
The Creator, the radiant and the glorious,
The greatest and the best, the most beautiful, the most firm,
The wisest, the most perfect,
And very well known in righteousness.**

**One who is full of wisdom,
Who spreads happiness very far,
Who has created us and
given us sustenance and
Who increases the prosperity of all.**

(Translation compiled from different translations by scholars)

SPD Comments

1. The FEZANA book:

Hamaa Anjuman Prayers for Naurooz In English, Farsi and Gujarati, Assembled by Ervad Soli P. Dastur with the help of FEZANA Naurooz Planning Committee.

can be ordered from FEZANA admin at: admin@fezana.org

May the Flame of Fellowship, Love, Charity and Respect for all burn ever eternal in our hearts so we can do HIS work with humility, diligence and eternal enthusiasm!

Atha Jamyat, Yatha Aafrinaamahi! (May it be so as we wish?)

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli