



THE MAZDAYASNIE CONNECTION



MEHER YAZATA & MEHERGAN

Wednesday October 02, is *Mehergan* (Meher Mah and Meher Roj) in the Fasli calendar. Nowruz and *Mehergan* are the two most important *hingaams* (festivals) in the Zarathushti calendar. This article has been extracted from *The Mazdayasnie Connection*, Vol. 24, Iss. 3, Fall 2005.

Mehergan is a celebration of events in Nature. Culturally and historically, it has been celebrated as a festival of seasons and a commemoration of the triumph of good over evil, warmth over coldness, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.

Nowruz and Mehergan are the two most important *hingaams* (festivals) in the Zarathushti calendar. From ancient times, Mehergan has been celebrated for religious and historical reasons. In the Persian calendar, when the name of the month, matched the name of the day (*parab*), it was celebrated because of its religious significance. In the Zarathushti calendar, Meher mah (month) is the seventh month, which is the chief of the second half of the year and Meher roj (day) is the sixteenth day in the month, which is the first day of the second half of the month, and hence the importance.

Meher Yazata

In the Avesta, Meher (Av. *Mithra*) Yazata is given prime importance. He is said to be the propagator of truth and the dispenser of justice, having jurisdiction over the words of humans and the promises they make. It is said that nothing displeases Meher Yazata more than when one breaks a promise or goes back on his word (Av. *mithra-druj*). He is also described as having one thousand ears (*hazanghra gaoshahe*) and ten thousand eyes (*baevare chashmano*) i.e., one who hears and sees everything and can never be deceived. Meher, along with Sarosh and Rashne forms the triumvirate of Yazatas that dispense justice when one passes on from this world. Thus, Meher Yazata is known as *dāvar-e-rāst* = the righteous judge.

Meanings of Meher

The common meanings of Meher are seven in number and they also represent the seven steps a person ascends in order to reach the zenith or final goal of *Frasho-kereti* or *Frashogard*. These are as follows:

1. **Patet - Truth:** According to Herodotus, the ancient Iranians placed great emphasis on three things during the training of children: horsemanship, archery and speaking the truth, out of which, truthfulness was considered the most important. The first step, the very foundation of progress, is to speak the Truth. If a wrong has been done, own it at once and speak the truth with penitence and a firm resolve not to do it again.
2. **Love:** A person who is true to himself and to others, develops Love towards his fellow men and towards all God's creations.
3. **Compassion:** Loving all of God's creations, he feels compassion - kindness, mercy - towards all. Since he is kind to others, Nature is kind to him.
4. As a result, he is now **in contact or communion with Nature**. Such a person can understand and comprehend the mysteries and truths of Nature.
5. He develops complete **humility**, patience and tolerance - the virtues of Spenta Armaiti (Spendarmad Ameshaspand) in every atom.
6. **Inspiration:** Nature's Light shines into his being. Real psychic abilities and intuition are developed.
7. **Enlightenment:** His psychic centers (Av. *chakhra*, Fravardin Yasht, 89) are now developed and he can 'see' the entire plan of Creation.

Nowruz and Mehergan: Cosmic Events

Meher Yazata's glory reigns throughout the month of Meher; but it reaches its peak on Meher Roj and Meher Mah, also known as Mehergan. Mehergan and Nowruz (21st March) are the two most important days in the year.

According to the Zarathushti Science, when the sun (Khorshed Yazata) enters the sign of Aries (Fravardin Mah and Hormazd Roj), it is the beginning of a New Year, Nowruz. Six months later, Meher Roj and Meher Mah is considered to be Mehergan.

Nature pours down Her Blessings

On Nowruz and Mehergan, there is a continuous downpour of blessings from the spiritual world. These blessings provide spiritual nourishment to our body and keep it going. This is *Tan Darosti* (physical or bodily health). By observing all our Religious laws and tenets, including celebrating the festivals (*hingaams*) like Nowruz, *Mehergan*, *Tirgan* (Tir Roj and Tir Mah) and *Avangan* (Avan Roj and Avan Mah), and the six Gahambars, and by being truthful and righteous we enable our *Ruvaan Darosti* (spiritual health) as well.

There are three Gahambars between Nowruz and Mehergan. Spiritual seeds sown on Nowruz, sprout during these three Gahambars and on Mehergan, the fruit is ready for the picking. It is unto us to taste this fruit. How? By performing *jashan*, praying Meher Niyasht and Yasht and evaluating all our actions during the year. When we do this, Meher Yazata comes to our aid, there is order and Asha manifests.

Mehergan in History

Historically, Mehergan is the day on which the **Peshdadian** king, **Shah Faridun** ascended the throne of Iran, after having triumphed over the evil tyrant **Zohak** with the help of the blacksmith **Kaveh**. Since then, in Persian literature, Kaveh has been recognized as the symbol of freedom, Zohak the symbol of evil, and Shah Faridun as the symbol of victory over evil.



In the month of Meher, in the same week the festival falls, the **Achaemenians** (550-330 BCE) celebrated the triumph of **Darius the Great** over Gaumata, the pretender who had usurped the throne.

The **Parthians** and the **Sassanians** (250 BCE-651 CE) celebrated the occasion with all the royal pomp and glory. The king wore a sun-disc crown and a special dress. A special herald greeted him with the glad tidings of a bright future. A priest performed elaborate rites. People brought him gifts and in return were generously rewarded. A royal banquet was laid as colorfully as possible with flowers, fruits, food, and flavors. The rich and the poor held festivities throughout the empire. Many Sassanian kings were also coronated on this festival. Hence Mehregan was also called the festival of kings.

So deep-rooted was the custom that it held itself even after the Arab conquest of Iran. The Arabic word for 'festival' is "*mihrrjan*", an Arabicized form of Mehergan. Although Islam had replaced Zoroastrianism as the state religion, **Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphs** (661-1258 C.E.) sat in glory to receive gifts from their Iranian subjects,

In the Mediterranean region, the **Greeks** and the people of **Anatolia**, and later the **Romans** sought the favor of Mithra and it gave birth to the cult of Mithraism.

Mehergan Today

In Iran, Zarathushtis celebrate Mehergan by wearing new clothes and setting a decorative, colorful table. On it are kept a fire vase or incense burner, a copy of the holy Khordeh Avesta, a mirror for self-reflection, rose water, various grains for prosperity, flowers, vegetables and fruits (especially pomegranates and apples), sweet sherbet and coins. A priest recites appropriate prayers especially the Meher Niyesh. A talk is given about the significance of the occasion. Food is consumed and those present dance to the tune of music until late in the night.

Here's wishing that we are all able to taste the fruits of Mehergan!!!

