

# ECHO

of Islam

nowruz

*Hail to the People's Spring and Vitality of Days*

السَّلَامُ عَلَى رَبِيعِ الْأَنَامِ وَ نَضْرَةِ الْأَيَّامِ  
سلام بر بهار مردمان و شادابی و سرسبزی ایام





هر رأی  
سربازی  
برای افزایش  
اقتدار ملی

Every Vote,  
Is a Soldier  
For Increase  
The National Authority





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**Managing Director:** Muhammad Assadi  
Movahed  
Assadi101@yahoo.com

**Editor:** Saeed Kalati

**Editorial Board:** Reza Shahabi, Tahereh  
Rashidi, Dr. Shazia Akbar Awan Awan,  
Dr. Ali Naderi, Hasan Abu Nimah,  
Massoume Price,

**Public Relations Manager:** Maryam  
Hamzelou

**Designer:** Zahra Salari

Magazine of ITF , Tehran,  
Islamic Republic of Iran,  
Tel: +9821-88934302 , +9821-88934303  
Fax: +9821-88902725  
Website: <http://alhoda.ir>  
<http://www.itfjournals.com>  
<http://echoofislam.itfjournals.com>  
Email: [Info@alhoda.ir](mailto:Info@alhoda.ir)

Nowruz Is the Resurrection of the Nature	4
Everyone Who Is Interested in Iran and Its Security Should Participate in the Elections	6
Nowruz, An Iranian Tradition as Long as the History	12
Elections and People's Role from the Viewpoints of Imam Khomeini (RA)	16
Nowruz in Islam	20
Fall of Democracy in the West	24
The 'Deal of the Century': Revealed and Reviled	28
Iranian Months, Their Origins and Origin of the Names	34

# Nowruz Is the Resurrection of the Nature

◆ Muhammad Asadi Movahed, Managing Director  
Assadi101@yahoo.com

Nowruz is the beginning of a new revolution in the nature and the revival of human beings' living environment. Nowruz is the celebration of the nature's growth, the celebration of a new start and the celebration celebrated by the ancient Iranians. Nowruz is the most important celebration for Iranians and 300 million more people in Iran's neighboring countries who celebrate arrival of spring and re-birth of the nature together, which have been popular in Iran since 3rd millennium BC.

Nowruz is a social ritual which heralds the New Year across the Iranian plateau. Customs and traditions related to Nowruz have been handed down from a generation to the next generation and are considered as elements which identify the identity of Iranian society and its neighboring countries. It must be noted that rituals are rooted in beliefs and ancient values of the societies and are categorized as elements which strengthen cultural convergence among people. Therefore, Nowruz plays a key role in launching cultural relations among Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan Republic, Pakistan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and even

Zanzibar, because it is based on a celebration beyond lands and ethnicities and have been entwined with the cultural elements of these societies.

Since early time, mankind has been aware of rules of circles which adjust the life rhythm. Repetition of traditions and rituals in the exact times of the year will somehow represent this cycle. In general, such cultural rituals and traditions rooted in certain cycles such as birth, death and/or reconstruction across the nature and/or society. Along with these traditions, rituals enter the daily life and calendar of people.

Cultural ties independent from geography, language and ethnicity will survive more than indigenous culture and will survive even more through acknowledging cultural factors from other nations. Cultural symbols and factors of Nowruz have been institutionalized in these ethnics and it is considered as an effective and influential cultural tradition, even if you fail to fathom it as a herald for the New Year.

In other words, the synchrony of the Iranian New Year with the beginning of spring has extended its

social outcomes in the living of the mentioned societies and has developed a value-based action. The same feature was resulted in integration of Nowruz customs and tradition with the Islamic teachings, so a unique composition of Iranian-Islamic Nowruz was born. Such cultural shifts are fruits of human needs, who try to develop meaning through struggling in the life.

As it has been declared in the social science literature, the key feature of culture is its gradual changes in order to be able to meet social and cultural needs of people given specialties of each epoch. Therefore, after appearance of Islam, rituals of Nowruz experienced changes over time and somehow became Islamized. Such developments have occurred by ordinary people and made a condition in which Nowruz in Iran took a hue of Islam and its spiritual dimensions enriched more than ever.

In other words, Islam's flexibility to deal with the indigenous culture of different societies on the one hand and cultural inclination of the Iranian society to acknowledge Islam on the other hand paved the way for Nowruz to be identified



today as Iranian-Islamic tradition and a combination of national and religious rituals. Visiting relatives, paying Eidi, money or gifts people give to each other during Nowruz days, and showing kindness and affection to each other are among the Nowruz customs which are all considered as examples of Seleye Rahem, which had been advised by Islam. The prophet of Islam and Shiite Imams had praised Nowruz as a beautiful and honorable tradition and had described it as their own and their Shiits days.

In fact, it must be said that traditions, as social phenomena entails their own rules and rationale, which it can be seen in all societ-

ies across the history since ancient time till now. Traditions have been full of fundamental applications for the human societies.

A society is free to consider traditions as sacred events, as moments which are against the daily life. Hence, traditions can split the current of the daily life and direct the living excitement in the lethargy of routine life. Thus, supporting by their religious life, Iranians' thinking foundations try to approach Nowruz to Islam as a religion.

Nowruz is a symbol of resurrection, so it is not just limited to Iranians, but it belongs to all dynamic human civilizations, especially monotheistic religions. Some na-

tions have forgotten it, but others believe in this resurrection and think about its signs in the nature. Accordingly, to his companions, Imam Sadiq (AS) says, "Nowruz is amongst the blessed days of us, Persians have saved and commemorated it, but you underestimate and forget it."

Therefore, Nowruz is not just a celebration, but is a new reading of resurrection and to be navigated towards divine and godly route. Relying its infra-border and infra-nation nature, Nowruz is one of elements which can be used to strengthen unity and coherence among nations living in Asia and the Middle East.



# Everyone Who Is Interested in Iran and Its Security Should Participate in the Elections

>> The following is main points delivered on February 5, 2020 by Ayatollah Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in a meeting with people from various social backgrounds.

In the last era before the Revolution – during the Pahlavi dynasty and a little before that, during the Qajar dynasty – things were even worse. In those days, not only did the people not have any role, but they also used to be trampled underfoot as well. The country's sources of wealth were looted for the pockets of foreigners. Corruption had engulfed the whole government. The situation was like that before the victory of the Revolution.

Under the leadership of our magnanimous Imam Khomeini (RA) – the role of such a leader is one that cannot be compared with any other leader throughout our long history and in my opinion, it is unique in the whole world – the Iranian nation exercised their will-power and made a decision.

What does democracy mean? It means that since the beginning, the system was formulated through the votes of the people. It was they who determined who should prepare the Constitution – in other words, the Assembly of Experts on the Constitution. After the candidates elected by the people prepared the Constitution, the Constitution itself was put to the vote of the people.

In the same fashion, the legislative and executive branches, various councils, the Leadership itself, and the Assembly of Experts who select the Leader, are chosen by the people. After that, they elect a leader. This means that everything is referred to the votes of the people. This way of running the country is what defines a democratic

government. So, this ten-day period is one that is not comparable to any other period of the year for us. The ten-day Fajr ceremony is the manifestation of national determination.

Of course, the Islamic government is a popular government, but it is not only characterized by that. Our government is based on faith, religion and Islamic democracy. It is Islamic as it builds individuals like Shahid Soleimani. It is Islamic as it encourages families to send their youth and their flesh and blood to the frontlines during the Sacred Defense Era in order to engage in jihad in the way of God, while families feel proud of it.

Elections are an opportunity for our country and our nation and it is a threat for our enemies. Elections should not be underrated. We should not underplay the fact that some people say whatever they want about elections, discouraging the people with their words. Elections are an opportunity for our country: first of all, if it is held in an enthusiastic way and if all the people go to ballot boxes, this will ensure the security of the country. Why? Because the enemies who threaten the country and the nation are more afraid of popular support than our armaments. Although they are afraid of our missiles, they are more intimidated by the Islamic Republic's popular support. Presence in elections indicates the people's support for the system. That is why elections ensure security.

Secondly, they indicate the determination and power of the Iranian

nation. Well, there are certain problems in the country and they themselves are aware of them. Their sanctions, as well as some negligence on our part, have brought about certain problems for the people and they have some complaints. However, because elections, the reputation of the system and the security of the country are at stake, they show their presence in the arena. This shows national determination, national power and national insight. This was another point in this regard.

Another point is that elections solve many of our international problems. The judgment of international spectators about countries and their outlook towards them depends very much on these things. They look at parliaments in different countries – if they have any – and the heads of countries to see how and with what level of participation they are elected. These issues are influential.

Besides, presidential and parliamentary elections are an opportunity for the arrival of new thoughts and new methods in the cycle of decision-making and decision-building. New thoughts will emerge. In particular – later on, I will expand on this matter, God willing – if we manage to find and elect eligible people, this will be influential as we will witness the arrival of new thoughts in the cycle of the country's decision-making and decision-building. Such individuals will be able to present new solutions to the problems of the country and they will give their expert opinion.



The issue of the economy is very important and I have always stressed it. The issue of culture and the issue of developing science and furthering progress are very important as well, but it is elections which provide the basis for all these. If we benefit from strong, proper and public elections, then in my opinion, all the problems of the country will gradually be resolved. This shows the significance of elections.

Therefore, elections are the most fundamental issue in the country. This fundamental issue should not be undermined with peripheral matters, various comments and discouraging and disheartening words. Unfortunately, such words are uttered sometimes. Of course, the enemy is active and this is not a recent phenomenon. Since the very first years, the enemies have always put a question mark on our elections. They sometimes said that there had been violations of the rules in such and such elections and they sometimes said that they had been engineered. Foreigners used to say such things all the time, but they were not of any avail and the people were not influenced by them. The people do not trust such and such a treacherous radio that describes the millions of people on the streets as “a few thousand” and that describes 200 individuals who engage in sabotage on the streets as “the Iranian nation”. This is clear. However, this depends on



us not giving weight to their statements from the inside. This is what I wish to emphasize.

The elections in Iran are among the healthiest elections in the world. Of course, some countries in the world have good elections, but they are not better than ours. And in some countries, rigged elections are common. And there are some countries whose rules do not allow

for the existence of democracy in the true sense of the word, including the United States itself! In the US, which is supposedly the center of democracy, even if we exclude the propaganda efforts that they make to change the path of people's votes with money and the power of capital - this is another matter, but I do not want to discuss it now – their legal system has





been shaped in a way that a person who has garnered fewer votes than another becomes president! This is how their system works! The rival candidate to the current President, who managed to hold office in the elections two, three years ago, had apparently received a few more million votes, but their regulations specified that the latter become president. Well, is this democracy?

Is this the rule of the majority?

This is not how it works in our country. In our country, there is a thorough system. If someone gathers votes slightly higher than 50 percent – even if it is one tenth more in those elections where 50 percent is the criterion - he will become president. We have acted like this throughout all these years. In different terms, various people

wrote letters to me saying that there had been violations in parliamentary elections. Very well, we appointed a board to follow up the matter and carry out research. And when they examined the matter carefully, they saw that the person who delivered that report was wrong and that he was not aware of certain things. Elections in our country are healthy. I am surprised when some people who have built their career through elections question them. How come elections are healthy and proper when they turn out to be to your advantage and they are unhealthy when they are not to your advantage? “But if the right is on their side, they come to him with all submission” [The Holy Quran, 24: 49]. The Holy Quran says that if the law rules in their favor, they will accept it, but if it is not in their favor, they will not accept it. After that, it says, “Is it that there is a disease in their hearts?” [The Holy Quran, 24: 50]. It asks if they suffer from any disease in their hearts.

Elections are important. The Islamic Consultative Majlis, which is a legislative center, should become strong. When will it be strong? It will be strong only when it is formed with a high turnout. When it has such a strong source of support, it will be strong.

I will tell you that anyone who is interested in Iran should vote. I have said this before as well, but I wish to repeat it again. There



may be someone who does not like this humble person. That's alright, but do they love Iran, their country, or not? Therefore, they too should participate in elections. Anyone who loves the security of the country, who loves to see the problems of the country resolved, who loves to see a proper cyclical change of elites in the country should participate in the elections. Everyone should participate.

First of all, candidates should be religious. You should vote for those who are religious. It is faith that prevents deviation and setting foot in the wrong places. It is faith that prevents temptation from influencing you. Some people are good in the beginning, but when they set foot in certain arenas, various temptations sway them here and there. If they have strong faith, they will be immune from these deviations. So, they should be pious.

Secondly, they should be revolutionary. They should be really

attached to the Revolution in the true sense of the word and they must accept the Revolution in the real sense of the word. You should vote for such people. After that they should be brave. An MP who is afraid of speaking against such and such a foreign power does not deserve to represent the people of Iran who are so dignified and brave. Of course, the current MPs did a good job. Recently, after the martyrdom of Shahid Soleimani, they made a good move against the US. One should act with courage. This is because no task will move forward with fear, trembling and anxiety. One should act in a courageous and of course, intelligent and wise manner.

They should enjoy a jihadi spirit and they should work day and night. They should be efficient and advocate justice in the true sense of the word. Our country needs justice. Humanity needs justice as well. However, justice has been oppressed and abandoned in

the world. The Islamic Republic has raised the flag of justice. We should not let this flag be lowered. We should advocate justice – economic, legal and political justice – in the true sense of the word. Justice should be implemented in all these areas.

Well, if we can identify these individuals, we will vote for them. If not, we should benefit from insightful and trustworthy individuals. No one should say, "Very well, these are the conditions for parliamentary candidates, but I do not know such individuals. Therefore, I would better not vote." No, you should certainly vote, but you should refer to insightful and trustworthy individuals in whom one has confidence. You should ask for their opinion and if they provide guidance, you should accept it so that all the people will enter the arena with pure intentions and with reliance on Allah the Exalted, God willing.

**Some information about Elec-**





### tions in Iran

The next legislative election in Iran is scheduled for 21 February 2020, four years after the previous legislative election in 2016.

### Electoral system

The 290-seat Islamic Consultative Assembly has 285 directly elected members and five seats reserved for the Zoroastrians, Jews, Assyrian and Chaldean Christians and Armenians (one for Armenians in the north of Iran and one for Armenians in the south).

The 285 directly elected seats are elected from 196 constituencies, which are a mix of single and multi-member. In single-member constituencies the leading candidates must receive at least one-fourth of the votes in the first round. If no candidate passes this threshold, a second round is held with the two highest-vote candidates. In multi-member constituencies, voters cast as many votes as there are seats available; candidates must receive votes from at

least one-fourth of the voters to be elected; if not all the seats are filled in the first round of voting, a second round is held with twice the number of candidates as there are seats to be filled (or all the original candidates if there are fewer than double the number of seats).

Voters must be Iranian citizens aged 18 or over, and shall not have been declared insane.

### Qualifications

According to Iranian law, in order to qualify as a candidate one must:

- Be an Iranian citizen
- Be a supporter of the Islamic Republic, pledging loyalty to constitution
- Be a practicing Muslim (unless running to represent one of the religious minorities in Iran)
- Not have a "notorious reputation"
- Be in good health, between the ages of 30 and 75.

A candidate will be disqualified if he/she is found to be mentally impaired, actively supporting the

Shah or supporting political parties and organizations deemed illegal or been charged with anti-government activity, converted to another faith or has otherwise renounced the Islamic faith, have been found guilty of corruption, treason, fraud, bribery, is an addict or trafficker or have been found guilty of violating Sharia law. Also, candidates must be literate; candidates cannot have played a role in the pre-1979 government, be large landowners, drug addicts or have convictions relating to actions against the state or apostasy. Government ministers, members of the Guardian Council and High Judicial Council are banned from running for office, as is the Head of the Administrative Court of Justice, the Head of General Inspection, some civil servants and religious leaders and any member of the armed forces.

Source: Khamenei.ir

# Nowruz, An Iranian Tradition as Long as the History

◆ Reza Shahabi

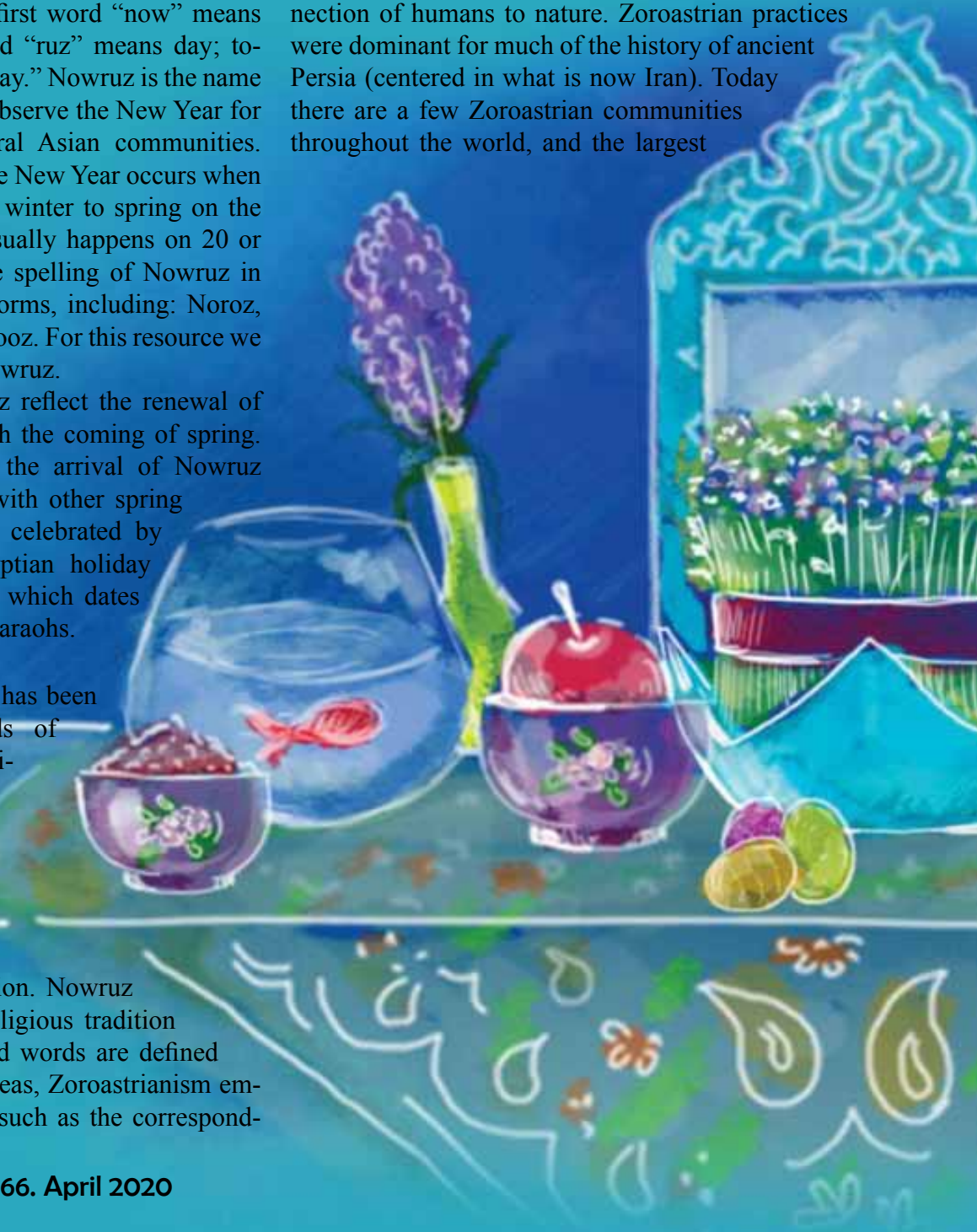
Nowruz (pronounced no-rooz) is a combination of two Persian words. The first word “now” means new and the second word “ruz” means day; together they mean “New Day.” Nowruz is the name for the celebrations that observe the New Year for many Persian and Central Asian communities. The exact beginning of the New Year occurs when the season changes from winter to spring on the vernal equinox, which usually happens on 20 or 21 March each year. The spelling of Nowruz in English can take many forms, including: Noroz, Norouz, Nowruz and Norooz. For this resource we have used the spelling Nowruz.

The festivities of Nowruz reflect the renewal of the Earth that occurs with the coming of spring. Activities that celebrate the arrival of Nowruz share many similarities with other spring festivals such as Easter, celebrated by Christians, and the Egyptian holiday called Sham Al-Naseem, which dates back to the time of the Pharaohs.

## Historical Beginning

Nowruz is a festival that has been celebrated for thousands of years. It is a secular holiday that is enjoyed by people of several different faiths and as such can take on additional interpretations through the lens of religion. Nowruz is partly rooted in the religious tradition of Zoroastrianism (bolded words are defined on pg.7). Among other ideas, Zoroastrianism emphasizes broad concepts such as the correspond-

ing work of good and evil in the world, and the connection of humans to nature. Zoroastrian practices were dominant for much of the history of ancient Persia (centered in what is now Iran). Today there are a few Zoroastrian communities throughout the world, and the largest





are in southern Iran and India.

### Persian Cultural Roots

People all over the world celebrate Nowruz, but it originated in the geographical area called Persia in the Middle East and Central Asia. The distinct culture based on the language, food, music and leisure activities that developed among the many people and ethnic groups who lived in this area is known as Persian. Nowruz became a popular celebration among the communities that grew from these Persian influenced cultural areas. While the physical region called Persia no longer exists, the traditions of Nowruz are strong among people in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Canada and the United States. Nowruz is a holiday that is celebrated by people from diverse ethnic communities and

religious backgrounds.

For the Parsi community, however, Nowruz is very special and is known as their spiritual New Year.

### Rituals and Traditions

Nowruz is a time for family and friends to gather and celebrate the end of one year and the beginning of the next. Children have a fourteen-day vacation from school, and most adults do not work during the Nowruz festivities.

Throughout the holiday period friends and family gather at each other's houses for meals and conversation. Preparing for Nowruz starts a few weeks prior to the New Year with a traditional spring cleaning of the home. At this time it is also customary to pur-

chase new clothing for the family and new furniture for the home.

### *Chahar Shanbe Suri: The Fire Jumping Traditions*

On the night of the last Wednesday of the old year Chahar Shanbe Suri, in Persian, is celebrated. During the night of Chahar Shanbe Suri people traditionally gather and light small bonfires in the streets and jump over the flames shouting: "Zardie man az to, sorkhie to az man" in Persian, which means, "May my sickly pallor be yours and your red glow be mine." With this phrase, the flames symbolically take away all of the unpleasant things that happened in the past year. Because jumping over a fire is dangerous, many people today simply light the bonfire and shout the special phrase without getting too close to the flames.

*Tahvil: The Exact Moment of the New Year*





Families return home after the events of Chahar Shanbe Suri and wait together for the exact moment when the vernal equinox occurs, in Persian called Tahvil. Today people know the moment of Tahvil through searching on the Internet or looking in the newspaper. However, before these sources of information were available, families knew that the New Year was close when a special person called Haji Firooz came to the neighborhood to sing, dance and spread the news of Nowruz. Haji Firooz is usually dressed in a red satin outfit with his/her face painted as a disguise.

When the New Year is just minutes away families and friends gather together and wait for Tahvil to occur. Right after the moment of Nowruz, the family exchanges well wishes such as “Happy New Year” or “Sal-e No Mobarak!” in Persian. Next, the eldest in the family distributes special sweets and candies to everyone, and young children are given coins as presents. It is also traditional for families and neighbors to visit each other and exchange special gifts.

#### *Haft-Seen Table: The Table of Seven S's*

The most important activity in the celebration of Nowruz is making the haft-seen table. Haft is the Persian word for the number seven and seen is the Persian word for the letter S. Literally, the haft-seen table means a “table of seven things that start with the letter S”. Creating the haft-seen table is a family activity that begins by spreading a special family cloth on the table. Next the table is set with the seven S items. Here are some of the items and what they symbolize:

Sumac (crushed spice of berries): For the sunrise and the spice of life

Senjed (sweet dry fruit of the lotus tree): For love and affection

Serkeh (vinegar): For patience and age

Seeb (apples): For health and beauty

Sir (garlic): For good health

Samanu (wheat pudding): For fertility and the sweetness of life

Sabzeh (sprouted wheat grass): For rebirth and renewal of nature

In addition to these S items, there are other symbolic items that go on the haft-seen table, depending on the tradition of each family. It is customary to place a mirror on the table to symbolize reflection on the past year, an orange in a bowl of water to symbolize the Earth, a bowl of real goldfish to symbolize new life, colored eggs to represent fertility, coins







for prosperity in the New Year, special flowers called hyacinths to symbolize spring and candles to radiate light and happiness. Each family places other items on the table that are special, for example the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, or the Shahnameh, an epic Persian story of colorful kings and princes written around the year 1000 CE.

Another important item to place on the haft-seen table is a book of poetry by the famous poet Shams ud-Din Hafez.

Hafez lived in Persian lands during the 14th Century CE and wrote many volumes of poetry and prose narratives.

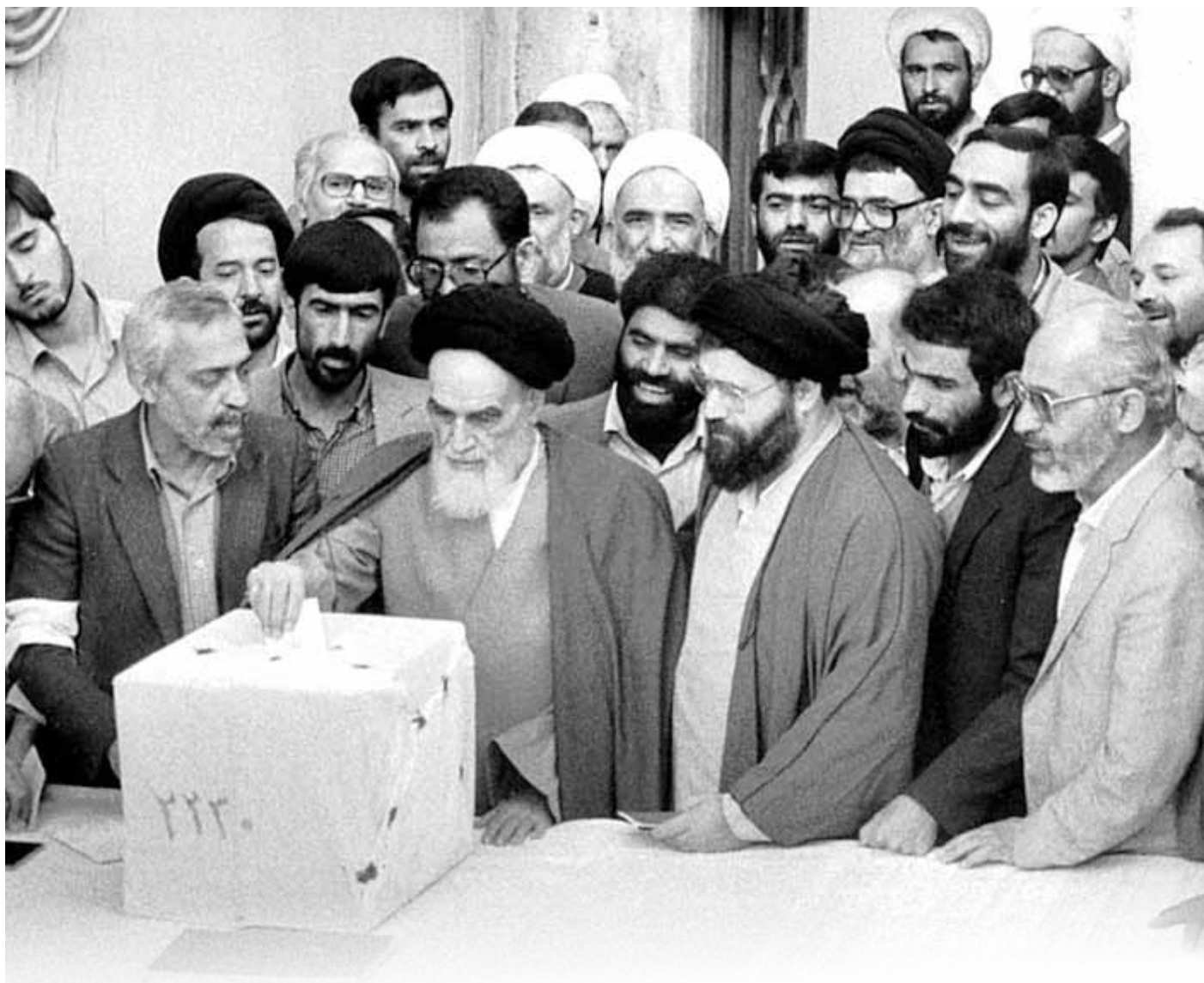
Many Persians consider Hafez to be their national poet, and his historical status is similar to the importance of Shakespeare in the English-speaking world.

#### *Special Foods of Nowruz*

Just like other cultural celebrations, many special foods are prepared during Nowruz, depending on the country of origin. One of these dishes, ash-e resteh or noodle soup, is typically served on the first day of Nowruz. This soup is special because the knots of noodles symbolize the many possibilities in one's life, and it is thought that untangling the noodles will bring good fortune. Another Nowruz dish is called sabzi pollo mahi (fish served with a special rice mixed with green herbs). The rice is made with many green herbs and spices, which represent the greenness of nature at spring. Special sweets are also served during Nowruz. Traditional items include naan berengi (cookies made from rice flour); baqlava (flaky pastry sweetened with rosewater); samanu (sprouted wheat pudding); and noghl (sugar-coated almonds).

#### *The Final Day of Nowruz: Sizdeh Bedar*

The haft-seen table remains in the family home for thirteen days after the beginning of Nowruz. The thirteenth day is called Sizdeh Bedar, which literally means in Persian "getting rid of the thirteenth." The celebrations that take place on Sizdeh Bedar are just as festive as those on the first day of Nowruz. On this day, families pack a special picnic and go to the park to enjoy food, singing and dancing with other families. It is customary to bring new sprouts, or sabzeh, grown especially for this occasion. At the park, the green blades of the sabzeh are thrown on the ground or in a nearby river or lake to symbolize the return of the plant to nature. Sizdeh Bedar marks the end of the Nowruz celebrations, and the next day children return to school and adults return to their jobs.



# Elections and People's Role from the Viewpoints of Imam Khomeini (RA)

◆ Tahereh Rashidi

Through his messages and speeches against the monarch system, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Late Imam Khomeini (RA), have always used to emphasize a kind of government which is based on two principles: Islamic rules and people's votes.



The Islamic System of Iran, which achieved victory subsequent to fall of dictatorial and despotic regime of Pahlavi in 1978, started its way towards its main purpose and goal based on a pivotal motto: “Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic.”

Through his messages and speeches against the monarch system, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Late Imam Khomeini (RA), have always used to emphasize a kind of government which is based on two principles: Islamic rules and people’s votes.

The Islamic Republic term first time was used by Imam Khomeini in Paris, when he described his favorite and ideal system. Here, republicanism refers to its common meaning, i.e. a government which is popular and based on people’s votes. In response to a journalist’s question on the quiddity of government in the Islamic Republic Model, Imam says, “The Islamic regime and Islamic Republic is a sort of regime which is relied on public vote and public referendum.” Thus, the system’s republicanism refers to acknowledging people’s right to choose and elect their ideal political system and their rulers. It forms the shape and framework of the government considered by the Late Imam. It is a system in which people are recognized as one of the main legitimacy pillars of the political system of Islamic Republic, as people’s opinions and votes are important not only during the initial days of the system’s establishment, but



Speaking about the necessity of eye-catching participation of people in the elections, Imam says, “If your participation would be less than that before the revolution, god forbid, the propaganda machine of foreign enemies and domestic rulers will tell the world that Iran has become disappointed of Islam and the Islamic Republic.”

the Islamic Republic always needs the permanent presence of people and their supervision over the authorities activities.

The Late Imam Khomeini (RA), the great architect of the Islamic Revolution, considered people as the main owners of the system and used to refer to their participation as guarantee for survival of the Revolution. Imam also emphasized the correlation among people as the main element to thwart conspiracies of enemies both inside and outside the country.

Emphasizing the maximum participation of people in the elections, Imam Khomeini believed that people’s participation after the revolution should not be less than that before the revolution, because the enemies’ propaganda machine outside the country and the political losers inside the country will stick it as an excuse to make our people disappointed about the revolution and system and will take advantage of its negatively. They would accuse Islam of being unable to manage the society and to meet people’s demands.

Speaking about the necessity of eye-catching participation of people in the elections, Imam says, “If your participation would be less than that before the revolution, god forbid, the propaganda machine of foreign enemies and domestic rulers will tell the world that Iran has become disappointed of Islam and the Islamic Republic.”

Elections is the manifestation of people’s political presence and participation and the arena in

which people's will to determine their destination would be realized, hence, election is very important and people will play a key role in conducting their mission.

Concerning about the importance of people's participation and presence in the elections, Imam Khomeini Says, "It is a divine duty, it is a national duty and it is a humane duty to which we need to loyal and all of us need to participate in the elections."

Because of this importance and role of people in the elections arena that all authorities and officials and media and caretakers need to take necessary and wise considerations to pave the way for necessary measures and forming a proper space in which the maximal participation of people in the elections would be paved. It would increase hope of advocates and friends of the revolution and Islam and will disappoint the Islam's foes and enemies.

## People's Responsibility in Elections from Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini

### A) Active Participation in the Elections

Imam Khomeini says: "If Islam or the Muslim state is damaged due to lack of taking part in the destiny of the society, god forbid, all of us, as the nation, would be responsible to the Almighty God and next generation would never forgive us because of our negligence and reluctance to participate in our current fate. One of our religious and logic important duties to safeguard Islam and country's advantages is participation in the polling stations and voting qualified and pious candidates who are informed about the world's political conditions and other things







the country needs them and the Majlis needs experts of different fields and majors who are necessary and vital for the country.”

The Late Imam Khomeini (RA), the great architect of the Islamic Revolution, considered people as the main owners of the system and used to refer to their participation as guarantee for survival of the Revolution. Imam also emphasized the correlation among people as the main element to thwart conspiracies of enemies both inside and outside the country.

#### B. Consultation

Imam Khomeini (RA) Says, “For electing your president or MPs you need consult with the committed and educated intellectuals who are informed about the world’s occurrences. They also must be independent from the despotic states and be committed to piety and Islam and Islamic Republic system of Iran. You also can refer to pious and committed clerics who believe in the Islamic Revolution of Iran.”

#### C. The Qualified Election

Imam Khomeini also says, “We need to elect people who are qualified in any case, only being Muslim is not enough, they need to believe in the Islamic Republic and informed about the current affairs and issues. Try to elect people like Martyr Moddares. Your elected ones should be able to detect problems; they must be brave and resistive.

“So the qualified election means electing people who believe in Islam and are ready to defend its reputation. They need to understand everything, because only being Muslim is not enough for a MP, we need Muslims who understand the country’s problems.”

Source: Tebyan





# Nowruz in Islam

◆ Shazia Akbar Awan Awan

Nowruz is the traditional Iranian festival of spring which starts at the exact moment of the vernal equinox, commencing the start of the spring.



It is considered as the start of the New Year among Iranians. The name comes from Avestan meaning “new day/daylight”. Noruz is celebrated March 20/21 each year, at the time the sun enters Aries and Spring begins.

Noruz has been celebrated for at least 3,000 years and is deeply rooted in the rituals and traditions of the Zoroastrian religion. Today the festival of Noruz is celebrated in Iran, Iraq, India, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. The emergence of Islam and its peaceful dealing with other religious beliefs and rituals, including ceremonies and rituals of the Iranian people, resulted in Nowruz to remain untouched.

The word ‘Nowruz’ is a compound word; No and Ruz together mean New Day, and it is the name of the first day of the first solar month, ‘when the Sun in Aries’. In the original Pahlavi (ancient language of Iran) word it means the tip of ruch or the tip of the day. Abū Rayhān al-Bīrūnī in his definition of Nowruz says: ‘It is the first day of the month of Farvardin and the reason it is called New Day is that it is the forehead of the year ...’ Historians and scholars have differed about the status of Nowruz. It is believed that from the time of the migration of the Aryans to the Iranian Plateau and bordering with the civilizations of Mesopotamia, they divided the year into two parts and the celebrations of Nowruz and Mehregan (harvest festival) were the beginning of

these two sections. Nowruz was celebrated marking the summer solstice and the Mehregan was celebrated marking the beginning of winter.

The emergence of Islam and its peaceful dealing with other religious beliefs and rituals, including ceremonies and rituals of the Iranian people, resulted in Nowruz to remain untouched. It was only due to the gradual conversion of Iranians to Islam that the scale of these celebrations was reduced. Over the time, when some customs and traditions would be contrary to the past beliefs, Iranian tried to rediscover their ancient characters and symbols through Islamic characters; in another words, they mixed their Iranian traditions with their Islamic belief. Islamic traditions associate Nowruz with the day when angel Gabriel appeared to Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), the day of Ghadeer and the day of the re-emergence of The Lord of our Time, Imam Mahdi (aj). On the other hand, in Iranian ancient belief, Nowruz is the day when the Creator finished the creation of the world and is the day when Man was created.

In addition to no-opposition stance of Islam in regards to the rituals of Nowruz, and further confirmation of it, continuation of commemoration of Nowruz during the Islamic period can also be attributed to the Persians continuing interest to preserve their ancient heritage. According to Bertold Spuler, a Persian historiographer and geographer; Muslims, especially at the

time of Omar II (Omar ibn Abdulaziz) tried to ignore Nowruz celebrations, but this custom was so deeply associated with the Iranian people’s thought and feelings that soon Nowruz successfully found its own place and with the rise of the Abbasids, and later the Shi’i Buwayeds it widely spread, becoming a regular tradition in Mesopotamia. It was also celebrated in Syria, Egypt and North Africa but not regularly. After the spread of Islam and its adaptation by the people of Iran, Nowruz found its way to expand to wider range of people even amongst non- Iranian tribes, such in Indian continent and North Africa. The respect for Nowruz in Shi’i Islam, although not exclusive to Shia, is very noticeable.

Nowruz has been highly regarded. Alameh Majlesi in Assamae va al Alam has narrated one of the sayings of Imam Sadiq (a) as follows: ‘With the beginning of Farvardin, human was created, and this day is an auspicious day for praying to seek dreams, to visit the nobles, acquiring knowledge, marriage, travelling and good business. In this blessed day the sick will be cured, the babies are born hassle free and sustenance will increase.’ Majlesi also talks about another narration from Imam Musa Kadhim (as) which says: ‘In Nowruz Allah made a covenant with His servants to worship Him and not to allow any partner for Him. To welcome, His messengers and obey their rulings. This day is the first day that the fertile wind blow and

the flowers on the earth appeared. The archangel Gabriel (a) appeared to the Prophet, and it is the day that Abraham (as) broke the idols. The day Prophet Muhammad (S) held Ali (as) on his shoulders to destroy the Quraishies' idols in the house of God, the Kaaba.' Regardless of the Abbasid dynasty ups and downs they managed to maintain their political and religious influence in the Muslim world for more than five centuries, and the endorsement by subsequent Caliph has contributed to celebration of Nowruz, its expansion and continuity.

Nowruz in the Safavids period adopted an Islamic pattern, so separating its ancient Iranian roots from its Islamic traditions would have been extremely difficult. Nowruz had certain grandeur in Abbasids and Safavids courts and Islam perfumed the great celebration of Nowruz with its Islamic traditions. In addition the most symbolic rituals of Nowruz which is the preparation of 'seven S' has both ancient and Islamic roots. In his research 'Nowruz and the Philosophy of Seven S' Mohammad Ali Dadkhah explains: 'Number seven, is sacred and part of the elite. The choice of this number in the preparation of Nowruz is very significant. In the ancient Iran this number was associated with seven holy immortals. In astronomy number seven is the house of dreams, and accomplishing wishes is promised in the seventh abode.' Alameh Majlesi in regards to the importance of number seven



says: 'The heaven and Earth each have seven levels and each level is guarded by an angel.' He also says: 'If at the time of New Year, one recites seven verses of Qur'an which starts with letter S, one would be protected against any afflictions'. The holiness of the New Year moments in the eyes of the people is so colourful and real that they make pilgrimage to holy shrines of Imams and their families. For example in Iran people go to Shiraz for Shahcheragh and Ali ibn Hamze (as); to Mashad for Imam Redha (as), to Qum for Lady Masoumeh (as) and to city of Ray for Shah Abdulazim (as).

Although Nowruz in Iran has attained an Islamic identity, and that the majority of population in Iran is Muslim, nonetheless this has never stopped the followers of other religions enjoying the celebration of Nowruz all the same. Nowruz Invocation Unfortunately there are no mentions of the New Year invocation in known supplication books, which means there are no reliable evidences in Sunni or Shia sources about it. But Alameh Majlesi in his book *Zad al Maad* mentions the existence of some reports in some less known sources. One of which is the following invocation that is highly





recommended to be recited repeatedly. O Moulder of the hearts and vision, O Master of the night and day, O He who changes stratagem and status, Transform our situation to the best condition The above invocation at the time of Safavids was a regular prayer for the New Year.

The fact that recitation of supplications or Qur'an and performing of prayer for the coming of a new year actually did happen, itself, is a sign of the Islamisation of this festivity. The concept of Eid (festivity) in Islam The word Eid (festivity) in Islam The word Eid in the Holy Qur'an has been mentioned only once in the verse 114,

chapter 5 (Maa'idah). 'Said Jesus son of Mary, O Allah! Our Lord! Send down to us a table from the sky, to be a festival for us, for the first ones and the last ones among us and as a sign from You, and provide for us; for You are the best of providers' (114:5) Eid on its own is a verb; it means to return. Return of happy anniversaries and commemorations are also called Eid. According to Islamic Law, Eid is a day in which a benefit or interest is gained and a day when a special prayer is performed and people congregate. The days of AlAzha (Qurban) and of Al Fitr are also Eid days. Verse 114 of Chapter 5 (Maa'idah) where Prophet Isa (as) asked for food from Heaven is taken as the day of miracle and that day is considered for all human as Eid. Eid, in this verse is referring to a Divine blessing descended from heaven in the form of a tray, or trays of delicious and edible food, so it became a sign for people to commemorate such day every year and bring joy and happiness repeatedly. Also repetition and return of such days could return same blessings which give us, human, another chance to make connection with God and remembering Him in our hearts and by our tongues. Islamic rituals of Nowruz In Mafatih al Jinan, which in the past decades has been one of the greatest books for religious recommended acts of worship, we read that the Prayer of Nowruz is a prayer combined of recitation of Al -Fatiha, Al-Qadr, Al-Kaferoon, AlTawhid, Al-

Falagh, Al-Nass and many other chapters of the Holy Qur'an. It is similar to a prayer which not only has the forms of Friday prayer but also the attributes of the prayers of Ghadeer Khum. Mafatih Al Jinan narrates from Imam Jafar Al Sadiq(as): 'When Nowruz comes, make Ghosl (ceremonial wash) , put on your clean clothes, and fragrant yourself with best perfumes, so when you are free of all other prayers, perform a four- rakaat prayer, each rakaat one Salam and in the first rakaat after Sura Al-Fateha ten times Sura Al-Qadr, and in the second rakaat after Al-Fateha ten times Al-Kaferoon. In the thried rakaat after Al-Feteheh ten times Al-Nass and Al-Falaq. After prayer prostrate in gratification.'

As we can see the rituals of Nowruz is the same as rituals for any other Islamic Eids of which its supplication starts with offering salutations to the messenger of Allah and his progeny and all the messengers of God. Nowruz has always been celebrated by Iranians. Its customs, despite the thousands of years, has never been demolished or forgotten. Nowruz has been a festivity celebrated by all the tribes, ethnic groups or religions that existed and lived in the Iranian Plateau for centuries and today many other countries, influenced by the culture of Iran such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and even some central Asian countries such as Kurds of Turkey, Iraq and Syria celebrate it too.

Source: [ijtihadnet.com](http://ijtihadnet.com)

# Fall of Democracy in the West

◆ Dr. Ali Naderi

There are two important issues in any sort of elections: first, the principle of participation in the elections and casting ballots in the poll box; second is identification and recognition of the most qualified candidates, which needs a great deal of scrutiny and time.

To be authenticated across the world, democratic societies need to attract and convince their citizens to participate in certain activities such as elections. But there are some intellectuals who have challenged that assumption on the basis that not everyone has the skills and knowledge necessary to make informed political decisions. In the developed and imperialistic societies, the better-off classes are more engaged in policy, while the poorest vote less and lack the re-

sources to lobby for change.

It seems an odd question, but researchers are increasingly asking whether citizen participation is good for democracy. Concerns about apparently diminished participation in the US reflect a Tocquevillian belief that more citizen participation benefits society and the polity. Many political observers lament the decline in voting turnout across the established democracies and view this trend as detrimental to the democratic process.

Low voter turnout in the United States has confounded politicians, activists and academics seeking to reverse a trend that puts the country behind many of the world's developed nations in participation at the polls.

Some years ago, the Pew Research Center ranked the U.S. 31st out of 35 countries including Islamic Republic of Iran for voter turnout based on the voting age populace, among the mostly democratic nations that are a part of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The study showed 53 percent of eligible voters in the U.S. cast ballots in 2012, with about 129 million people out of a potential 241 million citizens taking part in the election.

In recent history, participation in the U.S. has peaked during presidential elections, when the last several decades show about 55 to 60 percent of the eligible electorate will vote. But those numbers trail off during non-presidential years and in primary races.

Internationally, Belgium had the highest participa-





tory rate in its most recent election at 87 percent, followed by Turkey at 84 percent and Sweden at 82 percent. The study found that compulsory voting often had an impact on voter turnout, which was the case with three of the top five ranked countries, including Belgium and Turkey.

While mandatory voting is unlikely to happen in the United States, some states are looking to improve those statistics, even though many concede the reasons for low voter turnout are both varied and elusive.

According to interviews with research institutions, advocacy groups and legislators involved in those efforts, restrictive voting laws, as well as lack of hope to find a better society through voting, corrupt politicians and lawmakers in some states discourage the electorate from registering to vote. Additionally, they said gerrymandered districts cut across party lines reducing the number of competitive races and interest, and disgruntled citizens, fed up with the often contentious nature of politics, can choose not participate.

Liberal democracy in the west is facing its greatest crisis in decades, challenged from within by populists and from without by authoritarianism in the United States and even Europe and elsewhere. Reflecting what is becoming a widespread view, Viktor Orbán, Hungary's right-wing prime minister, recently proclaimed: "The era of liberal



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democracy is over." What went wrong? Many analysts focus on economic problems. Slow growth, rising inequality, and welfare-state cutbacks have made life more insecure for the working and middle classes and spread economic risk, fear of the future, and social divisions throughout western societies.

Others argue social grievances are to blame. Traditional norms about religion, sexuality, family life and more have been challenged while massive immigration and, especially in the United States, the mobilization of oppressed minority groups has disrupted existing hierarchies, leaving some citizens angry and resentful.

Most discussions stop here, arguing economic or social change has led inevitably to dissatisfaction with democracy and a populist backlash. But economic and social changes only become problems if politicians, parties and governments don't recognize and respond to them.

In fact, dissatisfaction with democracy is rooted in the belief that democracy is not working – that it is unable or unwilling to deal with citizens' demands and concerns. And there is evidence the dissatisfied are right: over time, politicians, parties and governments have become less responsive to a broad cross-section of citizens.

In the United States, gerrymandering has increasingly warped the translation of voter preferences into political outcomes. By some measures, close to 45% of the US population lives in gerrymandered districts where outcomes heavily favor one party, diminishing the need for parties to consider the preferences of voters outside their base.

The role of money in politics has also increased, skewing who politicians pay attention to and who controls the agenda-setting pro-



cess. Several political scientists have found that the interests of economic elites and the organized groups representing their interests powerfully shape government policy while less well-off Americans and the mass-based interest groups that represent their interests have much less influence.

In addition, private funding of campaigns has grown, influencing who runs for office, who gets elected, and what issues candidates respond to. The Koch network, whose preferences, especially on economic policy, are to the right of even most Republican voters, now raises about as much money as the entire Republican party spent on the 2016 elections. Perhaps because campaigns in-

creasingly require candidates to fundraise themselves, few lower-income people run for office. This biases economic debate in particular since politicians with working-class backgrounds are dramatically more likely than others to take progressive or pro-worker positions, even when controlling for partisanship, district characteristics and other factors. The American voting system also discourages particular groups from voting, particularly the poor and minorities, shaping what voices are heard at election time and within the political sphere more generally.

Given all this, it's unsurprising that political scientists have found that senior staff members in Congress – the people who help their

bosses decide what bills to pursue and support – have “no clue what Americans want”. The more time they spend talking to big business rather than mass membership groups, the more clueless these congressional staffers become.

In Europe, other trends have also diminished democracy's responsiveness, including the decline of mainstream political parties. Historically, social democratic and labour parties acted as the voice of the disadvantaged and disempowered. But over recent decades their economic policy-making became dominated by “finance-oriented economists” and neo-liberal think tank-based policy wonks who pushed them in a more neoliberal direction, and their overall lead-





ership shifted towards a highly educated elite whose preferences, particularly on issues like the benefits of the EU, immigration and cultural change, diverged greatly from those of their traditional voters.

The rise of an unelected technocracy at the national and European level has also reshaped democracy. Over the past decades, evermore policymaking areas fell under the purview of the EU without any corresponding increase in European citizens' control over them. Technocrats' preferences often diverge from those of ordinary citizens, and technocrats tend only to ask whether a policy is "effective", when equally if not more important is whether it

is legitimate. Citizens are more likely to tolerate the "inevitable disappointments and frustrations" of policy when they can vote out those whose decisions they disagree with.

Democracy is, by definition, "rule by the people". This does not require a perfect correspondence between some impossible to define "will of the people" and political outcomes, but it does require that the divergence between the two not be too great. In addition, political equality is the heart of democracy: some citizens cannot be systematically and permanently more powerful or impactful than others. It is hard to recognize much less solve large social and economic problems if

politicians, parties and governments are primarily responsive to elites or narrow groups of voters, rather than broad, cross-sections of the population.

We are living in a time when these basic features and requirements of democracy have been eroded, leaving many citizens feeling disregarded and disempowered. As one leader of the "yellow vests" movement in France explained, "What we want above all is respect" – leaders and government should not ignore our needs and concerns. If traditional politicians and parties cannot convince citizens that they are willing and able to do this, dissatisfaction with democracy will increase – as will support for its radical alternatives.



# The ‘Deal of the Century’: Revealed and Reviled

◆ By Hasan Abu Nimah

*On January 28, US President Donald Trump officially revealed his long-awaited “Deal of the Century”: The plan for resolving the century-old Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Except for some additional details, the lengthy document did not add much to what had already been leaked, or even implemented, over the last three years. And yet, the content has been shocking and widely criticised.*

The timing of the declaration was seen by some critics as an opportunistic move to:

First, salvage two in-crisis leaders from problems they are facing at home: Trump’s impeachment and Netanyahu’s corruption case. (In

fact Netanyahu was indicted on corruption charges while in Washington awaiting the announcement ceremony of the deal; and second, help Netanyahu in his battle in the third Israeli general election due on March 2 next, as

well as Trump’s bid for a second presidential term at the end of this year.

If so, nothing could be more distressing than when the destiny of an entire people, the Palestinian people, is immorally, illegally and





inhumanely utilised for such pure personal purposes.

Obviously, the deal's announcement date, as well as its content, which was meant to succeed the March 2 Israeli election day so that it would not influence the outcome, was brought forward to extricate Netanyahu out of his legal crisis.

The highly biased content of the deal confirms previous predictions that it was entirely authored in Israel by the most hardline extremist and racist settler elements there; the elements that openly claim Palestine as the land of the Jewish people with no place for the Palestinians in it.

It is precisely for this reason, that it was Israel, not the Palestinians which had been obstructing peace

efforts for the last 50 years. It is Israel which never negotiated with the purpose of reaching a final settlement; in favour of using protracted negotiations for buying time to create more irreversible facts on the ground, eliminating any possibility of the rise of a Palestinian state at any time. It is Israel, not the Palestinians, which sabotaged all US efforts and initiatives for meaningful negotiations; remember William Rogers' initiative, President Carter's efforts, Jim Baker's, John Kerry's and others. It is Israel which rejected and ignored hundreds of UN resolutions, including Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967. It is Israel which rejected the King Fahd initiative in 1982 and the Arab Peace initiative, which offered it

peace, recognition and normal relations with all the Arab and the Muslim states in 2002.

The Palestinians and the concerned Arab states did reject some peace plans but for the right reasons. They were not supposed to accept any offer that did not recognise their legitimate rights as defined and endorsed by international law. There is nothing abnormal here in any negotiations.

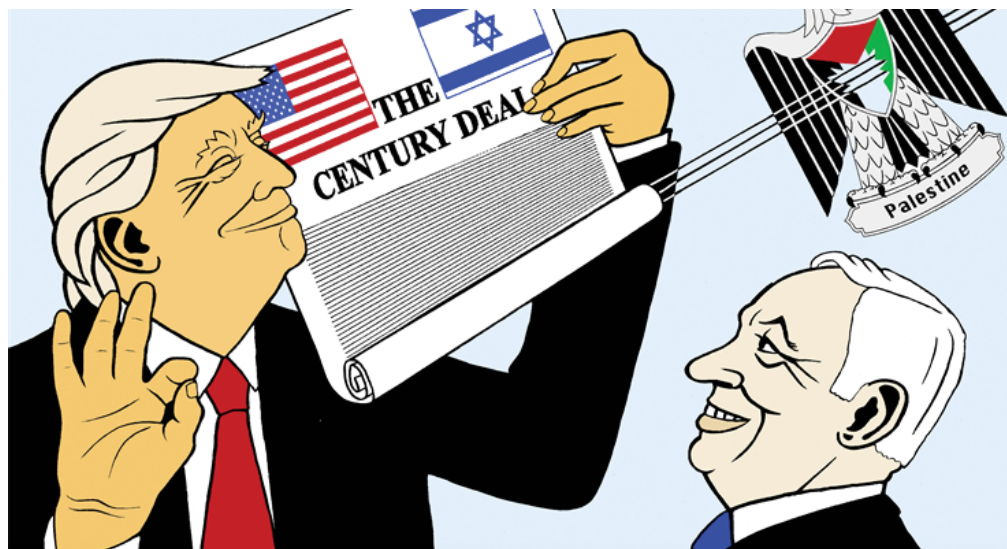
The striking reality, however, is that the Palestinians have been overly extravagant in accepting much less than they should have along their arduous struggle for a peaceful settlement, severely compromising their territorial and political rights for the sake of a peace settlement they never had.

The Palestinians agreed to settle

for 22 per cent of the Palestinian territory, the West Bank and Gaza, along the so-called 1967 lines; they agreed to a swap of territory and border alterations, thus reducing even further the 22 per cent, they then agreed to the Oslo accords which actually placed the Palestinians under endless and harsh Israeli occupation, that controlled their lives, their economy, tax collection and restriction of movement.

Under Oslo, Israel continued to colonise the Palestinian land, planting more than 800,000 settlers in more than 120 settlements built illegally on Palestinian occupied land on the 22 per cent, the West Bank.

Under Oslo, the Palestinian Authority agreed to the unique preposterous arrangement of “security cooperation”; the formation of a Palestinian police force not to protect their own people from daily aggressive Israeli practices or settler attacks on defenseless Palestinians’ property, farms and homes; not to defend their land which was systematically confiscated and colonised, but to protect their occupiers and the settlers and to prevent the Palestinians from practising their legitimate right to even defend themselves, or to reject the humiliation and resist the occupation. The recruited Palestinian youth for the security cooperation police force were educated, trained and armed, to do just that: Defend their occupiers from their own people. There is no precedent in history where the op-







pressed victims of such a ruthless occupation become the guardians and the protectors of their oppressors. Only in Palestine. Only by the Palestinians, who are now condemned by their wise Arab brothers and a chorus of pseudo experts for missing opportunities by rejecting repeated offers for peace from their generous occupiers.

But that is not all. The Palestinians have been engaged in sterile negotiations for more than five decades. The late Yaser Arafat negotiated extensively with the US, with Europe and all others. He agreed to a settlement on the basis of the 1967 borders. He agreed to renounce violence. He agreed to modify the Palestinian National Charter by removing any language seen as hostile to Israel. He accepted UN resolutions, including SC Resolution 242. He published an article in the NY Times condemning terrorism, of which he, and his organisation, were accused. He accepted Oslo with all the disastrous implications of that terrible accord. Rather than insisting on liberating his people by ending the occupation, Arafat agreed to join his occupied people and spend his last years under the very occupation he committed himself, and his organisation, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, to fight. Arafat, who started his struggle by committing to liberate all Palestine, ended up, under Oslo, agreeing to Gaza and Jericho as a modest beginning.

Successor Mahmoud Abbas also negotiated endlessly and tirelessly

with every Israeli Prime Minister during the past 25 years. He negotiated with the Americans, Europeans and every country in the world. He pledged to only negotiate and not to ever allow his people to resist their occupiers for any reason even if by legitimate means, and he still does.

As a matter of fact, Abbas was harshly criticised for being excessively forthcoming for negotiating under uneven circumstances; sometimes under humiliating conditions. He over did it to the point where the Israelis were always encouraged to expand their demands and to add new conditions. In the meantime, and under the convenient cover of sterile negotiations, they continued with their colonisation schemes without fear of any consequences. From an early stage, Abbas was clearly taken for granted.

Abbas has only redeemed himself, partially though, when, for a change, he finally decided to say “no”, to sever any contacts with the current US administration and to end the charade of pointless negotiations, following President Trump’s measures to liquidate the Palestine question; measures such as the decision to grant Jerusalem to Israel, to punish the Palestinians financially and to cut aid from UNRWA in the hope that the termination of UNRWA would also put an end to the Palestinian refugees’ rights for return and compensation.

These measures and more are now incorporated in the revealed terms



of the White House “Deal of the Century”. Now that the world is face to face with the most biased, the most blatant, unjust, illegal, provocative, absurd and dangerous terms of the US peace plan, everyone, not just Abbas, is saying no. All Palestinians are rejecting the plan and ready to fight it. The Arab League concluded a meeting on the matter last Saturday with a unanimous declaration strongly rejecting the plan, while reconfirming the Palestinian rights for statehood and liberation. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has also issued a similar rejection following a meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia few days ago. The UN is opposing the plan, as are many

other world powers, in addition to credible Jewish voices in the US and in Israel. Former Israeli officials have expressed serious concern about ominous consequences of the deal on the Israeli scene. Israelis demonstrated in Tel Aviv earlier this week to voice their rejection under the banner “Peace plan, not annexation deal”. They chanted: “Annexation is a disaster, no peace no security”. Israeli Arabs organised huge demonstrations as well rejecting the deal and warning against transfer.

What was revealed on January 28 is not a deal, or a peace proposal, or a plan. It is an endorsement of Israel’s extremist position that aims at eradicating the Palestinians





from their homeland once and for all. Clearly the plan was designed to be rejected by the Palestinians, so that they would be held responsible for missing another opportunity for peace and missing also their share as very poorly defined in the deal, the imagined Palestinian state, while the Israelis would then be free to grab most of the territory.

The US president has no legal authority or right to abolish international law and decide on his own to illegally and unilaterally grant Palestinian and Syrian occupied lands to a usurper state.

The deal has no chance to redraw the lines or to be implemented, as it has no legal validity, and it will not

be helped except by the extremist Israeli elements and those who support them, mainly in the US.

Israel, therefore, may or may not rush to annex the West Bank areas designated in the deal: The settlements and the Jordan Valley. But even if that happens, it will not change the existing reality on the ground. The areas in question are already under Israeli occupation, for more than 50 years now. Occupied Jerusalem and the Golan Heights were already annexed by Israel for more than 40 years. The American permission for Israel to annex them again may only comfort Israel into believing that its illegal annexation is gaining validation from an important world

power. It does not. The occupation cannot be legalised simply by an illegal verbal decision of a third unauthorised party.

The deal is also dangerous, for Israel in particular, but for the entire region as well. It may, as many have already feared, plunge the region into prolonged waves of violence, on top of what is happening already. The situation is quite explosive with patience running out as a result of mounting injustice, prolonged occupation and hopelessness. The deal could spark a wild fire and, let us hope it does not.

The Palestinians must revise their strategies and rearrange their priorities. It is time that they demand the end of the occupation rather than live with it as they have been doing, particularly since Oslo. The problem did not start with the “Deal of the Century” and will not end without it. It is the occupation that should be removed first. The other Palestinian rights should also be dealt with within the UN system, nowhere else.

Finally: the Palestinian case is only part of the larger Arab-Israeli conflict. The “peace process” that started with the Madrid Peace conference 30 years ago, envisioned a “peace settlement” of the Arab-Israeli conflict in its entirety, with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. Egypt had already reached a settlement in 1979. The goal was a just, a comprehensive and a permanent peace. Where is the “Deal of the Century” from That?

Source: Global Research

# Iranian Months, Their Origins and Origin of the Names

◆ By: Massoume Price

The names of the 12 Persian months are taken from the ancient Zoroastrian texts and the origins are deeply rooted in their belief system. The Lord of Wisdom in order to defeat the hostile spirits creates many forces and beings to help him. There are three groups of metaphysical beings, some are more important than others. The first group is the six Amesha Spenta. With

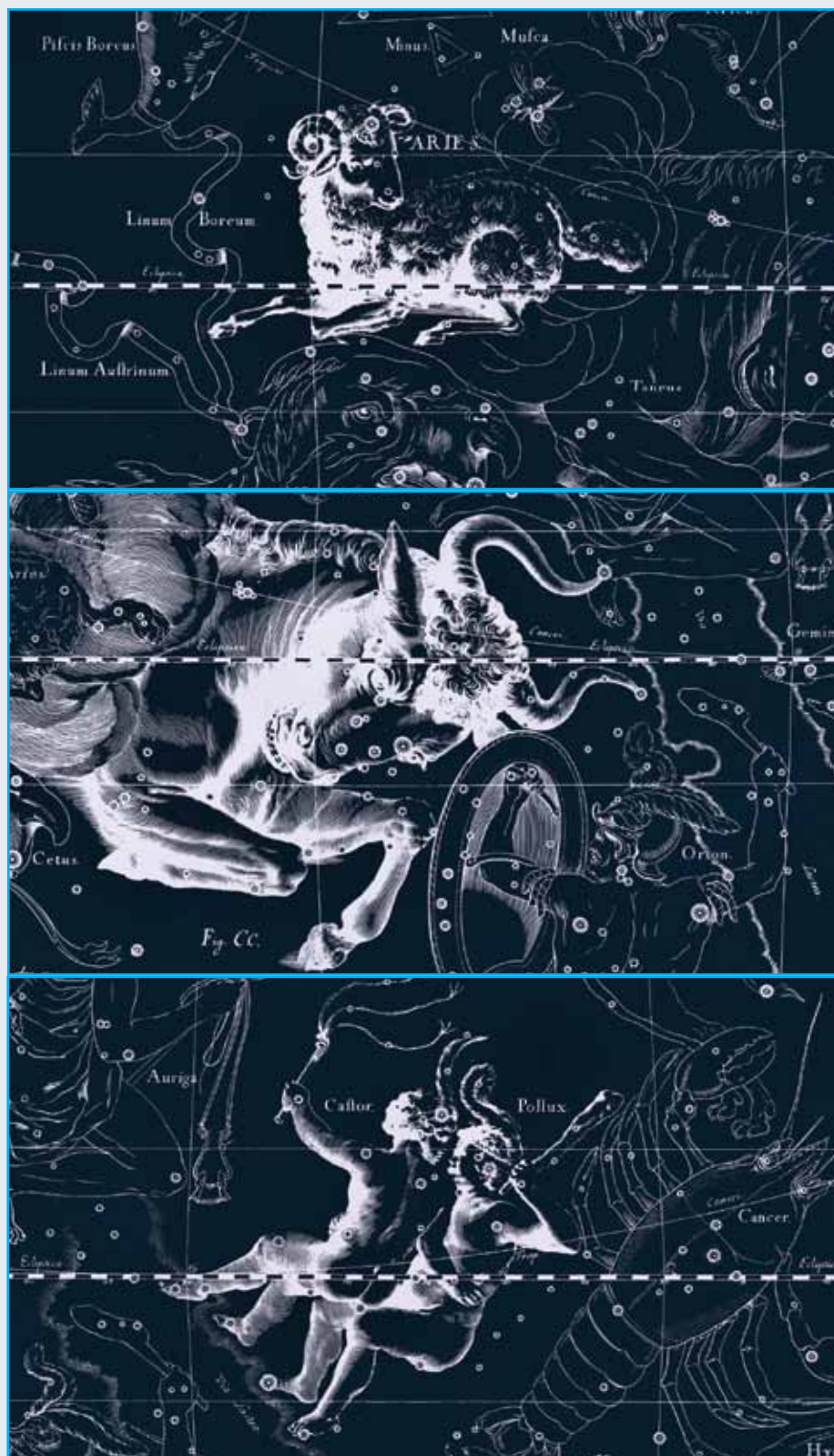
the Lord of wisdom they form the seven Holy Immortals that protect the first seven creations when the material world (Geety) is created. They are the protectors of sky, waters, earth, fire, plants, animals and humans. Six of the twelve months are in their names. Khashtra Vairya (Shahrevan), is the lord of sky, all stones, metals, warriors and the protector of the poor and

the weak. It means the desirable dominion (Keshvar e Are-zoo Shodeh). Shahr is country or land and Var means desirable. Asha Vahishta (Ordibehesht) lord of fire and noontime heat means the ultimate righteousness (Behtarin Rasty). Asha has many meanings - righteousness, law, purity, sacred (Asha Zardosht) are only some of the commonly used ones.





Vohu Manah (Bahman) protector of animals means good purpose (Nik Nahad). He was a powerful symbol of creative goodness and is the divinity personifying the principle of Asha (cosmic order). Haurvatat (Khordad) protects all waters and means health or wholeness (Rasaei & Kamali). Spenta Armaiti (Esphand / Espandarmaz) a female deity who protects mother earth is Holy Devotion (Foroutani Moghadas). Espand means holy and Armaiti equals devotion and unconditional love. She is also the guardian of herdsmen and farmers. She is identified by the Greeks as Demeter and in Armenia is known as Spendaramet. Ameretat (Mordad) supporter of all plant life represents immortality (Na mira). Mar (marg in modern Persian) means death, 'a' at the beginning of any word changes the meaning into the opposite. Mordad means death, while Amordad means immortality. Mordad is used wrongly in modern calendar and should be Amordad. These immortals also represent different aspects of Ahura Mazda's attributes. One of their functions is to transfer these attributes to humans. For example Vohu Manah (Bahman) is a symbol of "Good Purpose". Zoroastrians through Bahman Yasht (Prayers specific to Bahman) would discipline themselves to always mean good and have noble purposes. Ordibehesht Yasht (Yasht means

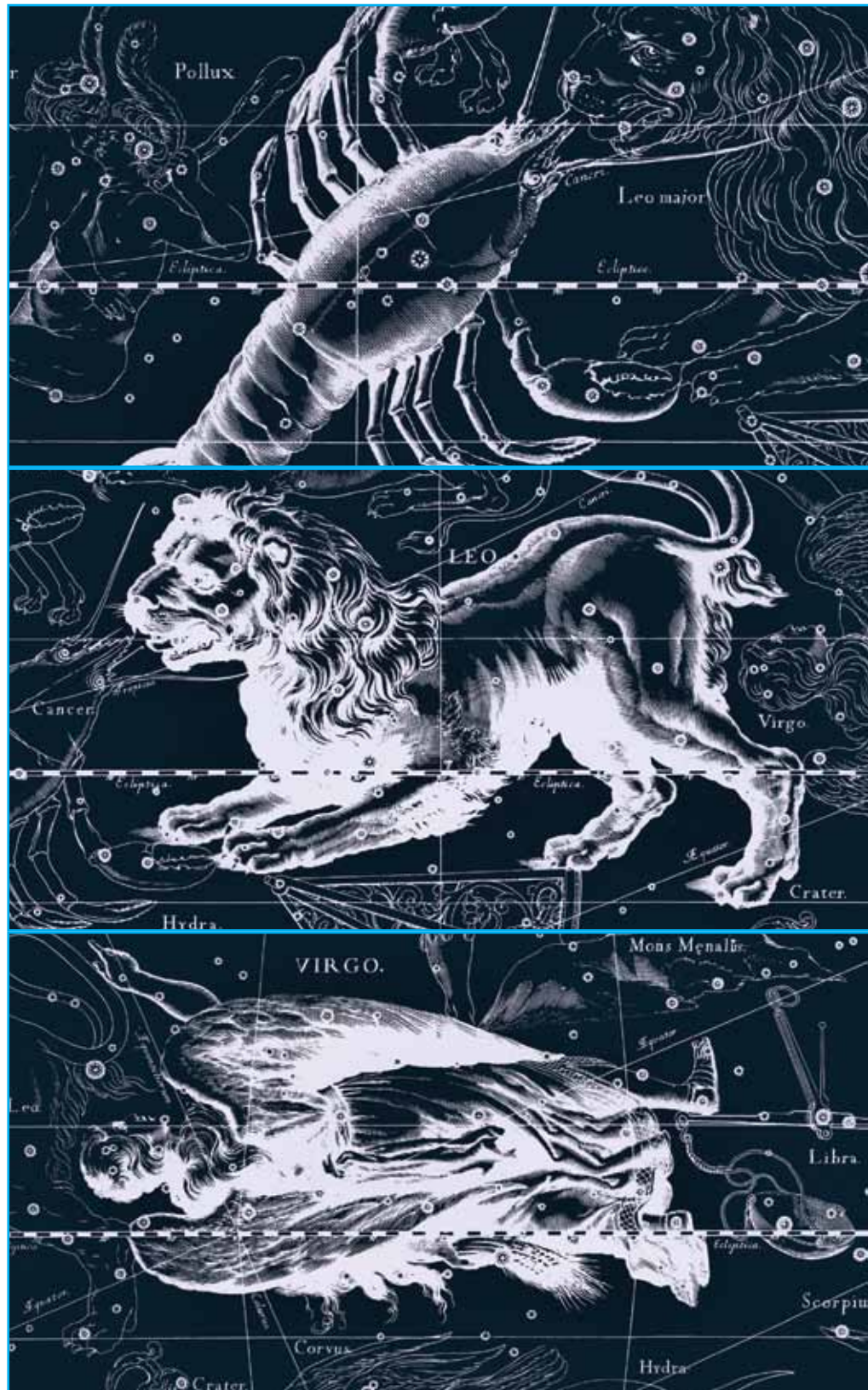




prayer) will teach Zoroastrians to follow righteousness, one of Lord of Wisdom's attributes.

The second group of metaphysical beings are Yazata (Eyzad), 'a being worthy of worship'. There are many of them. Good forces in nature and all deeds and attributes beneficial to humans have their own Eyzad. Azar, Aban, Khorshid, Mihr, Tir and Bahram are some of the best known Eyzads. Azar (Atar/Adur) is yazata of fire (Agni in Indian Rig-Veda). It is one of the most important of all Eyzads. In Avestan Mythology it helps legendary king Takhmorup (Tahmoureth) and Yima Khshae-ta (Jamshid) to overcome many obstacles. The word has become synonymous with fire (Atash) in modern Persian.

Aban, is Avestan 'Apas', 'Api' in middle Persian and 'Ap' in Phalavi. It means water (Aub, in modern Persian). It is the protector Eyzad of the 'waters' and an assistant to Spenta Armaiti. Mihr is Mithra in Avesta and Mitrah in Phahlavi. It is the yazata of the covenant and of loyalty. It has come from the word mei, meaning exchange. In Avesta he is the protector of 'Payman e Dousti' (contract of friendship). In modern Persian it means love and kindness. He is the lord of ordeal by fire (walking through fire to prove innocence, story of Siavash in Shahnameh) and presides over judgment of the soul at death. Ancient Greeks identified him with Apollo.

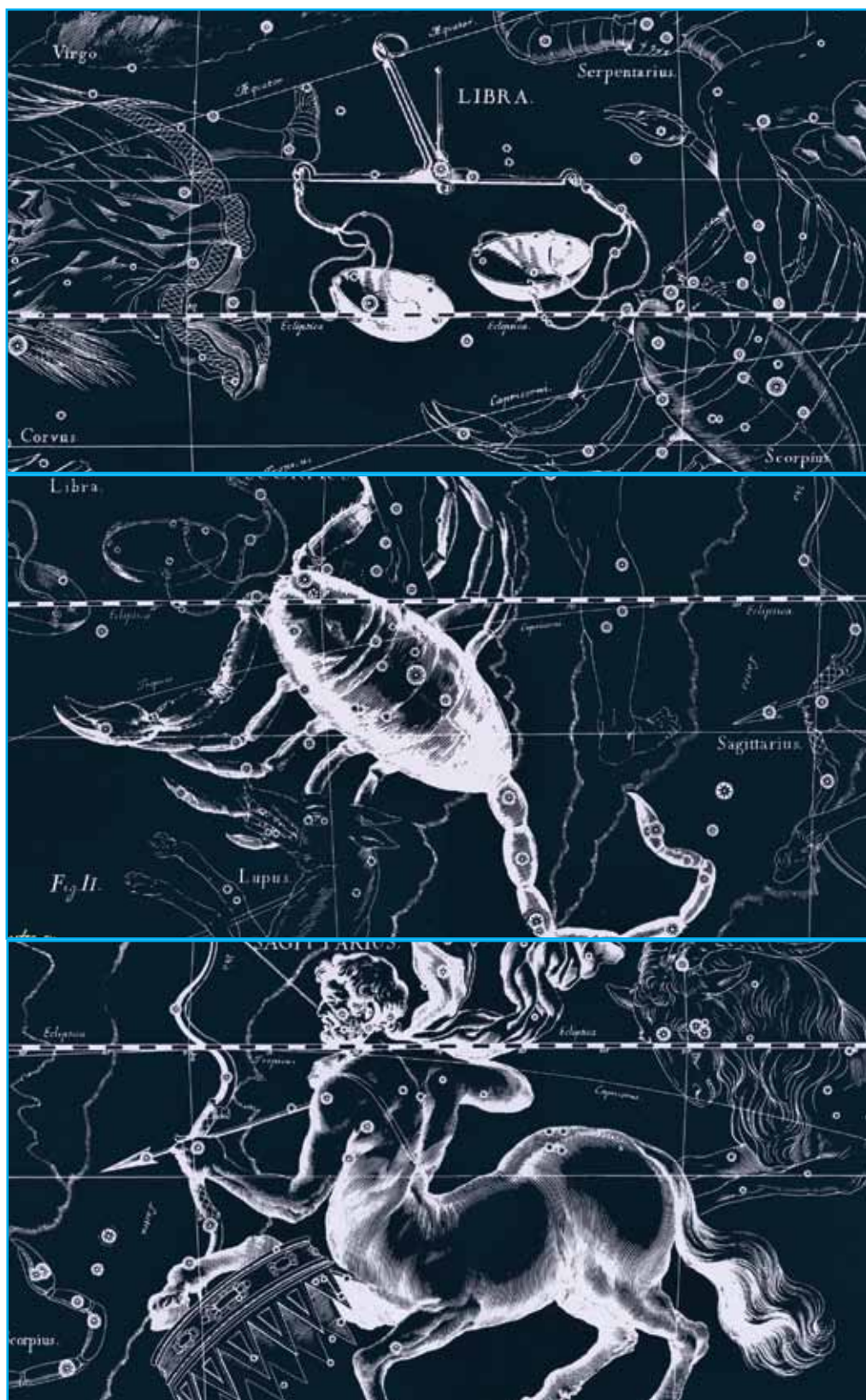




Tiri, Tir (Tishtrya), is assimilation from Babylonian Nabu, lord of scribe and of the planet Mercury into Avestan mythology. It means the swift one (Tond va chabok) and protects rain. In Persian-Islamic mythology Tir (Attarod in Arabic) is still the lord of scribe (Setareh Dabir).

The last groups of Metaphysical beings are Farevashi or 'Forouhars', the guardian angels created by Ahura Mazda to protect living beings after the material world

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(Geety) was created. These are protectors of humans from birth to death and it is roughly translated as guardian. The word has become synonymous with fereshteh in modern Persian. Farvardin, is the descent of Farevashi to earth in order to visit and help their human counter parts. It also means 'Farr e Din', glory of religious consciousness. A major festival celebrating departed souls it was changed into celebrating guardian angels coming to earth before the start of the New Year. Farvardegan is 'Jashn e Farevashi' and it still celebrated by Zoroastrians today. 'Day' (dadar) means creator (Afaridegar). The whole month was dedicated to Ahura Mazda. The eight, fifteenth and twenty-third of every month were also called 'Day'. The first day of this month was celebrated as 'Khoram Ruz' a feast of charity, people were expected to be charitable and help others. The twelve deities have survived as months of the year in modern Persian calendar. In the Islamic period the same structure was taken and transformed into the Iranian version of Shiite Islam. Twelve Imams replaced Yazata and Saoshyant; the last saviour was changed into the Time Lord, Imam Zaman. However the meanings, the importance of following and practicing divine attributes as part of the monthly rituals are lost. So are the joys, monthly feasts and celebrations associated with them.





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
حرر الحلال  
حولك حلال  
محول حول ولا  
لله الشكر ما  
ما سرنا  
تأملت ما ولا الصبر

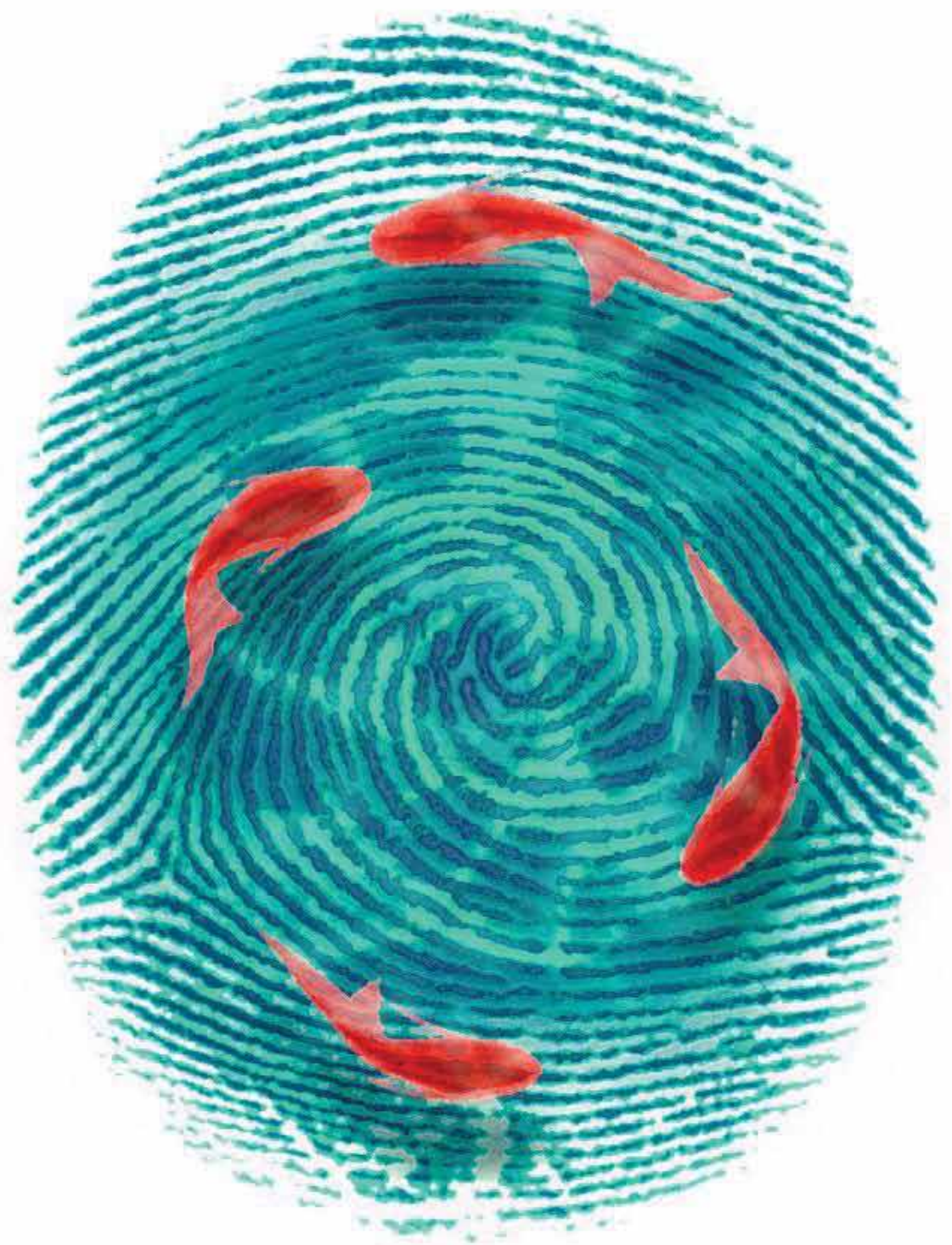
بیچ نوروزی نیست مگر آن که مادر آن روز منتظر فرج (قادم آمل محم) هستیم؛  
چرا که نوروز از روزهای ما و شیعیان ماست.

«امام صادق علیه السلام»

*There is no Nowruz, but when we are waiting  
for the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (AJ),  
because Nowruz is a day of ours and our Shi-  
ites.*

*(Imam Sadiq (AS))*

*The Election is a Rebirth of Country's Movement*  
*Ayatollah Khamenei*



انتخابات، تجدید حیات برای حرکت کشور است  
آیت الله خامنه‌ای