



National Inventory on the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

Welcome to the National database of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India.

In fulfillment of its obligations under the UNESCO convention on ICH, a statute to which India is a signatory, the Ministry of Culture, Govt. Of India, has declared the Sangeet Natak Akademi, India's apex body on culture, as the Nodal centre for coordinating India's nominations for various lists and other actions such as developing and maintaining the National Inventory of ICH through the Ministry of Culture's **letter no.2-21/2011-UNESCO cell** dated 21 February, 2011.

The Sangeet Natak Akademi's nomination as the ICH Nodal agency has been endorsed, as required by the Akademi's constitution, by its duly constituted Executive Board and General Council. The Akademi is an autonomous body engaged in the work of preserving and promoting the traditional cultural heritage of India's rich performing arts of classical dance, music, theatre, puppetry, crafts and folk arts and is represented on its General Council by India's top cultural and artistic personalities.

As the first step in the making of a National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), this website offers collective ICH database of a variety of well-known institutions and organisations engaged in culture. The National database of Intangible Cultural Heritage also has a link to the current and ongoing nomination, documentation, attachments and audio-visual materials of each of the chosen elements in its entirety. Each element is supported by the requisite documents by the community engaged in the work of preservation and promotion of each. It is indeed the result of the participating bodies' demand to be placed on the UNESCO Representative List. The respective ICH elements are also part of a larger database culled from regional institutions located all over India and are a product of the community's knowledge of their micro and macro profiles garnered over their intimate association with this knowledge gained over hundreds and even thousands of years.

Links of archives and other databases of various subordinates offices, attached offices and autonomous bodies of Ministry of Culture, Government of India

Sangeet Natak Akademi, National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama, India

North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala

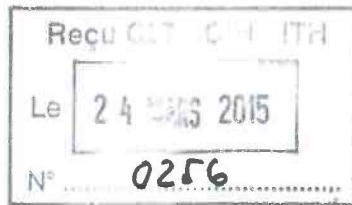
North Centre Zone Cultural Centre, Allahabad

South Central Zone Cultural Centre, Nagpur

Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre, Kolkata

Centre for Cultural Resources and Training, New Delhi

Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi



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Inventory on the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India (current and ongoing nomination, documentation, attachments and audio-visual materials of each elements)

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No.	Name of the Element	Detail (PDF)	Consent letters (PDF)	Images	Video	Other reference links
1	Kutiyattam, Sanskrit Theatre					http://kerala.gov.in/
2	The Tradition of Vedic Chanting					http://www.sangeetnatak.gov.in/
3	Ramlila - the Traditional Performance of the Ramayana					http://www.sangeetnatak.gov.in/
4	Novruz, Nowrouz, Nooruz, Navruz, Nauroz, Nevruz	Description	Consent	Images		http://www.unescoparzor.com/
5	Ramman: Religious Festival and Ritual Theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas	Description		Images	Video	http://uk.gov.in/
6	Chhau Dance	Description	Consent	Images	Video	http://www.jharkhand.gov.in/ http://odisha.gov.in/ http://westbengal.gov.in/
7	Kalbells: Folk Songs and Dances, Rajasthan, India	Description	Consent	Images	Video	http://www.rajasthan.gov.in/
8	Mudiyettu: Ritual Theatre and Dance Drama, Kerala, India	Description	Consent	Images	Video	http://kerala.gov.in/
9	Buddhist chanting of Ladakh: recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir, India	Description	Consent	Images	Video	http://leh.nic.in/ http://jammukashmir.nic.in/
10	Sankirtan, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur	Description	Consent	Images	Video	http://manipur.gov.in/
11	Thatheras of Jandiala Guru: Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making, Punjab, India.	Description	Consent	Images	Video	http://punjabgovt.nic.in/
12	Kolam: Ritualistic Threshold Drawings and Designs of Tamil Nadu, India	Description	Consent	Images	Video	http://www.tn.gov.in/
13	Music and knowledge of the Veena strinaed	Description	Consent	Images	Video	http://www.sangeetnatak.gov.in/



Sangeet Natak Akademi

New Delhi

NAVROZE

Navroze, celebrated on the 21st of March every year, marks the beginning of the Parsi-Zoroastrian New Year and Spring. It is celebrated on the Spring or Vernal Equinox- when the length of the day equals that of the night. It is also the day on which the sun leaves the constellation of Pisces and enters Aries and marks the transition period between winter and summer. There are various ceremonies, rituals, and cultural events held within every family and community. The celebrations include traditional games, special cuisines, music and dance performances; also brought to the fore are oral expressions and literature, handicrafts and painting masterpieces (in particular miniature arts). Values of peace and solidarity, reconciliation and neighbourhood, cultural diversity and tolerance, healthy life-style, respect for nature and renewal of living environment are promoted and transmitted from generation to generation during this cultural event. Women play a major role in the cultural event, by managing the ceremonies and disseminating the traditional knowledge to the youth. It is a part of and strengthens the cultural identity of the community involved.

MYTHS AND LEGENDS

Navroze is a festival more than 3000 years old. There are records of the festival's celebration dating from the 6th century onwards. It embraces a variety of different features of an intangible cultural heritage as of its antiquity, a very vast geographical scope and many periods, as well as a time of its holding. It consists of a variety of cultural forms and expressions based on myths just like that of the Jamshed, the mythological king of Iran, who added elements of the solar calendar to the system of determining dates. This is deemed to be the mythical day on which King Jamshed was crowned King of Persia. It is in his honour that the festival is also called the *Jamshedi Navroze*. Similar myths exist in Indian and Turkish mythologies. There is also the central Asian myth in which *Naneh-Nowruz* waits for *Amoo-Nowruz* to come but at the very moment of the beginning of the New Year she falls asleep. *Amoo-Nowruz* comes and goes while she is asleep. This legend repeats every year.

This festival, celebrated by many as a spring festival even today, has its origins in the seasonal festivals of Central Asia, over time it has come to acquire religious significance for the Zoroastrians. The festival becomes a significant part of the Zoroastrian respect for nature. A celebration of the agricultural season, it became dedicated to *Ahura Mazda*, Lord of Wisdom and the *Amesha Spenta* or Holy Immortals as part of the Gahambar celebrations of

the season. Oral Tradition and the *Afringan e Gahambar* tell us that in the first *Gahambar*, God created the sky, in the second water; the third earth; the fourth vegetation, the fifth animals; the sixth, man. God fixed a time for remembering His creations in the *Gahambars*. The names of the seasonal festivals are: Mailyozarem, mid-spring; Mailyoshahem, mid-summer; Paitishahem or bringing in the grain; Ayathren, the home-coming of the herds; Mailyarem, mid-winter and Hamaspathmaidyem, held for the Fravashis during the Gatha days of the Zoroastrian calendar. Navroze or the New Year is the largest and most holy celebration, dedicated to Spring, Fire and Righteousness. It is still celebrated as a spring festival by many including the Kashmiri pundits of India.

NAVROZE AS A COMMUNITY FESTIVAL IN INDIA

Being the most important day on the Parsi-Zoroastrian calendar, Navroze brings the entire community together. The word Navroze itself, an Indian variation of Nooruj, Nowruz etc. and literally meaning New day, is a result of the community's adaptation of the indigenous language and culture. Bonds of friendship are made and renewed at this time of the year. "In India, this community celebration of the agricultural season has changed in a primarily urban environment to become mainly a social gathering."

Early in March the preparations for Navroze begin with the sprouting of *Sabzeh* (lentil, wheat or barley) and *Khane Tekani* (house cleaning). Of these traditions, the former harks back to the agrarian background of the Iranian tribes, while the latter entailing washing carpets, painting the house, cleaning the yard etc. stems from the Zoroastrians' preoccupation with cleanliness as a measure for keeping Evil away. *Khane Tekani* also symbolically signals to the spirits of the ancestors that their kin are ready and willing to entertain them. The ancestors are invited to descend on their previous homes to help them nourish the growth of the *sabzeh*, the main source of their sustenance that had been depleted during the long and cold days of winter.

These two rituals are followed by *Kharid-i-Nowruz*, or shopping for Nowruz. For *Kharid-i-Nowruz*, a family affair- everyone must be measured and outfitted with shoes, tops or headgear, and the like. Certain other items such as sweets, confectionaries, candles, fruits and nuts used later as part of the celebrations are also bought at this time. Additionally, women of the house also prepare sweet breads and sew special clothes for the little ones in the family. Finally, a trip must be made to the bank in order to acquire new coins and crisp banknotes to give out as *eydi* (gift) and for the *sofreh* (Nowruz display cloth.)

It is a time of cleansing the house and spiritually rejuvenating the self. There is a sense of

new life and this is embodied in the rituals associated with Navroze- ploughing of the springs for spring planting, the wearing of new clothes, sprouting of the fresh greenery- all placed on the Navroze table.

Sofreh-i-Nowruz

In earlier times, a few days before Navroze a large piece of cloth or the *Sofreh*, was spread on the floor of a room in the house. These days the white cloth is spread on the table and the following items are placed on it:

The *Avesta*. The holy book of the Zoroastrians is placed in a prominent of place on the cloth. It is said to refresh the bond between the faithful and the source of good emanating from the light.



The Navroze table is set up in Irani and Parsi Zoroastrian homes. In honour of this feast special customs marked by the number 7 are observed. Representing the 7 *Amesha Spenta*, the special angels of Zoroastrianism, particular food items are prepared in homes to be set on the Navroze table. The most visual symbol of life- seeds of seven kinds, or seven seeds of a grain are sown in little containers in order to sprout in time for the Navroze table. These fresh green seedlings symbolize the feast as a celebration of new life and remind humankind of the eternal life to come.

Fire, represented by a lamp; a mirror, a prayer book, a pomegranate and 7 edible items beginning with the letter 's' (sh) are placed on the sofreh.

Sib (apple), Somaq (sumac), sir (garlic), saman (a paste made with wheat sprouts), senjed (jujube fruit), sohan (a candy made with honey and nuts), siyahdane (sesame seeds), serke (vinegar) and sangak (bread baked on a bed of rocks)- these are the edible items from which 7 are chosen. Since the edible items placed are not to be consumed until after Navroze often non-edible items are used to substitute the edible ones. These non-edibles include sekke (coins), sonbol (hyacinth), spand (wild rue), sepestan (sebatens), samovar (samovar) and sabzeh (wheat or lentil sprouts.)



Sabzeh



Falooda- a special pink drink made from sprouted seeds is a part of the Parsi-Zoroastrian feast of Navroze.

These items are metaphors for sweetness, fertility, love, health, nature, the sun, purity and good fortune. Sometimes hard-boiled eggs, painted by the children are also placed on the table. A *ses* or special silver tray with ritual silver items is kept on the table and a mirror is placed next to it. Live gold fish in a bowl of clear water represents the animal kingdom while *dahi* or yoghurt or cheese represents cattle, which provide so much that is good to man. Pomegranates, a fruit sacred to Zoroastrians are placed with *sikka* or coins inserted into them to signify fruitfulness and prosperity.



The whole table is beautifully laid. It symbolizes the Message and the Messenger, light, reflection, warmth, life, love, joy, production, prosperity, and nature. It is, in fact, a very elaborate thanksgiving table for all the good and beautiful things bestowed by God.

On the day itself the house is fully cleaned and decorated with white chalk patterns or Parsi rangoli, the doors are decorated with garlands of fresh mogra/jasmine flowers and red roses. Dressed in their best the family visits the Fire Temple for a community Jashan or ceremony of thanksgiving. In the Jashan too all the *Amesha Spenta* are symbolically invited by the priests to bless the community. A special *Chasni* (normally consisting of a sweet meat called malido, made with rich dry fruit) or blessed food and several fruits are placed in the Jashan, to be shared by the whole community during the celebrations. The Zoroastrian Fire temples are lit up with divas and fragrant with incense sticks. Hearing the beautifully synchronized rhythm of the prayers recited by the priests is a majestic and tranquil experience.

They then come home to the Haftsin table where the head of the family recites the Nowruz prayers. Everyone's hands are sprinkled with rose water from the Gulabdas or sprinkler of the *ses*. They wash their face with rose water while an elder picks up the mirror. She asks them to smile so that they smile through the year, take a silver coin, so that they may have wealth the whole year round, then sprinkles rosewater on their hands to keep them smelling sweet and healthy. After that, she invites them to partake of the food, which is laid on another table. You wish seeing your face in the mirror, bow to the Avesta and pictures of the Prophet Zarathustra, taste the sweet meats and are given a coin.



If a family cannot put up an individual table the Anjuman or Panchayat places these items on a community table and the same procedure is followed. Parsis visit their friends and relatives and wish each other by putting their right hand into their left hand, saying “Hamazor Hama Usho Bed,” or “may you be with us at the ceremony and may you be righteous.” Elders give gifts to younger members. Next, the rounds of visits to neighbours, relatives, and friends begin. Navroze gifts are shared among friends and most communities in India have a festive dinner where rich and poor eat together in friendship and harmony.



Most of the rituals and traditions are now being lost with globalization. However, even where the religion is dying out, traditions of celebrating the Navroze feast remain. The day begins

with religious services early in the day and concludes with everyone gathering for joyous celebrations with a feast; it is a communal feast where the food being blessed in the morning religious service is also served separately. It is necessary for “the youth to understand the significance of this ancient celebration and learn to participate both in the symbolism and the joyous celebrations.” Children’s competitions are held at Surat, Ahmedabad and other parts of Gujarat to keep alive the spirit of Navroze.



It should be noted that although the myths sound ancient, they are narrated and alive in our culture at the present time; tales; epics; poetry and song competition in addition to the classical poems from the *Shahnameh* all come alive on Navroze; this comes through the experiences, skills and arts of the community. Tangible cultural forms such as hand embroidered clothes and toys for children, and decorative objects as well as jewellery made of precious gems and/or metals are presented to newly married couples. As a whole, these ceremonies own a general shared feature all over the mentioned territory, but in details they enjoy different local and regional particulars that prove the rich cultural diversity of the practices of the festival.