

Norooz Day 13 - The story of Sizdah Bedar

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The tradition of leaving the house on the thirteenth (Sizdah) day of Farvardin, the last day of the Norooz period, and spending that day outside with joy, laughter and pleasure has been in practice since ancient times in Iran. This is the last phase of the celebrations of the New Year.

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The tradition was for bonfires to be made the the night before Sizdah Bedar (the feast night) and for people to hold religious ceremonies and joyous celebrations during the day of Sizdah Bedar.

In modern times people go to parks, have a picnic and throw their 'Sabzeh' into a river symbolizing the cycle of life.

This joyous celebration has its roots in the Zoroastrian belief that laughter and joy symbolize the throwing away of bad thoughts. According to Zoroastrianism, bad thoughts are the gift of Ahreeman (the devil) and his offspring and the festival of the New Year will cleanse all bad thoughts. The celebrations defeat the enemies and plant shoots of comradeship and peace. The custom of kissing each other on the cheeks also comes from a belief that it cleanses the individual.

The New Year period was a chance for people to renew their appearance, clean their houses, and welcome the New Year in a fresh physical and mental state.

According to folklore twelve devilish spirits sent by Ahreeman are eating away at the 12 pillars of the world all year around, and at the end of the year when the pillars are on the verge of collapse, the evil spirits come to earth to celebrate. While they are dancing with joy, during the first 12 days of Norooz, the pillars are restored to their original state due to the people's joy, celebrations and goodwill. The bad spirits will again start eating away at the pillars on the thirteenth day of the year hoping to topple the world once again.

The first twelve days of the year were therefore considered particularly significant and had the important duty of safekeeping the world and the lives of people on earth. The thirteenth day of the year was considered the beginning of the normal period of the year.

In Iranian stories it is stated that the world's length of life is 12 thousand years and the number 12 is taken from the 12 months of the year. On expiry of the 12000 years, the world's lifespan is over and the world's population has the prime duty of fighting against Ahreeman.

On the expiry of 12000 years, according to Zoroastrian folklore, the people will completely defeat the Ahreeman and with the appearance of Shoosaiianet, the last face of Ahreeman will be destroyed and the war of Ahooramazda against Ahreeman will result in Ahooramazda's absolute victory. From then onward there will not exist a materialistic earth and the people will return to their permanent place in the heavenly body 'Minoo' enjoying universal happiness, peace and tranquility.

Therefore the first 12 days of the year, i.e the Norooz period, could also be symbolic of this belief.