



NOWRUZ

THE SHARED HERITAGE OF MANY COMMUNITIES

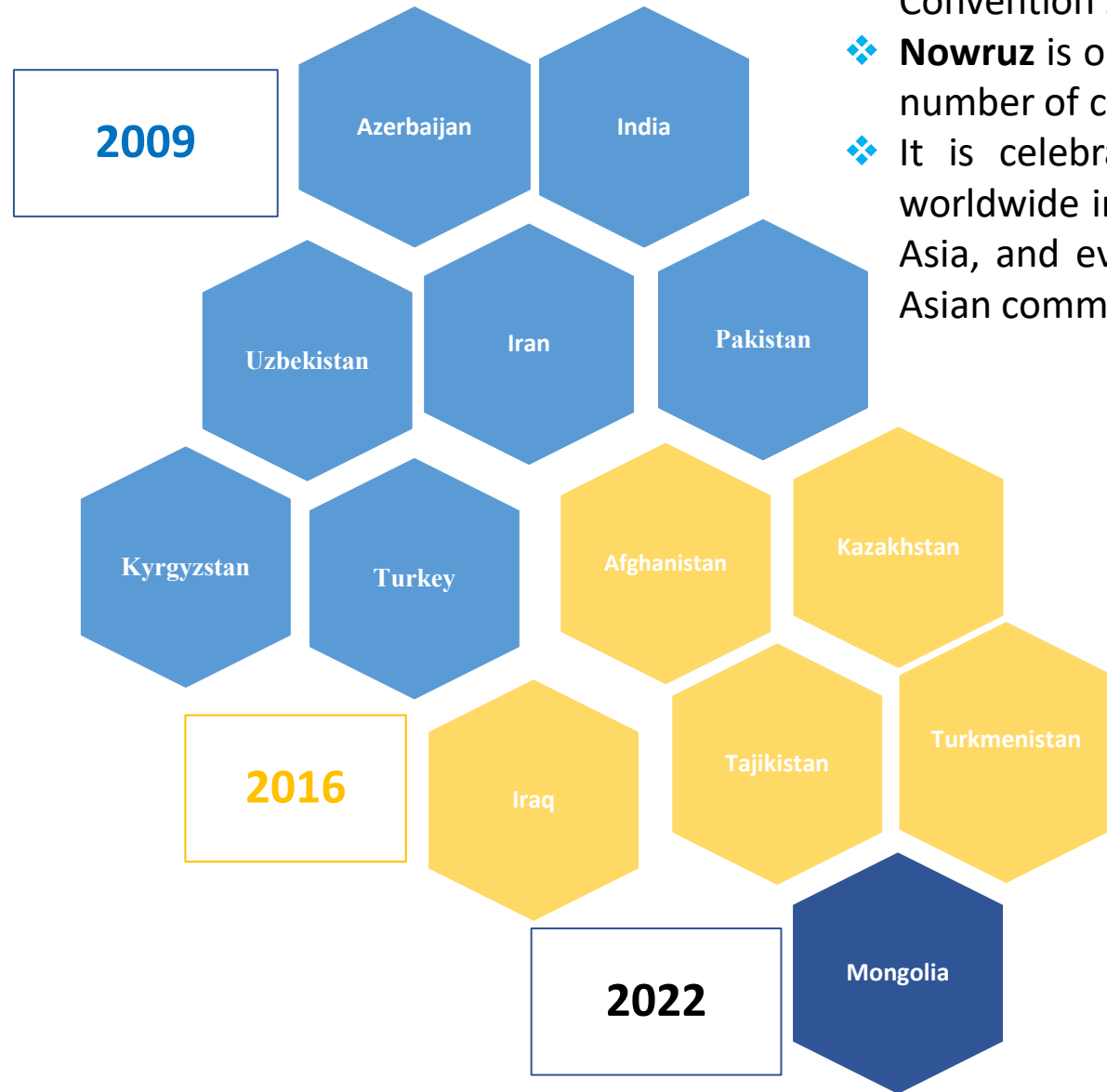
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at WHS Persepolis



Nowruz, the shared Heritage of many communities

- ❖ Inscribed on the UNESCO **Representative List** of the Intangible Cultural under Convention 2003 in **2009, 2016** and **2022**
- ❖ **Nowruz** is one of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) elements with the largest number of countries jointly recognizing it as their shared heritage.
- ❖ It is celebrated in **12 countries**, and by an estimated **300 million** people worldwide in countries across Central Asia, the Middle East, the Caucasus, South Asia, and even parts of Europe and North America, where Persian and Central Asian communities reside.



The widespread recognition highlights

- ❖ The significance of Nowruz as a unifying cultural tradition across diverse regions.
- ❖ The Shared heritage of a vast region, rooted in the ancient past with channels of communication like the Silk Route playing a key role in creating appreciation for diversity, cultural exchange and a harmonious living
- ❖ The shared memory of the remote past and its continuing transmission and adaptation across communities resonating their own social practices, religious rituals and cultural nuances building in the common themes of rebirth, new beginnings and the celebration of nature.

The genesis of Nowruz

- ❖ Nowruz, the Farsi word for “new day,” also known as the Iranian or Persian New Year marks the **Vernal Equinox according to the Iranian Solar Hijri calendar in the northern hemisphere,**
- ❖ The festival celebrated widely by over 300 million people around the world.
- ❖ An ancient festival with roots in Zoroastrianism, Nowruz marks the beginning of the Iranian Solar Hijri calendar and falls on or around the spring equinox, typically between March 19th and March 21st.
- ❖ Nowruz is over **3,000 years old**. It is believed to have been celebrated as far back as the **Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BCE)** in ancient Persia

- ❖ **In 2020, UN Declared 21 March as the International Day of Nowruz.**

Many countries have a National Holiday while in others it is an Optional Holiday

- ❖ Nowruz is an opportunity to **foster peace and solidarity across borders, amongst communities and within the nation states.**
- ❖ It also promotes an **appreciation of diversity** as each community celebrates this astronomical event of the Vernal Equinox together enacting the **rituals and customs rooted in the ancient past** tempered with those which reflect their **own cultural expressions**, each in their own way based on their own social practices and customs
- ❖ Festivals and Melas such as Nowruz also provide **economic opportunities contributing to the sustainability of our Intangible cultural heritage.**



The Parsi Community Navroze Celebrations in Pakistan



Agiary in Saddar Karachi



Lord Zoroaster the founder of the Parsi Religion



The priests, Dastur performing the religious rituals at the gathering of the Parsi community at the Agiari



The **Parsis**, followers of Zoroastrianism (genesis 1500-1200 BCE), the first monotheistic religion by some accounts, migrated to the Indian subcontinent from **Persia** in the **7th** century. Or by some accounts between the **8th** and **10th** centuries.. The community's presence in the sub-continent goes back to more than a 1000 years. Novruz is considered to have been introduced by them. **While keeping many of the customs and rituals of its origin, it became syncretic adopting and adapting the local Gujrati culture (their entry port to India).**

The celebration of Nowruz by Parsis in India includes traditional customs such as setting up the **Haft-Seen table**, preparing festive meals, and visiting fire temples for prayers.

The Parsi (Zoroastrian) Community have deep roots with Iran and carry the tradition of celebrating the vernal equinox according to the Iranian Calendar falling on 21st March. Parsis in Pakistan are a small community of 8000=10,000 persons, majority of whom are centered in Karachi.

The Parsi Community Navroze Celebrations in Pakistan



Above: Continuity of the Rituals of their Persian origin: **Haft -e-sheen** to '**Navroze Table**' created with 7 symbolically auspicious items beginning with the letter 'Sheen' or 'Seen', **Shirini** (sweets) **Sheer** (milk), **Shukkar**, (sugar) **Sharbat** (juice) **Shaljum** (turnip), **Schocolate** (chocolate) **Sharab** (alcohol).

Left Imbibing the rituals of the new home Gujrat: auspicious welcome ritual with the saffron and rice tilak. A **Syncretic culture**



Above Imbibing the rituals of the new home Gujrat: Host sprinkling Rose Water on the guest palm while the Guest looks in a mirror placed on the Navroze Table and makes a silent wish for the New Year

Celebrating Nowruz in Pakistan : Gilgit Baltistan communities



Khaplu in the mountainous Gilgit Baltistan upper reaches of Pakistan is home to a diverse mix of **ethno-religious groups** reflecting the region's rich cultural heritage. A **testament** to its historical significance as a crossroads of **trade and cultural exchange along the ancient Silk Road**.

Nowruz is primarily **observed** by communities with Persian cultural influences, particularly the **Shia Muslim** and **Noorbakhshi** groups, who have historical and cultural ties to the broader Persian cultural world. In the celebrations everyone joins in creating a festive event carrying forward the **spirit of Nowruz. Spring Equinox.... A time of renewal & rebirth, communal peace, care for nature and the environment**



The Haft-Seen Table: The objects on the table symbolize purity, brightness, abundance, happiness, and fertility for the New Year



Celebrations include Music Dance, Community Events. Sports, and Theatrical events invoking the spirit of good and bad are central

Intergenerational transmittal of the ICH knowledge through engaging school participation..... Understanding the content of the Haft Sheen Table & Painting Eggs as a symbol of rebirth and renewal



Celebrating Nowruz in Pakistan: Parachinar Shia communities of Khurran Agency



The Norouz festival reportedly arrived in Parachinar from Afghanistan in the late 1970s.

Vernal Equinox symbolizes Harmony and Balance in Naturethis is the Message of Nowruz
This is the goal in our inter and intra community relationship

Thousands turn out in Parachinar, the capital of the Kurram district in northwestern Pakistan, to celebrate Norouz, the Persian New Year

Khurram Agency, earlier part of FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) Nowruz is celebrated at the advent of spring with enthusiasm, mainly by the majority **Shi'a Muslim** community, but enjoyed by all the population.

This **Afghan war** affected area has seen a revival of Nowruz celebrations which had become subdued in the troubled times.

Nowruz, with its spirit of peace, communal harmony, rebirth and cycle of life and nature can heal the fissures and bring peace to this area.

Celebrations included communal gatherings, traditional music, and the lighting of bonfires. Festivals were held which fosters a sense of unity and joy among the residents.



Celebrating Nowruz in Pakistan : Ismaili communities, the Haraza community of Baluchistan & more

The Hazara community of Balochistan celebrate Nowruz juxtaposing their cultural expressions and practices with those carried through from the Persian prototype.

In Quetta, where a significant Hazara population resides, the celebrations often include the Haft Sin Table with symbolic items like wheat, candles, and painted eggs, representing renewal, prosperity, and family unity.

Alongside is the traditional Music and Dance, Poetry recitations, storytelling, and other cultural activities are organized to celebrate their heritage.

The festival is not just a celebration of the new year but also a way for the Hazara community to preserve their cultural identity and foster unity. It's a beautiful expression of their resilience and rich traditions



Khaplu 3 day Festival: Above Story Telling and Below Egg Rolling Competition



Haft-Seen of the Ismaili community for a family gathering



Women arranging the Novruz Table at Khaplu Festival



Heralding the Spring in Pakistan :

Pastoral, agrarian cultures and the astronomical Vernal Equinox

Some Notable celebrations in Pakistan

Spring solstice celebrations in the Indian subcontinent are deeply rooted in cultural, agricultural, and religious traditions. The arrival of spring is marked by various festivals and rituals that symbolize renewal, fertility, and the harmony of nature. **The date of the New Year is according to regional calendars.**

These are not specifically tied to the Vernal Equinox but are around the time of the equinox,

Vernal Equinox Festivals

While the local festivals and events are being inventoried

A concerted effort should be made to increase the pace since a lot remains to be done.

Communities participation in the process can be reviewed to fully engage them in the process.

- ❖ **Basant** : Celebrated across northern India, this festival marks the beginning of spring. Its is set according to local customs, traditionally by the elders of the kite flying organizations, a principal sport of the festival.
- ❖ **Holi**: Celebrated throughout India and by the Hindu community in Pakistan, Holi, the festival of colors is set according to **Hindu lunar calendar**. It signifies the arrival of spring and the victory of good over evil.
- ❖ **Baisakhi or Vasakhi** : It is celebrated annually on April 13th or April 14th, marking the spring harvest in Punjab and the beginning of the solar new year according to the Nanakshahi Calendar according to the Solar Calendar
- ❖ **Joshi or Chilimjush** : Celebrated for 4 days in mid-May in the mountain reaches of the Kalash Valleys by a small indigenous community of 4000, the festival marks the beginning of spring. Dates are according to the local calendar “Suri Jagek” a ICH UNESCO inscribed Element (2018)

Heralding Spring in Pakistan : Pastoral, agrarian cultures and the astronomical Vernal Equinox



Joshi Festival in Kalash Valley



Baisaki below



Significance of Festivals Today

- ❑ The Festivals provide us an insight into ways and means to address challenges faced by communities and the world today. Festivals resonate with the themes of renewal, abundance, and community

Some of these are as below

- ❑ Reaffirmation of Identity and appreciation of Diversity among and within nations leading to Peaceful Co-existence in a conflict ridden world.
- ❑ Ways and Means to Mitigate Climate Change Issues through a deeper understanding of the diverse systems of preparing the regional/ local calendar based on agricultural cycles.
- ❑ Opportunities for Trading and Marketing are traditionally central to Festivals thus a means for economic wellbeing and poverty alleviation for local and business communities.
- ❑ Opportunities for Showcasing cultural elements and domains are integral to festivals and a means for safeguarding ICH.
- ❑ Festivals highlight Appreciation & Peaceful co-existence with Nature thus mitigates environmental degradation

There is a need to inventory, rejuvenate and strengthen traditional festivals to Safeguard the ICH of Humanity



Basant in Lahore



NOROUZ....NAVROZ....NOORUZ
NORUZ.....NAURYZ MUBARAK

MUBARAK ...*Jee iaya kno*
THANK YOU

