



# Persian Heritage

is published quarterly by:

**Persian Heritage, Inc.**

110 Passaic Avenue,

Passaic, NJ 07055

www.Persian-heritage.com

E-Mail: Mirassiran@AOL.com

Tel: (973) 471-4283

Fax: (973) 471-8534

Subscriptions:

Cover Price \$5.00

\$16.00 per year (Domestic)

\$28.00 (Foreign)

All requests for permissions and

reprints must be made in

writing to the managing editor.

Editor:

**Shahrokh Ahkami**

Managing Editor:

Haleh Nia

Editorial Board:

Shirin Ahkami Raiszadeh

Dr. M. Abu-Saidi - Dr. Talat Basari

M.H. Hakami - F.A. Sadeghpour

A. Lotfalian - Dr. H. Rahnama

Dr. Mahvash Alavi Naini

M. K. Sadigh- M. A. Dowlatshahi

Dr. David Yeagly - K. Navi

Mehdi Ebrahimi

Director of Advertising:

Terry Russo

Published by:

**Persian Heritage, Inc.**

A corporation organized for  
cultural and literary purposes.

Printed 15,000

On the Cover

Desert Flower

By: World Center Inc.

The appearance of advertising in this magazine does not constitute a guarantee or endorsement of the product by Persian Heritage. In addition articles and letters published do not reflect the views of this publication.

The contents of the articles and advertisements of the journal with the exception of the editorial are the sole works of each individual writer and contributor. This magazine does not have personal knowledge as to the truth and veracity of these articles. All contributors agree to hold harmless and indemnify Persian Heritage (Mirass-e-Iran), Persian Heritage, Inc., its editors, staff, board of directors, and all those individuals directly associated with the publishing of this magazine. The opinions within these articles are the sole opinions of the writers and not the journal. No article or picture submitted will be returned to the individual writer or contributor. All articles submitted in English must be typed.

# Persian Heritage

Vol. 4, No. 17

Spring 2000

<b>FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK</b>	6
<b>LETTERS TO THE EDITOR</b>	10
<b>NEWS BRIEFS</b>	14
<b>COMMENTARY</b>	
<i>Zoraster's Time and Homeland</i>	
By: Daryoush Jahanian, MD	20
<i>Is The Hostage Issue of 1979...</i>	
By: K. Navi	27
<i>Count Mirabeau and the French Revolution</i>	
By: F.A. Sadeghpour	28
<i>Iran's Position... *</i>	
By: Dr. Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh	22
<i>Herbal Medicine</i>	
By: Amir Harandi	33
<b>YOUR PERSIAN HERITAGE</b>	
<i>Noe Rouz</i>	
By: F.A. Sadeghpour	44
<i>A Special Request</i>	36
<i>Shirin Neshat &amp; "Soliloquoy"</i>	
By: K. Navi	34
<i>History of Terrorism</i>	
By: David A. Yazdan, MD	38
<i>A Pearl of Great Price</i>	
By: Dr. David A. Yeagley	40
<b>THE ARTS</b>	
<i>Alam I Sugrah</i>	
By: Dr. David A. Yeagley	48
<i>A New Jewel Is Born</i>	
By: Layla S. Diba	53
<i>Poetry</i>	54
<i>Book Reviews</i>	58
<b>SPORTS</b>	
<i>A Conversation with Fariborz Azhakh</i>	
By: Shahrokh Ahkami	60
<i>Iran vs America</i>	
By: Amir H. Moussavian	64
<b>FEATURE</b>	
<i>An Interview with Iran Darroudi</i>	
By: Shahrokh Ahkami	66
<b>OUTSIDE YOUR HERITAGE</b>	70

## From the Editor's Desk

Happy Nou Rouz to you all and best wishes for a healthy and happy New Year, from **Persian Heritage**. Nou Rouz is a special holiday celebrated by Persians around the world and represents the rebirth of nature. It is a time when roots awaken and go deeper into the soil. The deeper the root, the stronger the branches, the more fragrant the blossom and more vibrant the bud. This year **Persian Heritage** enters the first year of the new century with new enthusiasm. Like the plant, each year the roots to our culture grow deeper. This allows us to be stronger and bring you articles that are stronger and vibrant. We now enter our fifth year of publication. This would not have been possible without the support we received from our readers, advertisers, writers and staff. I thank you all.

I received criticism about my last Nou Rouz article. People seemed to be offended by the subject matter saying it was sad and controversial. I took the criticism to heart and believed I would write something that was whimsical and care free for this year. But, as a journalist, I would be negligent if I did not timely discuss issues of importance, simply, because it is Nou Rouz, especially when these issues will impact Iranian Americans for generations. And so, I apologize to those who might once again take offense.

I am addressing the Census 2000. I must admit I never took a real interest in the census before and did not think much about this one, until I received a newsletter from a Persian, cultural organization. It is a newsletter I respect and look forward to read from cover to cover. In this edition the census was addressed as follows:

### Census 2000, Around the Corner!!

*The 2000 census is a perfect opportunity for us to mark our presence!*

*Let YOUR SELF be counted in Census 2000 as "Iranian Americans." Please fill out the census cards and write in "Iranian" for racial category. If Iranians and Iranian Americans want recognition as a viable constituency, we must make our numbers show.*

*The 1995 census announced that there were only 100,000 Iranians in USA; however estimates indicate that this number is off by a factor of 10; meaning we're more like one million!*

*To those of you who care, please inform everyone that you know that participating in this census as IRANIANS is of utmost importance. Please also note that "Caucasian," "Other," "Non-Hispanic," etc., will not help our cause TO BE RECOGNIZED. It will hurt us.*

**\*\* ONLY IF YOU CHOOSE "IRANIAN" OR "IRAN" WILL WE BE RECOGNIZED.\*\***

(In the Persian translation they further request that you add the word "Iranian" in front of the category "other.") If I am not Caucasian, than what am I?

I thought to myself, "how were we going to mark our presence in a census?" The article strongly encourages you to complete the census card. This is positive. It continues by telling you how to complete it. This is negative. The words used made me tremble.

It is surprising that Iranians who boast to be absolute, heirs of the Aryans and whose books write about their anger over the invasion of Iran by the Arabs, Moguls, Salukis etc., now direct us to classify ourselves as "other." This will make us a missing link, individuals who don't know their

identity. How can we, who boast about our accomplishments past, present and future now be told to deny it? How can we, a heritage rich in the arts and sciences with a remarkable history, be nothing? Is it because we now make our home in a country that is considered a super power? How can we stand proud and be counted as part of this great nation if we confuse a census?

### IRANIAN IS YOUR ETHNICITY NOT YOUR RACE!

To write in "Iranian" will enhance the confusion some Iranian Americans already experience. Furthermore, it will humiliate us. Again, I ask what are we to gain from this? I am saddened to see our youth not know who they are. An example of this occurred some time ago. A young couple with green eyes and blond hair went to the clerk for their marriage license. When asked their race, the couple looked at one another, then at the clerk. She then marked "other." I happened to be at their home when they returned. They told their parents of their experience. The parents were speechless. I on the other hand stepped in. . . "Shame on you for not being able to answer that question. Shame on your parents for not teaching you this and shame on the clerk for not finding the correct answer." The next day I went to the clerk and asked her why she marked "other." I asked her to look at my skin and tell me the color. I then asked her to call the state or federal government for the proper classification.<sup>(1)</sup> She did, it was Caucasian. I trust anyone else of Iranian heritage who came to her would be classified as Caucasian and not racially misplaced. This is how we become recognized. I am further saddened by our youth who turn away or deny their ethnicity, when it is inconvenient, and embrace it when it

is to their advantage.

### **IRANIAN IS YOUR ETHNICITY NOT YOUR RACE!**

When will our cultural societies in this country take the responsibility for protecting and defending Iranian racial and national identity? Do we have that kind of leadership? When the heads of our organization look toward their African, Hispanic, Oriental and Indian friends they can see the benefits distributed to them, benefits based on their minority classification. If our leaders think we can seek these benefits by miss classifying ourselves they are taking the wrong direction. And... when our cultural societies look at these benefits, what they do not see is that these "minority" groups are well organized. They have strong leadership and have worked hard to obtain these benefits and rights. Do we have this fight in us? Do we want to? Do we need it?

Remember the word "minority" in the Persian dictionary means a class smaller than the majority. It usually depicts a religion or ethnicity, not a skin color as it does in the States. To suggest that we not characterize ourselves improperly is an insult to those of color and to those who have fought so hard to overcome the negatives, that were misappropriated to them. They fight and continue to fight to be recognized for their achievements.

### **IRANIAN IS YOUR ETHNICITY NOT YOUR RACE!**

It is a fact that, over the past twenty years, Iranians in this country have suffered emotionally and socially in their personal and professional lives, because of the state of affairs. Were we ever able to organize the Iranians in this country against these injustices? No! How can we expect to be strong when so many of us hide from our identity? We are always trying to be something or someone we are not, when what we are is so valuable. We change our names, and we change our origin. We say we are

from Asia rather than from the Middle East? Why? What are we afraid of?

Again, taking the course suggested, to receive a few financial rewards is dangerous and our children will pay the price. If you ask our Arab or Israeli friends where they are from, without hesitation they say the Middle East (a geopolitical region and part of the world situated in Asia, Africa and Europe). Egyptians do not call themselves Africans. Jordanians or Israelis do not call themselves Asians, even though one is from Africa and two are from Asia. Why does an Egyptian, Israeli, or Jordanian not say that they are African or Asian? Because, they want to be recognized as Semites and white. Iranians, Greeks, Turks and Cypriots are Caucasian, for them to say they are Asian places them in the racial category of color and gives them minority status.

What kind of leadership have we had, do we presently have and what will we have in the future? The answers are NONE, WEAK and LET'S HOPE THINGS GET BETTER. Knowing what we are is the first step to respect. Being proud of it, the second, wanting to share it with others the third, organizing the fourth.

Is it so hard to say I am an Iranian American of Persian/Iranian ethnicity, from the Middle East, Caucasian and most important PROUD OF THEM ALL.

This editorial was not written to degrade or offend any race or

ethnicity. Each of us has value and each of us must learn to be proud of who and what we are. To me to be labeled under a minority classification does not make one inferior. Inferiority comes from not knowing who you are?

Best wishes

*Shahrokh Alavi*

#### **1- Per United States Labor/Department RACE (check one):**

A. Black (not of Hispanic origin): A person having origins of the Black racial groups of Africa.

B. Hispanic: A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American culture.

C. White (not of Hispanic origin): A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa or the Middle East.

D. Asian/Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original people of the Far East, Southeast Asia, Indian Subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands (ex: China, Japan, Korea and Samoa).

E. American Indian or Alaskan Native: A person having origins in any of the original people of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

**Per United States Department of Commerce**  
Persians are coded as "white" "Caucasian"  
For additional information call 301-457-2403

*Happy Noe Rouz*

*to our readers*

*from*

**Persian Heritage**

## YOUR PERSIAN HERITAGE



### SHIRIN NESHAT and "Soliloquy"

By: K. Navi

The invitation can make or break you as an artist. To be asked to participate in the 103 year old Carnegie International survey of contemporary art is comparable to

being nominated for the Oscar, Tony, Nobel, or Pulitzer. The event is being held in Pittsburgh, PA, through March 26, 2000. Few individuals will weather treacherous conditions to get the perfect shot. Shirin Neshat, took chances. Her new film installation, *Soliloquy*, is a film that, at the same

time tells, two sides of a story, on two large screens. It was filmed in Mardin, Turkey under some very adverse circumstances and extreme weather conditions.

Ms. Neshat does not just make a film. Her subjects and subject matter come to life and deliver a message of beauty and meaning. Her works have been recognized and accepted by the critics. This past summer she received The Golden Lion, a top award given at the Venice Biennale. Presently an older piece of hers work hangs as a banner outside the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art. But it is the inner and outer beauty of a person and her surroundings that move this artist rather than awards. When first introduced to her work in a story published in *The Lincoln Center* magazine, I was taken back by the beauty and charm of the photograph. It was a photo of a beautiful woman's hands and face. All were covered in Persian calligraphy. Though I could not read one word, it was obvious to me that this woman had a strong message to send. . . through the softness of a woman.

Her feelings behind her creations are deep. Perhaps it comes from the loneliness of separation from her native country or perhaps from the loss of a loved one. Whatever the reasons, Ms. Neshat has not allowed herself to wallow away in self pity. Instead her direction has been to go forward in a positive motion. To her, you are not the only one who suffers, every part of the world shares the burden and by knowing this we could probably change society.

*Soliloquy* incorporates the new wave music of Iranian born talent Susan Deyhim. Ms. Deyhim went to great lengths to achieve the background sounds to compliment Ms. Neshat's images. For certain the critics will not remain silent when they review her new work. I only hope that they will understand the depth of her message and not view it as just another attempt for a feminist to shock the world. It is all that and SO MUCH MORE.

PH





# A Pearl Of Great Price

## A Brief Lecture Tour in Iran

By Dr. David A. Yeagley

This piece, and the following series of articles, are based on the entirely on the personal experience of the author, involving no official political persuasions, American or Iranian. There is no intent to offend or confront any opposing views, nor to promote any particular position. The purpose is simply to convey a personal experience, personal preference, and a psycho-sociological revelation.

As an American, I can never forget the images of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and the shocking slogan, "Death to America." (The Western media, of course, has proven a living and willing museum of these memories.) I am a descendent of a

warrior race myself. I am a Comanche, an American Indian <sup>1</sup>. While I found myself strangely and strongly attracted to the "wild" Iranians pictured in the news twenty years ago, I now feel that I better understand both that attraction, and also the people themselves. During the month of November, 1999, I was a guest of Iran, and gave numerous lectures at the University of Tehran and Ferdowsi University of Mashad. I spoke on American religion, literature, culture, law, and sociology. I also visited Neshapour, Torbat-e-Heydariyeh, and a farm farther south.

My journey was arranged so that it coincided with the annual National Day of the Campaign Against Arrogance (November 4), and incidentally with the trial of the *Khordad* editor, Abdullah Nouri, accused of Westernism. <sup>2</sup> (That fact is, the trip was originally planned months earlier, but I was simply not able to get my visa in time!) There were demonstrations to be seen in the streets of Mashad, where I happened to be on November 4th, and Nouri accused the Special Clerical Court of violating Islamic traditions in prosecuting him for his beliefs. <sup>3</sup>

Khamenei announced his refusal to pursue any normal relations with the United States, and Majlis leader Nateq-Nouri said Iran has no need for such relations.<sup>4</sup> Well, I had gone to declare my love for the Iranian people, and to tell them how much I admired their courage, strength, and determination. I had no thought of actually encountering any personal confrontation. On the contrary, I believed that genuine affection and love cannot be misinterpreted, nor ever harmful. These were my offerings.<sup>5</sup> Frankly, I was a bit *naive* about the Iranian interior conditions altogether. All I knew was that I wanted to be there, and meet the people. It was a glorious opportunity.

As the date drew near for my departure from Oklahoma City, I informed various friends and family. I had Iranian friends in New York and New Jersey of course, and had recently become acquainted with Iranian families in Oklahoma City, particularly the Alavi family.<sup>6</sup> The love of these friends was a great encouragement to me, and to members of my own family, who, I must say, never shared the same interest I always had in Iran. All my Iranian friends were absolutely confident that I would have a wonderful time. They had relatives in Iran at every point of my journey, and the same kind of support I had here in America would continue perfectly uninterrupted when I arrived in Iran. My own family, and American friends, of course, were apprehensive from the start, yet, by now had come to expect the exotic and bizarre from me. I referred them to the recent *National Geographic* article (July, 1999), and also to Sandra Mackey's book<sup>7</sup> based on her personal experience in Iran, and to other works.<sup>8</sup> The presence of the Western media's stereotype of mean and violent Iranians, however, was still, these twenty years later, the dominant image in the American mind. My university colleagues were most disturbed by my venture. The news of my lecture tour was kept almost secret. I will say, too, that my Iranian American friends advised me to wait until the trip was completed successfully before trying to publicize

it.<sup>9</sup> As I said, I really never felt fear, because I knew I was motivated by sincere love and appreciation for this great people and their country. This was my intuition. I had no disposition to research the political problems of the recent past nor the present. I wasn't going there to try to solve any problems. I was going there to simply enjoy a magnificent people, or as W. Keller put it, "a particularly handsome race."<sup>10</sup> I was going there to applaud their great courage and energy. I never imagined offending anyone, there or here. I wanted to acknowledge the people for what they are, and not to dispute their religious, political, or sociological manifestations. I took the whole idea of the nation personally. This was a personal venture. It was the people I went to see, personally.

At Oklahoma's Will Rogers Airport, every inch of my luggage was examined. This took a while, and I had packed very carefully. I hoped that this was not going to be a portent of the entire journey. However, I was impressed by the ability of the two security officers to put all my belongings back together, just as I had packed them. My younger brother stayed with me at the airport until the actual departure. We talked about many things, and I can say that I was still not apprehensive. I had really only one concern: the long hours on the airplane. No one looks forward to that. My flight would be on Northwest Airlines from Oklahoma City to Memphis, Tennessee. There I would transfer to KLM (Dutch Royal) direct to Amsterdam. This was actually the longest segment of the trip. In Amsterdam I also had an incredibly long layover. There I would transfer to Iran Air, and fly directly to Tehran. As I waited, I noticed Iranian people beginning to gather near the flight. Here was my first impression of the hijab, the covering, worn by the women. In the case of Iran, the robe is black. The psychological effects of such a phenomenon, upon me I will address later. I waited quietly, until I initiated a conversation with a kind gentleman. (I really thought I could distinguish between an Iranian American and an Iranian national!) I was most impressed with the entry of

the Iranian flight crew in the gate area. They wore white Neru shirts (collar-less) under black suits trimmed in gold. Their captain's hats gave them all a royal appearance. They carried a peculiar dignity about them. I must say, the concomitant time schedule was a little less elegant, however. We waited on the plane an hour before leaving.<sup>11</sup>

On the flight I noticed a more relaxed attitude with respect to seating, and even safety measures. The particular plane I was on was a new one, and it seemed to me that the people were not "new." By this, I mean that everyone apparently had been back and forth from Iran to America a hundred times. There was no special intensity or excitement. It was quite routine. Everyone was patient and pleasant. There was absolutely no sense of apprehension about anything.

On the flight, I became acquainted with a gentleman by the name of Dr. Ali Abkar, a physics professor (if I remember correctly). He was accompanied by his wife, young child, and new baby. Our conversation was occasioned by the fact that his wife wanted to lay the baby out on the seats. I naturally volunteered my row, which happened to be empty, and thus I came to sit with Dr. Abkar. He had been a professor in a prestigious university in America and was now teaching at the University of Tehran. He realized (from my American English, no doubt) that I was an American, and he was most interested in my apparent trip to Iran. Of course, I was most willing to share with him my intentions, and also to take advantage of the opportunity to try out some of my ideas on him. I wanted to know his reaction, and how he thought my ideas would fare in Iran, especially on a university campus. I had a copy of the latest issue of *Persian Heritage*<sup>12</sup> in my briefcase, and I immediately told him about my background and my interest in Iran. He seemed pleasantly surprised and impressed. What I really was looking for was a more understanding about the Moslem religion as it was experienced or practiced by the Iranian world. Thus far in my studies and in my own

## A Pearl of Great Price

opinions, it seemed to me that the history of the Iranian people greatly expected the scope of Islam. My personal belief was that this historical irony was perhaps the source of many of the current problems in Iran. I was, in fact, ignorant of both modern Iran and the Moslem faith. Dr. Abkar, however, seemed most interested in my views, and was even more curious to know how I would communicate them in Iran. The result of our conversation, to me, was encouragement.

We arrived in Tehran at nearly midnight, Sunday, October 31. Of course, everyone was exhausted. In the course of my conversation with Dr. Abkar, I had forgotten to inform the flight attendants that I had CIP arrangements,<sup>13</sup> which I was to have done upon boarding the flight. It was a bit cold that night, so that I was worried about waiting outside. In Iran, there are no covered walk-ways from the terminal to the airplane. It is a bit nostalgic, I'd say, rather than evidence of economic obfuscation. Nevertheless, I informed an attendant, and he called in to the terminal; myself and one other gentleman were soon picked up by the CIP car, and taken to the plush waiting room adjacent to the terminal. I was truly fatigued, and was anxious to get some rest. (My schedule included a lecture the very next morning at the University of Tehran.)

The CIP people took my paper, walked me through some hallways, and began going through my brief case. They seemed enthusiastic that I was a daring American, yet, they were obligated to do their job. I was curious that they focused first on the cassette tapes I was carrying. "We have to confiscate those," the chief attendant said, "because we do not know the contents." I understood what he was referring to. It was a religious concern. "Well," I responded, "these are tapes of classical music, you know, Bach, Beethoven, Brahms." "Oh," he said, "that's okay, then. We are concerned about inappropriate lyrics of popular Western music." I understood perfectly. "Good!" I

answered.

I was fascinated with the sense of morality I was shown. The women were all covered but for the face.<sup>14</sup> The authorities didn't want any "hard rock" type of musical lyrics entering the country. All this was thrilling to me, personally. I had lived in a comparatively indecent society all my life, and yet, because of my own Protestant Christian background, I was in constant conflict with my society. I was excited with the idea of a "religious" society, especially one which seem to hold many of the basic values of the original American Puritan society.

The attendants then took me into the actual waiting room, offered me any sort of refreshment I desired, and brought out the most exquisite pastries one could imagine. After some time, however, it was made known to me that not all was in order. My papers were not accurate. It seems that my travel agent had paid for the service via the CIP office in Maryland (USA), but the office in Iran had not been notified of any such arrangement. As it was turning out, the attendants wanted me to pay for the service then and there. This was most disturbing, for I had the signed paper that the Travel agent had paid. I then went into some detail about my lecture tour, and after a good while more of waiting, two men from the University of Tehran appeared at the CIP office, Dr. Mohammad Alavi and our driver. Dr. Alavi assumed responsibility for communication from that point. He knew everything about me, and was most cordial. We went from the waiting room into the CIP business office, and began hashing out the problem.

Dr. Alavi had an incredible British accent. He obviously had learned English from the English. I found out later that he had spent time in the States, but, he had actually earned his degrees in England, and also had taught there. He was from Leicester. I must say, I consider myself a very good judge of accents. I detected not the slightest Iranian accent in his heavy British dialect. It was so

authentic, however, that I actually had trouble understanding him! Fortunately, he was able to convince the CIP authority that the responsibility for the fee was not, in fact, mine. It had already been paid, and it was the CIP's place to collect from the Maryland office, for which they had a fax and telephone numbers. I was the guest, and it was not my place. This negotiation took some time, but apparently there was no fault in Dr. Alavi's Farsi.

Finally, we were off. It was very late, or, I should say, early in the morning. I had no idea how large Tehran was! We drove and drove, through the night. I had no concept of direction, and I don't recall that all that many right hand turns. I was really relieved to have met Dr. Alavi, and our conversation helped pass the time. He was professor of English in the foreign language department of the University of Tehran. He planned for me to speak to a doctoral seminar in the sociology department. He, of course, asked me for some details, to get an idea of how I would speak, and offered suggestions. He was actually very open minded. The truth is, I had only love and admiration to offer, as I said. I could hardly go wrong.

By the time we arrived at our destination, we had driven through maze after maze of crowded blocks of buildings. I was dizzy, both from fatigue and from the intensity of the city. I can't say that we were in the richest part of town, by any means, but, there was an abundance of iron gates everywhere. This was curious, I thought. Where exactly was I going?  
TO BE CONTINUED.

PH

### Note:

1 The details of the author's personal background are presented formally in a previous article in *Persian Heritage*. See, David A. Yeagley, "The Persian-American: A Native American View," *Persian Heritage*, Spring 1999, Vol. 4, No. 13, pp. 26-28, esp. n.1.

2 Specifically, of "libel, insulting the Islamic system, defaming the late architect of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, and support for restoration of ties with the US and Israel." "Nouri in the Dock Says Jury Not Important," *Iran Daily*, 31 Oct. 1999, p.1, cols.1-3.

3 "Nouri Accuses Court of Prosecuting His Beliefs," *Iran Daily*, 4 Nov. 1999, p.1, cols.3,4.



## A Pearl of Great Price

4 "Leader Rules Out Normalization of Ties With Us," and "Campaign Against US Arrogance Is National Essence," Iran Daily, 4 Nov. 1999, p.1, cols. 1-4.

5 I also found great encouragement from one of the latest major international reports found in National Geographic. The word was out that Iranian people were astir once again, but this time for simple, rational change. "Two-thirds of Iran's people are too young to remember the frustrations of life under the shah. They know only the frustrations of life under the ayatollahs, and many are ready for change." Fen Montaigne, "Iran: Testing the Waters of Reform," in National Geographic, July, 1999, pp.1-33.

6 It so happens that the patriarch of the American Alavi's, Bob, has had articles recently appearing in Persian Heritage.

7 Sandra Mackey, *The Iranians: Persia, Islam, And The Soul Of A Nation* (New York: Dutton/Penguin, 1996). Ms. Mackey was interviewed by *Persian Heritage*. "Sandra Mackey, The Writer of The Iranians," *Persian Heritage*, Fall, 1996, Vol.1, No.3.

8 Among these were: *Islam: Muhammad and His Religion*, ed. Arthur Jeffery (1958: rpt. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977) and Lawrence Davidson. *Islamic Fundamentalism* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998). I actually took a copy of this latter book with me to Iran, whence it seemed acknowledged and acceptable. I later added to this simple collection a book given to me while I was in Iran: Allamah S.M.H. Tabatabai, *Basic Teachings of Islam* (Tehran: International Publishing Co.)

9 To date, at the writing of this article, January, 1999, no American news media has accepted any story about the tour. This article in *Persian Heritage* itself represents the first published report.

10 Werner Keller, *The Bible As History In Pictures* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1964), p.285. Dr. Keller's work, originally in German, contains 337 plates and illustrations, involving various cultures pertinent to Hebraic history.

11 Somewhere, I had heard the phrase "Iranian time," as a label for this sort of delay. This was meant in good humor, of course, but, the fact is, I heard the phrase first as "colored time," referring to American Negro culture, and the sociological style thereof. Later I heard "Mexican time," and of course, "Indian" time, referring to American Indian ways. I couldn't help but think of Edgar Allan Poe's delightful story, "The Devil in the Belfry," (1839) and its Dutch fantasy village of Vondervotteimittiss. It seems that exact time keeping is a custom of Western Europe and America alone, and a bit neurotic compared to the rest of the world. See, *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Thomas O. Mabbott

(Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), II p. 362,f.

12 Fall, 1999, Vol. 4, No.15.

13 "Commercial Important People" is a fairly new service which, if purchased with the airplane tickets, insures the traveler of more facile access of entry into the country, avoiding long, weary hours of customs delays. I had the confirmation paper with me, but had neglected to announce it.

14 Of course, one cannot under-estimate the romantic power of the woman's face, if even just the eyes! I have to observe this fact, that one of the leading fashion magazines in the world, Elle, made its place in this most competitive business with magazine covers featuring only the face. As early as July, 1993, Elle had declared itself "the world's biggest selling fashion magazine." There has been a more inclusive involvement of the total feminine form in recent years, but, originally, Elle climbed to the top on the sole merits of facial beauty. I wrote an article in 1994 called, "Fashion, Politically Correct Aesthetics, and Ethical Racism," in which I developed the idea of associating a higher level of literary consciousness with the fashion industry. I envisioned a "fashion photography" column, in fact.

### Persian Heritage on the INTERNET

[www.persian-heritage.com](http://www.persian-heritage.com)  
[www.mirassiran.com](http://www.mirassiran.com)

## Best Wishes to Persian Heritage

### Vitafol-PN® Prenatal Caplets

*The Smallest Complete Prenatal Vitamin  
Ensuring the Health of Mother and Baby*

Prescription Vitamins, Nutritionals and  
Ethical Pharmaceuticals

Everett Laboratories, Inc.  
West Orange, NJ 07052





# NOE ROUZ

## Glory of Spring

By: F. A. SADEGHPOUR

In the fall 1996 issue of *Persian Heritage*, an article appeared entitled "Mehr'gaun". In this article, I briefly touched upon "Noe Rouz" which celebrates the coming of spring by nations of Aryan heritage or Iranians. (When we speak of Iranian nations, we include nations that have a common foundation, language and history). We can safely mention countries from east to west beginning with Tajikistan, the land of Keepers of

the Crown, to Azerbaijan (Aran) Republic. Those of Aryan heritage include Kurds, in any country in which they reside, Afghans, Belouch, whether in present Iran or Pakistan, and the multitude of Parsees in India.

Before the four seasons became part of the present calendar, there were two seasons which ancient Iranians celebrated. These were "Zayana" or winter, of which Mehr'gaun was its festival, and "Hama", summer, celebrated by the festival of Noe Rouz to announce its

coming.

In order to understand why Noe Rouz and Mehr'gaun have held their status as the two most important festivals of the vast Iranian nations, we must first go back to prehistoric centuries. In ancient times, the climate of our northern hemisphere was not as it is today, therefore, our forebearers had only two major seasons. Spring and summer only lasted two to three months, and the rest of the year was winter. Gradually the climate became more temperate. Noe Rouz occurs

exactly when the length of night and the length of day are equal. Of course here, we must mention that the most correct calendar is the Iranian calendar which calculates the days and months in the solar calendar. A real year is 365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 64 seconds. "Noe" in the Persian language means "new". In the old Persian language this was pronounced "nov". "Rouz" means "day", and in old Persian was pronounced "rouzh", then "rouch" and now "rouz". Hence, "Noe Rouz" means "new day" or "new year". In the Christian calendar, Noe Rouz falls either on March 20th or 21st which is the very first day of the spring season.

The ancient Iranians believed that mankind has a lofty rank- almost a deity that is considered the masterpiece of physical creation, and the representative of the Creator in this vast universe. According to this philosophy, any character that is noble and virtuous in mankind has been bestowed upon us by God. It is the manifestation of the Heavenly spirit or soul in a terrestrial body which gives man a temporary presence on earth. The spirit or soul which is a gift of God is called "Far'vahar" who enters the body of the embryo in the womb of the mother instilling life. Therefore, each living person possesses a part of the Divine Power in himself/herself which in turn considers mankind to be an integral part of the Omnipotent Creator, and an illumination of the Divine and everlasting Light. Hence, the eternal flame is the reminder of the Light.

In the ancient Iranian culture, the reason given for the creation of mankind was to practice and spread absolute goodness not only among themselves but other lands or races as well. An Iranian had a responsibility to struggle against vice and evil in order to provide and maintain peace and tranquillity in the world. While a person lives, Far'vahar protects the body and sees that the person is associated with goodness and good deeds. Then after the death of the person, Far'vahar returns to its origin, the ever-present Divine See. It will not forget nor will cut its ties with its



terrestrial shell. On the contrary once a year Far'vahar descends upon the dwellings of descendants on March 15th and lingers there until March 24th to check upon the happiness, cleanliness, and the virtues of the living. For this reason, the descendants of the deceased, a month before Noe Rouz are busy cleaning the household, obtaining new garments and shoes, so that the Far'vahar of their departed can see that the descendants are happy and prosperous. They believed that the Far'vahar would rejoice in their feast, and when they return to Heaven, they will be happy for one more year.

One of the most important reasons that the first month of the new year is called Far'vardeen is for the descent of the Far'vahars. In order to stay virtuous and kind, Iranians believed one needs a strong body to host the Spirit of God properly. In order to

achieve this, a child from the age of seven would learn horsemanship, archery, wrestling, and sword play. When the Iranians were defeated by Alexander, they made sure that it would never happen again. The proof is that in over seven hundred years of encounters with the Roman Empire, out of twenty-six encounters, the Iranians were victorious twenty-three times. These encounters occurred during the Parthian and Sassanid dynasties.

From strength emanated virtue,  
For from weakness you grow fickle  
and untrue.

Avesta--

During the Sassanid Dynasty (226-652 A.D.), the first five days of Noe Rouz, the king would be attentive to the nobles and army personnel. The second five days, he would attend to all the people. The king would pardon prisoners, and give presents and new

clothing to the poor and needy. On the third five days the governors, "satraps", would present gifts to the king. On the first day of Noe Rouz, the king would don new raiment made of silk, and alone would sit upon the throne in the receiving hall or throne room. The chief magus would enter with novitiates carrying a tray. Upon the tray, were a gold chalice or red wine, a bejeweled ring, one gold sovereign, a bunch of myrtle, a sword, a bow and arrow, a pen and an inkwell. Waiting in the palace, there would also be a white horse with a groom.

The chief magus would then begin to sing a Noe Rouz hymn. Before the hymn, the army commanders, and the senior members of government would enter the throne room to present the king with their well wishes. The chief magus would then, on behalf of all the well wishers, recite the following soliloquy:

"O King, our prayers are with you on this auspicious Noe Rouz. Defend freedom as your forebears. Their ethos witness today's celebration, and have brought songs of sight and savvy. Live long with the spirit of glory. Drink from the chalice of Jamshyd for wisdom. Stay green and young always as the myrtle. May you reign always straight as an arrow. May your blade stay keened against our foes. May your horse be strong and fast upon the enemy. May your treasury always be filled with gold and gems. May your pen serve the writ of justice."

The chief magus would then hand the gifts one by one to the great king while the nobles and senior knights witnessed the event.

After the advent of Islam in Iran, the first four caliphs, "senior caliphs", paid neither attention to Noe Rouz nor to Mehr'gaun. After the senior caliphs, the Omniads (Omayyads), took over the caliphate 661-750 A.D. They discovered that it was financially advantageous to lift the ban for these

festivities. By allowing the Iranians to celebrate their feast, instead of expecting simple gifts such as myrtle, a chalice of wine, a single ring or solitary gold coin, the Omniad caliphs demanded exorbitant gifts from the Iranians. The Iranians submitted to these demands because they desired to keep the customs and traditions of their forebears alive, and these traditions represented their independence as a nation which are continuing to this day.

Finally, between 747 and 750 A.D., an Iranian champion from the province of Khorasan by the name of Beh'zaudan, also known as Abu Moslem, overthrew the Omniad Dynasty and selected a caliph from the house of Abbass. Thus began the Abbasside Dynasty. This Dynasty lasted from 750 to 1258 A.D. The capital of this Dynasty was the city of Bagdad.\* The Abbassides also allowed the Iranians to celebrate their important feasts and were at times active participants!

However, the Iranians, a week before Noe Rouz, decorate a table with seven symbols. Each one has a special meaning in life. These seven symbols are called "Haft Seen", seven S's. On the table are placed seven items that begin with S, such as Sabzee (greenery or herbs), Somagh (sumac), samanoo (juice of germinating wheat or malt mixed with flour and brought to the consistency of pottage), Seeb (apples), Sertkah (vinegar), Seers (garlic), Sonbole (hyacinth). Besides these main symbols are oranges, lemon, gold fish in a bowl of water, and a small basket or crystal bowl full of decorated hard boiled eggs, as well as some gold or silver coins on a plate in front of a mirror on silver tray and seven candles.

In ancient Iran (Persia), the number seven was very important and were represented by "Hapta Amsha Sepand", seven archangels, "Hapta Boom" seven lands or continents (from Avesta), and "Hapta Sepehr", seven heavens.

We, in turn, with our utmost perseverance and fortitude continue to hold onto these traditions of our rich

culture. We pass them on to future generations, no matter where they reside, as though these traditions were written with a diamond pen upon golden pages of history.

On this occasion of Noe Rouz, **Persian Heritage Magazine** extends its good wishes to all the peoples of the world, and especially to all Iranians.

PH

\* Bagdad is constructed from two Persian words, "Bag", God, and "dad" (daud), given, hence Bagdad means God-given. Before the advent of Islam Bagdad was the winter residence of the Sassanid, Kings of "Persia", Iran. Present day Iraq was always known as the first province of 27 Satrappi; Province of Persian Empire.

## SPRING CHANT

BY: ABUL-HASSAN KASSAI  
MERVZI (DIED 990 A.D.)

Spring breeze sighing in the meadow  
Caressing high canopies of violets  
below.

Meadow seems like emerald velvet,  
With myriad of colors upon the carpet.

Fragrant tidings from rose bower.  
Lilies, hyacinth, and gilly-flower

Murmuring-"springtime is here  
Streams as clear as a polished mirror."

Wide-eyed white daffodils stare  
At chafed sandalwoods bathing in  
spray.

Chaffinch in elm tree. On eglantine,  
warblers tune  
To a nightingale serenading on  
jasmine festoon.

Fawns grazing yond by the foothills  
Raise their long necks when the lark  
trills.

In sunny lea the red tulips titter,  
Fragile butterflies nearby flutter.

PH