



April 2023 | ISSN 1019-0767  
No.332 | Monthly Magazine



## **Nowruz, Cultural Convergence, and Public Diplomacy**

***Iranian Women  
and Nowruz Celebration***

***Nowruz and  
Human Disposition***

Lebanon 7000 LL  
Morocco 36.00 DH  
UAE 21.00DH

S.Africa 26.00R  
France 4.50€  
Italy 4.50€

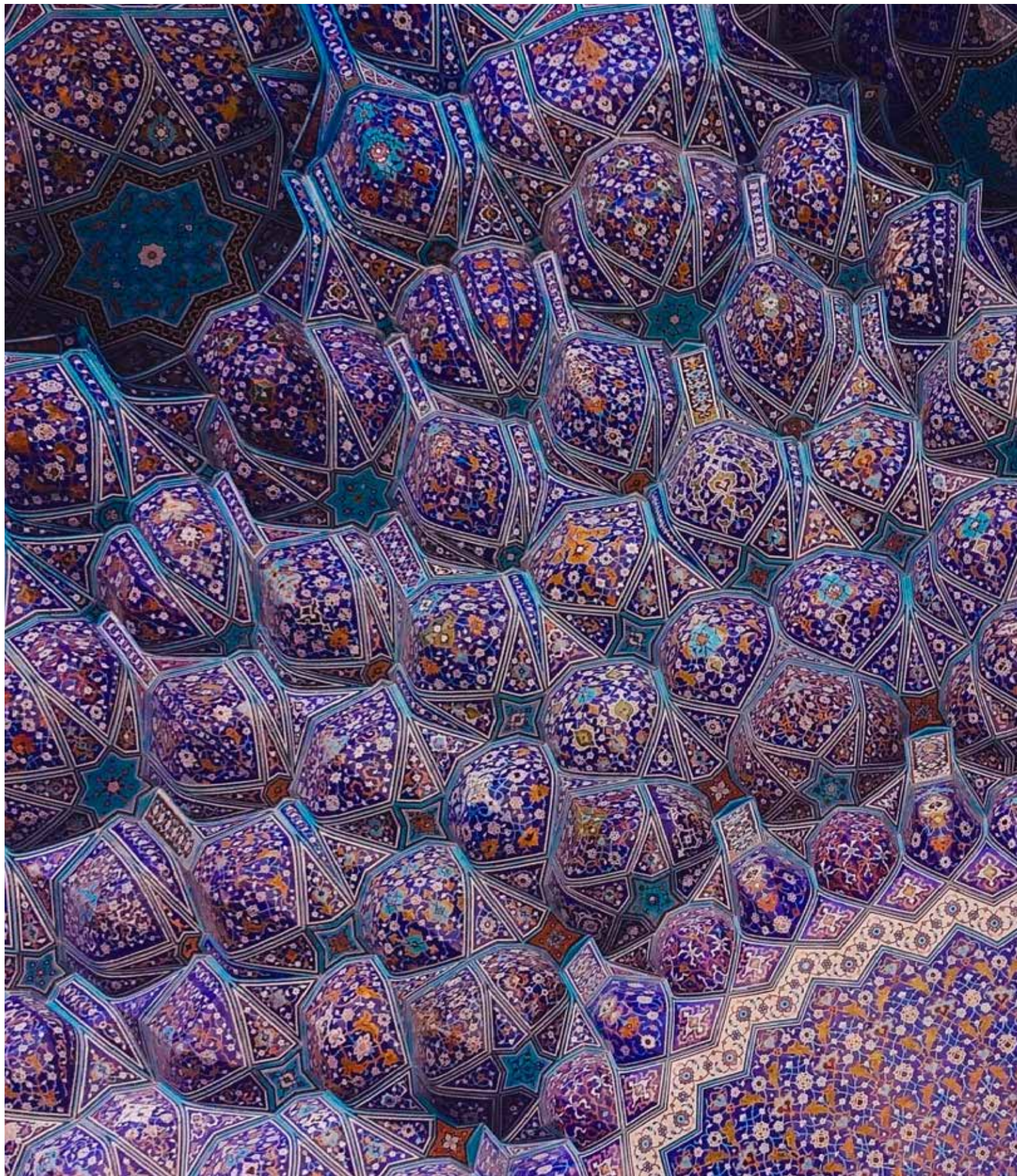
Germany 4.50€  
Turkey 5.50YTL  
America 3.00\$

Kenya 250KSH  
Qatar 20.00QR  
Tunisia 3.70TD

Spain 4.50€  
Mexico 65.00MEX\$  
Kuwait 2.000KD







Visit Our Iran  
*Imam Mosque in Isfahan*











**In Collaboration with the  
Office of International Women's  
Cultural Cooperation of the  
Islamic Culture and Relations  
Organization**



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

**Editor-in-Chief:**  
Fatemeh Alizadeh

**Assistant Editors:**  
Dr. Mohsen shojakhani  
Mohaddese Assadi Movahed

**Editorial Board:**  
Dr. Fatemeh Ebrahimi, Dr. Zohreh Nosrat Kharazmi,  
Dr. Setareh Kadkhodaei, Zeinab Rastegarpanah

**Public Relation Officer & Executive Manager:**  
Maryam Hamzehlou

**Art Director & Graphic Designer:**  
Marzieh Anbori

**Advertising Office:**  
Magazine of ITF,  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Tel:** +9821-88934302

**Fax:** +9821-88902725

**Website:** www.itfjournals.com

**Website:** www.alhoda.ir

**Website:** mahjubah.itfjournals.com

**Email:** Info@alhoda.ir





**4** Happy Nowruz  
and New Iranian Year

---

**8** The Message of Hojjat al-Islam  
Mohammad Mahdi Imanipour  
President of the Islamic Culture and  
Relations Organization On the Occasion  
of Nowruz

---

**10** Nowruz in Countries

---

**15** Nowruz, a message for  
Peace, Convergence,  
and Cooperation

---

**18** Tradition and Mythology

---

**22** Persian Cuisine

**24** Using Nowruz Diplomacy  
for greater connectivity in Eurasia

---

**27** Iranian Women  
and Nowruz Celebration

---

**28** Leader's message to Spanish-speakers on  
release of Spanish version of his book on  
memories of his struggles

---

**30** Nowruz in the land of Taleshan

---

**34** Nowruz, Cultural Convergence,  
and Public Diplomacy

---

**38** Nowruz and Human Disposition

---

**40** Nowruz Games for  
Women in Tehran



# Renewal of Hopes

**S**pringtime is certainly a time of renewal of hopes and revival of the manifestations of life. With the flowers out, the smiling sunshine and refreshing breeze, each of us can feel lively enough to plan for a new year, a better year in fact, both in terms of worldly matters and spiritual ones. As we all know, today's world is witnessing lots of maladies, plights and human sufferings which may darken the horizon of hope for some. But, for those who truly believe in God and in His Messengers (AS), there is endless hope, since they know God – The Most Gracious has presented the best directions and solutions in His last Book – the Holy Qur'an and so they see guidance in that Divine treasure as Imam Ali (AS) has advised his followers, "Solve your problems with the help of the Holy Qur'an."

In another Hadith, the Holy Qur'an has been regarded as 'the spring of hearts'. So let's revive our hearts with that celestial spring and also share that reviving blessing with the others. Never forget that God is the most kind and desires the best for all. That is why he has sent Messengers (AS) to take us out of the darkness and ignorance and lead us into the blissful path of salvation and eternal Paradise.

Mohammad Assadi Movahed





Nowruz







# Happy Nowruz and New Iranian Year

Compiled By: Firouzeh Mirrazavi







Originating in Iran's ancient history, Nowruz is celebrated by more than 300 million people worldwide on March 21, the day of the spring Equinox, which marks the sun's crossing of the Equator and the start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. Nowruz is one of the oldest and most cherished festivities celebrated for at least 3,000 years.

Nowruz is a messenger of peace, friendship, benevolence for humankind, and admiration for the nature not only for Iranians, but for several nations and tribes who adorn this ancient festivity and celebrate it. Nowruz is an opportunity for rethinking, restarting, and remaking.

Nowruz is the spiritual heritage of humankind and the Iranians will be most delighted if the world nations enjoy this heritage and take advantage of it. Nowruz is the message of peace and friendship by the Iranians for the whole world.

Nowruz is a strong testimony to Iranian rich civilization, national characteristics and history. It proves how a nation with its irreversible determination to endure, and even flourish, through periods of devastation, political chaos, hardship, and oppression.

For centuries, Persians have applied the Nowruz spirit to every dark challenge that has come their way. This spirit has made Nowruz far more than just a New Year celebration over the course of history.

Nowruz is a relic of ancient times. A memory of old tales and epics, a celebration of rebirth and rejuvenation. Spring has arrived and the previous year with all its events, good or bad, has passed. Renewed hope anticipates new achievements.

In harmony with the rebirth of nature, the Persian New Year Celebration, or Nowruz, always begins on the first day of spring, March 21st of each year. Nowruz ceremonies are symbolic representations of two ancient concepts - the End and Rebirth.

Nowruz (Norouz) in Persian means "New day". It is the beginning of the year for the peoples of Iran (Greater Iran, including: Afghanistan, Arran (Republic of

Azerbaijan), and Central Asian Republics).

It begins precisely with the beginning of spring on the vernal equinox, on or about March 21. Tradition takes Nowruz as far back as 15,000 years--before the last ice age.

It is not exactly known when and how the festival of Nowruz emerged. Some historians believe that natural changes in weather gave rise to the festivities. Some consider it a national festival, while others regard it as a religious ritual.

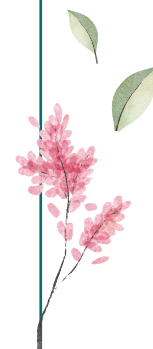
According to Zoroastrians, the month of Farvardin (the first month of the Iranian solar calendar) refers to Faravashis, or spirits, which return to the material world during the last 10 days of the year. Thus, they honor the 10-day period in order to appease the spirits of their deceased ancestors. The Iranian tradition of visiting cemeteries on the last Thursday of the year may have originated from this belief.

According to lexicographer Mirza Ali Akbar Dehkhoda, ancient Iranians celebrated a feast called Farvardegan (Farvardyan) that lasted 10 days. Farvardegan was performed at the end of the year and was apparently a mourning ceremony and not a celebration welcoming the rebirth of nature. In ancient times the feast started on the first day of Farvardin (March 21) but it is unclear how long it did last. In royal courts, the festivities continued for one month.

According to some documents, the festival was observed until the fifth of Farvardin, and then the special celebrations followed until the end of the month. Possibly, in the first five days, the festivities were of a public and national nature, while during the rest of the month it assumed a private and royal character.

Undoubtedly, the Nowruz celebrations are an ancient, national Iranian custom, but details of it prior to the Achaemenid era are unknown. There is no mention of it in Avesta - the holy book of Zoroastrians.

In ancient times, Iran was the cradle of civilizations for thousands of years and was regarded as one of the most powerful countries in the world. As time passed, the Empire of Persia disintegrated gradually





due to the invasions by the enemies of this land.

As a matter of fact, many glorious cultural and historical festivals and customs have faded away and only traces of them have remained and several centuries of our homeland's history are still in a "state of oblivion, darkness and ambiguity."

Currently, after several thousands of years, Iranians and the people of nine other countries enthusiastically celebrate the Nowruz festival, irrespective of their age, language, gender, race, nationality or social status as this festivity knows no boundary.

The oldest archaeological record for the Nowruz celebration comes from the Achaemenid period over 2500 years ago. They created the first major empire in the region and built the Persepolis complex in southern Iran. This magnificent palace/temple complex was destroyed by Alexander the Great.

Throughout their often stormy history, Persians have endured hard times of civil wars, devastations, and political chaos. They have celebrated the height of human civilization and scientific and military achievements through the spirit of Nowruz.

King Jamshid is said to be the person who introduced the Nowruz celebrations. Some 12 centuries later, in 487 B.C.E., Darius the Great of the Achaemenian dynasty celebrated the Nowruz at his newly built Persepolis in Iran. On that day, the

first rays of the rising sun fell on the observatory in the great hall of audience at 06-30 a.m., an event which repeats itself once every 1400 years. The Persepolis was the place the Achaemenian king received on Nowruz, his people from all over the vast empire. The walls of the great royal palace depict the scenes of the celebrations.

We know the Iranians under the Parthian dynasty celebrated the occasion but we do not know the details. It should have, more or less, followed the Achaemenian pattern. During the Sasanian time, preparations began at least 25 days before Nowruz.

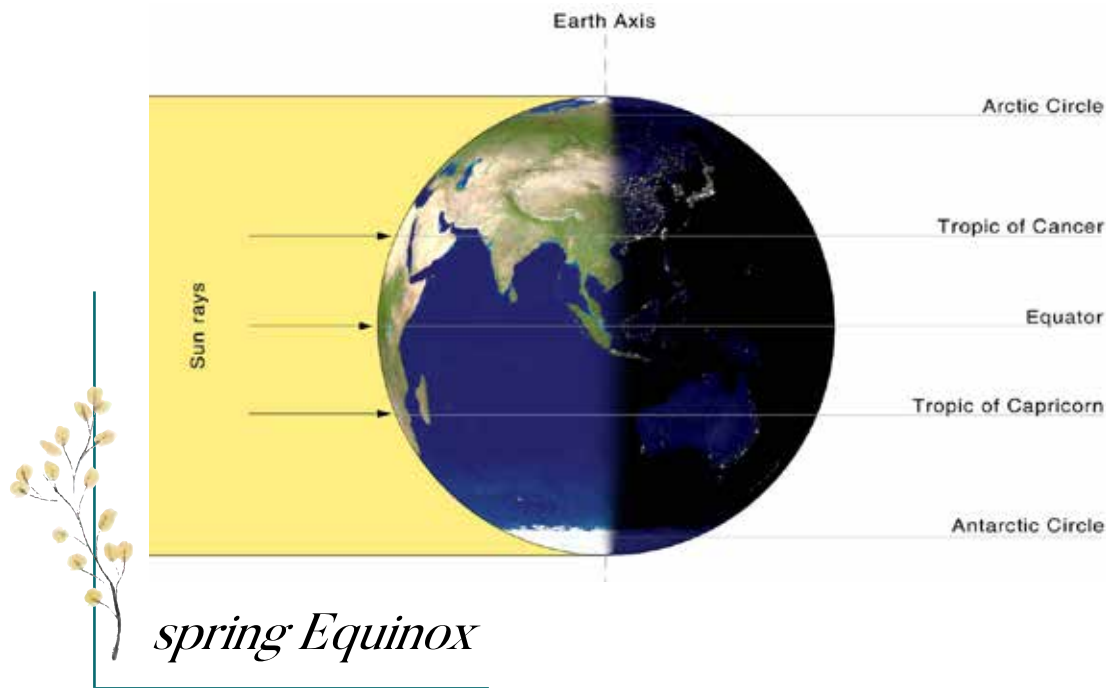
Twelve pillars of mud-bricks, each dedicated to one month of the year, were erected in the royal court. Various vegetable seeds--wheat, barley, lentils, beans, and others--were sown on top of the pillars. They grew into luxurious greens by the New Year Day.

The great king held his public audience and the High Priest of the empire was the first to greet him. Government officials followed next. Each person offered a gift and received a present. The audience lasted for five days, each day for the people of a certain profession. Then on the sixth day, called the Greater Nowruz, the king held his special audience. He received members of the Royal family and courtiers. Also, a general amnesty was declared for convicts of minor crimes. The pillars were removed on the 16th day and the festival came to a close. The occasion



**Nowruz is a strong testimony to Iranian rich civilization, national characteristics and history. It proves how a nation with its irreversible determination to endure, and even flourish, through periods of devastation, political chaos, hardship, and oppression.**





was celebrated, on a lower level, by all peoples throughout the empire.

During the first two centuries of Islam in Persia, the festivities were not observed with much earnest due to sociopolitical transformation. Gradually, greedy Omayyad caliphs, intending to boost their income through gifts, revived the custom.

Nonetheless, Iranians have always been enthusiastic about preserving this custom, especially when they were under foreign domination.

Omayyad rulers, known for their tribal fanaticism, left no stone unturned to annihilate the traditions and cultural heritage of conquered lands.

According to the historian George Zeidan, Persians would pay 5,000 to 10,000 silver coins for permission to celebrate Nowruz during the reign of the Omayyads. Iranians made strenuous efforts to celebrate the occasion even though they had to pay a high price. Omayyad rulers greedy for wealth and power sought to strengthen their hegemony, apparently only resorting to Islam as a shield to protect their interests.

The festival was so glorious and sacred that even the most ruthless rulers used to grant general amnesty to captives and prisoners. The dignity of Nowruz is captured as Ahura Mazda in its splendid glory says: "On the day of Farvardin, even the infernal-dwellers return to this world to visit their families."

A major part of the New Year rituals is setting a special table with seven specific items present,

Haft Sin (Haft chin, seven crops before Islam). In ancient times each of the items corresponded to one of the seven creations and the seven holly immortals protecting them.

Today they are changed and modified but some have kept their symbolism. All seven items start with the letter S; this was not the order in ancient times. Wheat or barley representing new growth is still present. Fish the most easily obtainable animal and water are present. Lit candles are a symbol of fire. Mirrors are used today, origin unknown.

These were expensive items in ancient times and were made from polished metal. It is unlikely that all households would have one. Zoroastrians today place the lit candle in front of the mirror.

Egg a universal symbol of fertility corresponding to the mother earth is still present. Garlic is used to warn off bad omens. Samano a thick brownish paste is present today. It is a nutritious meal and could have been part of the feasts. Coins symbolizing wealth and prosperity, fruits and special meals are present as well.

Ferdowsi, the great Iranian epic poet described this auspicious event in Shahnameh:

*On Jamshid as the people jewels streamed,  
They cried upon him that New Year beamed  
On Farvardin Hormuz in this bright New Year  
Bodies were freed from pain all hearts from fear  
New Year new king the world thus rendered  
bright  
He sat resplendent on the throne in light*





# **The Message of Hojjat al-Islam Mohammad Mahdi Imanipour President of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization On the Occasion of Nowruz**

نفس باد صبا مشک فشان خواهد شد  
عالم پیردگر باره جوان خواهد شد

*Morning breeze, its fragrance will exhale  
The old world will once again youthfully sail.*



Nowruz is the manifestation of the revival of nature. Nowruz is a new opportunity for people to reflect on their life and circumstances and seek help from God Almighty to be in the best of conditions spiritually. Nowruz also provides the opportunity for self-retrospection and reflecting upon one's need to evolve on a sacred path replete with signs of the power of God Almighty. This transformation is the divine tradition for which Nowruz is considered a turning point. The existing harmony among the nations who celebrate Nowruz brings their hearts and minds closer to each other at the glorious and beautiful moments of the change of Year. The morning breeze of the first day of Nowruz creates a sense of rebirth among the Persian-speaking nations as well as the non-Persian-speaking nations who consider Nowruz as the ancient heritage of their ancestors.

In addition to its intrinsic value, Nowruz is an opportunity to develop cultural relations between Iran and its neighbors. The spiritual and civilized outlook towards Nowruz can become a point of profound connection between the nations of the region. Looking at Nowruz as an ancient rite and tradition is not the whole story! Nowruz originated from a kind of unique civilization and has the power to create a cultural-civilizational union among different countries.

In Central Asia, Caucasus, and West Asia, Nowruz can be more than a "common tradition" and become a "center of common culture" to reach a "unified cultural system". This cultural system may not be limited to a specific time (the end of winter and the beginning of spring) and it can include all the days of the year. This cultural-civilized capacity should be considered and flourished by the countries that celebrate Nowruz.

In the religious teachings of the main leaders of Islam, Nowruz has been referred to as a symbol of transition to a new era in human life. This exalting outlook towards the change of year and Nowruz shows that religious leaders have considered it to be more than just a ceremony or tradition and looked at it

as a turning point in the elevation of human values.

What makes honoring this ancient festivity even more evident is to use of this common opportunity for coexistence, synergy, and convergence among nations and the development, stabilization, and evolution of their cooperation by means of this common heritage.

Nowruz has a special place among the nations of the region and can ensure continuous alliance and greater interaction among these nations and their governments. The hidden creativity and beauty in this ancient festivity can be considered an instrument for promoting a certain lifestyle based on "effective transformation" in the individual, social and international relations of nations. We believe that the regional and extra-regional capacities of Nowruz have not yet been fully actualized, and this heightens the responsibility of the relevant institutions in the countries that celebrate this beautiful tradition.

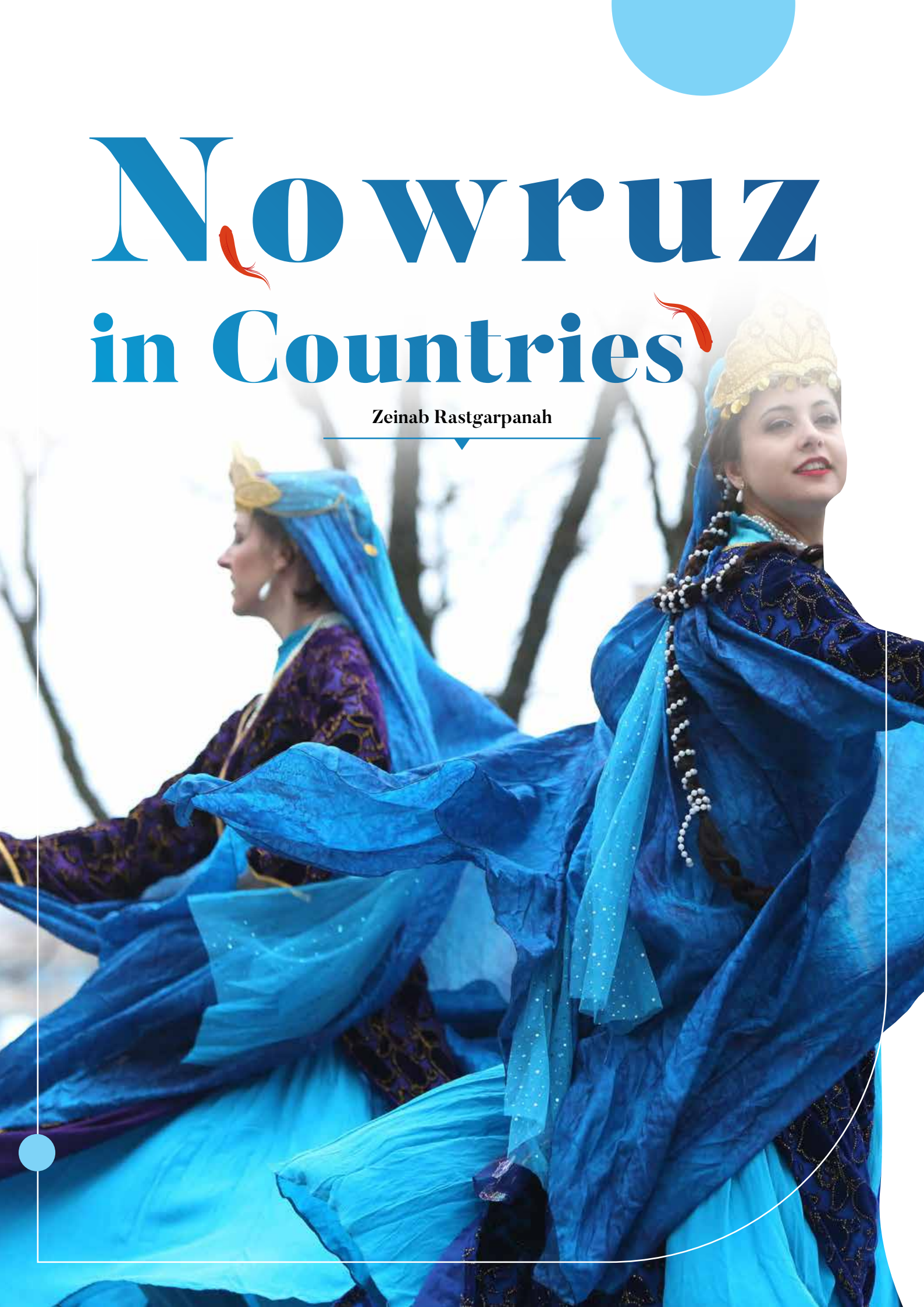
Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, as the custodian of the cultural diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, considers identifying and actualizing the latent capacities and strengthening the current capacities of this ancient tradition as a measure of civilizational and religious solidarity among countries. It is hoped to witness greater convergence among countries inspired by this rich tradition, in the near future. The realization of this ideal will create a bright future for those interested in Nowruz, and our dear compatriots inside and outside the country can, as in the past, have a significant impact on the expansion of the culture of Nowruz.

I, hereby, express my heartfelt congratulations to all dear Iranians, especially those living abroad, as well as the statesmen and citizens of countries within the cultural and religious zone of Nowruz, on this occasion and the New Year (1402) and I wish them a year full of success, blessings, and prosperity.



# Nowruz in Countries

Zeinab Rastgarpanah



## Norouz in Afghanistan



In Afghanistan, Nowroz festival is traditionally celebrated for 2 weeks. Preparations for Nowroz start several days ago, at least after Chaharshanbe Suri, the last Wednesday before the New Year. Among various traditions and customs, the most important ones are:

**Haft Mewa:** In Afghanistan, they prepare Haft Mewa (Seven Fruits) instead of Haft Sin which is common in Iran. Haft Mewa is like a Fruit salad made from 7 different Dried fruits, served in their own syrup. The 7 dried fruits are: Raisin, Senjed (the dried fruit of the oleaster tree), Pistachio, Hazelnut, Prune (dry fruit of Apricot), Walnut and whether Almond or another species of Plum fruit.

**Samanak:** It is a special type of sweet dish made from Wheat germ. Women take a special party for it during the night, and cook it from late in the evening till the daylight, singing a special song: Samanak dar Josh o mā Kafcha zanem -

Degarān dar Khwāb o mā Dafcha zanem.

**Gul-e Surkh Festival:**

It is an old festival celebrated only in “Mazari Sharif” for 40 days. People travel from different parts of the country to Mazar in order to attend the festival. It is

celebrated along with the Janda

Bālā ceremony which is a specific religious ceremony performed in the holy blue mosque of Mazar that is believed (mostly by Sunnite Afghans) to be the site of the tomb of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth caliph of Islam. The ceremony is performed by raising a special banner in the blue mosque in the first day of year (i.e. Nowroz). The Guli Surkh party continues with other special activities among people in the Tulip fields and around the blue mosque for 40 days.

**Buzkashi:** Along with other customs and celebrations, normally a Buzkashi tournament is held. The Buzkashi matches take place in

northern cities of Afghanistan and in Kabul.

**Special cuisines:** People cook special types of dishes for Nowroz, especially on the eve of Nowroz. Normally they cook “Sabzi Chalaw”, a dish made from rice and spinach, separately. Moreover, the bakeries prepare a special type of cookie, called Kulcha-e Nowrozī, which is only baked for Nowroz. Another dish which is prepared mostly for the Nowroz days is Māhī wa Jelabī (Fried Fish and Jelabi) and it is the most often meal in picnics. In Afghanistan, it is a common custom among the affianced families that the fiancé’s family give presents to or prepare special dishes for the fiancée’s family on special occasions such as in the two Eids, Barā’at and in Nowrouz. Hence, the special dish for Nowroz is Māhī wa Jelabī.

**Sight-seeing to Cercis fields:** The citizens of Kabul go to Istalif or other green places around where the Cercis flowers grow. They go for picnic with their families during the first 2 weeks of New Year.

**Jashni Dehqān:** Jashni Dehqan means The Festival of Farmers. It is celebrated in the first day of year, in which the farmers walk in the cities as a sign of encouragement for the agricultural productions. In recent years, this activity is being performed only in Kabul and other major cities, in which the mayor and other high governmental personalities participate for watching and observing.

## Norouz in Kazakhstan



“Qal-Tozaq” is a contest performed in Kazakhstan between men and women on Norouz. They believe that if the women win, the New Year will be filled with prosperity, but if the men win, they consider it to be unfavorable year.

In Kazakhstan, Norouz is considered to be the point of vernal equinox, a time during which everything becomes refreshed and when the whole world is filled with joy and happiness. The Kazakhs believe that Norouz is the beginning of the year. They have beautiful sayings that “Norouz has been awaited for one whole year”, “Blessings descend at Norouz”, and finally:



“The Azure gem of Samarqand will melt at Norouz”.

The Kazakhs perform season cleaning before Norouz, for they believe it to push away all ailments and problems. They light two candles and hang them above the door from the moment of New Year to “Shab-e-Qazir”. On the New Year’s Eve, the Kazakh girls cook a dish with the last portions of the horse meat called “Qyaqi Ashar” and serve their beloved boys with it. The young men give them presents such as combs, mirrors, and perfumes. They believe that this interchange of gifts would increase love between them.



Another ceremony performed by the young men is saddling an untamed horse. They let the horse gallop through their place at exactly three in the morning to wake the people up. This is a symbolic show representing the arrival of the New Year.

There are well-known contests among Kazakhs on the occasion of Norouz, among which “Qal-Tozaq” is one performed between men and women. Should the women win, they believe the New Year to be one filled with prosperity and blessing. However, if the men win, they consider it to be unfavorable year. “Koekpar”, picking goats by men riding on horses, “Avdar Yespaq”, wrestling, “Qiz Qov” and “Alti Baqan” are examples of other contests and games held on Norouz.

## Norouz in Pakistan



New Year in Pakistan is called Alam Afrouz meaning the New Day that illuminates the world with its arrival.

The ancient festival of Norouz in Pakistan is celebrated as the symbol of New Day. Norouz in Pakistan is called Alam Afrouz meaning the New Day that illuminates the world with its arrival.

This day begins in March and traditionally represents the rebirth of nature after the long winter. The New Year begins the instant the sun is no longer in the astrological sign of Pisces and enters Aries. It is celebrated as a time of renewal.

Norouz has an exclusive importance among the people of Pakistan and therefore different social and religious groups elucidate in details about it in the calendars they publish. The calendar is called Jandri.

One of the customs of Norouz in Pakistan is the practice of burning piles of wood. The bonfires are a symbol to destroy any remaining evil from the previous year. Season cleaning, putting on new clothes, preparing certain sweets such as “Luddoo”, “Golab Jamen”, “Rus Malai”, “Barfi”, “Shekar Pareh”, “Cream Roll”, “Souhan Halva”, and giving and receiving gifts (Eidi) are among the ceremonies practiced in Pakistan. In some cities, women take part in a bridal dress show to celebrate the New Year. During Norouz, people avoid unfavorable talks and follow a kind attitude toward each other. Composing and reciting poems in Urdu, Dari, and Arabic are quite trendy as well.

The Pakistani people believe that hope, peace, and amity in the Islamic world are the purposes of Norouz. They believe that this way, freedom, fortune, happiness, fraternity and equity would rest in the souls and hearts of the people.

## Norouz in Uzbekistan



In Uzbekistan, people cook sumalak, the symbolic Norouz dish. It is its mass character when each participant of this event becomes a part of the general elation that has prevented Norouz from falling into oblivion.

For all the nations spring is the time of nature revival and renovation, the period of expectations and hope for peace between



people, for bumper harvest in the fields and gardens and good increase in livestock, for love and consent in family. And all these expectations are embodied in spring festival Norouz.

From the times this holiday originated, Norouz was mainly the festival of masses and has been preserved as such up to the present days. During this festival there are no official events such as parades, demonstrations, meetings or marches in Uzbekistan.

Unlike the western New Year traditions, Norouz is celebrated in daytime hours within the family circle. March 21st is the main celebration, but for the next week it is common practice to visit friends and relatives, buy and plant seeding of fruit trees and have cheerful gatherings in the fresh spring air.

Traditionally, it is also a time to “clean up” one’s life. People tidy up their homes, wash rugs and draperies, decorate with flowers, and buy new clothes that they will use for visiting. On the day of Norouz, all housekeeping - including the preparation of the meal, careful cleaning of the home and the arrangement of blossoming branches from apricot, peach, almond or pomegranate trees - must be completed before rising of the morning star. Children enjoy the holiday because they often get presents of money, as well as blessings, from their elders.

In Uzbekistan, it is a customary practice for people to gather for hashar (team-work) few days before beginning of the festival. During

hashar, they tidy up and decorate their cities and villages because it is natural enough to celebrate the holiday in clean and tidy surroundings. By the time the celebration starts, all cooking of holiday food is to be completed too.

In Samarqand, Bukara, Andican, the ceremonies which start on Norouz continue for almost a whole month. The people visit each other’s tents during these ceremonies and congratulate each other. The food served during such visits is rice which is specially made. Shows like wrestling, horse races and rooster fights are organized.

Of the seven food beginning with the sound of SH in the Uzbek language, milk represents cleanliness, dessert represents the joy of living, sugar represents the coolness and rest; candle represents worshipping to fire, and comb represents the beauty of the women. After the introduction of Islam, 7 objects beginning with “SH” were replaced according to the Islamic traditions.

Various and plentiful meals are also made during the Norouz festival which is held in the hope of the coming profitable and bumper-crop year. On the day of the festival, different national dishes are served: pilov (meat dish with rice), shurpa (vegetable soup), boiled mutton or beef, kuk-samsa (patty with spring onions) and sweet nishalda (dessert made of eggs whisked with sugar).

But the culmination of the holiday is sumalak – a ritual meal, which citizens of Uzbekistan can



taste only once a year, whereas the guests, very likely, can do it once in their lifetime. Sumalak is made from flour and wheat sprouts, which are the symbols of eternal life.

Today, Uzbeks still serve a traditional meal of “sumalak”, which tastes like molasses-flavored cream of wheat and is made from flour and sprouted wheat grains. Sumalak is cooked slowly on wood fire, sometimes with addition of spices. Sprouted grain is the symbol of life, heat, abundance and health.

People cook sumalak, the symbolic Norouz dish. It is its mass character when each participant of this event becomes a part of the general elation that has prevented Norouz from falling into oblivion. Sumalak-making is a long process: it is cooked for 24 hours until it becomes a viscous mass. Special large pots are used, with round small stones covering the bottom of the pot to protect the sweet mass from getting burnt. Cooking of sumalak as an ancient ritual which has its own peculiarities; traditionally only women used to make it. It is notable that sumalak-making process is accompanied by women's singing of special short verses, dancing, joking, telling either true or cock-and-bull stories. The ready-to-serve sumalak becomes a good treat for relatives, guests and neighbors. Local people believe that it is a good omen if you find a small stone in your sumalak dish: it means you will be lucky and healthy till the next Norouz.

Meanwhile, the parks and squares are surrounded by blossomed trees the general merry-making starts. The traditional personages, Bahor-Hanum (Spring), Dehkan-Bobo (Old farmer), Momo-Er (the Earth), accompanied by musicians, drive along the streets in the cars decorated with the flowers, and invite everybody to the central square, where the main celebration takes place.

Following old traditions, Norouz is the day when people forgive each other's resentment and make it up with each other. Many people call on those who are poor, lonely or disabled, take care of them, and give them small gifts. In fact, the celebration of Norouz lasts the whole month.

The activities of the first 13 days of the New Year are considered harbingers of the year to come. For this reason, it is traditional to end quarrels, forgive debts and overlook enmity and insults. It is a time for reconciliation, when forgiveness and cheerfulness are the dominant sentiments. As with the celebration of the Chinese New Year, there are traditions associated with the first visitor to the house during Norouz. To ensure good luck for the coming year, this person should have a “happy foot”; he or she should be kind, gentle, witty, pious and have a good reputation.

Central Asia has its own Norouz traditions. From ancient times, the holiday was celebrated in agricultural oases with festivals, bazaars, horseracing, and dog and cock fights.

There is an interesting precept in “Norouzname”, a well-known poetic work by a prominent Iranian philosopher and poet Omar Khayam also famous in Uzbekistan: “He who celebrates and has fun on the day of Norouz will spend his life cheerfully until the next Norouz celebration.”

It was only after Uzbekistan became an independent state that Norouz gained huge popularity. It is significant that one of first acts of the new state authorities imparted a status of nationwide state holiday to Norouz.

In independent Uzbekistan, this ancient festival has gained a new sense. People of all nationalities, who populate Republic of Uzbekistan and for whom this land has become native celebrate Norouz with genuine enthusiasm, while the guests of their country participate in the festival with utmost interest.





# Nowruz, a Message for Peace, Convergence, and Cooperation

Alireza Bigdeli

Senior Expert at Central Asia and the Caucasus studies

**T**his is an opportunity to congratulate all those interested in Nowruz, and wish them according to the Iranian tradition to have ahead “A hundred years better than this year.” Thousands of years ago, our land’s people found out from experience that in the turning of days there is a time when cold is replaced with warmth, darkness with light, and despair with hope. The trees blossom, the flowers and greenery germinate and rise up through the ground and bestow nature with colors and odors and the animate again start moving and striving. They, with all tenderness, named the pleasant resurrection of nature “Nowruz”, and celebrated it. Nowruz is the start of spring, the first day in the solar calendar, and the day when God’s color shines in nature and humans’ hearts. Nowruz is a day for celebration and thanksgiving, one of the times when man feels the blowing of God’s breeze of blessings in his life and





sees himself more than ever exposed to them. Many people, dwelling large parts of Asia, from long ago, have celebrated the Nowruz celebrations with all glory and wished each other the best. With the advent of holy Islam, Nowruz was reinstated as a holy tradition. In our religious sources, it is a holy and happy day and an important day in creation and for guidance of mankind, for which prayers have been made.

The current traditions about Nowruz, among the people of various countries that celebrate Nowruz, are close and similar. These celebrations are symbols for worship of one God, creator of nature, respect to all God's blessings, thanks-giving and prayers, paying attention to joy and happiness, interest in change and development, an incentive for visits and travel, hailing the family, respect to children, magnifying elders, giving and taking gifts, an occasion for thinking, attention to cleanness of the living environment and glorifying the environment, purity of hearts, disappearance of impurities and uncleanness. Holding Nowruz traditions and respecting their deep human concepts such as marking the ringing in of the new year, setting the Haft-sin ( seven things starting with s) are still current in the Nowruz region. In the solar calendar, if the ringing in is before noon, the same day is Nowruz, and if it is after noon, the next day will be Nowruz and the

first day of the new year. In some Nowruz countries like Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Tajikistani, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kirgizstan, Kazakhstan and so forth, Nowruz as a national celebration, is an official holiday.

Nowruz is a tradition with the capacity for fostering solidarity and integrity among nations and ethnicities. This ancient tradition has such specifics that probably has from four thousand years ago drawn the attention of various peoples dwelling the Iranian plateau and guided them into the path of solidarity and neighborhood and has established peace and friendship across a vast territory stretching from North Africa to the Indian subcontinent. Across this expanse, Iranians have benefited from this festival more than any other nation and used it along with religion and other traditions to strengthen their national unity. This ancient tradition has echoed in our literature, art and sports.

Fortunately, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, listed Nowruz as a world heritage on September 30,2009. In a resolution, the UN general assembly recognized and designated March 21 as International Day of NOWRUZ. Since then, Nowruz has again become a force for convergence among the countries which celebrate it and have joint plans for marking it. According to the UN estimates, Nowruz is celebrated by over 300 million people in Iran,



Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Tajikistani, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kirgizstan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Pakistan, India and populations spread around 25 countries.

Nowruz can prosper many neighboring capacities, and cause strengthening of political, economic and cultural relations of the people who mark and celebrate it. Nowruz can bring its own economy, culture and politics. Nowruz countries can firmly find friendship and mutual bonds by the virtue of and on this holiday that is celebrated by the nations. As cleaning of the living and working environment, buying clothes and consumables, giving gifts and preparing for travel, parties and tourism are part of this popular holiday, the Nowruz countries can benefit from its economic aspects and expand their mutual cooperation based on this. Nowruz is woven into the fabric of our people's culture and is an occasion for strengthening cultural integrity and joint gatherings. The Nowruz holiday can strengthen the spirit of integrity and good neighborhood among our countries which have common cultural borders and serve as a basis for solidifying our ties. For this, the countries which celebrate Nowruz can use Nowruz politics to de-escalate tensions and strengthen mutual ties and their respective foreign policies.

Our experience shows that foreign policy begins from neighboring countries and borders and if we succeed to strengthen integrity and cooperation in our region, we will take long strides in our foreign policy and can outline propitious horizons for the happiness of our nations. Nowruz puts countless opportunities before us which have not yet been tapped into. Holding regular Nowruz meetings at the presidents and high ranking officials levels, holding cultural, art, and traditional sports festivals and trying to improve people, elites, and artists' relations in Nowruz countries and showcasing our common bonds at the world and international organizations levels are examples of such opportunities.

For us, the residents of the Nowruz region, each day spent together in integrity and cooperation is Nowruz and a new day, as put by Sa'adi Shirazi "Each day passed with you is Nowruz."

(The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the IPIS)

**The Nowruz holiday can strengthen the spirit of integrity and good neighborhood among our countries which have common cultural borders and serve as a basis for solidifying our ties.**



**Nowruz is a tradition with the capacity for fostering solidarity and integrity among nations and ethnicities. This ancient tradition has such specifics that probably has from four thousand years ago drawn the attention of various peoples dwelling the Iranian plateau and guided them into the path of solidarity and neighborhood and has established peace and friendship across a vast territory stretching from North Africa to the Indian subcontinent.**





# Tradition and Mythology

Saeed Noor Mohammad Oghli

**T**he celebration has its roots in Ancient Iran. Due to its antiquity, there exist various foundation myths for Nowruz in Iranian mythology. In the Zoroastrian tradition, the seven most important Zoroastrian festivals are the six Gahambars and Nowruz, which occurs at the spring equinox. According to the late Professor Mary Boyce.

The Shahnameh, dates Nowruz as far back to the reign of Jamshid, who in Zoroastrian texts saved mankind from a killer winter that was destined to kill every living creature. The mythical Persian King Jamshid (Yima or Yama of the Indo-Iranian lore) perhaps symbolizes the transition of the Indo-Iranians from animal hunting to animal husbandry and a more settled life in human history. In the Shahnameh and Iranian mythology, he is credited with the foundation of Nowruz. In the Shahnama, Jamshid constructed a throne studded with gems.

He had demons raise him above the earth into the heavens; there he sat on his throne like the sun shining in the sky. The world's creatures gathered in wonder about him and scattered jewels around him, and called this day the New Day or





*The victory of the lion over the cow, the symbol of the beginning of spring in Iran*

No/Now-Ruz. This was the first day of the month of Farvardin (the first month of the Persian calendar).

The Persian scholar Abu Rayhan Biruni of the 10th century A.D., in his Persian work “Kitab al-Tafhim li Awa’il Sina’at al-Tanjim” provides a description of the calendar of various nations. Besides the Persian calendar, various festivals of Arabs, Jews, Sabians, Greeks and other nations are mentioned in this book. In the section on the Persian calendar, he mentions Nowruz, Sadeh, Tiregan, Mehregan, the six Gahanbar, Parvardegaan, Bahmanja, Isfandarmazh and several other festivals. According to him: It is the belief of the Persians that Nowruz marks the first day when the universe started its motion.

The Kurdish version of Newroz is the Legend of Kawe the Blacksmith, which says that once upon a time there was an evil king named Dehak. The king and his kingdom were cursed because of his wickedness. The sun refused to shine and it was impossible to grow any food. The king Dehak had the added curse of having two snakes attached to his shoulders. When the snakes were hungry he was in great pain, and the only thing that would satisfy the hunger of the snakes were the brains of

children. So every day, two of the children from the local villages were killed and their brains fed to the snakes. Kawe was the local blacksmith and hated the king, as 16 of his 17 children had been sacrificed for the King’s snakes. When he received word that his last child, a daughter, was to be killed he came up with a plan to save her. Instead of sacrificing his daughter, Kawe had sacrificed a sheep and had given the sheep’s brain to the King. The difference was not noticed. When others heard of Kawe’s trickery they all did the same; at night they would send their children up to the mountains with Kawe where they would be safe. The children flourished in the mountains and Kawe created an army from the children to end the evil king’s reign. When their numbers were great enough, they came down from the mountains and stormed the castle. Kawe himself cast the fatal blow to the evil king, Dehak. To tell the news to the people of Mesopotamia he built a large bonfire, which lit up the sky and cleansed the air of the evilness of Dehak’s reign. That very morning, the sun began to shine again and the lands began to grow once more. This is the beginning of the “New Day” or Newroz as it is spelled in Kurdish.





It has been suggested that the famous Persepolis complex, or at least the palace of Apadana and the Hundred Columns Hall, were built for the specific purpose of celebrating Nowruz.

## ■ Historical background

Although it is not clear whether proto-Indo-Iranians celebrated a feast as the first day of the calendar, there are indications that both Iranians and Indians assumed the first day of autumn as the beginning of new year season. There are reasons that Iranians may have observed the beginning both autumn and spring.

Boyce and Grenet explain the traditions for seasonal festivals and comment: "It is possible that the splendor of the Babylonian festivities at this season led the Persians to develop their own spring festival into an established new year feast, with the name Navasarda 'New Year' (a name which, though first attested through Middle Persian derivatives, is attributed to the Achaemenian period). Since the communal observations of the ancient Iranians appear in general to have been a seasonal ones, it is probable, however, that they traditionally held festivals in both autumn and spring, to mark the major turning points of the natural year".

We have reasons to believe that the celebration is much older than that date and was surely celebrated by the people and royalty during the Achaemenid times (555-330 BC). It was, therefore, a highly auspicious occasion for the ancient Iranian peoples. It has been suggested that the famous Persepolis complex, or at least the palace of Apadana and the Hundred Columns Hall, were built for the specific purpose of celebrating Nowruz. Although, there may be no mention of Nowruz in recorded Achaemenid inscriptions (see picture). There is a detailed account by Xenophon of Nowruz celebration taking place in Persepolis and the continuity of this festival in the Achaemenid tradition. According to Britannica, the Jewish festival of Purim, is probably adopted from the Persian New Year.

Nowruz was the holiday of Arsacid/Parthian dynastic Empires who ruled Iran (248 BC-224 AD). There are specific references to the celebration of Nowruz during the reign of Vologases I (51-78 AD), but these include



no details. Before Sassanids established their power in West Asia around 300 AD, Parthians celebrated Nowruz in Autumn and 1st of Farvardin began at the Autumn Equinox. During Parthian dynasty the Spring Festival was Mehragan, a Zoroastrian and Iranian festival celebrated in honor of Mithra.

Extensive records on the celebration of Nowruz appear following the accession of Ardashir I of Persia, the founder of the Sassanid dynasty (224-651 AD). Under the Sassanid emperors, Nowruz was celebrated as the most important day of the year. Most royal traditions of Nowruz such as royal audiences with the public, cash gifts, and the pardoning of prisoners, were established during the Sassanian era and persisted unchanged until modern times.

Nowruz, along with Sadeh (celebrated in mid-winter), survived in society following the introduction of Islam in 650 AD. Other celebrations such Gahanbar and Mehragan were eventually side-lined or were only followed by the Zoroastrians, who carried them.

*Nowruz is mentioned in the Shahnameh for the first time with the story of Jamshid Shah. (miniature collage made by Hamid Rahmanian)*



# Persian Cuisine







# Mahjubah Spice



Scan Me to Find the Recipe





# **Using Nowruz Diplomacy for greater connectivity in**

# E u r a s i a

Masoud Hamyani

---



**A**s Iranians are going to celebrate the Nowruz Festival, on the eve of the new Persian Year, along with various ethnic groups across Greater Eurasia from Xinjiang to Turkey, it seems that the time has come to reaffirm the significance of Nowruz diplomacy for achieving some foreign policy goals of the country in the 21st century.

Cultural diplomacy is a useful tool that can be employed to realize foreign-policy objectives, and within this context, a special aspect of cultural diplomacy projection, especially leveraging Iran's historical links with Eurasian nations will be examined. Also, it intends to understand why Iran is in a favorable position to utilize the Nowruz heritage in its foreign policy? Finally, which initiatives need to be taken by Iran in the Nowruz diplomacy area within the context of greater connectivity in Eurasia?

It is worth noting that today the cultural diplomacy as a complement to the official diplomacy has found a special place in the strategic calculations of countries, which means the exchange of ideas, information, art, literature and also highlighting the shared historical memories between the nations to strengthen mutual understanding. In other words, cultural diplomacy is an attempt to pursue national interests by utilizing cultural links. Therefore, despite the strategic and geopolitical position of the country being improved in the international system in the past decades, at the same time, it should be borne in mind that issues such as geoculture are similarly important for shaping the foreign policy trajectory.

#### ■ The status of Nowruz diplomacy

Interestingly, the relationship between Nowruz and state diplomacy is not a new one, and dates back to the days of ancient Iran, a matter which has been depicted in a historical monument on the theme of representatives of 29 nations paying tribute to Darius, the King of Iran. Since then, for

centuries, Nowruz has not only remained a focal point for cultural and human connectivity in Eurasia, but also an integral element of Eurasian nations' identity so that some countries in the region have taken the initiative to register this ancient heritage in international forums as their historical values. Nowruz also has been recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and in 2010, the day of March 21 was declared as the "International Day of Nowruz" by the United Nations General Assembly on. This Resolution welcomes the efforts of Member States which celebrate Nowruz to preserve and develop the culture and traditions related to Nowruz, and encourages Member States to make efforts to raise awareness about Nowruz and to organize annual events in commemoration of this festivity.

#### ■ Nowruz Has Deep Roots in Iran History

As Nowruz is well placed at the core of Iran's identity as a cradle of coexistence and empathy of various ethnic groups, it presents a unique image of a country that in the ups and downs of history has always been able to bond the hearts and minds of various ethnic groups around a cultural heritage like Nowruz so that this festival was welcomed at the courts of the Mongol kings in the Indian subcontinent and beyond in Xinjiang of China. Today similarly, Nowruz can be used to meet foreign policy goals, because Iran, as the origin of Nowruz, is in a position to work with like-minded nations across Eurasia to promote Nowruz diplomacy to expand physical and human connectivity.

#### ■ Nowruz and Eurasian greater connectivity

Today, the established transnational network for celebrating Nowruz festival plays a significant role in the lives of millions across the region, and considering that most nations of the region see Nowruz as an inherent part of their identity and civilizational values, this Eurasian presence of Nowruz makes it ideal



for cultural diplomacy projection.

Certainly, the Nowruz diplomacy could have an impact beyond the realm of cultural diplomacy, an aid in other areas of foreign policy as well. Nowruz also could present a noble image of Iran as an internationally influential entity by realizing the principles and goals of foreign policy of the country.

Therefore, for the current administration, which has adopted an active “neighborhood policy” to lead its foreign policy agenda, the use of Iran’s shared cultural and historical ties with other countries will open up a new horizon for cooperation. Moreover unlike the common belief about soft power which aims to impose certain cultural values, the positive feature of Nowruz is that its promotion has not to be seen as the export of a cultural product, but as a common cultural festival throughout Eurasia that can be considered as a diplomatic and cultural mechanism for strengthening the regional relations. Therefore, Nowruz diplomacy could potentially facilitate the realization of the administration’s grand strategy in the context of the “First Neighborhood” and “Look to East” policies.

### ■ NOWRUZ in Iran; Persian New Year Traditions

In this regard, some symbolic diplomatic gestures, such as regularly holding the Nowruz Summit can create an appropriate mechanism for regional dialogue. In addition, hosting an International Nowruz festival with various cultural initiatives such as film and music events, holding international sports events with the presence of Nowruz countries

and other guest countries in different cities, and facilitating the visa procedures and trade exchanges will increase the flow of tourists. It should be noted that since most of the countries in the Nowruz geography are full members or observers in the Shanghai Organization, a proposed cultural initiative titled “Nowruz Common Heritage” would be the right step in this direction.

However, despite all the huge benefits that the Nowruz might offer for a successful cultural diplomacy projection, so far, no significant initiative has been taken in this regard. However Nowruz diplomacy provides the relevant catalyst for human connectivity and regional economic integration, and in this regard, we don’t have to do anything to prove anything new, because Nowruz itself remains a more powerful brand than anything else to appeal sufficient global attraction with enormous benefit for the Eurasian nations.



In the conclusion, considering its shared heritage with the Eurasian nations, the Islamic Republic of Iran should speed up the modernization of its connectivity and infrastructure networks to make a thriving trade route and attract a large number of tourists. Iran also, given its geopolitical features as a bridge between Eurasia and the Indian Ocean and coupled with its efforts to invest in its connectivity projects such as the Chabahar port and the north-south corridor, must be able at the same time to understand cultural complexities of the region and take responsibility for strengthening the cultural and human ties with Eurasian society. Therefore, Nowruz can continue to benefit the country for its regional and international outreaches in the 21st century.

# *Iranian Women and Nowruz Celebration*

**I**n Iranian thought and culture, a woman is a symbol of giving birth, growth, and love. She spreads her sincere love and affection at home and makes the family pleasant. The vitality of the family depends on the vitality of the mother.

In the Holy Qur'an, God introduces women as the cause of relief and peace in the family and considers marriage as the cause of achieving peace.

In Surah Ar-Rum - 21, God says: "And of His (God) Signs is that He has created mates for you from your own kind that you may find peace in them and He has set between you love and mercy. Surely there are Signs in this for those who reflect."

One of the roles of women is to provide happy moments in the family Which is more important in celebrations such as "Nowruz".

Ayatollah Khamenei, the Leader of the Revolution, says: "Undoubtedly the role of the mother as the manager of home and

family, to create intangible elements such as creating a lively environment for her husband and children can not be ignored."

Nowruz is the best opportunity for family gatherings and strengthening relations between children and parents. Again, it is the mother who can initiate intimate conversations and strengthen the emotional bonds of the family these days.

In a happy family, a man should support his wife all-around. In this regard, Imam Reza (AS) has said: «Whenever a man tells his wife that I love you, a love is created in a woman's heart that never leaves her heart."

Expressing love by a man is like a spark of fire that ignites a woman's heart and increases the fire of love in her being. The wife also gives this love to her husband and children.

Nowruz is a kind of respect for nature. It is a celebration in which women play the most beautiful role.







## Leader's message to Spanish-speakers on release of Spanish version of his book on memories of his struggles

**I**n the ceremony announcing the official release of the Spanish translation of the book “Cell Number 14” in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, Imam Khamenei’s message to all the Spanish speaking people of the world was published. The book “Cell Number 14” (in Spanish “Celda n.º 14”) contains Imam Khamenei’s memories of resistance from the periods he spent in prison and exile during his fight against the Pahlavi regime. The text of the Leader’s message is as follows:



Sayyid Ali Khamenei

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

*If I have been able to communicate with you Spanish speaking people by way of this book ("Cell Number 14"), I will be very pleased. This covers a small part of my life. It is very good if all of us and you and all justice-seeking nations are able to become more familiar with each other and combine our efforts. I pray that God will grant you prosperity.*







# Nowruz in the land of Taleshan

(Iran and Caucasus)

**T**alesh is the name of a tribe with an ancient history that lives in a region with the same name located to the west of the Caspian Sea. This region starts from the Sefid-Rud river in the Gilan province of Iran and extends to the Kura (or Cyrus) river, parallel to the Talesh mountains, in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Before the annexation of a part of Talash geography to Russia, which was formed as a result of the disgraceful Treaty of Turkmenchay, all of Talash was part of Iran as a result of which the

culture and civilization of Talesh were of a unified identity under the banner of a single religion and language.

The Talesh region of Iran includes the cities of Astara, Talesh, Rezvanshahr (Talesh-e Doulab), Masal, Shanderman, and parts of Fouman, Shaft, Sowme'eh Sara, and Anbaran, covering an area of 5413 square meters and a population of about 600,000. The Taleshan population in the Republic of Azerbaijan is also about 800 thousand people, excluding the Talesh diaspora in Russia. Available

information proves that the language spoken by the people of Talesh is rooted in Old Persian (Asgari Khanqah, Asghar: 1388-89, 13).

Nowruz, not only has a great role in the identity and solidarity of today's Iranian society, but it can be a connecting thread between all those who love and celebrate Nowruz outside the geographical borders of Iran. This is because the common culture and mythological symbols play the greatest role in the solidarity of nations, and the perpetuity of national and religious such rites as Nowruz are important from this point of view.

The culture of the people of Talesh is a mixture of customs, beliefs, and national Iranian traditions combined with mystical-religious elements. This fusion has been able to establish a musical culture the scope of which ranges from "Nowruz chants" (as a symbol of national beliefs in this community) to "religious poems, in which religious leaders are praised on the occasion of their birthdates." (Kazemi, 2010)

The people of Talesh living on the other side of the Iranian border celebrated ancient Iranian festivals and rites with greater enthusiasm than the people of this ethnicity living in (Ibid.)

What follows are some details of the important customs and traditions of the people of Talesh during Nowruz.

#### Frying and roasting edible seeds and rice:

Women of Talesh roast and fry rice and other edible seeds like lentils and wheat after soaking

and draining them, usually on fire and by using clay pots.

#### Planting greenery and flower arranging:

About two weeks before Nowruz, the women and girls of the family put seeds like wheat, lentils, corn, peas, and orange in clay, porcelain, zinc, or plastic dishes filled with water and wait for them to sprout. Also, they pick fragrant forest violets and primroses and arrange them in the form of a small bouquet for Haft-sin as a symbol of the advent of spring and the revival of the earth. In some regions like Astara the branch of the evergreen and an oily plant with deep green



color, which is called "Zargand" in the Taleshi dialect, are collected from the forest and used for decorating the Haft-sin table.

#### ■ Reciting Nowruznameh:

Reciting Nowruznameh is a custom, which usually begins at the beginning of the last month of the Iranian calendar (approx. around 21st February) and continues until "chaharshanbeh-suri" and some youth (2 to 4) go door to the door, knock the door or ring the doorbell, enter the premises and start reciting poems, the content of which are in praise religious leaders, ethnic heroes, and nature. After that, the owner of the house comes out and gives them a gift, which is usually cash or some rice and the poem reciters also give a small branch of the buxus, which is a symbol of blessing, to the owner of the house and he/she puts it in the place where rice is stored.

An example of Nowruz letter poems in North Talesh (Caucasus):

#### Translation:

|                                     |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>It is spring, It is New Year</i> | اَوَه سوره، اَوَه سور |
| <i>When spring comes</i>            | و ختی اَوَه سور دَمَه |
| <i>Everywhere is green</i>          | کا وو به، مَحول هَمَه |
| <i>The swallow flies and comes</i>  | پَر سَتِلَه پری اومَه |
| <i>It is New Year, It is spring</i> | اَوَه سوره، اَوَه سور |





The culture of the people of Tالش is a mixture of customs, beliefs, and national Iranian traditions combined with mystical-religious elements. This fusion has been able to establish a musical culture the scope of which ranges from “Nowruz chants” (as a symbol of national beliefs in this community) to “religious poems, in which religious leaders are praised on the occasion of their birthdates.”



### ■ Chaharshanbeh-Suri (Kulukuli Wednesday)

The people of Talash go to their local cemetery on the eve of the last Wednesday of the year to visit the graves and recite Fatiha for their deceased one. After it gets dark, they light fires in three or seven places using rice straw. Usually, the elders hug their little children and jump over the fire three times and recite certain poems.

### ■ Examples of songs in North Tالش language:

*Translation:*

*O Fire, Wednesday fire*

کولو کولی چارشنبه

*I give my yellowness*

زر دیم دثو ب ت

*O fire, give me your redness*

ک اشته سی بده بمن

*O Fire, Wednesday fire*

کولو کولی چارشنبه

### ■ Nowruz special cuisines:

The nature in Tالش, the variety of food, and the art of cooking are three important components in cooking and preparing food for the last Wednesday of the year and the first day of Nowruz. Fish, which is usually the Caspian white fish, is stuffed with aromatic vegetables, pickles, and walnuts and fried and served with rice. “Lavangi” or stuffed chicken is also one of the most delicious local dishes. “Ba Satrama Ordak” or stuffed duck, is placed under the rice pot and cooked with its steam. “Sabzi Kuku” which is prepared from green vegetables, eggs, and garlic leaves, and also walnut patty, or “Vuzeh Kuku” which is prepared from walnut powder, vegetables, and spices are other special cuisines of Nowruz. But the most important food of the Tالش people is “Pateh” or “Tarah”, which can be called the national dish of the people of Talash. This food is prepared from natural edible greens collected from the forest and is mixed with a little rice added to it and has healing properties and a special taste.

### ■ Splashing water (Aw pashandi)

Early in the morning on the last Wednesday of the year and before the morning prayer, the head of the family jumps three times over the clear water of the nearby river or spring and brings some water home, and sprinkles it on the family members so that they wake up and jump over the clear water too. While jumping, they make a wish that their morals and our hearts would be as clear as water during the new year.

### ■ Sizdah Be-dar day of nature:

The people of Tالش consider the 13th day of the month of Farvardin (the first month of the Iranian calendar) as the day of harmony with nature and go to the heart of nature to spend the day. On this day, even the sick members of the family should stay at least thirteen steps away from their house and spend the day in nature. At noon time and upon hearing the midday call to prayer, young girls and boys tie the green sprouts they have brought from the Haft-sin table and wish that they would be married before the end of the year and then throw it into the river. On this day, people play their local games and in addition to shopping at the local bazaar, the musicians perform music



with such instruments as reed, sorna, and tambourine.

Among the social functions of Sizdah Bedar, we can mention the familiarization of boys and girls of marriageable age with each other, listening to each other, and the glad tidings of possible upcoming wedding celebrations.

#### ■ Nowruz meeting and peacemakers “Eid Avini”:

On the morning of the first day of Nowruz, the people gather in the house of the head of the community. At first, a literate and trustworthy person recites some verses of the Holy Quran, and then a Nowruzname reciter recites poems in praise of spring in a pleasant voice. And then those who have not been in good books for some time reconcile, shake hands and embrace each other.

In Talesh villages, too, young people gather and start paying visits to all the houses, especially the houses of those who have lost a loved one or have a sick person at home and wish them a year with good health.



#### ■ References

- Ahmadi, Hossein: Taleshan from the Safavid period to the end of the Second Iran-Russian War, Printing and Publication Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, first edition, 2010.
- Ahmadi, Hamid: Ethnicity and ethnocentrism in Iran from myth to reality, first edition, Nei Publishing, 1378.
- Asadi Movahed, Mohammad: The role of Nowruz in strengthening cultural relations between 12 countries, Naseem Nowruz publication “Nowruz special letter” Al-Mahdi Cultural, Art and International Publications Institute, 1400.
- Bakshizadeh Alyani, Ismail: Journey in Talshan’s life from Anbaran to Saravan, Payam Rouz Publishing House, first edition, 2019.
- Ba Zan, Marcel: Ethnic regional conflict in northern Iran, two volumes, Astan Quds Razavi Publishing House, 1367.
- Bahmani, Mohammad: A document about the separation of Northern Talesh from Iran in the disgraceful covenant, Talesh’s Voice “Gilan News, Analytical, Educational and Research Weekly, Fifth Year” “Supplement No. 85, May 31, 1389”.
- Pournemat, Solmaz: Wednesday and Eid ceremony in Anbaran, Voice of Talash, “Biweekly Research, Education, News and Analysis of Gilan”, Year 5, Number 96, “Nowruz Special”, March 2019.
- Heydarian, Armin: Nowruz on both sides of Astara River, Parpirar Publishing House, Tehran, 2015.
- Hojjati, Hossein: Naseem Nowruz publication (special issue of Nowruz 1400, Al-Mahdi Cultural, Art, and International Publishing Institute. Farvardin 1400.
- Shakuri, Changiz: The nomads of Talesh, Azar Khazar, 2012.
- Shakuri, Changiz: Ethnic groups of the South Caucasus and their role in regional convergence and divergence, Master’s Thesis in Political Geography, Faculty of Humanities, Islamic Azad University of Rasht, 2013.
- Kazemi, Bahman: Music of Talesh tribe, “Metan” Publishing Institute of Artistic Works, 2019.
- Askari Khanqa, Asghar: Biological anthropology of Talesh, research project (case study), Institute of Social Studies and Research, Department of Anthropology.





# **N**owruz, Cultural Convergence, and **Public Diplomacy**

By: Dr. Abdul Reza Farji Rad, Dr. Ribaz Ghorbani Nejad, and Dr. Abdullah Mehraban

## ■ Geographical, Cultural, and Civilizational Zone of Nowruz

**B**esides Iran, which is the birthplace of Nowruz, this festivity is celebrated over a large geographical zone from western China to Anatolia, the Indian subcontinent and Afghanistan in the east to Mesopotamia in the west, and from Xinjiang and Central Asia in the northeast to the Greater Caucasus in the north and Asia Minor in the northwest.

Turkmen, Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Azeris, Yazidi Kurds of Armenia, Turks of the North Caucasus including the Azeris of Darband in Dagestan, Afghans, Pashtuns, Baloch people of Pakistan, Tajiks of Central Asia, Kurds of Turkey, Kurds of Iraq, Kurds of Syria, Tat people and Talysh people of the Caucasus, Turks of Anatolia and Balkan, Muslims of Tatarstan, Udmurta, and Bashkortostan, and Muslims of Astrakhan all believe in this festivity and celebrate it simultaneously.

Outside the current geographical boundaries of Iran, along with other main and essential elements of identity such as language and literature, music, art and architecture, national food, and dresses, Nowruz has become a large part of a common identity. According to the writings of the Tajik scholar, Begum Manzar Shahara, Nowruz meant the victory of justice and the beginning of a new life for the ancestors of today's Tajiks. Nowruz is like a national festivity for the people of central Asia who during the communist era in the Soviet Union faced restrictions by the Soviet government because it was considered a religious ceremony, and it was completely banned on December 5, 1936. However, following the independence of these republics in 1991, Nowruz regained its rightful place in these countries and it is being celebrated every year on March 21 with great enthusiasm. In Afghanistan, too, Nowruz festivity has had a long history and the people of this ancient

land and the residents of the Ariana have been celebrating this festivity for thousands of years since ancient times, and one of the best and most magnificent customs of Nowruz among them is to leave behind all anger and begin the new year with a clear heart towards each other.

## ■ The causes of the perpetuation of Nowruz

Most of the encyclopedias of the world have an entry about Nowruz. In the Turkish encyclopedia of Islam (Islam Ansiklopedisi) there is a lengthy entry about Nowruz. In addition to the entry on Nowruz the Turkish encyclopedia contains explanatory notes about the term Nowruz and other terms consisting of Nowruz in Turkish music. Similarly, another Turkish language encyclopedia (Turk Ansiklopediasi) has an entry on the term Nowruziya, which was a term used for gifts given by the kings to statesmen during the time of Nowruz, as well as the poems that poets used to compose on the occasion of this festivity.

History has shown that the occasions and festivities that are rooted in people's culture, interests, and beliefs are more durable. Therefore, the secret of the immortality and perpetuity of Nowruz should be sought in social values, especially the institution of the family in Eastern society. One of the reasons for the longevity of Nowruz is that it is an extremely popular custom and is held in the hearts of people, among people, and in families. The name of this festivity is "Nowruz" in the language of all the nations that celebrate it and it is a name that has never been translated into other languages.

## ■ Cultural diplomacy based on Nowruz

The role that Nowruz festivity can play as a cultural element in creating regional convergence is unique and unmatched. This





**Turkmens, Uzbeks,  
Karakalpaks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz,  
Azeris, Yazidi Kurds of Armenia,  
Turks of the North Caucasus  
including the Azeris of Darband  
in Dagestan, Afghans, Pashtuns,  
Baloch people of Pakistan,  
Tajiks of Central Asia, Kurds of  
Turkey, Kurds of Iraq, Kurds  
of Syria, Tat people and Talysh  
people of the Caucasus, Turks  
of Anatolia and Balkan, Muslims  
of Tatarstan, Udmurta, and  
Bashkortostan, and Muslims  
of Astrakhan all believe in  
this festivity and celebrate it  
simultaneously.**

is due to the fact that Nowruz has historically been an influential factor in cultural convergence between nations and states and nations have always been looking for factors that enhance their relations. Of course, it should not be overlooked that the idea of using cultural and social commonalities in order to strengthen and enhance relations between peoples is one of the old and long-

standing issues of human history and Nowruz is one of those intangible historical contexts that can make relations between nations and governments in the field of culture and civilization more humane and logical.

By the same token, cultural diplomacy can play an important role in cultural exchange among nations and especially neighbor states resulting in cultural growth and elevation of stable peace and peaceful coexistence. Nowruz is a common cultural asset shared by

Iran and its neighbors. The role of Nowruz in cultural convergence takes place in two ways; hard and soft. In its hard form, a union gets formed with the aim of forming a common culture and identity. A clear example of this form of cultural convergence is the European Union the purpose of the creation of which has been to help create a common European

identity, which has, of course, failed in some cases.

But another type of it is soft convergence, where countries are led towards convergence due to their understanding of a similar identity and thus increase their interactions. In this type of convergence, there is more strength and it has a longer and more stable life. Nowruz is an element that can cause convergence. Nowruz is not just a time and a celebration, rather it is a discourse. Nowruz

is a discourse that originates from the heart of peaceful coexistence. Something that the countries of the region are in need of it more than at any other time and the attainment of which can affect the entire human world. Nowruz has the power to connect and unite nations and create convergence among them. This is because, within the context of Nowruz, there is no sign of negativity. Everything there is divine and humane; a world full of light, brightness, blessing, and truth.

After the United Nations recognized Nowruz as an international occasion by passing a resolution entitled “International Nowruz Day”. Iran held the first and second meetings of high-ranking officials of Nowruz countries in Tehran with the participation of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, and Azerbaijan. The global initiative of Nowruz being recognized as a global festivity was a significant mover in the direction of strengthening the cultural and political relations of countries that have many strategic commonalities.

Keeping in view the importance of this festivity and its potential effects on regional convergence, several points should be noted.

**A** The cooperation of regional countries in the inscription of Nowruz in the United Nations in the recent past shows the importance and high status of this ancient and regional festivity. Thus, more attention to its high potential at the world level can promote greater regional convergence as well as peace at the world level.

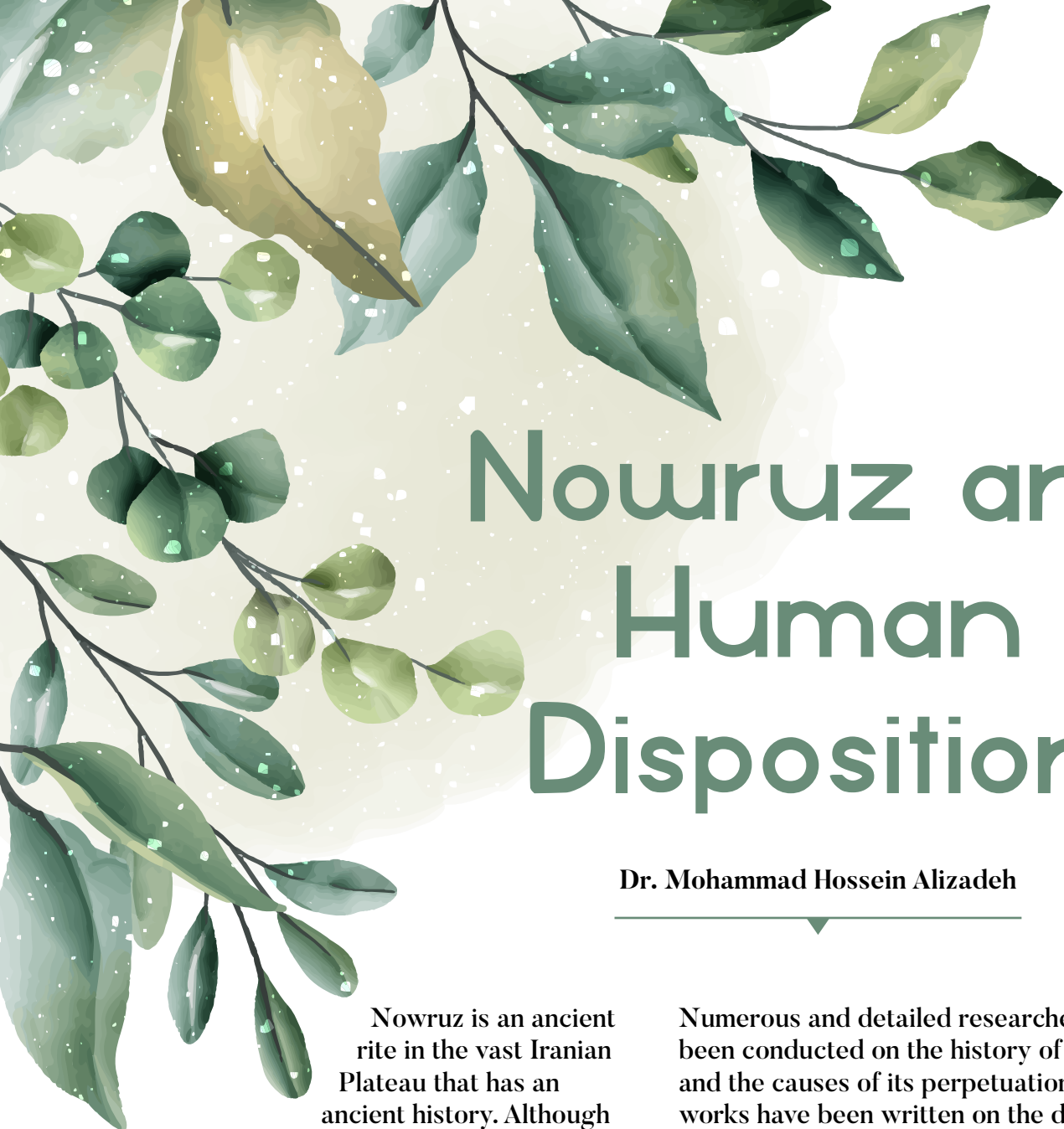
**B** It should be said that Nowruz can have a significant role in the foreign policy and relations of the countries of the region resulting in an unprecedented positive outcome in different areas. In other words, increased cultural convergence can lead to stronger political and economic cooperation among the countries of the region.

**C** Countries celebrating Nowruz as a national festivity can join hands and increase their influence on international affairs, and by increasing the level of convergence among these countries they can focus on reducing disagreements and barriers to cooperation and prevent policies that cause divergence in the region.

#### ■ The impact of globalization on the cultural convergence of the Nowruz region

Considering the ethnic diversity in the Nowruz region, the effects of globalization on the ethnic and national identity in this region are unavoidable. Will different national and ethnic identities within the region be a barrier to convergence? Or will they cause consistency and expansion of intra-regional convergence? Ethnicity is a cultural concept that focuses on having common cultural norms, values, beliefs, symbols, and practices. The formation of ethnic groups is based on common cultural symbols that have developed under specific historical, social, and political conditions. Seeking ethnic identity, if intensified, can lead to the emergence of ethnic movements. There are two main views on the impact of globalization on ethnic movements or, in general, cultural particularism. Most of those who have looked at the issue of ethnicity from the perspective of globalization and its related theories believe that globalization has led to the strengthening of these movements. However, there are other people who believe that this effect is not related to the process of globalization. In their opinion, states can succeed when they get out of the passive reaction towards this phenomenon and face it in an active manner. In an interactive mode, affecting and being affected occur simultaneously, and if managers are aware of the competitive advantages of organizations, they will make maximum use of mutual relations with other countries.





# Nowruz and Human Disposition

Dr. Mohammad Hossein Alizadeh

---

Nowruz is an ancient rite in the vast Iranian Plateau that has an ancient history. Although borders and geographical

divisions have turned this area into different lands and created territories that are referred to as countries, in the past, Nowruz was celebrated all over the Iranian Plateau. And that is the reason that today this rite is practiced in many countries like Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iraqi Kurdistan, Syria, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Albania, Pakistan as well as among the Parsis and Shiites of India and also parts of China all of which are known as the geographical boundaries of Nowruz. Of course, it is to be noted that these days Nowruz has crossed its historical boundaries and is no longer limited to its ancient geographical borders.

Numerous and detailed researches have been conducted on the history of Nowruz and the causes of its perpetuation, and many works have been written on the dimensions of the two factors of natural geography and economic geography of Greater Iran. Traditions such as Nowruz have been affected by the civilizational and cultural customs of communities, without being affected by political factors or invasion by other ethnic groups. Many traditions and beliefs have come into being under the influence of geographical, natural, and climatic conditions, and then religious factors have come to have an effect on them, too.

As regards the natural geography of Iran, it should be said that the inaccessibility of different regions of Iran to invaders has been one of the reasons for the perpetuation of its rites and customs. In other words, the geographical and climatic conditions had

been a barrier against invasions in forest and mountain areas, and many local governments with ancient backgrounds continued to rule in these areas and protecting and preserving ancient beliefs rites, and customs.

Relying on the ability to adapt, Iranians always attracted the conquerors of their land to themselves - after being dominated by foreign invaders for a short period of time - and as a result, the invading communities adopted the Iranian culture and civilization, making it possible to revive this culture and civilization.

In terms of economic geography, too, it should be mentioned that the structure and court system of Iran was such that as evidenced by their history, during the conquest of Iran, the Arabs adopted the regulations that had been laid down by the Sassanid king, Khosrow Anushirvan, regarding different types of taxation. In addition to the taxation system that the Arabs adopted from the Iranians, they also inevitably adopted the time and date, which were related to the Iranian calendar and chronology. In ancient Iran and based on the solar calendar according to which months and seasons were of fixed duration, all religious occasions, tributes, and celebrations would take place on special days.

The tradition of giving gifts as an economic factor and the role of social factors in the perpetuation of Nowruz should not be neglected, on which a separate paper needs to be written. However, despite various tangible reasons for the perpetuation of Nowruz, it seems there is something intangible and beyond these factors that have caused Nowruz to be inscribed in the hearts and minds of the people of this region. In spite of their richness, Iran's literature and music went into oblivion after the advent of Islam in Iran, the teachings of which appealed to the Iranians to such an extent that "adhan" (azan) replaced the songs composed by Barbod and Nakisa. Also, major Islamic eids, which are full of spirituality and originate from a divine

source were adopted by Iranian society and replaced many other festivities and ceremonies.

Trying to explain the cause of the immortality of Nowruz in Iranian culture, some people have talked about its deep connection with Iranian rites and cultural memory of Iranians and some people have talked about the spring equinox and revival nature.

But in the writer's opinion, however, what has caused the perpetuation and survival of Nowruz in the minds and thoughts of a wide range of people is the wisdom and rationality present in this rite, which existed in the human nature and disposition of Iranians. Nowruz's connection with religion, which is a symbol of perfect wisdom in itself and is intertwined with human disposition, is also the reason. Nowruz originates from the depth of human nature that has been created by God Almighty Who is the Creator of beauties. God is beautiful and all the beauties of the world belong to him. Man has always been looking for beauty. Nowruz is a manifestation of beauty and glory. This is the reason why this festivity has made its way through history and has never faced oblivion despite all the obstacles and difficulties.





# Nowruz Games for Women in Tehran

**T**he first international Nowruz Games for Women started on Saturday (03 March 2023) in Tehran, capital of Iran. Over 500 athletes from 20 countries, including Iran, competed in nine sports for three days. The athletes from Iran, Armenia, Afghanistan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Iraq, Kuwait, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Tunisia, Russia, Armenia, the UAE, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Palestine, Thailand, and Nepal partook in athletic, riding, Chogan (polo), Karate, Kabaddi, futsal, powerlifting, fencing, and judo competitions.







# Haft-Sin

*Iran is normally referred to as the cradles of civilization and its impact on different regions and traditions is still observable. One of the most beautiful customs which has been celebrated for over 3000 years now is Nowruz.*

*For honoring such a great day, Iranian people follow many different customs and traditions. Each one of them has a special meaning and refers to one important and essential aspect of Persian culture. Here, we are going to explore Haft-Sin, one of the most beautiful traditions of Nowruz and the hidden meaning behind it.*

## *THE ITEMS OF Haft-Sin*

*Sabzeh (wheat, barley, or lentil sprouts): Symbolizing rebirth and growth.*

*Samanu (sweet pudding made from wheat germ): Symbolizing sweetness and fertility.*

*Senjed (dried oleaster fruit): Symbolizing love.*

*Seer (garlic): Symbolizing medicine and health.*

*Seeb (apple): Symbolizing beauty and health.*

*Somagh (sumac): Symbolizing the sunrise and new beginnings.*

*Serkeh (vinegar): Symbolizing age and patience.*











Oh reformer of  
hearts and minds  
Director of day and night  
Transformer of conditions  
Change ours to the best  
in accordance with your wil