

# Peyk

Persian Cultural Center's Bilingual Magazine  
P.O. Box 500914, San Diego CA 92150



# 192

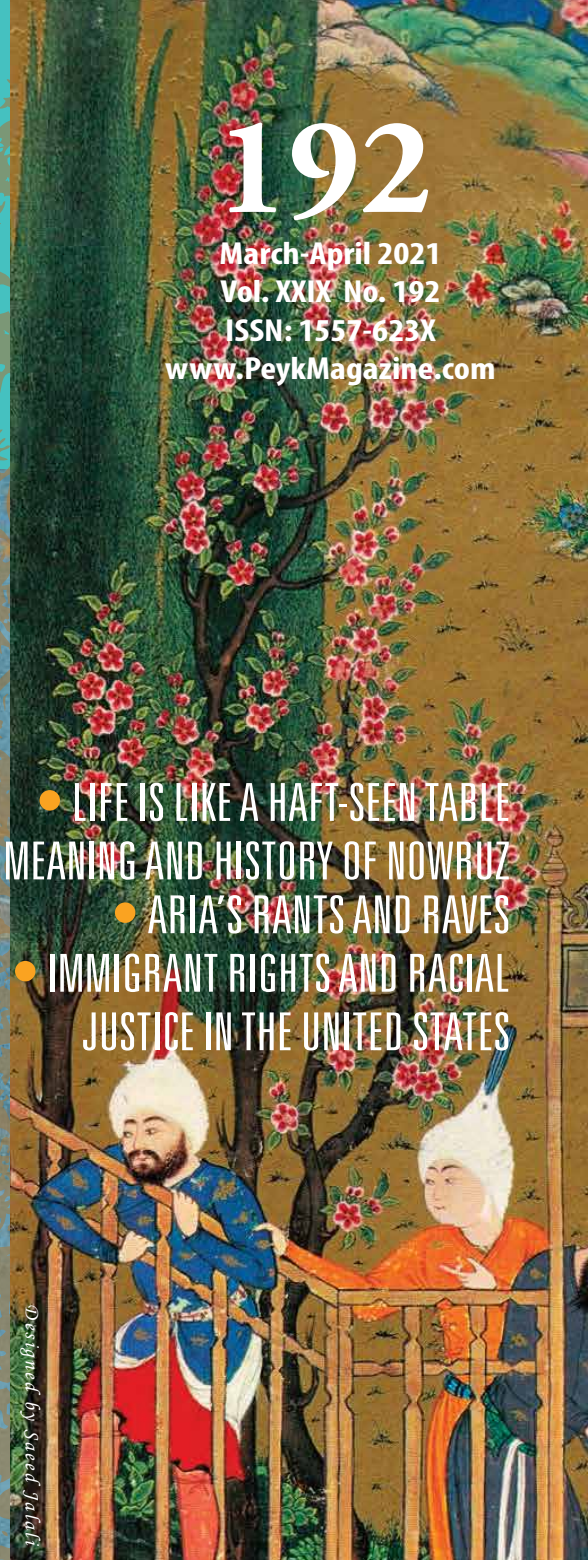
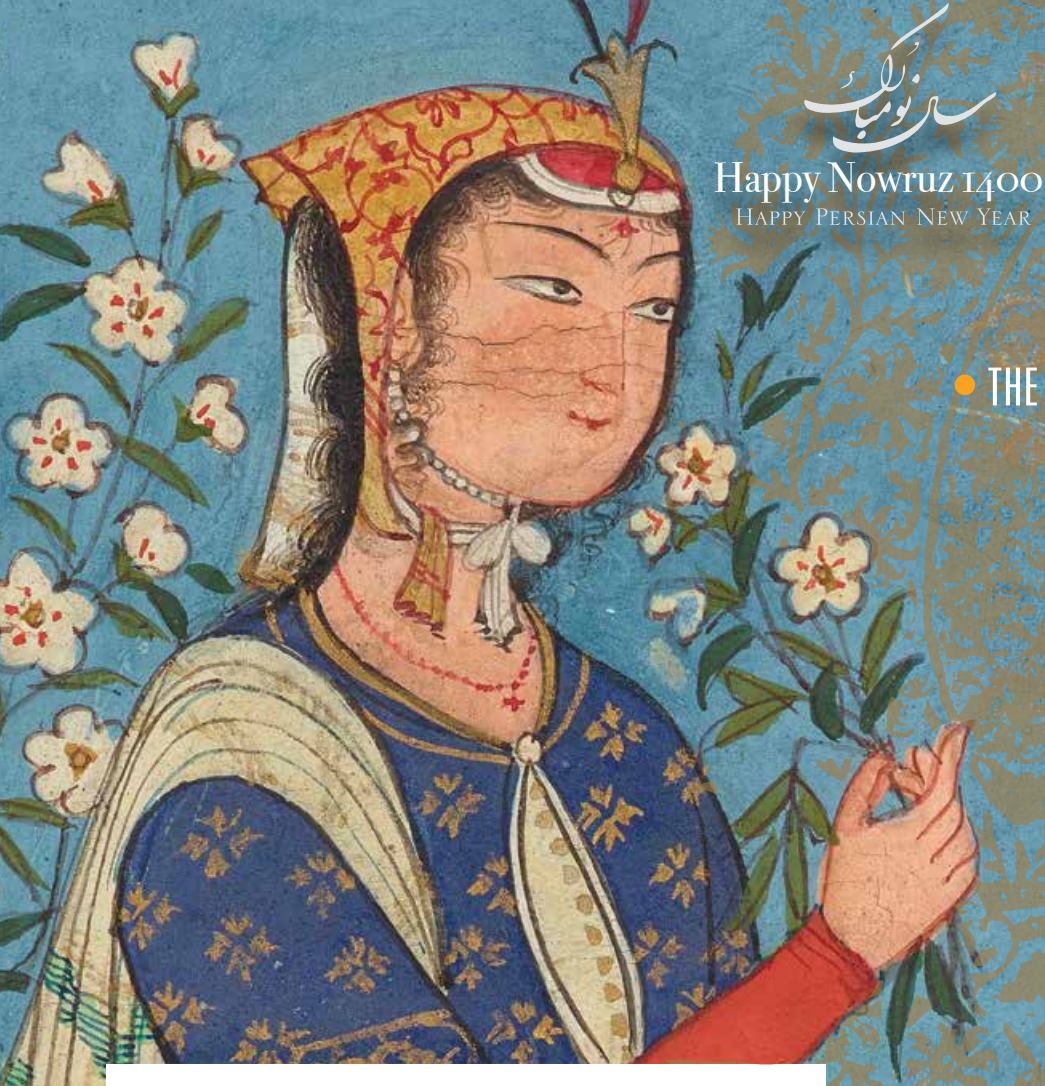
March-April 2021

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سازگاری  
Happy Nowruz 1400  
HAPPY PERSIAN NEW YEAR



Designed by Saeed Jafar

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- THE MEANING AND HISTORY OF NOWRUZ
- ARIA'S RANTS AND RAVES
- IMMIGRANT RIGHTS AND RACIAL JUSTICE IN THE UNITED STATES

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- DEMYSTIFYING COVID-19 VACCINES

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Saturday, March 20, at 2:37:28 a.m.

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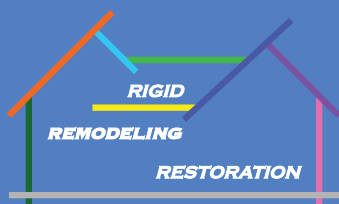
وکیل تصادفات  
و صدمات بدنی

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- تصادفات موتورسیکلت
- تصادفات اوپر و لیفت
- حمله حیوانات
- زمین خوردگی

وکیل دادگاه‌های کالیفرنیا و فدرال

نوروزتان پیروز

مشاوره اولیه رایگان



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Shaghayegh Hanson



## Life is Like a Haft-seen Table

If Forrest Gump were Iranian, today he might say, “Life is like a haft-seen table,” instead of a box of chocolates (you never know what you’re going to get). It’s true that we never know what life is going to throw our way, but we sure have run the gamut of possibilities in the last few years: worsening climate change disasters, refugee crises around the world, intractable political division, a war on facts and the truth, a sober reckoning with systemic and deadly racial injustice, and, just when we thought things couldn’t get any worse, a deadly global pandemic topped off with an insurrection at the beating heart of the largest democracy in the world.

Through necessity, and running on a human instinct for self-preservation, we turned inward to deal with the outward; much like a fussy newborn in need of swaddling, we hunkered down in our homes and held our loved ones close. We jumped off the hamster wheel of work because the wheel stopped, or at least slowed down enough for us to take stock of our blessings and reframe success beyond dollars and cents. We tuned in to a collective human spirit and the power of hope. So this year, when we set our haft-seen tables, we channel more deeply the wisdom of the ancients who created our millennia-old tradition. We do not just delight in a decorative display of mirror, candles, goldfish, garlic, apple, sumac, vinegar, sprouts, eggs, sweets, nuts, coins, fragrant hyacinth, eggs decorated by little hands, a revered family book of faith or poetry, and rose water (all explained on page 5). We feel intensely the meaning of these symbols of what our lives are like, the cherished things as well as the bruised or broken things we are attempting to glue back together: good health, wisdom, self-reflection, rebirth, the beauty and power of nature, patience, enlightenment, happiness, and, above all, hope. Indeed, Iranian Forrest would be right to say life is like a haft-seen table (perhaps with a Shirazi accent?).

While this edition of *Peyk* is dedicated to the dawning of a new year, our wonderful writers and contributors have woven a unifying thread through history, culture, and the signs of our times. From book recommendations to satisfy your intellectual curiosity, and hard facts about the pandemic, to much needed self-care advice and soul food recipes, there is something for everyone in this edition.

Finally, with this Nowruz, I find myself in possession of the editorial torch, passed on to me by the mother of our community, Mrs. Shahri Estakhry. For decades, since the inception of *Peyk*, she has been a steadfast, and inspirational, keeper of the flame. I am honored that she chose me as her successor, and will endeavor to match the compassion, love, integrity, and wisdom with which she wrote in these pages. I know how much her presence will be missed, but I also know we are all excited to see where her adventures will take her next.

One of Mrs. Estakhry’s most notable achievements was in spearheading a petition, requesting official recognition of Nowruz by the United Nations (“UN”). That petition resulted in 620,000 signatures, a powerful addition to a chorus of voices from communities and countries around the world, that bore fruit in 2010, when the UN General Assembly proclaimed March 21 as International Nowruz Day. With its inclusion in the “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity,” Nowruz is celebrated by more than 300 million people in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, and other regions. I leave you with last year’s Nowruz message from UN Secretary-General António Guterres, which still applies today:

*This year, for many, Nowruz comes at a time of sadness and anxiety [...] I send my deepest condolences to those who have lost loved ones, and my best wishes to all who have been affected. I hope the festival of Nowruz will provide a welcome break to relax and spend time with close family [...] and celebrate our common humanity.*

Source: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-nowruz-day>

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## PCC NEWS

### PCC's Board Meetings

Persian Cultural Center's board of directors holds its meetings every second Wednesday of the month at the Iranian American Center (IAC). The last two meetings took place on January 7 and February 11, 2021.

### Jong-e Farhangi - January 15, 2021

January Jong was an online event hosted by Ali Sadr. Guest Aria Fani, Assistant Professor at the University of Washington in Seattle, presented the topic: "Iranian Studies and the Iranian American Community: In Search of a Connection." A question and answer period followed the discussion.

### Jong-e Farhangi - February 19, 2021

This online event, hosted by Aria Fani, was in cooperation with the Iranian Studies Department of the University of Washington. Guest Dr. Domenico Ingenito, Assistant Professor of Persian Literature at UCLA, presented the topic: "Beholding Beauty: Sa'di of Shiraz and the Aesthetics of Desire in Medieval Persian Poetry." A question and answer period followed the discussion.

### Quarantine Night's Poems – January 20, 2021

In this virtual event hosted by Farshad Babakhani and PCC's Poetry & Literature Committee, poems from Mahsati's "Mahsati" were read, and attendees also read poetry.

### Quarantine Night's Poems – February 17, 2021

This virtual event was part of a new series hosted by PCC's Poetry & Literature Committee, entitled "A Poet and a Poem," which introduces lesser-known Persian poets. Farshad Babakhani hosted the event, at which attendees recited poetry by Masoud Sa'd Salman, a poet of the 10th century..

### Virtual Movie Discussion Series – January 28, 2021

*Winter Sleep* (2014), directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan and starring Haluk Bilginer, Melisa Sozen, and Demet Akbag, was the movie selected for the January virtual movie discussion. Mahmoud Pirouzian hosted the discussion, at which Tania Ahmadi reviewed the movie.

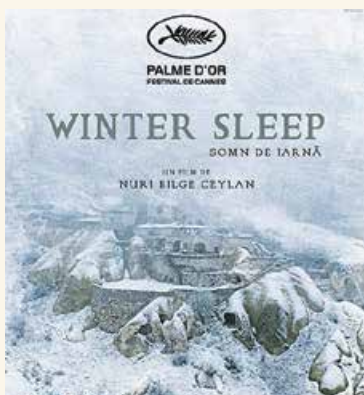


### Virtual Movie Discussion Series – February 25, 2021

*The Time to Live and the Time to Die* (1985), directed by Hou Hsiao-hsien, was the movie selected for the February virtual movie discussion hosted by Mahmoud Pirouzian. The movie follows the story of a boy who comes of age during a tumultuous time in his family's history as they made the move from mainland China to Taiwan in 1948, never able to return. Guest Brian Hu, SDSU Assistant Professor of Film, TV & New Media and Artistic Director of the Pac-Art Movement, discussed the movie.

### PCC Youth Committee

The PCC Youth Committee recently organized a food and toy drive, with over 180 pounds of food collected in addition to many toys for children in need. The committee also hosted a fundraising night at Chipotle to help raise money for PCC. Members of the committee have been offering tutoring services and held a cooking show to help others learn how to cook traditional Persian pastries. The committee members appreciate all who helped them achieve their goal of helping the community.



# THE MEANING AND HISTORY OF NOWRUZ



Nowruz literally means “new day” and marks the first day of the Iranian calendar. There is much quibbling over the correct transliteration of the word into English and some people prefer to write Norouz or Norooz, among other spellings.

The day falls on the spring equinox, or the first day of spring, and at the moment the sun crosses the plane of the earth’s equator, making night and day of approximately equal length all over the Earth. It is usually on March 21, or the previous/following day. Some people refer to Nowruz as Eid, but it is not an Islamic tradition. Nowruz has been celebrated for over 3,000 years by more than 300 million people all around the world, regardless of religious belief or ethnic background, including in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, and other regions.

In Persian mythology, King Jamshid introduced Nowruz to celebrate overcoming the hardships of winter and look forward to the promise of spring. King Jamshid is symbolic of the transition of Persians from animal hunting to animal husbandry--a more settled life in which the seasons played a major role.

The ancient Persian prophet Zoroaster (founder of the Zoroastrian religion) incorporated Nowruz as an elaborate feast to celebrate Ahura Mazda (Zoroastrian God) and the Holy Fire at the spring equinox.

In 487 B.C., King Darius the Great celebrated Nowruz at Persepolis, where he had newly built his palaces. The bas-reliefs at Persepolis today show people from all over Persia coming to offer Nowruz gifts to the king.

From about 248 B.C., Nowruz became the national holiday of successive ruling dynasties in Persia and survived as such even after the introduction of Islam in 650 A.D.

Omar Khayyam is attributed with the following description of Nowruz in ancient Persia in his *Noruznameh*:

“From the era of Keykhosrow till the days of Yazdegerd - last of the pre-Islamic kings of Persia, the royal custom was thus: on the first day of the New Year, Nau Ruz, the King’s first visitor was the High Priest of the Zoroastrians, who brought with him as gifts a golden goblet full of wine, ring, some gold coins, a fistful of green sprigs of wheat, a sword, a bow, and a handsome slave. In the language of Persia, he would then glorify God and praise the monarch. This was the address of the High Priest to the king:

Majesty, on this feast of the Equinox, first day of the first month of the year, seeing that thou hast freely chosen God and the Faith of the Ancient ones; may Surush, the Angel-messenger, grant thee wisdom and insight and sagacity in thy affairs. Live long in praise, be happy and fortunate upon thy golden throne, drink immortality from the Cup of Jamshid; and keep in solemn trust the customs of our ancestors, their noble aspirations, fair gestes and the exercise of justice and righteousness. May thy soul flourish; may thy youth be as the new-grown grain; may thy horse be puissant, victorious; thy sword bright and deadly against foes; thy hawk swift against its prey; thy every act straight as the arrow’s shaft. Go forth from thy rich throne, conquer new lands. Honor the craftsman and the sage in equal degree; disdain the acquisition of wealth. May thy house prosper and thy life be long!”

## THE RITUALS SURROUNDING NOWRUZ

There are a number of rituals that Iranians practice before, during, and after Nowruz. They include:

**The Haft-seen Table:** Seven (*haft*) things beginning with the letter “S” (*seen*) are placed on a decorated table in families’ homes. The items and their symbolism are as follows: *sabzeh*, wheat, barley or lentil sprouts (rebirth and renewal); *samanu*, a sweet pudding (affluence); *senjed*, dried fruit of oleaster tree (love); *seer*, garlic (medicine); *sib*, apple (beauty and health); *somaq*, sumac (sunrise of a new day); and *serkeh*, vinegar (age, wisdom, and patience). Other items usually placed on the table include colored eggs (fertility), Hyacinth (symbol of spring), coins (prosperity in the new year), a mirror (reflection on the past year), candles (to radiate light and happiness), goldfish in a bowl (for Pisces, which the sun is leaving), and a holy book and/or poetry book (Shahnamah or Hafez).

**Haji Firuz:** Symbolizing the Sumerian god of sacrifice (who was killed at the end of each year and reborn at the beginning of the new year), Haji Firuz is a man with a painted face and a red costume who sings and dances through the streets playing tambourine, to herald the coming new year.

**Chaharshanbe Suri:** This festival of fire takes place on the eve of the last Wednesday of the year. People build fires to celebrate light over darkness (a testament to the tradition’s Zoroastrian roots) and jump over the fires while exclaiming, “Zardi-ye man az to, sorkhi-ye to az man” (meaning “my yellowness to you, your redness to me”), signifying rejuvenation from the fire.

**Sizdah Bedar:** On the thirteenth (*sizdah*) day of the new year, everyone leaves the house for the outdoors (*bedar*) to have picnics and parties. The thirteenth day is considered unlucky based on the ancient Persian belief that the 12 constellations in the Zodiac ruled the Earth for a thousand years each, after which the Earth collapsed into chaos. At the end of this day, the *sabzeh* from the haft-seen table is thrown into running water to cleanse the household of any bad luck or sickness that the *sabzeh* has absorbed.

## THE OVERALL MERRYMAKING

During this time of festivities, family and friends visit each other and eat dishes such as *sabzi polo mahi* (green herbed rice with fish), *reshte polo* (rice and noodles), *dolme barge* (meat and vegetables in vine leaves), and *kookoo sabzi* (herb and vegetable omelette). Families buy new clothes and clean out their homes, ready for a fresh start. There are many parties that accompany the general joyous and optimistic mood.

## HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE OR NOWRUZ KHOJASTE!

Sources:

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# ARIA'S RANTS AND RAVES

## Rethinking Iranian Nationalism

There is an exciting new book in Iranian Studies entitled *Exile and the Nation: The Parsi Community of India and the Making of Modern Iran* by Afshin Marashi (University of Texas Press, 2020). The book largely addresses the following question: How did new understandings of Zoroastrianism as a monotheistic religion in harmony with modern values take form in the twentieth century and how did these new understandings fit within the emerging discourses of late Qajar and early Pahlavi nationalisms? The way this study formulates these questions itself gives us a clue as to how Marashi, as a historian of modern Iran (a vague and problematic term, I know!), reads his sources and approaches the task of writing Iran's multifaceted history. The book rightly assumes that new concepts of civilization, religious identity, and national belonging are not made out of thin air. They are not timeless; they undergo major changes in the course of history. The making and subsequent socio-political importance of new ideas are not inevitable or predestined.

We must then ask: to which historical periods, social processes, and particular figures does *Exile and the Nation* attribute the rise of new understandings of Zoroastrianism? The book focuses on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Why this period in particular? New technologies of print and mobility had significantly changed and intensified cultural connections among Iranians, Indians, and many other people. Increased mobility in the Indian Ocean, thanks largely to steamships, led to more travel, trade, and intellectual exchange; the consequential impact of these cultural exchanges, in the case of early Pahlavi nationalism vis-a-vis the Parsi community of India, had not been fully outlined or understood until the publication of *Exile and the Nation*.

Marashi's study analyzes the life, role, and ideas of the following figures: Kaykhosrow Shahrokh (d. 1940), president of the Zoroastrian Association of Tehran and *Majles* Deputy; Dinshah Jijibhoy Irani (d. 1938), the key interlocutor between Bombay Parsis and Iranian intellectuals; Rabindranath Tagore (d. 1941), whose official travels in Iran in 1932 are subject of extensive analysis in the book; Ebrahim Purdavud (d. 1968), the distinguished scholar of ancient and middle Iranian texts; and Abdulrahman Saif Azad

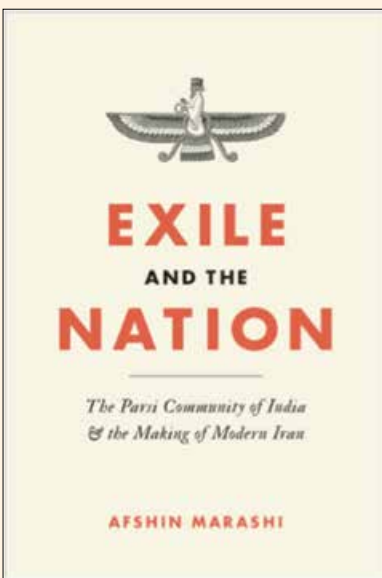
(d. 1971), the editor of the periodical *Iran-e bastan*. Each chapter offers an analytical account of how each figure fits within emerging networks of religious, national, and civilizational alliance.



Rabindranath Tagore in Tehran, 1932, with members of the Iranian Literary Society. Source: Dinshah Irani Memorial Volume

What did these figures do and what came out of their intellectual enterprise? On page seven, the author gives us a succinct and compelling answer: "In the Iranian case, the encounter with the Parsi community produced profound implications for how intellectuals and nationalists came to imagine an Iranian modernity rooted in a rediscovered, reconceived, and reconstructed culture of Indo-Iranian neoclassicism." Neoclassicism refers to the historical rise of a significant scholarly and cultural energy centered on the publication, study, and translation of, and commentary on, ancient and middle Iranian texts such as Avesta, the holy book of the Zoroastrians. Neoclassicism became an integral part of Pahlavi-era nationalism and its importance persists in the ways in which Iranians access their cultural heritage. This turn toward neoclassicism, Marashi argues, came about thanks to collaboration between Iranian nationalist intellectuals and members of India's Parsi community.

*Exile and the Nation* is a richly textured study of some of the main threads that make up Iranian national culture. It makes a number of important interventions, some of which are worth mentioning here. The book is part of a scholarly trend that examines how Iranians interacted with and learned from non-European ideas and discourses. Much of the scholarship on Iranian nationalism thus far has focused on how European Orientalist knowledge prompted Iranian intellectuals to invent new discourses of language, literature, and learning. This body of scholarship has examined how travel and study in western European cities inspired Iranian students to rethink concepts of democracy, governance, freedom, justice, and literature upon their



return to Iran. But Marashi shows us that we simply cannot afford to overlook the way Iranians made connections and collaborated with people in other cultural geographies: Turks, Arabs, Indians, Afghans, Tajiks, and many others. Marashi's analysis illustrates that examining these exchanges is not just a matter of "completing the narrative." In other words, the story of Iran-India connections is not just a curious footnote in the broader history of Iranian modernities. To the contrary, such a story makes us critically reconsider our longstanding assumptions about nationalism and modernity.

One assumption that *Exile and the Nation* forcefully challenges is that Iranian nationalism exists as a singular discourse, a unified phenomenon. Marashi shows how multiple systems of knowledge and multiple socio-political entanglements were involved in the making of Iranian nationalism, across different languages, geographies, and intellectual commitments. The study's own examination of how Pahlavi-era intellectuals collaborated with Indian Parsis is deeply complex. We learn that collaboration does not necessarily mean being on the same political wavelength or being in total agreement. In fact, we learn in the book that many members of the Parsi community were interested in building connections with Iranian intellectuals because their understanding of Zoroastrianism was ecumenical, meaning inclusive and international. But that was not the main aim of many of their Iranian counterparts, such as Abdulrahman Saif Azad, a vocal Nazi sympathizer who was interested in inventing and bolstering Iran's Aryan cultural credentials. Marashi explains this tension with clarity:

The inherent tension between this liberal ideal and the authoritarian methods of the new Pahlavi state were either not understood by [Dinshah Jijibhoy] Irani and other interwar liberal intellectuals, or passed unacknowledged in the hopes of achieving broader social and political objectives. (85)

Why does all of this matter? It matters because neoclassicism is baked into the cultural discourses with which millions of Iranians, particularly in the diaspora, identify today: the problematic idea that "our" national and cultural identity is primarily grounded in pre-Islamic texts and that Zoroastrian beliefs and practices are more authentic to Iranians. So many of our influential intellectuals have expressed similar ideas and remained beholden to the idea of an Iranian cultural singularity. The question of authenticity is a rabbit hole that I will not get into in this essay. There may exist another false assumption, held by many of us, that Zoroastrianism as a religion was built on hundreds of years of cultural continuity. Marashi treats those sets of ideas with a deeply analytical and sober approach. For that reason alone, his book should be in the hands of every Iranian interested in the history of ideas and the trajectories of Iranian national identities.

### ***Economic Inequality and the Pandemic***

When we are in the eye of the storm, it is easy to assume that it couldn't have been predicted or prevented. Yet, there were so many who warned us about the deeply vulnerable nature of our economic, public health, and democratic systems. The investigative journalist Anand Giridharadas is one such voice. In his *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2018),

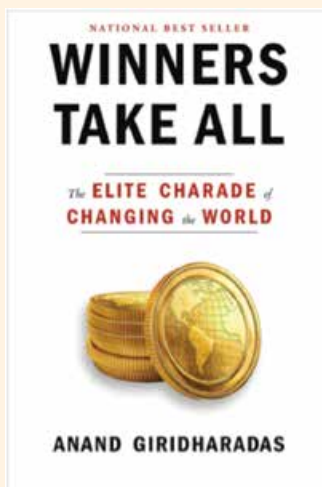
Giridharadas raises and addresses one of the pressing paradoxes of our times: why does so much economic disparity exist during a period of unprecedented philanthropy? He asks us to stop cheering for and uncritically accepting charitable enterprises that many institutions in our society, including food banks and schools, have come to rely on. Why? Giridharadas rightly argues that philanthropists and corporations behind many of these charitable efforts have a vested interest in safeguarding the highly broken and iniquitous system that produced their wealth. Therefore, they are more than willing to part with large chunks of their money so they would not have to part with the system that enabled them to accumulate their wealth.

Anyone who sees the grotesque inequality of our time on the one hand and the amount of wealth built by corporations like Amazon during (and well before) a pandemic that has devastated ordinary people worldwide on the other hand would have to draw the same conclusion: there is something entirely wrong with this capitalist system. Giridharadas's analysis offers many clues as to why we've come to this point: an ongoing assault on labor unions, antitrust laws designed to prevent monopoly formation, and taxation. The latter is one of the most powerful mechanisms that exists in any democratic society that can be used to offset the racist, sexist, classist workings of capitalism through social spending. You don't believe him? Take it from the mouth of billionaires like Bill Gates, who has spoken publicly about how he knows better than the government how to spend his wealth through his private foundation for the betterment of society. There is a minor problem there: such methods are deeply anti-democratic since no citizen can sit on the board of Gates' foundation and inform its decision-making.

*Winners Take All* shows how giant corporations and wealthy families resort to charity in order to hide the fact that they are responsible for the fact that so many people live in poverty or, in the case of the criminal Sackler family, responsible for the death of so

many people thanks to the opioid crisis they helped create. The reason we don't think of the Sackler family the same way we think of Joaquín "Chapo" Guzmán, the former head of the Sinaloa cartel, is because the Sacklers have put their names on fancy museums all over the country and most probably have the phone numbers of many Democratic and Republican lawmakers on fast dial (yay to bipartisanship!). This is our epoch-defining problem: at a time when we need to wage a well-coordinated and collective fight against the climate crisis, which poses a grave danger to our ways of

life, the wealthy have an obscene amount of power with which they are reinventing the world before our eyes. And they are doing so with a major aim: to hold onto most of their wealth, but *all* of their political power. Anand Giridharadas's *Winners Take All* is a read for our times!



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by Hooshyar Afsar

# Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice in the United States

Throughout U.S. history, immigrant rights and open immigration policies have been closely tied to the adoption of or opposition to white supremacy and racism. In other words, major developments towards racial justice have facilitated more open immigration policies in the direction of a multi-racial democracy. On the other hand, the racist trends in the opposite direction have curtailed openness in immigration and the rights of immigrants living in this country. These trends have not only been confined to limiting “non-white” new immigrants into the country, they have also brought forth discriminatory policies against immigrants already in the country, including legal and naturalized ones. In fact, the notion of naturalization has always been tied to immigration regardless of whether immigrants were given a path to citizenship. That’s why it is key to start by looking at the history of citizenship.

## Citizenship and the U.S. Constitution

Naturalization and citizenship are key aspects of immigrant rights in the U.S.; the rights of an American citizen have been at the heart of the struggle for racial justice since the founding of the nation. The original constitution made naturalization legislation part of the powers of the Congress (legislative branch) in section 8 of Article I by briefly stating “Congress shall have power ... To establish a uniform rule of naturalization.” Accordingly, the notion of who could become a U.S. citizen was first addressed in the Naturalization Acts of 1790, 1795, 1798, and 1802.

## Citizenship in the 1790s: “Whites Only”

Per the original constitution, the first Congress passed the Naturalization Act of 1790 limiting the naturalization eligibility to “free white person[s]...of good character.” The first four naturalization acts did not shun this openly white supremacist notion. It is important to note that immigrants from various ethnicities came into the country during this time, while enslaved African people were kidnapped and shipped to this country under horrible conditions. Yet even free blacks and all other “non-whites” could not become U.S. citizens. This meant that all immigrants who were not considered “free white person[s]...of good character” could not become citizens either and enjoy the rights that came with citizenship.

## Rights of Citizens Prior to the Civil War and Reconstruction: Federal v. State

The original constitution referred to the word citizen ten times but it did not define citizenship. Article IV, Section 2 is known as the “Comity Clause,” which states: “The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States.” Historian Eric Foner, in his recent book *The Second Founding*, writes that this language “seems to suggest that the rights of citizens are determined by states rather than Federal



government” (page 4). But what did the Bill of Rights have to say about the topic? After all, the first ten amendments ratified in 1792 by all the states guaranteed a whole set of individual rights, starting with freedom of speech. Again Foner argues that prior to the Civil War, the “Bill of Rights” was really intended to protect individual citizens from the federal government; it was only after the Civil War--and during the 12-year period known as Reconstruction--that the “Bill of Rights” was used to argue against the states (specifically Southern states) violating the rights of citizens (page 74).

## Immigrant Rights During the “Second Founding”

The three Reconstruction-era amendments--namely, the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments--were so groundbreaking in shifting the U.S. Constitution toward the rights of citizens and equality that the era was treated as a second founding of the nation. The “Second Founding” term was first used at the time by the Republican Senator Carl Schurz; it’s an interesting irony that Schurz was a progressive who fought in the 1848 German revolution and emigrated to the U.S. in 1852 and later fought as a general in the Union Army during the Civil War.

A simplistic view of the Second Founding amendments is that 13th amendment made slavery illegal, the 14th amendment declared enslaved people citizens, and the 15th amendment gave former enslaved people the right to vote. That view is technically correct, yet it is a limited view on the scope of these amendments and their impact on citizenship and immigrant rights. The 13th amendment not only made slavery illegal, it also banned “involuntary servitude,” directly impacting millions of future immigrants who could be brought into this country as indentured servants. The 14th amendment not only granted citizenship to formerly enslaved people, it brought forth the idea of birthright citizenship and equal protection of the laws, including the right to life, liberty, and property and due process for “any person.” This meant that these rights applied to all immigrants living in the United States--not just the citizens. Finally, the 15th amendment provided the right to vote for all citizens regardless of their race, color, or previous condition of servitude (but not regardless of their sex, as women would not gain the right to vote until 1920). Again, this meant that all (male) citizens regardless of their background had the right to vote. Of course, as many historians and scholars agree, the full implementation of these three amendments is still a work in progress today as we shall see below, yet they took the constitution of the United States to a new level and created a bedrock for the probable eventuality of arriving at a multi-racial and multi-ethnic democracy.





## Jim Crow, Segregation, and Immigrants

Unfortunately, racism and white supremacy as the most terrible legacies of slavery continued to live on when Reconstruction ended abruptly in 1877 with the withdrawal of Union troops from the South. This gave rise to the emergence of a whole new system of racial and social control known as “Jim Crow laws” or segregation. While this new system took roughly a couple of decades to fully emerge, as inscribed in the constitutions and laws of the Southern states, its seeds had been already planted right after the defeat of the pro-enslavement confederacy in 1865 with the introduction of “Black Codes” in the South. Even though segregationist laws and constitutions were predominantly used in the South, over 40 states (yes, 40) had segregationist laws, many of them impacting immigrants. In fact, the state of California--that today may seem to be at the frontline of progressive politics--enacted 17 segregationist laws between 1866 and 1947, including six miscegenation laws which prohibited the reproduction by people who were believed to be members of different races. At the federal level, one clearly racist example was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that banned the immigration of Chinese laborers. This shameful act was built on the Page Act of 1875, which mixed racism and misogyny, prohibiting the immigration of Chinese women to the United States. It is clear that “Jim Crow” segregation violating the human rights of African Americans went hand in hand with racist and discriminatory laws against legal immigrants living in the U.S. and those immigrating to this country.

These policies continued during the Hoover administration, which exploited Great Depression joblessness as an anti-immigrant ploy claiming that “foreigners” stole American jobs. An August 2018 article in *The Washington Post* reported that up to a million American citizens of Mexican descent were deported under this policy. This is yet another clear example that while Jim Crow segregation ravaged the South and over 40 states had such laws, discrimination and even deportation was used against legal immigrants and even American citizens. Jim Crow segregation continued during the administration of FDR, whose New Deal policies for the most part left African Americans out and largely benefited the white working class. FDR refused to support a federal anti-lynching law while this instrument of terror continued to be used in the South and other states. He even resisted his own better half, Eleanor Roosevelt, who called for such legislation. Is there any surprise that FDR’s government then rounded up over 110,000 Japanese Americans, including second and third generations, and sent them to concentration camps after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor? There are stories of pregnant second-generation Japanese Americans living under awful conditions in the camps while their husbands were fighting for the U.S. armed forces against Japan.

## The 1960s Civil Rights Movement and its Effect on Immigration

Until 1965, immigration in the United States was based on a “national origins formula” starting with the 1921 Emergency Quota Act that was openly racist and intended to maintain the ethnic makeup of the country as white Protestant of European descent. In fact, the 1924 Immigration Act included an Asian Exclusion Act that barred not only Chinese immigrants, but all Asians from immigrating to the United States. The law was pro-

Northwest Europe and had provisions against Italians, Asians, and Eastern Europeans, including Jews from that region. The 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act that was passed during the dark days of McCarthyism changed the Asian Exclusion Act, yet only gave a quota of 100 immigrants per year to each Asian country. It was used to bar many progressive writers or activists from entering the United States.

Then came the full force of the Civil Rights Movement, culminating in the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The hard-fought struggle of Black people along with all progressives of different ethnicities brought about these key victories. It was no accident that less than two months after the passage of the historic Voting Rights Act, the historic Immigration and Nationality Act--also known as the Hart-Cellar Act--ushered in a new era of immigration towards a multi-racial and multi-ethnic democracy. The act removed the “national origins formula” and its Northwest European focus and ended discrimination against Asians, Africans, and all other non-Northwestern European ethnicities. It also gave priority to relatives of U.S. Citizens and green card holders, professionals, and refugees.

Our Iranian American community never would have reached its current size and influence if it were not for the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act. We and other immigrant communities directly benefited from the accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement.

## Iranian Americans and the Future of U.S. Immigration

The last four years of the Trump administration did significant damage to immigrant communities in general--and the Iranian American community in particular--by way of the “Muslim Ban” and other openly discriminatory policies. Our community has been deprived of new blood and our children have been dispossessed of contact with their family members in Iran, an essential aspect of retaining and transferring our cultural heritage to the next generations of Iranian Americans.

History was repeated on November 3, 2020, when the activism of Black people, especially that of Black women, helped elect Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, the first woman vice president who is also the first vice president of African and Asian descent. With a stroke of the pen on his first day in office, President Biden ended the Muslim Ban. This was the result of the progressive movement’s victory in the United States; a new president, who has declared ending systemic racism as part of his agenda, ended an openly discriminatory and anti-immigrant policy among many others. As over 240 years of American history has shown, the future rights of the Iranian American community and all immigrant communities shall be closely aligned with the future of the racial justice movement in this country. Our choice in this matter shall make a difference.

*Hooshyar Afsar is one of the founders of Racism Awareness Project (RAP), an educational program on the history of and present-day racism in the United States and its impact on the Iranian American Community. RAP has had a variety of educational forums across the United States. Mr. Afsar has written several articles and book reviews on the topic for Peyk and other publications. He can be reached at [hoosh.afsar@rapusa.org](mailto:hoosh.afsar@rapusa.org).*

# Reclaiming Self-Care

By Lily Mojdehi



In my last article, I wrote about the stigmatization of mental health services in the Iranian American community and the challenges that many immigrant communities face in accessing such care (see *Peyk* #186). It's clear we need to normalize the conversation of mental health in order to provide care and resources for people in need of support. In this article, we will explore the meaning of the popular phrase "self-care"--the practice of prioritizing and engaging in activities that take care of a person's mental, emotional, and physical well-being--and how a multitude of Iranian cultural norms and traditions could be considered ways of practicing self-care.

Indigenous communities all over the world naturally engaged in self-care practices, because their lifestyles nurtured a balance between mental, emotional, and physical wellness. Prior to colonization, self-care was practiced by people who honored themselves, their community, and the land with which they lived in synchrony. Over time, self-care transitioned from a practice integrated into everyday life into an act of necessity for self-preservation. For example, in the 1970s, the Black Panther Party in the U.S. popularized self-care as an act of staying resilient amidst the systemic racism and violence of that era--creating free community health care clinics for their members was in and of itself an act of survival and resistance. Since then, self-care has become a popular catch phrase for describing self-nurturing activities or marketing wellness products. However, I have not heard this phrase widely used in the Iranian American community, and I have a few guesses as to why.

The Iranian American community rightfully prides itself on hard work and resiliency. It is thus important to clarify that taking time to rest and slow down does not equate to laziness or lack of ambition. Along with redefining rest as a powerful tool for success and wellness, another probable reason why self-care is an uncommon concept in the Iranian American community is because we are such a collectivist culture, one that prioritizes friendship, connection, and taking care of one another. Our mindset values community over individualism. To me, self-care does not mean that you are ignoring your community, but rather it shows a commitment to take care of yourself so you can show up for your community.

My grandmother is a perfect example of someone who took care of herself as well as her community. She was ahead of her time and it gives me great pride to know that she set intentional time to work on herself in order to become a better wife, mother, friend, and member of her community after immigrating to the U.S. Different people in our community have experienced varying levels of tragedy by living through a revolution, war, migration, and acculturation. My mom recounts a poignant story about my grandmother who, for months after her arrival to the U.S., would pick her daughter up from school every day while wearing a trench coat thrown over her pajamas because she was mourning the loss of her country, friends, family, community, and everything else that felt familiar to her. One of the ways my grandmother eventually navigated this feeling of loss was through her connection with a newfound community of Iranian immigrant women. She met

with a group of Iranian mothers who gathered together a few times a week to play cards and "dar dedel," which translates to "express your heart's pain." They would discuss different topics, all relevant to their immigrant status: how much they missed their homeland, how to survive in their newly adopted country, and how to help their children navigate in this new culture while still honoring their Persian traditions and values. The group also shared information and resources, varying from contacts for doctors and immigration lawyers, to accessing English classes, and how to navigate their children's school system. This group honored each other's collective experience of loss and supported their unique individual experiences of Iranian identity, immigration, diaspora, etc. In the U.S., some younger generations might call this "group therapy." Regardless of the name, the intention is powerful in finding support and love with the community.

It is important to remember that we have many ways of taking care of ourselves that might not be defined as the Western notion of "self-care," but are nevertheless embedded in our culture. Iranian culture is filled with rich cultural and spiritual traditions that nurture our overall health and wellness as holistic human beings. You could say that rituals such as getting together for afternoon tea, telling fortunes from Turkish coffee cups, group readings of the rich poetry of Hafez and Rumi, gathering with family and friends, and burning esfand (Persian incense) are all acts of "self-care."

Discovering the ancient wellness practices in which my ancestors engaged has been enlightening to me. I have grown up hearing about my family's traditional "self-care" rituals, going back three generations to my great-grandmother who always shared different proverbs, prayers, and natural healing remedies with her family. She lived and breathed culture and tradition. Learning about my family's history and culture gives me immense pride and keeps me grounded to who I am and where I come from.

Remembering my past has become a part of my self-care. Taking a moment to pause and drink Persian tea every morning has also become a part of my wellness routine. Other rituals such as saying a short prayer before I start driving is a way I practice self-care. Cooking food for my family is a way I practice self-care. Speaking Farsi and learning Persian poetry is a way I practice self-care. It has been empowering for me to realize that many culturally-specific traditions improve my overall mental health and wellness. I invite those who have taken the time to read this to do the same.

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*Lily Mojdehi is an Iranian American woman from San Diego who grew up dancing at the Persian Cultural Center of San Diego. Majoring in sociology, she recently graduated from Bard College in New York and now works as a Middle Eastern outreach coordinator for Breaking Down Barriers, a San Diego County-funded program aiming to reduce the stigma of mental health through education and prevention programs. Contact: [lilym@jffssd.org](mailto:lilym@jffssd.org)*





# What Nowruz Means to Me

Comments by Parents and Students of Iranian School of San Diego about Nowruz

Rachel Tait

As an American of Scottish-English-German descent, it often amuses my Iranian American husband that I'm the one in our household who puts the Nowruz haft-seen together before he even notices it is time to prepare. Though I now know each of the components by heart, I still consult the holiday section of the copy of *New Food of Life* by Najmieh Batmanglij that was given to me by my in-laws at my bridal shower, a not-so-subtle way of further welcoming me into the culture. Each March, I pull out my box labeled "*NOWRUZ*," carefully unwrap delicate dishes from Iran that were given to us upon our engagement, gather up the Seven Ss, and add other touches such as rose water and the *shirini* (sweets) we prefer from our local Persian market. Then comes the fun part--I add in elements from my childhood's "Easter" traditions, like colorful little chicks and the pastel foil-wrapped chocolate eggs that are so prevalent this time of year. Now that our young son is old enough to help prepare the haft-seen, he marvels at the various items on our table and enjoys hiding the little chicks here and there in the *sabzeh*. For me, preparing the Nowruz haft-seen is my way of honoring and blending my husband's culture with traditions that I grew up with as well... a beautiful way of showcasing both to our son, family, and friends.

Kris Gunevel

We celebrate Nowruz by setting up our haft-seen with all of the decorations, including the gold coins, eggs, grass, candle, apples, etc., a week or so prior to Nowruz. On actual Nowruz we have a traditional Persian dinner followed up by music, dancing, and then talk about what we were grateful for from the prior year and what we are looking forward to for the next year. We also celebrate Charshanbe Suri on the Wednesday before by jumping over a fire and saying Zardie man az to, Sorkhie to az man.

Brandon Cobb

I have only experienced one Nowruz. Mahsa and I met in July 2019 after 2019's Nowruz. For 2020's Nowruz, it was just the start of COVID-19. I was in another Farsi class and I learned about all the objects and symbols. My favorite was eidi! Haha, I want eidi. Then we were at Mahsa's friend Romina's apartment and cleaned it up nice, cooked a great meal, and ate with another couple plus Romina and her friend. It was a fun get together.

فرناز احرابیان

عید نوروز مهم‌ترین عید ایرانیان توام با آغاز سال نو می‌باشد و به همین دلیل در بین ایرانیان و خانواده ما دارای اهمیت بسیار زیادی است. ما در انتهای زمستان با انجام خانه تکانی به استقبال نوروز می‌رویم. مراسم نوروز با فراهم کردن اجزا سفره هفت سین شروع می‌شود که بسیار سرگرم کننده و جذاب است. ما هرساله همراه با همه اعضا خانواده آغاز سال نو شمسی را در پای سفره هفت سین جشن می‌گیریم و پس از حلول سال نو مراسم تبریک و رد و بدل کردن هدایا شروع می‌شود. معمولاً این بخش جذاب‌ترین و خاطره انگیزترین بخش مراسم نوروز برای کودکان می‌باشد. تماس با اقوام، دوستان و آشنایان دور و دید و بازدید از کسانی که در دسترس هستند بخش دیگری از مراسم نوروز می‌باشد.

Kourosh Taghavi

I Left Iran in 1983 and every year, even in the most trying years, I made sure I had a haft-seen, spring cleaned, bought new clothes, and found someone younger than me I could give "Eidi" to! So, the tradition has continued ever since I got married and my wife and I are now proud parents of two wonderful kids.

My wife and I believe in multiculturalism and we raise our kids as American Iranians who understand the values of multiculturalism! We have always talked about the importance of understanding other cultures and believe that many others in our communities feel the same way. So one of the most important aspects of Nowruz for us is celebrating it with our non-Iranian friends (kids take a haft-seen to school, they give a presentation about Nowruz, etc.).

At home we try to honor the rituals of Nowruz by having a haft-seen, which my wife and daughter somewhat design together, and we make sure to visit family and friends (Did-o-Bazdid) of course, give crisp dollar notes as Eidi to kids, and so on. We try to make Nowruz as interesting and as fun as possible for the whole family by telling our kids how Nowruz was for us as kids, perhaps reminding ourselves of our childhoods and memories of our parents and friends.

Nowruz is different for us as it is nostalgic for we the grownups and mysterious and fun for the kids, even though it is always competing with the holidays that everyone celebrates in the U.S.!

Sanaz Majd

Growing up, my mom would create an elaborate *sofreh haft-seen* each year. It was always color-coordinated with great attention to fine detail. All of the rich, ornate containers had to match, of course. If the theme was blue, you could bet the eggs would also be blue, as would the carefully attached ribbon draped around the *sabzeh*. Not just any *seeb* would do, they had to be the reddest she could find. New candles would decorate the periphery, and matching, shiny colored pebbled rocks were very carefully and intentionally scattered between each item on the *sofreh*.

Then, no matter the time of the day (or wee hours of the night) was designated as the precise time of the "*saleh no*," she would insist on gathering all of us to sit around the *haft-seen* table to celebrate that seemingly magical moment. It didn't matter if it was 3 p.m. or 3 a.m. As a naive, snot-nosed adolescent, however, all I wanted was to sleep and be left alone. Once gathered, she would then insist on stuffing sweet *noghl* in our mouths precisely before that moment arrived, "So that your entire year will be a sweet one," she'd say.

I didn't get it. I remember thinking as a teenager, "Why does she make such an effort and go through all this trouble?" It didn't seem to mean as much to us kids as it did to her. And here I was struggling to assimilate as a first-generation Iranian American; the last thing I wanted to do was to hold onto old traditions that felt "un-American." But still, each year my sisters and I complied with the same ritual simply to please my mother.

Growing up, there weren't many Iranian children who attended the same schools as I did. Looking back, I truly wish there were. I had assimilated all too well, and was at risk for losing any part of our rich culture I had left. I incessantly listened to American pop music, and was so clueless as to how beautiful the sounds of our own instruments were. I wore neon leggings, rubber bracelets from my wrists to elbows, and crimped my hair (yes, this was the 80s). I even later married outside our culture...gasp!

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# Soccer, A Reflective Bubble of the World

By Danial Golphorush



Generally, soccer and other sports are simplistically understood only as a pastime. They are seen as nothing but loud and sometimes hyper-masculine activities mainly reserved for the weekend or, on occasion, during the week. However, much like many other hobbies and events are simplified to a fraction of their subjective purpose, soccer plays a crucial role not only in the community that it represents but also in its global fanbase. Sometimes it simply is the only factor bringing two strangers together in the same bar to watch a match or even fly across the world to watch live in a stadium. Soccer possesses an extraordinary global reach that cuts across different cultures, languages, and physical borders. In our lifetime, soccer has become an entity of its own with governing bodies, regional regulations, nation-state investor groups, social development programs, you name it. With the world more connected than ever before, the influence of soccer on its international community has never been more prevalent.

For instance, as the world witnessed the murder of George Floyd, the English Premier League and other top European leagues and football associations around the world took it upon themselves to display “Black Lives Matter” and “No to Racism” banners during their matches and players began to take a knee before the kick off of each match. Millions of people tune in from across the world every week to watch these matches. While performance and the scoring of goals may be unpredictable, the message of unity was not. Admittedly, there were some backlashes, much as there have been in the real world. In late December, Millwall fans in the UK booed their team during the BLM kneeling in one of the first matches with a limited number of fans being reintroduced to the stadium for the very first time during COVID-19. More famously, Burnley fans in the UK flew a “White Lives Matter” banner during their team’s closed-door match. Even though these events are few and far in between, it reflects our current state—a movement that started in the U.S. now has supporters and opponents across the world.

Soccer has gone from representing a small regional community to quite literally becoming a microcosm of the world. An echo or reflective bubble if you will. As the miniature version of the world, soccer is a reflection of our society and our surrounding environment. Yet it functions as a bubble as well since many of the events within it may not have a direct and immediate influence on the outside world. This places soccer in a unique position. Although it embodies and represents the imperfections and flashes of brilliance of its environment, it has the opportunity to actively create preventative and long-lasting positive change. Admittedly, it is not helpful to look at soccer through rose-colored glasses because, at the end of the day, it is still a commercial entity. Profits are a necessity for the survival of each club and the many mouths that they feed. However, I would argue that long-term profits and social action go hand in hand. Soccer is not going anywhere any time soon.

Let’s take the women’s game as an example. Currently, women’s soccer is worth a fraction of the men’s game. This valuation has nothing to do with the sex of the players but it purely has everything to do with decades of infrastructure, exposure, and planning from which the men’s game has benefited. These decades of infrastructure have transformed into norms; thus, the women’s game struggles more when seeking fans, funds, and investments to expand when compared to the men’s game. There is an exact parallel in the “outside” world, where, by some estimates, only 2% of venture capital funds go to female entrepreneurs. However, as we have seen with the United States Women’s National Team, with the calculated and well-planned investments in grassroots, brand partnerships, and individual player’s growth, the women’s game has the potential to not only compete with the men’s game but surpass it as well. For the past decade, the USWNT has competed with the USMNT for the highest percentage of revenue generated annually for U.S. Soccer. However, as previously mentioned, while there is an objectively social good created by such investments, in the long-term the investors will without a shadow of a doubt generate more funds as more players and fans join the women’s game.

We can take the diversity of the leadership level, both executive and coaching staff, as another example; well, rather, the lack of it. It is common knowledge that most of the clubs across the top European leagues and clubs have failed--and are actively failing--to form a more diverse executive team and coaching staff. A diverse management team will not only be encouraging to younger generations, but it will, more importantly, bring a more specialized perspective on certain topics. Often individuals recruited for such positions are ex-players or experienced professionals; thus, their own past experiences and expertise can prove beneficial as the clubs or leagues look to resolve issues related to racism, sexism, etc. Their presence and past experiences can prove to be assets as certain aspects of decisions may be overlooked by a less diverse team. However, this is a long-term investment. With more diversity within the board and the coaching staff, we close the gap between different ethnicities and individuals from different socioeconomic statuses. This ideally turns into more active involvement across all communities, which will in return generate more money.

Even though diversity and inclusion open more doors for growth in the social and monetary sense in the long term, we have seen the benefits of a more inclusive environment in recent times. There have been many successful and unsuccessful campaigns held by players and teams; however, Marcus Rashford and his fight against child hunger in the UK is one of the clearest ways that this reflective bubble can change the source of its reflection for the better. Rashford, a 23-year-old Manchester United and England National Team starter who suffered from food insecurity as a child, did not miss the opportunity to battle his past when given the

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chance. When the UK government voted against extending the free meal program for children in vulnerable families during school vacation and COVID-19, Rashford voiced his disapproval by starting a campaign and petition to feed the children in need. Within weeks, the government changed its decision amidst the economic struggles of the second wave of COVID-19 after the overwhelming support his campaign received from the public. Rashford has since utilized his 4.1 million Twitter followers as a food drive and assistance directory and information page. He and his work have been praised and supported by many celebrities, athletes, and politicians across the world. As a result, Rashford recently earned the title of MBE, one of the highest honors given by the UK's royal family. The seeds for this moment were planted many decades ago when inclusivity was promoted, and all soccer had to do was to do what it does best--reflect society. It was this reflective bubble that nurtured one of its own from within, who then changed the source of the reflection that dissatisfied him.

Stepping away from the rose-colored glasses again--and the vacuum that each of those scenarios was described in--the question becomes why should soccer generate the voices to define generations? More importantly, who decides what those voices are? And what is "positive change"? These are fair and necessary questions that need answering. However, as a greater global society, our values and understanding of the world around us are ever-changing and always evolving for the better. While the past few years and especially 2020 have made this harder to believe, there are actors within the game who are playing their role in creating a space more perfect than the season before. As we struggle with the issues of diversity, discrimination, and unnecessary social taboos, this conscious microcosm--this reflective bubble--can become the long-term and long-lasting voice for change that each society deserves.

Danial Golphorush is a recent graduate of the University of California, Berkeley with a degree in International Economic Development with a focus on development through technology and entrepreneurship. He is currently working in the personal finance industry. Danial takes a particular interest in analyzing and writing about the social and business aspect of soccer."

It wasn't until my children were born that all of a sudden I seemed to remember who I was, like a switch of a light. I now had two identical sets of eyes staring at me, yearning to learn who they are and how they will fit into this world.

From then on, I simply could not get enough of Persian everything--I was listening to Radio Javan non-stop, gave up coffee to become a *chaiee* snob, learned how to make *Asheh-reshteh*, found myself speaking more Farsi despite my thick American accent seeping through, and was in constant search for other Iranian kids to play with mine.

It all mattered. I was reaching desperately for an almost lost connection that I had to our culture. I wanted more for my kids, and started to make the effort to help them understand who they are.

Since my twins were born, creating an annual *haft-seen* table has become our greatest Persian family tradition. It is the one holiday that belongs to us. As it nears Nowruz each year, my girls are actively involved and in charge, front and center. They display unyielding excitement for the opportunity to drape the *sof-reh* on the table, to set the table with *senjed*, *somagh*, *serkeh*, *sekeh*, and *seeb*, to water the *sabzeh* each day until it is vibrant green, and most especially, to decorate the eggs.

We also attend the Balboa Park Nowruz show in San Diego every year, another tradition and highlight of this time of year since the days that my girls were crawling. Entranced with the beautiful Persian dance routines on stage, they yearned to learn and now take Persian dance lessons themselves. They also eagerly look forward to the annual ISSD Nowruz show, in which they participate on stage. They themselves demand to listen to Aghayeh Sadr's songs (our principal) that he records each year in preparation for the show... over and over again (and over again) in our car rides for almost the entire month of March (yes, they demand this even after the show).

My girls are miraculously more interested than I ever was growing up. Perhaps because it's a different generation, different time? After all, they never had the internal struggle with assimilation into a new world. They accept everything as is, so much simpler.

Also, great credit goes to ISSD for allowing young Iranian American families to unite as we celebrate our culture. The lasting connections we have made with other families there have been life-changing. These are connections and resources that were not easily accessible to me while growing up.

Either way, it has all come back full circle. I am so grateful to my mother for her persistence in instilling these traditions despite my reluctance while growing up. She is quite a special lady, in so many more ways than this.

I can now pass it on to my own children, and they can pass it on to theirs. Even if my kids somehow get lost somewhere along the way, I am confident that by making this effort and keeping the culture alive while they're growing up, that they too will eventually return to their roots...just as I did.

**From my family to yours, *Eidetoon Mobarak*.**



# Nutritional Value of the Nowruz Haft-seen

By Mohammad Ahrar, PhD



## Introduction

One of the most important Nowruz traditions is setting a haft-seen table (sofreh), full of natural edible elements. All items start with an S, including Seeb or Sib (apple), Seer (garlic), Serkeh (vinegar), Samanu (sprouted wheat paste), Senjed (dried oleaster fruit), Sumac (dried berry), and Sabzeh (green sprouts). The haft-seen table is also decorated with other symbolic items that do not start with S, but are decorative elements which make the sofreh colorful and attractive. Although each item symbolizes a concept in Persian culture, some items on the haft-seen table have inherently great nutritional value. In this article, we will briefly review the nutritional value of the Nowruz haft-seen.

### 1- Seeb (Apple)

This common fruit is rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants, all of which provide good health benefits. An average-size apple provides 9–11% of a person's daily requirement of vitamin C, which can boost the immune system and help defend the body from infections and diseases. Vitamin C is also a potent antioxidant. (More information about Vitamin C is discussed in *Peyk* #173.) Besides Vitamin C, apples also contain other types of antioxidants, which help neutralize free radicals that are produced in body cells. When free radicals are accumulated in the body, they can damage the cells and cause a range of conditions, including cancer and diabetes. (More information about antioxidants can be found in *Peyk* #184.)

Apples contain most essential minerals in considerable amounts, including potassium, which helps relax blood vessels, reducing the risk of high blood pressure and cardiovascular complications. A large whole apple provides about 4 grams of fiber, which is about 10-20% of an average adult's daily requirement. People who consume fruits high in fiber appear to have a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke, and fiber may also help reduce the risk of colon cancer. Additionally, consuming apples daily may help lower the risk of lung cancer, breast cancer, and colorectal cancer among other types of cancer.

### 2- Seer (Garlic)

Garlic, a tuber closely related to onions, shallots, and leeks, is known to boost the function of the immune system. Like apples, garlic contains antioxidants that may support the body's protective mechanisms against oxidative damage from free radicals.

One clove (about 3 grams) of raw garlic provides 1.2 milligrams of Vitamin B6, and a substantial amount of other B vitamins, as well as Vitamin C and Vitamin K. Garlic also provides necessary minerals for the body, including zinc, iron, potassium, and

magnesium. It is also an excellent source of calcium, manganese, phosphorus, copper, and selenium.

Most of the health benefits of garlic are due to the presence of sulfur compounds that exert potent biological effects in the body cells. At high doses, the sulfur compounds in garlic have been shown to protect against organ damage from heavy metal toxicity. The phosphorus content in garlic plays a major role in energy production in the cells.

As garlic and many other underground bulbs and tubers concentrate nutrients, they may also concentrate toxins and pesticides. For this reason, *organic* onions, beets, turnips, potatoes, and similar food products may be preferable.

### 3- Serkeh (Vinegar)

The word vinegar derives from the French "vin aigre," or sour wine. It is a mixture of acetic acid and water, produced as a result of fermentation of sugars in aerobic conditions. The use of vinegar has been traced back to 5000 B.C.E. in Babylon as a medicine, a preservative, and a drink to boost strength and promote wellness. Apple cider vinegar is suspected to be useful in addressing acid reflux and heartburn, due to the fact that acetic acid is a weak acid which can buffer the strong acids such as hydrochloric acid in the stomach.

But be warned: regular consumption of vinegar can cause tooth erosion or decrease potassium in blood to hazardous levels. Vinegar may also interact with medication taken by diabetic people; so, please, tell your doctor if you are regularly taking vinegar.

### 4- Samanu (Sprouted Wheat Paste)

Samanu is made of sprouted wheat; wheat grain is usually soaked for 6 to 7 days, then blended with water. The mixture is then heated over medium temperature and constantly stirred for hours until the water is evaporated, turning the mixture into a puree. Samanu is surprisingly sweet, which occurs when the starch in wheat (which is a complex carbohydrate) is broken down by enzymes into a simple sugar. Samanu contains protein, is rich in vitamin B6, and is also a good source of iron, phosphorus, zinc, selenium, magnesium, copper, and potassium.

### 5- Senjed (Dried Oleaster Fruit)

Senjed, the small dried fruit of the oleaster plant (also known as the lotus tree fruit, silverberry, Russian wild olive, or the Persian olive), is a noble item on the haft-seen table. It is a traditional

*Continue on page 21*



## A Traditional Nowruz Feast

From: *The Joy of Persian Cooking*

By: Pari Ardalan Malek

*Joyous Season of Nowruz to all and nush-e-jan. Our warm greetings to Ms. Pari Ardalan Malek and best wishes for the year ahead; thank you for sharing your recipes with our readers. "The following dishes are traditionally served on the eve of the Iranian New Year- Nowruz. Polo is prepared exactly the same way as Chelow (white rice recipe Peyk #107), but in order to maintain the light, fluffy quality of the rice, boil the rice in polo recipes for only 2 minutes, instead of 3-4. It is important not to over cook the rice, as the other ingredients mixed in any polo recipe will tend to make the rice soft."*

### Kookoo Sabzi (Fresh Herb Quiche/Souffle)

Preparation time: 45 minutes

Makes 8 wedges

**Ingredients:** 4 cups chopped parsley; 4 cups chopped spring onions; 1 cup chopped Chinese parsley; 1 cup chopped dill; 4 green lettuce leaves; 7 eggs; 1 tsp. baking soda; 1 Tbsp. flour; 6 Tbsp. oil; 3/4 tsp. salt; 1/4 tsp. pepper; 1/2 tsp. turmeric; 1/2 tsp. cinnamon

#### Directions:

1. Chop dill and lettuce leaves finely by hand.
2. Chop remaining vegetables in a food processor or by hand.
3. Heat 3 tablespoons oil in a large skillet, then sauté vegetables and set aside.
4. When cool, mix vegetables with remaining ingredients (except oil) in a large bowl. Beat with an electric mixer for 3 minutes.
5. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Pour remaining oil into a 9- or 10-inch round Pyrex dish and place in the oven.
6. When oil is hot, remove Pyrex dish and fill with vegetables, smoothing the top.
7. Bake uncovered for 35-45 minutes.
8. Remove dish from oven and slice into wedges.
9. To give the sides an even color, fry kookoo on all sides in 1 tablespoon oil.

**Optional Ingredients/Directions:** Add 2 Tbsp. barberries (zereshk) and 2 Tbsp. chopped walnuts in Step 3.



### Sabzi Polo (Fresh herb pilaf)

Preparation time: 1 hour

Serves 6-8 persons

**Ingredients:** 3 cups dry rice; 3 cups chopped parsley; 3 cups chopped spring onions; 1 cup chopped dill; 3 tsp. liquid saffron; 1/4 cup butter; 2 cups water; 1/2 tsp. salt

#### Directions:

1. Cook rice (see Peyk #107- Chelow) for 2 minutes.
2. Just before draining the rice, add the chopped greens (except for dill), stir gently, boil for 1 minute, and drain in a colander. Mix the chopped dill gently with drained rice. Add salt.
3. Melt 1/4 cup butter in the cooking pot and add 1/4 cup water to it.
4. Add rice mixture to the cooking pot and stir.
5. Wrap the lid of the pot with paper towels or a cloth to keep steam inside the pot, and then cook for 45 minutes on low heat. To make *tahdig* (rice crust), cook rice for an additional 15 minutes on medium heat. Remove 1 cup of the rice from the top of the pot and save on a separate plate. Add 1 teaspoon liquid saffron to the plate and mix gently with the rice. Reserve for garnish. Add remaining liquid saffron to the mix in the pot and stir gently.
6. Spoon out rice out onto a serving platter, garnish with saffron rice, and serve.

HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR TO ALL



as it simply carries the DNA that encodes the spike protein. There is no COVID-19 virus involved. J&J previously used a similar approach to create a vaccine for Ebola.

### Can an mRNA Vaccine Interact with or Alter my DNA?

No. The injected mRNA used by Moderna and Pfizer does not enter the “nucleus” of the cell, the structure inside the cell that stores DNA. The mRNA simply hangs out in the “cytoplasm” of the cell, the large area of the cell that contains the solution that protects and helps shape the cell. Then the mRNA self-destructs after it creates the spike protein particle. Its function is simply to create that spike protein and then skedaddle. It is therefore scientifically impossible for it to interact with or alter DNA.

### Are the mRNA Vaccines Really Safe?

Yes. While the COVID-19 vaccine is the first mRNA vaccine that applied for FDA approval in the U.S., mRNA vaccines are not new concepts. They have been studied for decades prior. One of the greatest advantages of an mRNA vaccine is that it can be developed rapidly using readily available materials, hence quite useful in a pandemic for emergency use. It is less costly, less time-consuming, and easier to create mRNA than it is to create viral particles or proteins as used by other vaccines.

But mRNA’s fragile nature has kept scientists from utilizing it in vaccines up until now. It is easily destroyed and requires specific temperatures to survive. However, scientists were brilliantly able to solve this problem during the pandemic, and going forward we are now more likely to utilize this technology for future vaccines.

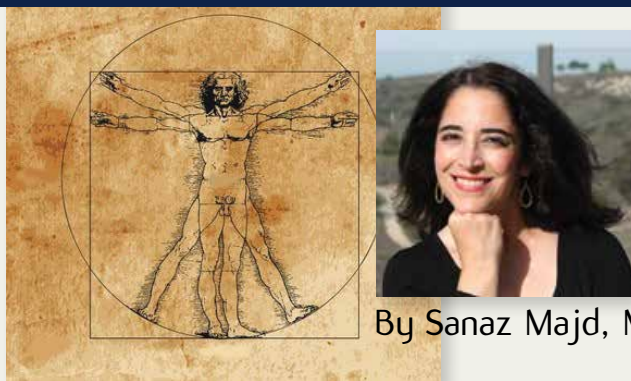
The COVID-19 mRNA vaccines were studied in tens of thousands of people in large clinical trials to ensure they met safety standards and have been under significant peer, state, and federal review before authorization for approval.

They are held to the same rigorous safety and efficacy standards as all prior vaccines; the FDA and the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) have thoroughly reviewed all safety data prior to the vaccines’ approval for use in the U.S.

### Which Vaccine is Best?

Truthfully, whichever vaccine you can obtain first is best. And most likely, you will not be given an option during the beginning stages of vaccination. We are very fortunate to be able to obtain any one of the approved, available vaccines.

Pfizer’s and Moderna’s vaccines both require two injections 21 and 28 days apart, respectively, and are almost equally effective after the second dose. Pfizer has an insignificant, less than 1% lead,



By Sanaz Majd, MD

## Top 6 COVID-19 Vaccine Questions & Answers

### Can I Get COVID-19 from a Vaccine?

No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines approved for use or in development in the U.S. uses a live virus. In fact, the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines do not utilize a dead virus or even part of a dead virus. It is scientifically impossible to get infected with COVID-19 when the vaccine does not even involve an actual virus.

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines instead utilize a synthetic “messenger RNA” (mRNA) method. This mRNA serves as a “messenger” to the cells it is injected with, and the message it carries contains genetic material that provides instructions for the cells to produce certain proteins.

In the case of the COVID-19 vaccine, when this mRNA is injected in your body, it enters the cell and instructs it to produce a replica of a harmless “spike protein” that typically sits on the surface of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the name for the COVID-19 virus). Once this protein is produced, the cell displays the spike protein on its surface, and the mRNA then self-destructs.

Your immune system then senses this “foreign” particle on the cell surface and mounts an attack, in addition to creating a “memory” of this battle by producing “antibodies,” proteins that will help destroy the virus if encountered in the future. Then, the next time your body encounters the same spike protein particle on the real COVID-19 virus, it will more quickly attack and destroy it before it causes illness. This is termed “immunity.”

In essence, the vaccine gives our immune system a “heads up,” a forewarning of sorts, that this nasty bug may be encountered on the horizon and to get ready for war when the real thing attacks.

Note that Johnson & Johnson is also pending Food & Drug Administration (FDA) authorization for emergency use of its one-dose vaccine. Its method differs from Moderna’s and Pfizer’s, in that it uses a harmless, modified “adenovirus” (a virus that typically causes the common cold) that has been engineered to carry the DNA to produce the COVID-19 spike protein. So, instead of directly injecting an mRNA, the vaccine utilizes a different virus as the carrier of the genetic material that encodes the spike protein.

J&J’s vaccine cannot cause the common cold infection, as the Adenovirus has been modified so that it cannot replicate itself or cause illness. And it also cannot induce a COVID-19 infection,



at 95% efficacy versus Moderna's 94.1% efficacy.

J&J's vaccine on the other hand is a single injection reported as 66% protective against moderate to severe infection, but 85% effective against severe infection. Even though it would seem as though J&J is comparably less effective, it is not possible to compare the efficacy of J&J's to Moderna/Pfizer's vaccines because the trials were testing for different outcomes when assessing their efficacy. All have surpassed the FDA's required 50% efficacy threshold and are good options.

The key is to vaccinate with whatever vaccine is most easily accessible and to protect as many people as quickly as possible in order to produce "herd immunity," immunity in which a high proportion of people can help prevent the spread and help protect those most vulnerable and/or unvaccinated. Herd immunity will also help diminish the development of new mutations of the virus, which is really key at this point in time.

In the case of COVID-19, scientists estimate that between 70-85% of people need to be immune before we achieve significant herd immunity. The virus may not ever entirely vanish, but it can then gradually diminish over time after herd immunity is reached.

## Do I Need a Vaccine If I Already Had COVID-19?

Yes. We currently do not know how long natural immunity will last after infection. There is some evidence that the vaccines facilitate a more potent immune response when compared to natural illness. But this is an area that still requires further research. The CDC's recommendation is to be vaccinated even if you previously contracted the COVID-19 virus.

## What Are the Vaccines' Side Effects?

Many people report minimal or no side effects from the COVID-19 vaccines. Side effects can vary in different people, but are often mild and short in duration. They may be more common after the second shots of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines.

Side effects typically last 1-2 days, and most commonly include:

- soreness at the site of injection
- body aches
- headache
- fatigue
- fever
- chills
- nausea, vomiting
- swollen lymph nodes

Note that side effects are simply evidence that your body's immune system is doing what it is supposed to be doing. These symptoms are created by your own immune system as it is mounting a response and preparing for war in case it sees the virus in the future.

Long-term side effects have not yet been studied since the vaccine trials began in the summer of 2020. However, long-term side effects to vaccines are very rare and it is highly unlikely that a little mRNA protein will cause any long-term effects. If you are still concerned, the safety of vaccines in the U.S. will be reported in a

publicly-shared program called Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) at [www.vaers.hhs.gov](http://www.vaers.hhs.gov). Overall, the pros of obtaining a COVID-19 vaccine highly outweigh any potential cons or minute risk.

There is no doubt we all have a vital role to play in this pandemic, not only in our own behavior (wearing a mask, social distancing, etc.) but also in the decision we make when it comes to vaccination. Remember that vaccination is not only to protect you, but it is to protect those around you--think of your elderly grandparents, your co-worker on chemo, infants and children, and those with underlying medical conditions.

We are at war with a deadly virus. It is the duty and responsibility of each and every one of us to do our part to fight this war so that we can reclaim our lives, health, safety, and economy. As a physician who has seen all sides of this nasty pandemic, I urge all of you to consider getting vaccinated.

### References:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

*Sanaz Majd, MD is a board-certified Family Medicine physician and host of the Majd MD YouTube channel, reviewing the latest medical topics and headlines: [www.youtube.com/MajdMD](https://www.youtube.com/MajdMD). You can also follow her on Facebook or Instagram: @SMajdMD.*

### Public Announcement



## 10 Water heater tips TO put safety and savings on tap

1. Keep safety and energy savings on tap year-round with these simple tips for your home water heater.
2. Set the water heater thermostat to 120°F or less to save energy and reduce the risk of scalding. (If your dishwasher lacks a booster heater, a setting of 140°F may be needed.)
3. Hand-test water temperature before bathing or showering. A child's bath water generally should be no hotter than 100°F.
4. Securely install water heater restraints to wall studs to prevent movement or toppling during an earthquake, as required by state law.
5. Keep flammable products away from the water heater and vent system to help prevent fire hazards.
6. Keep the area around the water heater clean and well-ventilated.
7. Fix leaky faucets to prevent heated water from dripping away.
8. Use cold water to wash clothes and rinse dishes when possible.
9. Run full loads in the clothes washer and dishwasher.
10. Install low-flow devices on faucets and showerheads — less water, less heating.
11. Wash clothes in cold water. It lowers microfiber pollution and cold water uses less energy. Up to 90% of the energy cost goes towards heating the water.

**For more energy-saving and safety tips visit [sdge.com/winter](http://sdge.com/winter).**

# Events in San Diego

## Persian Cultural Center

Tel: (858) 552-9355 Fax & Voice: (619) 374-7335  
www.pccsd.org

**PCC Virtual Nowruz Celebration with Rastak Music Group**  
**Friday March 19th, 8 pm.**  
**Saturday March 20th, 2021, 10:30 am.**

### Persian cooking Three Chefs in the Kitchen

Learn about Persian cuisine and more  
Special for Nowruz  
Saturday March 13, 2021 at 2 PM  
Join our virtual program  
Meeting ID: 839 2615 6984

### Jong-e Farhangi

Friday, April 16, 2021 at 6 PM

### Movie and Discussion

Thursday April 15, 2021 at 7:30 PM

### Poetry Night

Wednesday, April 21, 2021 at 6 PM

### Creative Writing Workshop with Hossain Mortezaeian Abkenar

Advanced: Sundays 1 to 3 PM  
Beginners: Start in January 2021  
For more information and registration contact PCC

## Iranian School of San Diego

(858) 552-9355  
Persian classes: Sundays from 10 AM to 12 noon

**Setar class:** Sundays from 1 to 2 PM

**Dance classes:** from 12 noon to 2 PM

### ISSD Virtual Nowruz Celebration

March 21, 2021

## Persian Dance Academy of San Diego

Dance classes for all ages at the location of Iranian School  
Sundays from 12 to 2 PM

## Dollar a Month Fund

Tel: (858) 552-9355 • www.dmfund.org  
www.facebook.com/DollaraMonthFund

## AIAP (Association of Iranian-American Professionals)

Tel: (858) 215-2427 • www.aiap.org

## ISTA (Iranian Student Association at UC San Diego)

www.istaucsd.org

## House of Iran

House of Iran Balboa Park  
www.thehouseofiran.com

## Iranian-American Scholarship Fund

Tel: (858) 552-9355 • www.iasfund.org  
www.facebook.com/Iranian-AmericanScholarshipFund

## Mehregan Foundation

Tel: (858) 673-7000

## PAAIA (Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian-Americans)

www.paaia.org



**NIAC** (National Iranian-American Council)  
www.niac.org

**IABA** (Iranian-American Bar Association)  
www.iaba.us/chapters/san-diego

## Book Club Meeting

Iranian-American Center (IAC)  
6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121  
Tel: (858) 552-9355

## Iranian-American Life Science Network (IALSN)

www.ialsn.org

## THE FLOWER FIELDS

The Flower Fields of Carlsbad California  
760-431-0352 • Mar 1 - May 9, 2021

## VIRTUAL TOURS

San Diego Museum of Art • Dec 17, 2020 – ongoing

## SDMA 360: A VIRTUAL GALLERY EXPERIENCE

San Diego Museum of Art • Dec 17, 2020 - ongoing

## SAN DIEGO EDUCATIONAL WHALE WATCHING

Flagship Cruises & Events  
PRICES VARY 619-234-4111 Dec 14, 2020 – ongoing

## PRIVATE CUSTOMIZABLE ICONIC CITY HIGHLIGHTS TOUR

SHUTTLED CULTURAL AND HISTORIC CITY TOUR  
San Diego Photography Tours 858/692-8402  
Nov 4, 2020 – ongoing

## PRIVATE TOUR: BALBOA PARK

HISTORIC HIGHLIGHTS AND SECRET SPOTS  
San Diego Urban Adventures 619-432-7560  
Aug 18, 2020 – ongoing

## THE SECRET LA JOLLA TOUR

SECRET ART, ARCHITECTURE, AND HIDDEN VIEWPOINTS  
San Diego Photography Tours  
858/692-8402 Jun 24, 2020 - ongoing



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# Demystifying COVID-19 Vaccines

By: Dr. Alidad Zadeh

AIAP, virtual meeting, January 27, 2021

The Association of Iranian-American Professionals (AIAP) is an educational non-profit organization located in San Diego, California. During its 25+ years of existence, among other community activities, AIAP has held monthly general meetings inviting professionals, scholars, and experts to speak about a wide range of topics to its members and the public.

What you are reading is an excerpt of the speech given by Dr. Alidad Zadeh, an internal medicine specialist, at a virtual meeting on January 27, 2021. The speech has been edited for readability. For more information about AIAP and to view some slides about this article, please refer to [www.aiap.org](http://www.aiap.org)

The COVID-19 virus is a human and animal pathogen. It has six versions: four of them cause the common cold; two of them cause serious illness (SARS and MERS). In 2019, COVID-19 was found to cause a cluster of pneumonias in Wuhan, China. It has rapidly spread to the entire world, infecting about 100 million people and killing over 2 million.

## How Does COVID-19 Spread?

The COVID-19 virus spreads through close contact, from person to person, through airborne transmission. A viral spread can happen even for people near each other, up to approximately 6 feet apart. It can spread by people who are asymptomatic. It can be spread through respiratory droplets (cough, sneeze, etc.) if absorbed through the mucus membranes (nose, mouth, and eyes). COVID-19 is more contagious than influenza (less contagious than the measles).

## What IS COVID-19's Incubation Period?

After COVID-19 transmission, it can take 4-6 days (and up to 14 days) for the infected person to develop symptoms. The illness can last 10 days or longer. The COVID-19 infection period is 8-10 days, but can be longer, and starts 1-3 days before the symptoms develop. After the infection period for 3 days there won't be any symptoms. That is when the person will be released from isolation.

## Testing For COVID-19:

There are currently three main methods to test for COVID-19.

The Molecular Test: A nasal swab is used to diagnose the active infection and is the most accurate. Examples are: NAAT, LAMP, or PCR test.

The Antigen Test: A nasal swab is used to diagnose the active infection. It has the fastest processing time, but is less accurate with false positives in areas with low viral load and false negatives in areas with increased viral load.

The Antibody Test: This blood test is proof of past infection and is less accurate than the other tests.

## Clinical Presentation (Symptoms) and Serious Manifestations of COVID-19:

The most common initial presentation of COVID-19 is cough (50%), fever (43%), myalgia (muscle aches or pains) (36%), and headache (34%). Less common presentations include diarrhea (19%), sore throat (20%), and loss of sense of smell and taste (10%).

The most serious cases of COVID-19 include pneumonia (marked by fever, cough, dyspnea [difficult or labored breathing], and CRX B/L infiltrate) and Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS), which is the most common cause of death and the leading cause of respiratory failure.

Other complications of COVID-19 include cardiovascular issues (heart attacks, arrhythmia, and shock), thrombotic events (like DVT, pulmonary embolism, and stroke), neurological issues (such as encephalopathy), inflammations (such as Cytokines release syndrome and Kawasaki disease [mostly in children], and secondary Infections (such as bacterial and fungal infections).

## COVID-19 Mortality in the U.S.:

The number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. is more than 400,000 and the excess death rate (the difference between the observed death rate during a particular period of time and the expected death rate during the same period) is about 400,000. According to a USA Today article published on January 21, 2021, the year 2020 was the deadliest year on record for the U.S.

## Blood Types and COVID-19:

Human blood types are A, B, AB, and O. According to a study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine on November 24, 2020, patients with blood type O and Rhesus negative have lower risk of COVID-19 infection or severe diseases. Based on a retrospective study of 225,000 patients that tested positive between January 15 and June 30, 2020, those with blood type O had a 2.1% chance of getting the infection (lowest out of all blood groups). Rh- was protective as well. Type B+ had a 4.2% chance of infection (highest out of all blood groups).

## Treatments for COVID-19:

Outpatient: *Monoclonal antibody* decreases hospitalization.

Inpatient: *Remdisivir* speeds recovery.

*Dexamethasone* decreases mortality in severely ill patients.

## COVID-19 Treatments That May Not Work:

*Hydroxychloroquin*- RA drug

*Convalescent plasma therapy* in the severely ill

*Lopinavir/Ritonavir*- HIV medicine

*Tocilizumab*- IL-6 inhibitor



