

NOWRUZ

A New Day for Humanity

Nowruz, literally meaning “new day,” has through the ages lived up to its name in wondrous ways.

It has provided the supreme occasion for renewal and rejuvenation, for new resolves and novel beginnings. Its inexhaustible appeal to the human mind resides in a simple truth: by holding nature up to us, it connotes a celebration, not of this or that nation or people, but of our common humanity. It invites us to contemplate nature as it dons a magnificent cloak at springtime and to revisit the relationships we build in the human community and between ourselves and our world. Showing us nature’s ability to renew itself every year, Nowruz has through the millennia fostered much human yearning.

The roots of Nowruz are scattered in myth and in history; they go deep into the earth beneath our steps, all the way to the time when the settlement of the first peoples on the Iranian plateau signaled a new phase in human civilization. They pass through various historical layers, from the formation of the first Persian Empire over twenty-five centuries ago to the later formations of the Persian civilization before Christianity and Islam. Its historical function over the millennia has been to forge and foster evernewer senses of collective identity in an ever-changing world. When Iran lost much of its ancient civilization and its identity was threatened, several generations of Iranians worked to restore that sense of identity through the creation of marvelous documents and monuments, spheres and spaces that still impress the world with their beauty, their artistry, and their relevance to our world. From Ferdowsi’s *Book of Kings* and Rumi’s *Spiritual Couplets* to the rose gardens of Shiraz and blue-tiled domes of Esfahan the landscape of Iran’s civilization is strewn with such marvels.

In recent centuries, as the vast Iranian Empire gave way to the modern country of Iran, Nowruz has spread its branches over the neighboring countries, and increasingly all over the world. It still invites us to contemplate nature as it blossoms in new and wonderful colors as a site for renewal and rejuvenation. Today, for the two million Iranians living abroad, as for the seventy million living in the homeland, Nowruz holds out the promise of transcending political divisions and moving toward new beginnings. To the world, it offers the potential of the human community, where a race of all races is emerging to create a new global culture beyond all nationhood and nationality. It aspires to a globalized humanity as beautiful and colorful as nature on the first day of spring.