

# راه زندگی

## Rah-E-Zendegi

1557 Westwood Blvd., #139, Los Angeles CA 90024

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## New Year and Nowruz Celebrated in Montreux

An Ancient Tradition that Ambassador Zahedi Solemnizes Year after Year

**From Chahar Shanbeh Souri to the New Year Eve and Sizedeh Bedar**  
Traditional rituals of eternity and rejuvenation



To celebrate the three occasions marking the Iranian New Year festivities, every year Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi arranges ceremonies that are remembered throughout the year. CHARSHAN-BEH SOURI, THE NEW YEAR EVE and SIZEDEH BEDAR are celebrated in presence of distinguished Swiss and Iranian friends. This gives him an opportunity to insist on the common values of humanity, man's worship of nature and the philosophy of rejuvenation; the eternal promise of nature that after winter there is a spring and a new life. The green elements in Haft Seen or on Sizdeh Bedar remind us of the vegetation myth, a belief that there is life after

death, that winter is the beginning and not the end. This is what has given hope and is as old as humanity.

It is true that part of the rituals of spring can be traced back to thousands of years ago in the ancient Greek festivities, the rural dances and songs that celebrate the new year of the fertility of land, the hope for light, warmth, food and fruits, joy and marriage. The whole procedure was known by the name of Como-edia or Comedy. The ritual helped to get rid of cold and pollution and all the evil spirits of winter, the very ingredients of the Greek tragedy.

The Zoroastrians, followed by ancient royal Iranian dy-



*Left to right Front to Back: Max Smithuis, Mis. Nira, Mr. Mrs. Gregory & Laura and Children Udry Jergensen. Mrs. Tannaz Taghavi, Mrs. Anne Zucher, Mrs. Anne-Rose Smithuis, Ms. Laetitia Roch H.E. Ardeshir Zahedi. Mrs. Therese Gharibi, Mrs. Barbara Mittermaier*





*Mr. Mrs. Laurent & Myriam Wherli, H.E. Ardeshir Zahedi*



*H.E. Ardeshir Zahedi, Mrs. Myriam Wherli, Mrs. Yasi Moghadam Tehrani, Mrs. Khaneghahi, Mr. Babak Moghadam Tehrani*



*Mrs. Myriam Wherli, H.E. Ardeshir Zahedi, Mrs. Naseem Merali, Mr. Edo Roddaro, Mr. Olivier Grivat.*

nasties, dramatically enriched the tradition and established the ritual of the vernal equinox. So, most of the ceremonies associated with our Nowruz and spring festivities are of pure Iranian invention.

Nowruz is certainly the most Iranian of all celebrations. A symbol of identity and cultural heritage. The beginning of spring always mattered much in Babylonian and Mesopotamian life. Their lives, as ours, depended on agriculture and the beginning of spring was the promise of fruition and bounty. Cyrus the Great, when he invaded Babylon and on the occasion of appointment of his son, Cambyses as the ruler of Babylon recognised the ritual and decided to establish it throughout the empire. The Iranians then incorporated many of their own traditions to give it a truly new colour. Chahar Sahnbeh Souri, Haft Seen and Sizdeh Bedar have their roots in genuine Iranian traditions.

Today Nowruz is still celebrated in several countries like Afghanistan, parts of India, Africa, the Middle East and wherever there are still traces of the great Persian Empire.

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Throughout his life, Mr Zahedi has remained loyal to these traditions that are integral parts of our national identity and deeply rooted in our cultural heritage. He believes that Nowruz is not only the first day of the year but also the first day of spring, the new life, the new hope for growth and fruition, a symbol of recycling and therefore at the very origin of our faith in eternity.

Whether in childhood, youth or early career, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador to the United States and the court of Saint James, or throughout the 38 years that he lives in exile





*Seated Row: Miss. Malek Bourehla, H.E. Amb. Mourad Bourehla, Ambassadrice Mrs. Maha Bourehla, Hon. Syndic of Veytaux Mrs. Christine Chevaley, H.E. Ardeshir Zahedi, Mrs. Myriam Wherli, always hands in the hands with Ardeshir Zahedi, Hon. Syndic of Montreux Mr. Laurent Wherli, Mrs. Hessima Tarzi, H.E. Amb. Nanguyalai Tarzi Mrs. Linda Gabrelian*

*Second Row Right to left: Mr&Mrs. Mittermaier Director general of Hotel Victoria, Mrs. Merygan Perrier, Mrs. MahinTashakori, Mrs. Maria Elvira Le Grand, Mr. Reza Pourchani, Mrs. Pourchani, Mrs. Maryam Gamurzieva, Mr. Shariar Gharibi, Mr. Jean-Claude & Mrs. Therese Roch, Mrs. Naseem Merali, Mrs. Isabel Poyan, Mrs. Patricia Dozio, Mrs. Soraya Nashat, Mrs. & Miss. Martina & Carolina Bayani.*

*3rd Row Right to left: Mr. Babio Davallou, Mrs. Nilofar Tashakori, Mr. Esfandiar & Bahman Bakhtiar, Mr. Tarzi, Mr. Alain Le Grand, Dr. Prof. Michel Perrier, Mr. Edo Roddaro, Mr. Gamurzieva, Mr. Mirko, Mr. Thierry Amsalem, Mrs. Yasi Moghadam Tehrani, Dr. & Mrs. Nicolas Coman, Mr. Olivier Grivat (Famous Journaliste), Dr. Prof. Bijan Ghavami, Mr. & Mrs. Claude Grand.*



in Switzerland following the change of regime in his native land, Zahedi has always made sure that no one around him would fail to remember



the 5000-year-old traditions of his beloved country. With true devotion and loyalty, year after year, he organ-

*From Left to Right:*







*From Right to Left; Mr. Tarzi(Son), Mrs. Hessima Tarzi, Dr. Mathieu Jaton, H.E. Ardeshir Zahedi, H.E. Amb. Nanguyalai Tarzi*



*From right to left: Mr. Edo Roddaro, Mrs. Isabel Poyan, Dr. Mathieu Jaton, Mrs. Therese Roch, Mr. Jean-Claud Roch, Mrs. Patricia Dozio, Mr. Olivier Grivat, Mrs. Naseem Merali, Dr. Nicolas Coman.*



*From Left to Right: Mrs. Myriam Wife of Sy idic Wherli, H.E. Ambassador Mourad Bourehla(Tunisia Ambassador ), Mrs. Linda Gabrelian, Mrs. Ambassadrice Hessima Tarzi(Amb. Afghan), Mrs. Ambassadrice Maha Bourehla, Mr. Ardehir Zahedi.*

*Table Behind: Dr. Mathieu Jaton (president Montreux Jazz Festival), Mrs. Therese Roch, Mr. J.C. Roch.....*



*Hon. Syndic of Vevtaux Mrs. Christine Chevaley*

ises special ceremonies in and around his residence "Vill a Les Roses" in Montreux, Switzerland, to welcome the New Year and share with friends the joyful pride of an Iranian in its rich and fascinating culture.

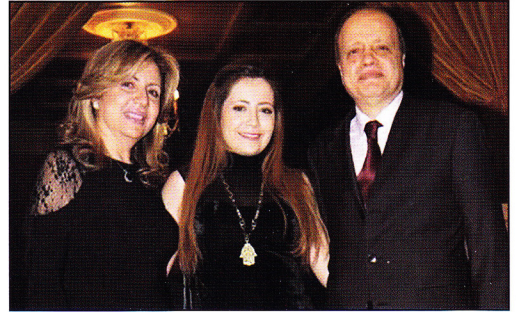
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On the eve of last Wednesday of the dying year, Chahar Shanbeh Sour bonfires are lit in his garden and the guests dance around and jump over the fire to purge and purify their souls. It is a promise of enlightenment and hope throughout the coming year, the burning of the winter garments and wearing of the new; it rings in the new and rings out the old and we all get ready for the New Year to creep in. The guests leap over the flames while singing (Sorkhi-e to az man) Give me your beautiful red colour (Zardi-e man az to) And take back my sickly pallor. The brightness of the light and the heat of the fire will lead us through the dark of the night and lighten our ways to the hopes of the new dawning days. The evil spirits will leave, the cold of the winter shall melt. The kids running with spoons and pans in the streets (Ghasogh Zani) will beat out the last traces of the dying year and





*From Right to Left: H.E. Ardeshir Zahedi, Mr &.Mrs. Mittermaier, Mr. & Mrs. Claude Grand*



*H.E. Amb., Mrs. Ambassador Mourad & Maha Borehla and Miss. Malek Bourehla*

blow the trumpet of renewal. Ladies start the cleaning up of the houses, wearing colourful dresses. Friends, neighbours and relatives get together to share the blessings of fresh food and new gifts of nature.

In the Zoroastrian tradition the festival ended with thanksgiving prayers. It is regrettable that the spiritual dimensions of Chahar Shanbeh Souri have gradually faded away.

On this occasion the Ambassador explains the philosophy of the bonfire and the Haft Seen to the Swiss guests and adds:

"The seven essential parts of Haft Seen starting with "S" in Farsi have all symbolic origins. For example: Sabzeh or sprouts, usually wheat or lentil representing rebirth.

Samanu is a pudding in which common wheat sprouts are transformed and given new life as a sweet, creamy pudding and represents the ultimate sophistication of Persian cooking, a symbol of nourishing power of nature. Seeb means apple and represents health and beauty.

Senjed the sweet, dry fruit of the Lotus tree, stands for love. It has been said that when lotus tree is in full bloom, its fragrance and its fruit make people fall in love and become oblivious to all else.

Seer which is garlic in Persian, represents medicine and the healing power of nature.

Somaq, sumac berries, represent the colour of sunrise; with the appearance of the sun the coming of light, the

end of night, winter and darkness and therefore triumph of life over death and light over darkness. Good conquers Evil.

Serkeh or vinegar, represents age and patience. The ultimate fruition.

We traditionally add a few coins (Sekeh) placed on the sofreh (special table cover) representing prosperity and wealth; a basket of painted eggs for fertility; more recently we have added a goldfish in a bowl standing for life and activity. There is normally a mirror to reflect the image of creation that is associated with rebirth and spring. On either side of the mirror are candlesticks holding a flickering candle for each child in the family. The candles represent enlightenment and happiness and continuity.



*From Right to Left: H.E. Ardeshir Zahedi, Mr. Gil Vincent (Chef Hotel Victoria), Mr. Nicolas Eric, Mrs. Pourchani.*



*From right to left: Miss. Malek Bourehla, H.E. Ardeshir Zahedi, H.E. Amb. Mourad Bourehla, Mrs. Ambassador Maha Bourehla*





*From Right to Left: Hon. syndic of Montreux mr. Laurent Wherli, H.E. Ardeshir Zahedi, Dr. Mathieu Jatou(President of Montreux Jazz Festival)*



*Left to right: Mrs. Claudia Robine, Mr. Ardeshir Zahedi, Mrs. Danielle de Vreng*



*Left to Right: Miss Laetitia Roch, Mrs. Naseem Merali, Miss Wettengel, Dr. Adiaborz Dehnad, Mrs. Pouran Vakili, Mr. Chiellini( Pianist), Mrs. Claudia Robine H.E. Ardeshir Zahedi, Miss Cedrine Wettengel*

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Amongst the special guests of Ambassador Zahedi on the New Year Eve, were His Excellency Mourad Bourehla, Ambassador of Tunisia, H.E. Nanguyalai Tarzi Ambassador of Afghanistan, Dr. Mathieu Jatou President of Montreux Jazz Festival, Mr Thierry Amsallem President of Claude Nobs Foundation, Mr and Mrs Laurent Wehrli, Member of the Grand Council of the region, Counsellor of the National Parliament and the Mayor of Montreux. Mrs. Christine Chevaley (Syndic Of Veytaux)

At dinner time the ambassador welcomed the distinguished guests, spoke in some detail about the New Year traditions and the joys of the season that have been shared for thousands of years by people of different colour, faith and nationality.

He had offered every guest a led pen, night writer, beautifully wrapped in a paper flag of Iran and asked them only to try it when the lights were put off. The moment came and in the darkness of the night he tried to amuse his guests by the magic of the pen and the light it should throw on the flag. His pen did not work or was poorly manipulated. He first put the blame on the arthritis pain of his right hand and then suggested that all pens should be returned to the manufacturer in England. Much to everyone delight, the wife of an ambassador who knew the trick made it work and then the whole reception hall was decorated with beams of light on the Persian flag.

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The crowning experience in the festivities is the traditional Sizdeh Bedar, often corresponding with the April Fools' day or April the First.

The occasion, the 13th. Day of the New Year is traditionally devoted to outdoor festivities to crown the cele-



