

## Symbolic Meaning of Nowrooz:

### Transcript of Interview on Public Television

MOST WESTERN COUNTRIES CELEBRATE IT IN JANUARY. THE CHINESE CELEBRATE IT IN FEBRUARY. AND NOW WE'RE HERE IN MID-MARCH RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF NOROUZ, THE IRANIAN NEW YEAR.

WARREN: THE WORD "NOROUZ" MEANS "NEW DAY" IN FARSI, THE LANGUAGE OF IRAN. IT REFERS TO MARCH 19, THE BEGINNING OF THE SOLAR YEAR. WE'RE LOOKING AT THE CUSTOMS AND RITUALS OF THE IRANIAN NEW YEAR TONIGHT, IN PEOPLE, PLACES & THINGS.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA IS HOME TO SOME 600,000 IRANIANS. MOST OF THE MARK NOROUZ WITH A THIRTEEN-DAY CELEBRATION DATING BACK TO ANCIENT PERSIA. IT INCLUDES SPENDING THE FINAL DAY OUTDOORS ENJOYING MUSIC AND FOOD AND TRADITIONAL GAMES.

VAL: AND HERE TO TELL US MORE ABOUT THE IRANIAN NEW YEAR IS MITRA MAKBULEH, AN AUTHOR, PHD, TEACHER AND SOCIAL SCIENTIST. WELCOME TO LIFE AND TIMES TONIGHT.

MITRA MAKBULEH: THANK YOU. IT'S GREAT TO BE HERE. HAPPY NOROUZ.

WARREN: IT SOUNDS LIKE FUN. THANK YOU.

MITRA MAKBULEH: IT'S GREAT FUN.

VAL: AND THESE ARE ABSOLUTELY GORGEOUS ITEMS, ALL THAT ARE PART OF NOROUZ. MAYBE YOU CAN EXPLAIN -- SHALL WE START PERHAPS WITH THESE BEAUTIFUL EGGS?

WARREN: GORGEOUS EGGS.

MITRA MAKBULEH: IT'S SO DIFFICULT TO GO INTO DETAILS, BUT I'M GOING TO DO MY BEST TO TELL YOU A LITTLE BIT ABOUT EACH ONE OF THESE. THE TRADITIONAL PERSIAN NEW YEAR SET-UP INCLUDES SEVEN ITEMS. OF COURSE, THE SEVEN IMMEDIATELY BRINGS UP OTHER SEVENS WE KNOW ABOUT.

WARREN: SURE.

MITRA MAKBULEH: NOROUZ IS ABOUT THE REDEMPTION OF NATURE FROM THE COLDER WINTER --

VAL: SPRING.

MITRA MAKBULEH: -- AND THE REDEMPTION OF HUMAN NATURE. SO THIS IS THE BEAUTY OF --

WARREN: WHAT ABOUT THE EGGS? START WITH THE EGGS.

MITRA MAKBULEH: NOW THE EGGS. WHAT DO THEY MEAN? NEW BIRTH. IN NATURE, OF COURSE, SPRING IS THE BEGINNING OF NEW BIRTH. THE NEW BIRTH OF NATURE. SO IT IS WITH US. WITHIN OUR SOUL, WE HAVE THAT POSSIBILITY. EVERY SPRING, WE'RE GIVEN A NEW CHANCE FOR A NEW BIRTH.

NOW WE GO TO THE APPLE. THE PERSIANS ARE PROBABLY THE FIRST ONES TO RECOGNIZE "AN APPLE A DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY".

WARREN: THIS GOES BACK 3,000 YEARS, SO THEY'VE BEEN DOING THAT FOR A LONG TIME.

MITRA MAKBULEH: YES. THE HISTORY OF NOROUZ, ALONG WITH THE CHINESE NEW YEAR AND THE JEWISH NEW YEAR, IS ONE OF THE MOST ANCIENT OF ALL THE NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS. SOME PEOPLE SAY IT GOES EVEN WAY BACK BEFORE ZOROASTRIANISM. I MEAN, IT GOES TO MITRAISM, WHICH IS MY OWN NAME, MITRA, BUT SOME PEOPLE SAY IT EVEN GOES BEFORE MITRAISM TO THE TIMES OF ARCADIAN AND SUMMARIANS AND PEOPLE LIKE THAT. IT'S A CELEBRATION OF NATURE.

WARREN: OKAY. WE'VE HAD NEW BIRTH, WE'VE KEPT THE DOCTOR AWAY WITH THE APPLE, WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH THE GOLDFISH?

MITRA MAKBULEH: THE GOLDFISH REPRESENTS THE LIFE FORCE, THE MAGNIFICENT FIRE. IT ALWAYS HAS TO BE THIS COLOR. IT CANNOT BE ANY OTHER COLOR.

VAL: IT HAS TO BE A GOLD FISH?

MITRA MAKBULEH: YES. ALSO, IT REPRESENTS PISCES. YOU SEE, SPRING COMES OUT OF PISCES. ARIES, WHICH IS THE MONTH OF APRIL, IT REPRESENTS FIRE. IT'S A FIRE SIGN. SO THE GOLDFISH IS A FIRE SYMBOL AND THE WATER REPRESENTS THE SIGN OF PISCES AS WELL BECAUSE IT'S A WATER SIGN. SO THE COMBINATION OF THESE TWO REPRESENTS THE DIVINE EMANATIONS, THE BEAUTY OF THE DIVINE FORCES THAT ARE OPERATING IN NATURE AND ALSO WITHIN OUR NATURE.

WARREN: AND THE ZODIAC IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ALL OF THIS?

MITRA MAKBULEH: ALL OF THEM. YES, ALL ANCIENT CULTURES HAD THE

ZODIAC AS ONE OF THEIR FOCUSES. WHEN WE GET TO THE NUMBER TWELVE, AS YOU KNOW, THE PERSIANS CELEBRATE TWELVE DAYS. ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY, WHICH IS IN PERSIAN CULTURE, SUPPOSED TO BE A BAD DAY. NUMBER THIRTEEN IN THE AMERICAN CULTURE AS WELL --

VAL: JUST LIKE UNLUCKY?

MITRA MAKBULEH: -- EXCEPT, AGAIN, FOR THE CHINESE AND THE JEWS, THIRTEEN IS A GOOD NUMBER. SO IT'S A VERY FASCINATING THING. THE NUMBER TWELVE IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ZODIAC AS WELL AS THE SYMBOLOGY OF JACOB AND HIS TWELVE SONS AND JESUS AND HIS TWELVE DISCIPLES AND YOU HAVE THE TWELVE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUNDTABLE AND THE THIRTEENTH ONE ALWAYS GETS TO HAVE THAT SEAT THAT IS VERY PERILOUS.

WARREN: EVERYBODY GETS TO HAVE A GLASS OF WINE.

MITRA MAKBULEH: THIS IS A VERY INTERESTING STORY. IN THE ANCIENT TIMES, THE STORY GOES THAT THE SEVEN ELEMENTS THEY USED TO SET UP INCLUDED WINE. BUT WHEN THE MUSLIM ARABS TOOK OVER IRAN, BECAUSE WINE WAS PROHIBITED BY THE PROPHET, THEY CHANGED IT AND THEY USED OTHER SYMBOLOGY. BUT THE ZOROASTRIANS AND THE JEWS, OF COURSE, ALL RELIGIONS IN IRAN CELEBRATE NOROUZ BECAUSE IT'S REALLY A CELEBRATION OF NATURE AND, AS I SAID, OF HUMAN NATURE. IT GOES BEYOND RELIGIONS.

WARREN: WE'RE RUNNING SHORT OF TIME. LET'S SEE THE HYACINTHS AND TELL US WHAT THE HYACINTHS HAVE TO DO WITH THIS.

MITRA MAKBULEH: THE HYACINTH, OF COURSE, REPRESENTS ALL THE BEAUTY, MAGNIFICENCE AND THE FABULOUS SMELL. I MEAN, IT'S ONE OF THE MOST TRADITIONAL FLOWERS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS CELEBRATION AND EACH ONE OF US, OF COURSE, HAS THE POSSIBILITY OF SMELLING LIKE THAT AND THE FRAGRANCE WE CAN GIVE TO THE WORLD.

WARREN: A CANDLE AND A MIRROR?

MITRA MAKBULEH: YES. THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND, TO ME, ONE OF MY FAVORITE SYMBOLOGIES. THE CANDLE, AGAIN, REPRESENTS THE LIGHT OF THE DIVINE. THE LIGHT THAT WE SEE AROUND US, THE LIGHT OF THE SUN, BUT ALSO AGAIN THE LIGHT WITHIN OUR SOULS. THIS IS WITHIN OUR NATURE WE HAVE THIS LIGHT, WHICH WE NEED TO REFLECT IN THE MIRROR OF THE WORLD. WE ARE HERE TO GIVE --

VAL: TO REFLECT GOD'S LIGHT.

MITRA MAKBULEH: -- TO REFLECT GOD'S LIGHT IN THE WORLD. IT'S JUST BEAUTIFUL.

VAL: THAT'S A BEAUTIFUL THOUGHT.

WARREN> SWEET GRASS.

MITRA MAKBULEH: THIS SYMBOLOGY, AGAIN, HAS TO DO WITH THE REJUVENATION OF NATURE. IN ALL PERSIAN FAMILIES, THEY GROW THIS ABOUT SEVEN DAYS -- AGAIN THE NUMBER SEVEN COMES UP -- BEFORE THE NEW YEAR, THEY BEGIN TO GROW THIS. THEN ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY, EVERYBODY GOES OUTDOORS. YOU MUST BE OUTDOORS. OTHERWISE, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE BAD LUCK, ACCORDING TO PERSIAN STORY.

WARREN: WE'RE GOING TO HAVE BAD LUCK IF WE DON'T SHOW THIS MAGNIFICENT FLORAL ARRANGEMENT BACK HERE.

MITRA MAKBULEH: LET ME GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE. THIS ARRANGEMENT WAS PROVIDED FOR US BY A LOVELY LADY, [GILA GILALA]. I WANT TO GIVE CREDIT TO HER BECAUSE IT'S JUST ONE OF THE MOST MAGNIFICENT ARRANGEMENTS I'VE EVER SEEN. IT HAS ALL THE TRADITIONAL SEVEN ELEMENTS ON IT.

WARREN: I SEE AN APPLE, I SEE EGGS --

MITRA MAKBULEH: ALL THE SEVEN ELEMENTS, WARREN, THEY ALL START WITH 'S'. SEVEN S'S.

VAL: YES, THAT THE HAFT-SINN, THE SEVEN S'S.

MITRA MAKBULEH: YOU'VE DONE YOUR HOMEWORK.

VAL: I LEARNED SOMETHING.

WARREN: THAT'S ALL THE TIME WE HAVE. GOOD LUCK TO YOU.

MITRA MAKBULEH: THANK YOU. ON ONE FOOT. THAT'S ALL WE COULD SAY.

WARREN: HAPPY NEW YEAR. THANK YOU FOR BEING WITH US.

MITRA MAKBULEH: HAPPY NOROUZ TO ALL YOUR VIEWERS.

VAL: THANK YOU SO MUCH.

WARREN: THAT'S OUR PROGRAM FOR TONIGHT.