

# Mehrgan (Mehregan) Festival

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Sometimes Spelled Mehregan, Mihregan or Mehrgan is an ancient Persian festival dating back almost 3000 years ago. Mehregan is one of the most ancient Iranian festivals known, dating back at least as far as the earliest Aryans (Iranians). There are many accounts as to the beginning of Mehregan. Sometimes Spelled Mehregan, Mihregan or Mehrgan is an ancient Persian festival dating back almost 3000 years ago. Long ago, Mehregan was celebrated by Iranians with the same magnificence and pageantry as Norouz. It has been the second most elaborate celebration after Norouz. Though most Iranians have heard about Mehregan, unlike Norouz it is not celebrated by all and is mainly regarded as a Zoroastrian festival. In the recent years there has been a revival of this joyful and merry occasion and more Iranians are participating in this festival. There are many accounts to the beginning of Mehregan which are listed below: First, Avestan texts (the Zoroastrians' holy book) divide the Iranian year into two equal parts or seasons. The first season was summer and the second was winter. The coming of the two seasons would be celebrated through, Norouz and Mehregan. It is celebrated on the 16th of the seventh month (Mehr) at the time of the harvest festivals and beginning of the winter. This feast would be celebrated for 6 days, starting on the 16th the "Mehr Ruz" and ending on the 21st known as "Raam Ruz". The first day was called "Mehregan'e Khord" and the last day "Mehregan'e Bouzorg". In these days farmers had taken their harvest and they could pray God for it and relax. Second, ancient Iranian's calendar had 12 months and each month contained 30 days. Each day had its own name and 12 days in each month had month's names as Farvadin, Ordibehesht, Khordad,...and Iranians celebrated the day which its name was like the month's name, such as 19th of Farvadin and 2nd of Ordibehesht and 4th of Khordad...The name of 16th day of month was Mehr, so they celebrated this day as Mehregan. Now in our new calendar 6 first months of year have 31 days so Mehregan has come 6 days earlier, at 10th of Mehr. I should probably mention that in such a day the length of day and night are exactly equal. Third, Mehr day is mentioned as the day when the first male and female, Mashi and Mashiane were created from Gayo-maretan. Ancient Iranians believed, Mashi & Mashiane asked God to change them from plant to human shape, and God accepted their wish in such a day. Fourth, Feraydon's victory over Azydahak (Zahak in king's letter) happened on this day. Mehregan is a day of victory when Angels helped Fereydoon and Kaveh become victorious over Zahak. They imprisoned him in the Damavand Mountain where he died from his wounds 6 days later! And at last some people have believed that Mehregan is the day God gave light to the world that had previously been dark. Mehregan is one of the most ancient Iranian festivals known, dating back at least as far as the earliest Aryans (Iranians). There are many accounts as to the beginning of Mehregan. A few, different versions are listed below:

1. Mehregan is a day of victory when Angels helped Fereydoon and Kaveh become victorious over Zahak. They imprisoned him in the Damavand Mountain where he died from his wounds.
2. Mehregan is the day God gave light to the world that had previously been dark.
3. On this day Mashya and Mashyaneh (a concept of Semitic Adam and Eve) were created.
4. On this day the sun was created.

In some form or another, the feast day of Mehregan has always been honored for many hundreds of years in Iran. Mehr is also the time of harvest, ( same principles as thanks giving).

Some scholars believe that the month of Mehr was the beginning month of the calendar year during the Achaemenian era. The Mehregan feast celebrated the beginning of a new year. Mehr in Avestan is "Miora" and in ancient Farsi and in Sanskrit is "Mitra" and in Pahlavi "Mitr". In modern Farsi, it has become Mehr. Although it can be slightly confusing, it should be remembered the word "Mehr" has been used for a God, an angel, a symbol of the sun, as well as the seventh month of the Iranian calendar.

When the Indo-Europeans lived together, Mehr was considered one of the great Gods of that time.

The ancient Iranians thought Mehr was responsible for love and friendship, contracts and covenants, and a representation for light. Later, Mehr was also considered as a symbol of the sun. There again, Mehr was considered to be a God of heroism and warfare. The Iranian soldiers were strong believers and had songs for Mehr. With expansion of Achaemenian Empire, the worship of Mehr was taken to other countries.

Long ago, Mehregan was celebrated with the same magnificence and pageantry as Norouz. It was customary for people to send or give their king, and each other gifts. It was common for people to give presents that they personally liked themselves! Rich people usually gave gold and silver coins, heroes and warriors gave horses while others gave gifts according to their ability, even an apple. Those fortunate enough, will help the poor with gifts. After the Mongul invasion, the feast celebration of Mehregan lost its popularity. Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kerman continued to celebrate Mehregan in an extravagant way. For this celebration, the participants wear new clothes and set a decorative, colorful table. tablecloth are decorated with The holy book Avesta and a mirror are placed on the table together, rose water, sweets, flowers, some times a scale for showing the equality of day and night, A burner is also part of the table setting for kondor (frankincense) and expand to be thrown on the flames. How to Prepare for Mehregan: Seven types of fruits are seen at the tablecloth, pomegranate, apple, grape, pear, senjed (fruit of the lotus tree), quince and citron. There is also a kind of special nuts at this table. There are some grains such as: pea, been, lentil and chickling vetch to dedicate last year harvest and next year plan. In Mehregan all families join together for observance and pray. In some of the villages in Yazd, Zoroastrians still sacrifice sheep for Mehr. These sacrifices are done on the day of Mehregan and for three days afterwards. The sacrifice should be done during the hours of sunlight. roasted mutton is this day's special dish. Some times this meal is distributed freely to all local people including the non-Zoroastrians. Other kinds of food and delicacies

are also prepared to be shared by all (including dogs, which are venerated amongst Zoroastrians). There are special cookies which are prepared for this day and distributed in feast. At the sun light of first day of festival prayers are gathered near the biggest spring of the village and pray for dead people. Then they go to village's houses singing and dancing. Each house's host opens the house door for them and gives some Mehregan's nuts to them and then they go to temple of village and give the gathered nuts and gifts to the man who preserves the temple's fire last year and ask him to preserve the fire for next year also and that man distributes nuts. The greatest observance is the lighting outside this temple of a huge fire just after the sunset. The rest of the days will be spent feasting, praying, singing and partying. To learn more about Iranian Festivities and celebrations also see Norouz ( New Year) and the Tirgan Celebration ( Jashne Tirgan).