

Mehrgan festival

Mehrgan festival is one of the ancient seasonal festivals of the Tajik people. This festival is celebrated according to the Old Iranian solar calendar on the 16th day of the month of Mehr and the day is called the day of Mehr as well. The date for the Mehrgan festival according to Gregorian calendar it falls on the 8th of October. The word Mehr according to the Iranian mythology is the name of the Zoroastrian deities Mithra who is considered to be the god of contract, friendship and light. The name of this festival in ancient sources is also mentioned as Mitrakana. Mehrgan festival has an ancient history and possibly had been celebrated among the Arian people at the time when Mehr was worshiped as central deity.

About the genesis of the Mehrgan there are multiple information found in ancient sources. For example one of such sources Bundeishn informs that when on the day of Mashi and

Mashyana the first male and female from the lineage of Gayumarth were born marked the Mehrgan day. Other sources mention King Faridoon as a founder of the festival.

Mehrgan is an autumn festival and relates to the agriculture and gardening. During the Navruz farmers sow and in autumn they gather the harvest; in the spring they plant trees and prune them to be fruitful and in the autumn they gather the harvest. In such manner Mehrgan festival is an event when people bring their thanksgiving offerings to God for the abundance of the harvest gifts.

In past Tajik people in celebration of Mehrgan would set up a festive table-cloth where they would put variety of fruits and objects such as lemon, sugar, water lily, apple, grape, pears, wheat, a mirror and scales. Each of the elements put on the table carried their own individual unique symbolic meanings. The agriculture

products to decorate the feast table ought to have golden, white and bright colors signifying the happy heart and abundance. The mirror and scale was signifier of the Mithra's attributes as god of brightness, commitment and justice.

During the Soviet period when the agricultural societies were united in collective farms they celebrated Mehrgan as «Idi hosilot» (Harvest festival). On a certain day in the month of October the heads of the collective farms with the members of farms would organize massive fair to display the samples of the year's harvest. These fairs would have very celebratory nature and music was played and people congratulated one





another for the abundance of the harvest.

After gaining its independence Tajik government is directing its attention to revive the traditional cultural festivals and as such Mehrگان has been inserted into the event calendar in Tajikistan by the decree of the president of the Republic of Tajikistan, Founder of Peace and National Unity, Leader of the Nation his Excellency Emomali Rahmon. The first Mehrگان festival in independent Tajikistan was officially celebrated on 8th of October 2011 in Sh. Shotemur Agriculture University with participation of the head of state and thenceforth every year on this day it is celebrated across the country. The festival is marked by organization of agriculture fairs accompanied by musical festivals.

