24th of February is coincided with Iranian traditional Women’s Day. Maybe it is the most ancient day in history to appreciate the position of women and mothers in a society.

Esfandgan, روز پاسالانی زن در ایران که ایرانیان را که پاییز با 24 فوریه است، هر سال با دادن گل به همسر خود پاپس بدارند.

**Tehran, 24 February**: 24th of February which falls in the Iranian month of Esfand is called Esfand Rooz (day) or Esfandgan. From the ancient times Esfand was glorified for the fertility of land and the fifth day of this month which falls on 24 of February each year is known as “women admiration day” in Persian culture.

Esfand (Sepand, Sepanj, Espanj) is also the name of a common weed found in Iran. According to ancient Persian tales, the lord of wisdom created six holy immortals known as “Amesha Spenta” to protect His creations. The first three were male deities: Khshatra (Shahrivar), the protector of sky, and Asha-Vahishta (Ordibehesht) and Vahu Manah (Bahman) protected fire and animals. The other three were female deities: Haurvatat (Khordad) to protect water, Spenta Armaiti (Esfand) protector of mother earth, and Ameratat (Amordad) for plant life. Ahura Mazda became the protector of humans and the holy fire. The six immortal gods are the names of six of the months in the current Iranian calendar.

Spenta Armaiti is one of the Amesha Spentas, the seven “Bounteous Immortals” of the Zoroastrian tradition. These are emanations of the one God (Ahura Mazda in Zoroastrianism), which are sometimes personified and sometimes considered as abstract concepts. Of all the seven, Spenta Armaiti is perhaps the most difficult to translate and explain. The term Spenta is itself hard to translate into English. It means increasing or growing but with a connotation of goodness, holiness, and benevolence. Scholars of Avesta (Zoroastrian’s holly book) have rendered the name as divine wisdom, devotion, piety, benevolence, loving-kindness, right-mindedness, peace and love, or even service. It has also been translated to progressive serenity, and universal bountiful peace.

Spenta Armaiti (Esfand) is a female deity who protects mother earth. Esfand means holy and Armaiti equals devotion and unconditional love. She is also the guardian of herdsmen and farmers. She is identified by the Greeks as Demeter and in Armenia is known as Spendaramet.

This way, the word Spenta Armaiti (Esfand) means earth, especially fertile earth or mother earth. Since according to ancient beliefs, the earth was identified as a fertile and breeding phenomenon which was the source of every creature, it was belonging to the female group. Some beautiful and spiritual phrases such as mother land for example originate in this meaning.

Armaiti (beneficent devotion), which is one of the Amesha Spentas, is the personification of holy devotion, the daughter of the creator and represents righteous obedience. She is associated with the earth and in that capacity she is the goddess of fertility and the dead, who are buried in the earth. The fifth day of every month and the twelfth month in the Iranian calendar are dedicated to her. Her eternal opponent is the archdemon of discontent, Nanghaithya.

Armaiti has been used widely and in several forms in Iranian culture and literature. Zoroastrians ask her for a fair life, for the fertility of land, pastures and animals, and for creating a fair governor. Avesta, the
Zoroastrian book, is full of words in appreciation and glorifying of the earth and women.

It is important to mention here that three words of Armaity, earth, and woman are ancient Arian or Indo-European words, which are very commonly used in different Indo-European languages with little difference in form. It is also important to point out that according to the ancient Persian tales, the term woman is tied with life and breeding, while the term for man means death and mortality. That is why Persian ancestors believed that the eternity of life is due to the existence of women who give birth to children and this way the circle of life continues forever. They believed that women are the keeper of generations of human beings. This belief had no relation with the matriarchy system.

According to some ancient inscriptions, in some parts of the Persian Empire such as the present day city of Eazeh in Khuzestan province, the status of women were so high that even when patriarchy was a prevalent system, sometimes the name of the mother was used for the identification of a child instead of that of the father, especially during the Elamite period.

The main reason for choosing the name of Esfand for the last month of winter in Persian calendar was for the rebirth of earth and the returns of its fertility. Thus the Persians named this month Esfand and called the 5th day of this month “Women’s Day”. This day which coincides with 24th of February, was a day to glorify women during the ancient times in Iran in which men held special ceremonies to appreciate the positions of women and awarded their wives some gifts. Unfortunately, little is known about the details of this ceremony, but most probably, it was the most ancient celebration of Women’s Day in the history of the world.