FIVE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD LEARN MORE ABOUT PERSIANS AND THEIR LANGUAGE

1. Persian languages are spoken natively by 110 million people worldwide. The Iranian variety, also known as Farsi, is spoken by 60 million people in Western and Central Asia, as well as the Middle East, with the highest concentrations of native speakers in Iran. Thus Farsi is also known as Iranian Persian.

2. Farsi (Iranian Persian) is a member of the Southwestern branch of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language Family, and shares many structural similarities to Tajiki (Tajiki Persian) and is mutually intelligible with Dari (Afghani Persian).

3. If you overhear people speaking Farsi, but feel like you are listening to a French foreign film, don’t worry your ears are not playing tricks on you. Due to a long historical relationship with France, Iranian Persian actually uses a lot of French loan words (such as ‘merci’ and ‘chauffeur’). In fact, for many years, French was a second language in Iran!

4. While many know that Persian is spoken in Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan, did you also know it was the official language of the Supreme Court in India for 200 years? (But now it is English.)

5. If you have read works by famous 13th century poet and theologian Rumi, those poems were originally written in Persian.

ABOUT US
The Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR) at Indiana University develops materials for learning and teaching a wide variety of Central Asian languages.

For more information, go to celcar.indiana.edu.

SOME USEFUL PHRASES IN FARSI

مالس
[sæˈlɒːm]
/Salām./
Hello.

اسم شما چیست؟
[es me ʃo moː tʃiːst]
/esm-e shomā chist/
What is your name?

 حالتون چطوره؟
[ˈhɒːleˌtuːn ʃeˈtore]
/hāletūn chetore/
How are you doing?

من خوبیم ممنون، شما چطورید؟
[mæn xuːˈbæm mæm nuː.n, ʃoˈmɒː ʃeˈtorid]
/man khūbam mamnun, shomā chetorid/
I'm fine. And you?

شما اهل کجا هستید؟
[ʃoˈmɒː ˈæh•le koˈʤɒː hæˈstid]
/shomā ahle kojā hastid/
Where are you from?

من از ایندیانا هستم
[mæn æz ˌindiˈɒnɒ hæˈstæm]
/man az Indiānā hastam/
I'm from Indiana.

خونه تون قشنگه
[ˌχuːnæˈtuːn ˌɣæʃænˈge]
/khūna-tūn ghashange/
You have a beautiful home.

دستشويی کجاست؟
[dæstʃuˈjiː koˈʤɒːst]
/dast-shuyi kojāst/
Where is the bathroom?

خیلی ممنون
[ʃiˈli mæm nuː.n]
/shimā mamnūn/
You have a beautiful home.

خداحافظ
[χoˈdɒː hɒːˈfez]
/khodā hāfez/
Good bye.
Languages in the Southwestern Iranian branch include Larestani, Kumzari, and Luri, which are all languages native to Iran.

While Farsi, Dari, and Tajiki are all closely related to each other, most language experts will agree that only Farsi and Dari are mutually intelligible to most native speakers.

Even though Farsi and Dari are mutually intelligible, there are still some marked differences in pronunciation (for example Dari is considered more conservative in maintaining vowel distinctions than Farsi). Further, some grammatical differences (such as the use of auxiliary verbs in certain tenses), and lexical differences exist (because the three languages have been heavily influenced by the languages of their surrounding neighbors).

However, all three, Farsi, Dari, and Tajiki, do share some main linguistic features, some of these include: SOV word order, agglutination, no grammatical gender, and null-subject.

**What is Persian Culture Like?**

Like other Persian cultures, Iranian Persians are mostly Muslims. However, unlike Dari and Tajiki speakers who are largely Sunni Muslims, most Persian speakers living in Iran are Shi'ite Muslims. Shi'ite is the smaller of the two factions of Islam, making up about 10% of the overall Muslim population. They are found mostly in Iran, Iraq, and Yemen. And like most Islamic cultures, Iranian Persians are a family and community oriented society that follow traditional elderhood and patriarchal organizational structures.

Because of their extensively ancient history, it should be no surprise that Persians are well known for their contributions to the arts, including architecture, literature, music, and applied arts. However, few would argue against the statement that they are best known for their Persian carpets that have been elaborately woven as a part of their culture for practical and decorative use for two thousand years. Most Persian carpets are made from wool or cotton and feature specific Persian designs that have been passed down through centuries of generations.

Iranian cuisine is similar to other varieties of Persian cuisine and uses a lot of rice, beef, vegetables, and fresh spices. Perhaps the most well-known dish is kebobs, speared meat marinated in spices and roasted then served over rice.