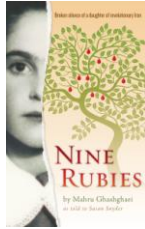


Nine Rubies: The Summary



In 1990 two mothers sat in a modest Connecticut kitchen enjoying a spring day and the usual conversation of getting to know someone new. It turned out that their common passions of family, children, gardening and heritage would become the pathway by which Mahru would start to share personal stories that bespoke the gulf between rich and poor, the plight of women, personal struggle and self-determination. Sue was an American Jewish educator; Mahru was an Iranian Muslim nurse and counselor. No matter: Mahru's stories were metaphors for the larger human struggle. They screamed for a way into the world, and Sue began to write them down.

The book begins nearly a century ago when Mahru's prosperous Iranian Azari grandfather escaped the Russian Revolution in 1917 and built a comfortable life for his wife and children in Northern Iran. The early death of his first wife was followed by marriage to a much younger woman who caused estrangement with his children. The treachery of a *Tudeh* (communist) husband ultimately placed Mahru's mother in penury, and she began her desperate attempt to preserve some kind of love and security for her three daughters as a servant in Teheran society, with results both tragic and heroic. The grandfather's deathbed prediction that his granddaughters would give their mother "nine rubies" (nine grandsons) in the midst of this turmoil is the impossible promise behind the title of the book.

The youngest of the daughters, Mahru found some personal liberation in her training as a nurse, navigating the final years of the Shah and taking part in an audience with the Ayatollah Khomeini in Paris in 1979 on her way to America. To help rebuild the country after the revolution she returned to Iran, only to be caught up in the Iran-Iraq war and then chose to help as a battlefield nurse. Five years later, in order to avoid her son's involvement in the war, she moved back to the United States. In the end she was able to bring her mother to America before her death and witness the fruition of her grandfather's promise: nine grandsons in America and Iran, facing unknown futures across two continents.

Nine Rubies is a dramatic story of historic sweep about ordinary women making difficult choices. It is a woman's tale that is not-for-women-only. The inner story is one of resilience and resoluteness; the cultural story is about living one's own way in a traditional male-dominated world. It will provoke and inspire readers everywhere.