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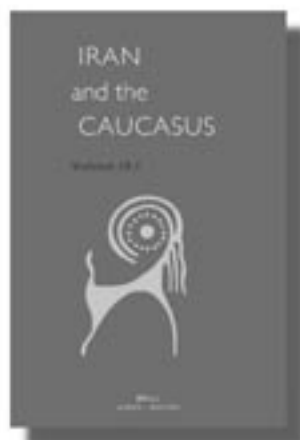
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## Iran and the Caucasus

Editor-in-Chief: Garnik S. Asatrian



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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

With the arrival of Noerooz, on behalf of *Persian Heritage* magazine, *Persian Heritage* monthly and *Mirass-e-Iran Gouya*, I am once again given the delightful opportunity to wish you all a happy and prosperous Persian New Year, one filled with health, peace and compassion for all mankind.

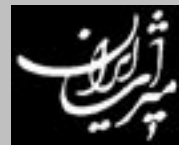
As most of you know Noerooz is also a time when we celebrate the anniversary of *Persian Heritage* magazine, which is now in its twelfth year. At Noerooz, Iranians celebrate the awakening of nature, buds begin to bloom and the hopes of a new and wonderful year fill our minds. *Persian Heritage* likewise begins each new year with the same awakening, with new hopes and dreams for Iran and Iranians all over the world. With each new year we strive to remain to be your communication tool, in and out of the Persian community.

Though we all share these wonderful desires and dreams of peace, harmony, independence and integrity for Iran and its people it seems with each passing year these dreams are more difficult to achieve. When Noerooz arrives we seem to be in the position of the old saying "we regret what we missed in the last year." With each passing year, month, week and day the situation in Iran worsens and Iranians, worldwide, are in a weakened state of affairs.

During these past few months all of us have been filled with anxiety and fear for the future of Iran and its people due to the eminent possibility of war. My mind, as I am sure is yours, is not allowed a single minute of serenity. I am constantly looking for someone to blame for this present situation. Is Iran in this state because of the ignorance, inexperience and crudity of its governing bodies or is it because of the colonialism and expansionism of the superpowers? I have found possible answers to these questions and in this editorial I would like to discuss them with you. While we may not be able to find a solution for Iran and its fight with the super powers, we may find a solution for ourselves, a solution that just might preserve Iran and save its people.

In the February 2007 issue of *Persian Heritage* monthly I wrote in my editorial, "... some Iranians desire a liberated Iran, a change of regime or government at any price, a price that could mean the death of hundreds of thousands of people, the utter destruction of Iranian cities and division of the country. These people are not aware of or have forgotten the devastation of the eight year war with Iraq had on Iran. Almost one million Iranians and one-half million Iraqis were killed or maimed. Saddam Hussein and the Iranian government got stronger. Everyday, with the excuse of war, government officials would eliminate their opponents by execution or prison. My dear fellow Iranians, **tomorrow is too late**. Let's wake up and get together in friendship. Let's unite and forget personal agendas. Let's stop opposing each other. Let's get together and prevent this destructive war from becoming a reality. If we wish to change the regime we must find a wiser and more prudent solution. We must support the leaders we believe can do the job. In this way we will protect our fellow Iranians in Iran and our precious rights here. This is not the time for us to get trapped in our anger and be revengeful. If we allow our emotions rather than our minds to lead us, Iran and Iranians may see the same fate it saw at the hands of Alexander and his lover at Persepolis. Though this event happened long ago it continues to remain a horrible memory for Persians, one that has past from generation to generation. Iran can never be that vulnerable again. United as one body, we can prevent another burning and destruction in our beloved country..."

I received numerous calls and letters regarding this February editorial from Iranians and non Iranians who share my fears and anxieties over the present situation. At this time I would like to share one interesting discussion I had with a friend of mine, who commented on the editorial. He is very active in political social and cultural affairs. After hearing me read this editorial on our weekly television show *Mirass-e-Iran Gouya*, he told me he was surprised by my words because I seemed to have had a 180 degree change in my position about the eminent war. I asked him why he thought that way. He then told me that some of my friends, in order to eliminate the government of Iran, would sanction dropping a few atomic bombs on Iran regardless of the consequences. This action, would, without question mean the death of over one half million people and total



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destruction to the country. But, my friends believe that this may be the only sure way to change the regime. They will therefore continue to encourage the American government to proceed with military force against Iran and hope in the end that the present regime will be replaced by one more desirable to them.

I responded to his comments by telling him that if he had carefully read my past editorials, the articles in our publications and discussions on the television show, he would realize the inaccuracy of his statement. The truth of the matter is that the *Persian Heritage* organizations, through its editor and writers is constantly demanding that the total integrity of Iran be maintained. We are against any type of war or attack on Iran and its division or destruction. Our friends, who think that the dropping of a few bombs and the killing of thousands of people will result in the removal of this regime with one they desire, are gravely mistaken. History repeats itself and will do so again if we continue to make the same mistakes. This group needs to remember the fate of Iraq and Yugoslavia. Maybe then they will change their way of thinking. In this, the 21st century, rather than looking at violent and destructive avenues, they should follow the solutions utilized by many other civilized countries. Clearly through unification we will have the power to find competent leaders who can guide us and the world to a more peaceful ending to this problem. When we are unified as a community and when we redirect the time and energy we presently spend on our selfish behavior and egos, we will be stronger as a community and our voices, against the destruction or division of our beloved Iran, will be heard.

We have the ability to do this because Iranians around the world all share a deep love with Iran's glorious past and its culture. It is a rare Iranian who is not proud of his or her roots. **Yet, when we as individuals, try to become one voice, difficulties arise. Rumors are spread and efforts to separate and divide are quickly set in motion. It only takes a few individuals to shatter the jars that hold the dreams of unification we worked so hard to gather. If this behavior continues what will remain will be individuals trying to salvage the contents of these shattered jars and try to unite again.**

We have wasted too much time TRYING, we need IMMEDIATE results.

Iran is a country with its own natural resources, yet it falls behind other countries who are deficient or lack these resources, such as Turkey and Greece. Despite everything they have attached themselves to the caravan that will allow them to become part of western civilization. Through hardship and perseverance they have become part of the European village. After the split of the U.S.S.R. each new country formed new governments and leadership. They did not regress back and try to compete with the west by escalating their military power, instead they chose to compete socially, economically and financially with the western world. Who could ever imagine that Russia, the United States' arch enemy, for so many years, would now have representation through gas stations on every street corner in America.

**The present government in Iran is putting the country on the verge of destruction and elimination. Every school child knows that one cannot challenge a military and economical superpower like America. Iran is playing a game with the tail of a lion and this action will not produce any positive benefit for Iran or the world.**

On numerous occasions I have written what I believe could happen if the leaders of our community placed equal pressure on Iranian and American government decision makers. With the vast educational backgrounds and financial advantage of Iranians abroad we have an excellent opportunity to stop this eminent war. Through our leadership we can convince Iran's leaders to put more money into the development of their country and provide a better standard of living for their entire population, rather than into rhetoric, military buildup and pockets of their neighbors.

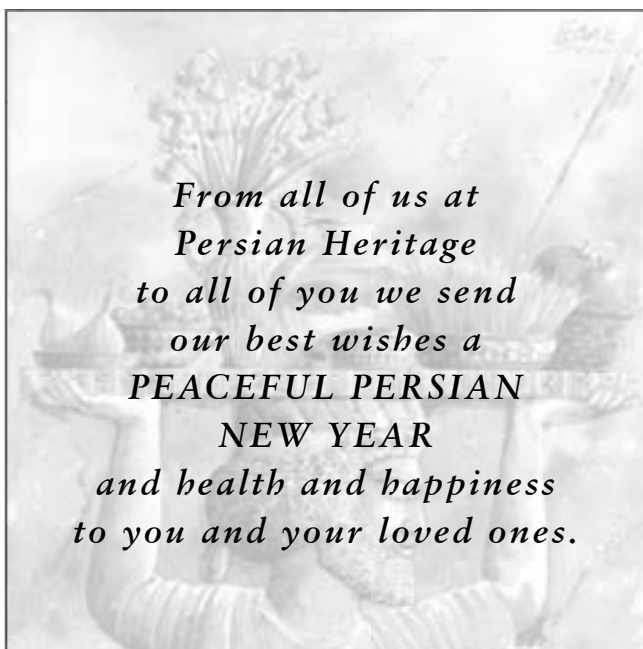
The people of Iran deserve to get back their international respect and the tools and resources necessary to accomplish this, exist within the country's own borders. If the present leadership reviews Iran's history they will quickly learn that their current direction, like other oppressive governments in Iran and the world, will fail. The people of Iran need to be given enough democracy and liberty to elect a desirable government for all. Rulers come and go but the heart of the country continues to beat through its citizens. It is these individuals, who are passionate about their history and culture, past and present. It is these individuals who must be given a right to determine their future. The people of Iran are tolerant but this tolerance should not be seen as a weakness. The people of Iran should not be underestimated.

If Iran stays on its present course or if individuals continue to call for military action in order to change the course, we must all be prepared for the consequences. The consequences of millions killed and a divided Iran. Those calling for military intervention must be prepared to never be forgiven by the future generations in Iran.

My dear readers as I stated earlier, **tomorrow is too late** to try and stop this destructive direction. We must unite now and quickly change it. Now is the time for us do everything in our power to give Iran and its people the independence it deserves.

ONLY WHEN, we as a group can unite together as a community, will I finally be able to write an editorial for Noerooz that is filled with joy and promise.

*Shahzad Alavi*



**AL-E AHMAD'S POPULARITY**

Thank you for publishing my short essay on "Al-e Ahmad." I am happy that you chose Hoveyda's essay discussing Al-e Ahmad, of course from a totally different point of view. As you must know, Al-e Ahmad is again being widely discussed in Iran, and as usual, the governing body has appropriated Al-e Ahmad's popularity for itself by distorting basic and fundamental facts about his ideas.

*Siah Armajani*

**RITA HAYWORTH**

The article on Rita Hayworth and the Persian Prince was almost like a fairytale. I was too young to witness these events while they happened but it was interesting for me to know the American-Persian connection that existed prior to me being born. I truly love this magazine.

*BB*

**AMERICAN WOMAN IN IRAN**

I have only one question, isn't it odd that every article we read in this magazine or other publications about American's visiting Iran are so opposite of what we hear from the government? I refer to the continuation of the article written by Janet Larsen. Just who are we to believe? Her article is so uplifting about my people and my culture. It makes me want to stand out on the corners and hand out issues of *Persian Heritage* magazine.

*E.May*

**RIGHT ON THE SUBJECT**

It was a great pleasure to see you and talk to you. I was delighted to read the editorial of your newspaper, which I just received, it was right on the subject. Thanks for your leadership.

*Saeed Manii*

## The Seeds Are Still in the Soil: My Journey from Persia to Persia

Zohreh Rastegar

I arrived in this country thirty six years ago as a young bride, raised a family and have no regrets. But, all these years I have had one concern. Because my children were born and raised in the United States, they never had a real chance to experience the sweet and loving way of life that I had experienced growing up with a big family in Iran. They never had the chance to enjoy our beautiful music and poetry and they never felt the true meaning of their grandparents' love and the joy of communicating with them. This sadness and worry is compounded with guilt for not insisting that my children learn Persian, their beautiful mother's language.

It is a huge task for any parent to raise a balanced, sane child with two cultures and two sets of values. We all do our best while some of us even force our way of life upon our children hoping to preserve our cultural values. Our children also do their best to make a sense of their bicultural influences. Often they live a double life to satisfy their parents and to fit in their society. In all fairness, it is natural for them to feel at ease with the American culture, at least in their younger years when they try to belong and not feel alienated. It is not uncommon for teenagers to reject their heritage by refusing to speak their native tongue or to mingle with others in their ethnic group. This is all understandable, and yet we as parents often feel resentment and hopelessness ... until they delightfully surprise us. Until one day when they demonstrate to us that although they did not participate or show an interest fully in our affairs, they have absorbed a great deal and are proud to be a part of us and our cultural heritage.

I have two very personal experiences of my own which I would love to share with you. I have been blessed to be the grandmother of two beautiful angels within the past four years. As a liberal, open-minded mother as my children proudly claim, I do not interfere with their decisions as much as a mother can. And, I absolutely did not regarding naming their children. Instead, I waited patiently until they were ready to make their announcements. You know how it goes with our children in this day and age. Individuality and independence are sacrosanct values in American culture and are not to be crossed, and I did not. So it was to my pleasant surprise that both of my children, my son and my daughter, chose Persian names, Darius and Persia.

My children are born and raised in America, they are not well versed in Persian, and most of their peers and classmates have been non-Iranians. Their only exposure to an Iranian environment has been within their home and with our family and friends. So, how did it happen that these children and many others like mine gravitate toward their old culture with willingness and with a certain pride? Based on my own experience, I believe that our actions spoke far more than our preaching. By practicing our ideals, by being faithful to our traditional ethos and values, and by exposing our children to our food and music without being didactic or pressuring them had a profound effect. They simply absorbed what they saw: celebrating our new year, Noerooz every year, our interactions, love and care for our parents and elders, recognizing our special holidays, preparing our food and serving it proudly and tastefully to others, and following what we believe and what we truly like and value. All of this provided a basic foundation without coercion or control. All they needed was the time and maturity to absorb and to appreciate it before it became evident in the way they lived their own lives.

I am a happy mother and a happier grandmother if my children continue to pass on the glorious Iranian heritage in their own subtle way. I am very proud of them for proving to me that although my branches have stretched far beyond the borders, the seeds are still in the soil and the roots are solid. I hope to live long enough to see that the extension of these beautiful branches exceed their current limits of knowledge and wisdom among a more sophisticated, kind and united generation, embracing both their past and their present.

This was my journey from Persia to Persia.

\* Zohreh Rastegar is a journalist and producer in Washington, DC.

**OSCAR NOMINEE**



Kami Asgar unfortunately did not win the Oscar for his nomination as sound editing on the Mel Gibson movie *Apocalypto*.

He also worked on the films *The Passion of the Christ* and *Kayvan Mashayekh's Persian Epic, The Keeper: The Legend of Omar Khayyam*.

**IRANIAN AT THE NEW YORK BALLET**

Medhi Bahiri is described by the New York Ballet as an International Guest who will bring a wide and diverse background in dance to his position as Co-Artistic Director of Fugate/Bahiri Ballet NY.

Mr Bahiri has been the principal dancer with Ballet West and the Boston Ballet, and a member Maurice Bejart's twentieth Century Ballet.

He has also appeared in Mexico, Chile, Korea the Philippines, the Ballet du Louvre and Tulsa. He is the winner of the First Prize of the Prix de Lausanne dance competition and was recognized for his outstanding artistic achievement and original style at the International Ballet Competition in Varna, Bulgaria. As a non competitor he was distinguished as Best Partner at the Jackson and Tokyo Ballet competitions.

**GETTING TO KNOW YOU**

Sometimes that is all it takes to change hatred into love. Mohammad Modarres entered into his freshman class at Paramus high school and was introduced as a Muslim. Fellow students found this grounds to torment and beat him. He was used to such acts since 9/11, when his house was splattered with paint, his sister was forced to remove her scarf at school and his own mother was asked to leave her job as a pre school teacher because her supervisors believed that her veil would frighten the children.

Mohammad experienced all of this at such a young age yet, he showed great maturity and never sought revenge. Instead he vented his anger and disappointment in another way. He entered Newsweek's political cartoon contest (taking second prize) and started a non-profit group to raise money for the poor people in the Middle East, Africa and Europe as well as raise money for the Rotary Club program for health care for less fortunate children. He also started a re-cycling program at the school and a senior freshman mentoring program. At nineteen he is now a senior and class president at Paramus and will be on his way to John Hopkins to continue his education. He is a proud young man, of his country America, his culture Iranian and his religion Muslim. He also hopes that the world will see goodness and decency in Muslim people and that Iranians are not terrorists.

**A LECTURE SERIES**

A series of lectures on the Shahnameh was held at California State University on March 9,10 and 11. The series included the following topics "The Poet and the Princess: Fact and Fiction," "A Social and Ideological History of the Epic's Textual Transmission," and "The Shahnameh and the Creation of Persian Poets." It was sponsored by the Rastegar Family's Iraj Afshar Iranica Lecture Series.

**MYSTERIOUS DEAD**

One may never know who killed or how Ardeshir Hassanpour, a nuclear scientist died but there are certainly many theories. One of the theories is poison by gas but how, when and what kind of gas has not made it to the attention of the media. Another theory projected that he was a target of the Mossad. Some believe that it would be impossible with someone of his level of experience with nuclear and poisonous gases could be accidentally exposed. Furthermore it has been reported that three other top Iraq nuclear scientists were victims of the Mossad. The actual cause of his death may never be determined but the press will keep investigating.

**IRANIAN WOMEN ARRESTED**

Three Iranian women, who are active in women's rights, were arrested in Iran. The three women Talaat Taghinia, Mansoureh Shojaee and Farnaz Seify were taken to their homes and their personal affects such as books, computers etc. were either searched or seized. Once the search was completed they were taken to Evin prison. All were members of the Women's Cultural Center. The arrest took place at Imam Khomeini Airport while they were trying to leave the country to attend a meeting in New Delhi for journalists.

**POSTER COLLECTION**

If you think collecting film posters is just a way of coloring the walls, think again. Serious collectors, if they can part with their prizes, can become wealthy in buying and selling vintage posters. Take for instance Tony Nourmand whose collection of thirty rare pieces can yield him "many thousands of English pounds."

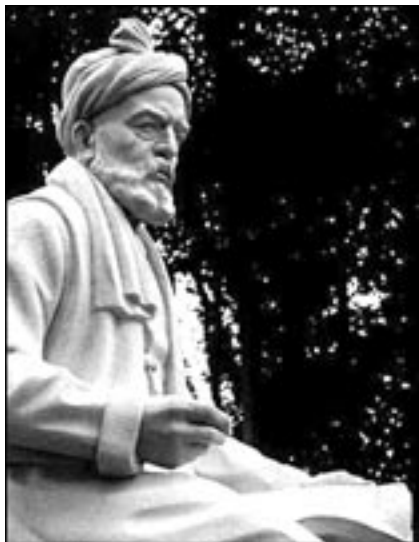
Actually, Mr. Nourmand was born in Iran but moved to England in 1976 to attend school. He studied painting and animation at the Central School of Art in Holborn, England. In order to raise funds to produce a movie he worked in a video store where he discovered a magazine on posters.

He was exposed to film by his uncle who took him to the cinema in Iran. Often he would walk out with the feature poster, compliments of the establishment.

At first collecting was just a hobby but eventually he realized it could be a profession, so with collection in hand he opened a gallery in 1996.

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**FERDOWSI  
A POET FOR ALL SEASONS**



TEHRAN, Jan.20 (Mehr News Agency) – Greek scholar Marina Theocharidou believes that Iran’s Abolqasem Ferdowsi is a poet for all times. At the Ferdowsi and Homer Conference that opened at Athens’ National Research Foundation on January 19, Theocharidou said, “Ferdowsi is a poet of all eras, who expressed the idea that good and evil guarantee or endanger man’s happiness.” She described Ferdowsi’s “Shahnameh” as an unparalleled masterpiece.

“Over the past 500 years, the ‘Shahnameh’ has been rendered into Turkish, Arabic, English, Sanskrit, German, French, and Italian, and now I’m enjoying translating an excerpt of the masterwork into the Greek language,” Theocharidou added.

“The book is so valuable that Mr. (Julius) Mohl, the French translator of the ‘Shahnameh’, spent 50 years translating it, i.e., 15 years more than the time that was spent for its creation.”

The two-day event was organized by the Iranian Embassy in Athens in collaboration with the Council for the Promotion of Persian Language and Literature.

Ferdowsi has been called the Homer of Persia. He was born near Tus in the Khorasan region and married at the age of 28. About eight years later he began the work for the “Shahnameh” (“Book of Kings”). It took Ferdowsi 35 years to complete the great epic poem. The “Shahnameh” contains 60,000 rhyming couplets, making it more than seven times the length of Homer’s “Iliad”.

**OUTSTANDING WOMAN  
IN TECHNOLOGY 2006**

Shirin Dehghan, CEO of UK telecommunications firm Arieso, has taken top honors at the Blackberry Women & Technology Awards in London. Dehghan who runs Arieso, a Newbury UK company that helps mobile operators around the world keep their networks running optimally and their customers connected, was named Outstanding Woman in Technology 2006 by the awards nine judges. In winning the top award, Dehghan beat dozens of nominees, including technology leaders from Coca-Cola, Goldman Sachs, and IBM. The judges also named Dehghan Best Woman in Technology at an SME in recognition of her achievements in bringing the Newbury, UK



based start-up to the attention and aid of some of the world’s biggest telecommunications companies.

Dehghan’s nomination for the awards was supported by senior telecommunications industry figures including Mike Short of O2 and former Motorola VP, Paul Strzelecki and by Maisy Ng, co-founder of venture capital firm Add Partners, Arieso’s lead investor. “Being a woman in the almost exclusively male field of telecommunications engineering has never been a factor for me. I love what I do and am proud to do it well enough to be recognized for what I, and all of us at Arieso, have so far achieved,” says Dehghan. “I think the judges saw that work we do is incredibly important in rescuing the profit margins of mobile operators and bringing a better quality of service to the mobiles we all depend on so heavily today.

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**UNESCO NOMINATES  
SHIRAZ  
WORLD’S 2ND CITY  
OF LITERATURE**

Shiraz, Fars prov, Jan 3, IRNA – UNESCO has nominated Iranian city of Shiraz ‘as the world’s second City of Literature’, local cultural official in Shiraz ‘Saeed Zahed, who heads the Farsology (Persian Studies Foundation), said. He told IRNA that the UNESCO national commission has recently provided a large number of documents about the city’s rich literary heritage for the Paris-based United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the purpose.

He said that the national commission has offered UNESCO to make final decision on registering Shiraz as a creative city and the world second City of Literature after the city of Edinburgh in Scotland.

The city, 924 km southern the capital of Tehran, is also known by the commission as a “productive” city due to its rich cultural and artistic heritage, Zahed added. He expressed hope that the city would officially be announced by the UNESCO as the world’s second City of Literature by the end of the current Iranian year (to end March 19, 2007).

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**INSTITUTE OF FRANCE’S  
PRIZE TO DR. MIRSHAHI**



The winner of the prize of the Dalarz Institute of France Foundation for the 2006 has been presented to Dr. Masoud Mirshahi. The award is accompanied with a financial prize of 25,000 Euros. Dr. Mirshahi is a researcher of CNRS and director of the research group (in the role of defining the environmental affects on the life of a cancer cell) at the Center L’U736 of L’Inserm and a member and professor of the Science Academy of Tajikistan, as well as a member of the Institute of Biomedicine, where extended research is being done on the fibroblasts of the cornea and treatment of corneal disease.

**HELPING IMMIGRANTS ADAPT**



Niccu Tafarroodi immigrated to the United States over twenty years ago and still remembers the pain of the forced separation from her husband and the loneliness and anxiety that accompanied her in a strange new land. To neutralize these feelings she started making miniature sets of her home town and country. She is now helping others reduce their anxieties through health education programs with brochures and Internet sites that she hopes will assist others in the same situation.

**SAVING THE CHEETAHS**

Long ago the beautiful Asiatic cheetah roamed the earth with out fear of extinction. Unfortunately today they are on the brink of extinction and saving them is a tall task. It is estimated that there are only 50 to 60 of these beautiful animals left and they reside somewhere in the Dasht-e Kavir region in Iran.

Iran has pledged to protect this species in every way possible. The animals have played a historical part in its history and culture. There are more then the environmental issues such as of a lack of food and water plaguing these animals, poaching them for the fun and skins is ridiculously popular.

This spring Luke Hunter who is the program director of the WCS (Wild Cat Society) is planning to visit Iran to help to catch and mark the animals. They believe the more they know about them the easier protecting them against extinction will be. This organization was founded at the Bronx Zoo in New York.

**WAR IN THE CINEMA**

Asal Shakeri's "War in Iranian Cinema" is scheduled to be presented in New York and London this February. The series seeks to bridge the bitter

experience of war from a perspective different from the front lines of battle. Instead he bases it on first hand experiences of ordinary people and of course, from the lenses of Iranian filmmakers.

**EXECUTION CANCELED**

It has been decided that Nazanin Fathi who was sentenced to death after being found guilty of stabbing one of three men who tried to rape her and her fifteen-year old niece, will be canceled. Petitions from over 340,000 people from around the world put pressure on Iranian officials to grant her a new trial. They determined that the stabbing was not pre meditated but rather an act of self defense. She is now charged with excessive force against the men and she has been asked to pay \$35,000 . It is known as blood money and must be paid by her in order to receive a pardon from the family.

Once again her lawyers will appeal any amount of restitution on her part stating that the force was not excessive. Her bail remains at \$45,000.00.

**NOW ON THE SILVER SCREEN**



Marjane Satrapi never in her wildest dreams thought her comic book, *Persepolis*, would become a best seller. Even less possible to her was that the book would become a feature length film. Well it has and the cast is very impressive. Released first in France the films cast includes in the French version Catherine Deneuve, as her mother and Chiara Mastroiani. An English version will also include Catherine Deneuve and Gena Rollands. The picture is being released by Sony Picture Classics.

**TAMIR**



Tamir actress and playwright has just launched a CD, "The Way of the Heart," in a very interesting form, live theater. The event was held on November 18 at the New York Open Center. Her performance both on stage and in the CD is one of passion and certain to invigorate yet, relax the soul.

Being able to interpret a Rumi poem at a level of excellence is something that one is born with, rather than developed and Tamir is an example of this at birth gift. Her sultry voice and musical accompaniment of Amir Vahab lures the listener into a world of serenity and peace yet, awakens the soul and embellishes the beauty of the Rumi poem.

Today we live in a fast paced world, one in which there is little time to relax and rid the body of daily tension. "The Way of the Heart," may be one of the ways to make the day a bit more tolerable.

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# Grandma's Hands

Grandma, some ninety plus years, sat feebly on the patio bench. She didn't move, just sat with her head down staring at her hands. When I sat down beside her she didn't acknowledge my presence and the longer I sat I wondered if she was OK.

Finally, not really wanting to disturb her but wanting to check on her at the same time. I asked her if she was OK. She raised her head and looked at me and smiled. "Yes, I'm fine, thank you for asking," she said in a clear strong voice. "I didn't mean to disturb you, grandma, but you were just sitting here staring at your hands and I wanted to make sure you were OK," I explained to her. "Have you ever looked at your hands," she asked. "I mean really looked at your hands?" I slowly opened my hands and stared down at them. I turned them over, palms up and then palms down. No, I guess I had never really looked at my hands as I tried to figure out the point she was making.

Grandma smiled and related this story: "Stop and think for a moment about the hands you have, how they have served you well throughout your years.

These hands, though wrinkled, shriveled and weak have been the tools I have used all my life to reach out and grab and embrace life. "They braced and caught my fall when as a toddler I crashed upon the floor. They put food in my mouth and clothes on my back. As a child my mother taught me to fold them in prayer. They tied my shoes and pulled on my boots. They held my husband and wiped my tears when he went off to war. "They have been dirty, scraped and raw, swollen and bent. They were uneasy and clumsy when I tried to hold my newborn son. Decorated with my wedding band they showed the world that I was married and loved someone special. They wrote my letters to him and trembled and shook when I buried my parents and spouse. "They have held my children and grandchildren, consoled neighbors, and shook in fists of anger when I didn't understand. "They have covered my face, combed my hair, and washed and cleansed the rest of my body. They have been sticky and wet, bent and broken, dried and raw. And to this day when not much of anything else of me works real well these hands hold me up, lay me down, and again continue to fold in prayer.

These hands are the mark of where I've been and the ruggedness of life. But more importantly it will be these hands that God will reach out and take when he leads me home. And with my hands He will lift me to His side and there I will use these hands to touch the face of Christ." I will never look at my hands the same again. But I remember God reached out and took my grandma's hands and led her home.

When my hands are hurt or sore or when I stroke the face of my children and husband I think of grandma. I know she has been stroked and caressed and held by the hands of God. I, too, want to touch the face of God and feel His hands upon my face.

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The Bearers of the Good News and the Beacons of Hope in the midst of all the horrible and worrisome news of violence, war and massacres coming from the Middle East these days the is news about women whose humane creativity, civic movements, and life-promoting and peace-seeking activities that bring hope for the future of this bloody and turbulent region. One example is the news of the Palestinian, Israeli and Lebanese women who have come together to promote dialogue and negotiations in an effort to end the prolonged wars and conflicts by finding a just and practical solution.

Today, there is an unyielding atmosphere prevailing in Iran, the Middle East and the international arena. An atmosphere of militarism, violence and repression. An atmosphere that strengthens the spirit of militarism, perpetuates the cycle of violence, and produces violent and militant images of men and women, strengthening in turn the brutal culture of patriarchy and victimization of women and children. In spite of it, Middle Eastern women and activists have not surrendered to this atmosphere of fear. They have not wavered in their determination to seek novel, more effective and efficient methods to improve their legal and social status through a process of trial and error. These efforts surely will impact their societies and status of men as well as women positively. Among the most hopeful efforts are the creative initiatives taken by Iranian women's rights activists. The women's movement in Iran is comprised of diverse groups, various activities and tactics. Some are engaged in organizing anti-violence workshops and anti-war activities as "*Zanan Solh*" (Women of Peace); some focus on feminist consciousness raising and egalitarian cultural production through print journals such as "*Zanan*" and "*Hoquq-e Zanan*." Some are doing this through internet journals such as *Zanestan* <http://www.herlandmag.org> '*Hastia Andish*; *Kannon-e Zanan Iran* <http://www.irwomen.com>, '*Meydan* and the Women's Committee of the Office to Foster Unity and the Alumni Organization of Iran (*Advare Tahkime Vahdat, Sazemane Daneshamookhtegane Iran*) 'both student

organizations'. One of the most recent initiatives seeks 'Change for Equality' (*Barabary*); through the collection of one million signatures demanding changes to discriminatory laws against women in Iran. Pragmatic Realism The "One Million Signatures" campaign, which is designed to help reform discriminatory laws, resulted from and is a continuation of the women's peaceful gatherings on the 12th of June in 2005 and 2006 that ended by violent attacks of the police and security forces. From both tactical and strategic points of view, this latest campaign is in line with an envisioned future where powers, opportunities and social goods are not divided based on gender differences or sexual orientation. Primarily initiated by the younger generation of women's rights activists, this campaign seems to be turning into a point of convergence among many groups and individual activists in

of the one who knows it all and does it all and becomes one of the many thousands of active participants, involved in the process of change. The final achievement of this movement results directly from this process of dialectical interaction. Here the civil society activist does not bear all the costs associated with the effort, and ordinary people are no longer passive or silent spectators.

By employing door-to-door and face-to-face educational strategy, the One Million Signatures Campaign will teach our activists a lot about social realities on the ground. In light of these teachings, instead of throwing themselves in the harms way and carrying the brunt of reform costs, separate from people, the women's movement's activists will be able to have a wider and more practical impact in unison with people, one that is accompanied by pressure from people and their full participation.

In return more will share the cost, and more people and forces will have a stake in the outcome. This wise and creative move will finally add to the depth and breadth of the reforms.

As evident from the writings of the activists in this campaign, unlike political parties, the women's movement has neither

## Rights Movement and the One Million Signatures Campaign

By Nayereh Tohidi

*Payvand.com, November 2006*

different parts of Iran.

This campaign seems to have surpassed ideological, sectarian and religious boundaries and limitations. Instead of seeking grand ideals and abstract solutions to women's problems, it is struggling on to achieve defined and tangible goals through practical means and methods. This movement has distanced itself from the more prevalent masculine and elitist perceptions that assume only a handful of avant-garde intellectuals, having discovered the 'Whole Truth' are the sole proprietors of solutions, who through personal sacrifice would impart the knowledge, bring freedom and save the souls of the ignorant and oppressed masses. The aim and strategy of this campaign rests on direct contact between the activists and ordinary women that would involve two-way conversation, dialogue, understanding, negotiation and education. In this model, the activist or the intellectual moves beyond the concept and framework

the intention of over-throwing the government, nor of seizing the state power. They reach beyond governments and aim at transforming the dominant cultural, social, economical, and political relations to achieve greater equality. Women's struggle in today's Iran is primarily a cultural and legal one, which is fought in a historical context rather than a battlefield. This struggle starts inside the homes (in the kitchens, bedrooms, and living rooms) and flows and spreads through workplaces (factories, workshops and offices), schools and universities, mosques, synagogues, and churches, streets and alleys, taxis and buses, stores and restaurants, parks, stadiums and recreation sites, parliaments and courtrooms. It also reaches the general public through educational texts, books, newspapers and magazines, games and toys, poems, stories and lyrics, movies, radio and television programs, the internet, and everywhere and anywhere that gender dynamics are present and social relations

between men and women exist.

Our skilled and well-informed women have learned from experience that male-domination is a multi-layered system, a deep-rooted and complex establishment, which will not fundamentally change through simply change in the state. This realization should however not serve to underestimate the critical role of the state in affecting women's status within society. A simple comparison of facts and figures related to human development indicators (and empowerment indicators) in different countries, gives us credible documentation that in societies where political and governmental structures are democratic, non-ideological and non-religious, where economy experiences healthy growth and material resources and social goods are fairly distributed, where national resources are used to create strong social welfare support systems, provide education and healthcare instead of spending much on militarism, women enjoy a longer lifespan, and better physical and emotional health. Further, women in these societies benefit from greater equality and equal rights, a higher social status, higher education levels, greater economic power, widespread social and political participation and enjoy greater safety and security from domestic violence.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LAW AND THE NECESSITY OF LAWS THAT GUARANTEE EQUALITY**

The aim of the 'One Million Signatures Campaign' is to change and reform laws that discriminate against women. At first glance it may appear that legal and rights issues are not the most pressing and important of concerns for the majority of the Iranian women, rather inflation, unemployment, and lack of housing are issues most women struggle with on a daily basis. But men may struggle with the latter issues as much as women do. What insults and injures women, simply because they are women, and makes them more vulnerable, is the existence of discriminatory laws that in many cases degrade women and reduce them to second class citizens and place values on them which are half those of men. Experienced and active women know only too well that having equal legal rights may not be a sufficient solution to women's problems, but still they recognize that equality under the law is indeed a necessity. Without legal support, any attempt by women for self-

empowerment, civil society-building, or cultural production and creative activity in the social and domestic arenas, will be blocked by limitations and hurdles. This point is underscored when one notes that many laws governing family, sexuality and gender relations in Iran lag behind modern changes, new attitudes, and new realities in Iran of today.

**THE LOCAL-GLOBAL INTERPLAY**

The innovative and courageous method employed by the activists involved in the 'One Million Signatures Campaign,' is not only well-rooted in the specific historical, cultural, religious, and geopolitical realities of Iran, but it is also in step with the most progressive and current discourses, laws and universal values. Furthermore, the aims of this campaign are respected and in line with values and goals espoused by international institutions such as the United Nations and well respected international human rights organizations. Iranian activists are not following some abstract theory in defining and developing their strategy for change; rather they are basing these strategies on the available resources as well as tangible, concrete, and immediate realities. This choice of strategy demonstrates their understanding and knowledge of the daily-ness of women's struggle, feminist theories and principles, and also of their involvement, connection and cooperation with trans-national feminist organizations in the region and beyond. These women understand that lofty goals will be difficult to achieve under the present repressive atmosphere, as such they have chosen to utilize deliberate and practical methods, with a persistent approach in-line with a woman-centered and feminist approach to culture-building.

Today, Iranian women's rights activists are armed with lessons learned from women's struggles around the world as well as those learned from the history and the experiences of their mothers and grandmothers in Iran. They have resolved not to take a passive approach, one that relies on the support of the West or promises of salvation through bombs and mortal-shells. Nor have they taken defensive stand in favor of the ruling patriarchy because of its defiance to the West. Rather they are taking practical steps toward democracy and equal rights, demarcating the women's movement from both the native Islamist and Western imperial patriarchies. Like-

wise, they are not pinning their hopes on national political groups and parties that only give credence to women and their issues at election time or during political turmoil. These women are not waiting passively for the politicians' promised "communist ideal" or the "secular democracy" or the "Islamic democracy," as a means to guaranteeing them their human rights. Instead these women feel compelled to organize and network among themselves, and in a culture building exercise, grow in their self-confidence, and help get rid of superstitious beliefs and unhealthy and violent sexual prejudices that plague both men and women.

**THE TRADITIONAL-MODERN INTERPLAY**

One of the special characteristics of the "One Million Signatures Campaign" may be the fact that in its creative course, this effort takes advantage of indigenous or traditional approaches that are familiar in Iran's context as well as the latest modern international technologies offered by the information age. On the one hand, in order to gather signatures the campaign relies on collecting signatures through the "face-to-face" and "alley-to-alley" methods. This method that can offer the highest quality of human communication and connection and can produce a wealth of social capital, is reminder of 'petitioning,' a well-known tactic in Iran's repertoire of civic and political struggles. On the other hand, by using the internet and virtual spaces such as websites and web-logs, the process of collecting signatures and networking is expedited.

Furthermore, their distribution of educational pamphlets on the law to the general public on the streets would enhance the mutual but ephemeral face-to-face experience. The creative juxtaposition of direct contact and interaction between activists and the general public on the one hand and virtual connections through the internet, works to reduce the gap between the real and virtual spaces. This would strengthen the progression and social and cultural dynamic of this campaign in particular and the women's movement in general. It should be noted that one of the negative side effects of the internet, particularly web-logging is the potential for the individualization and the creation of isolated islands within civil society.

If a large number of activists limit themselves to virtual spaces and virtual connections, overtime they may lose their

ability to communicate and debate in actual spaces and the real world. Social energy and capital will in this situation be used for isolated and self-centered efforts with a limited sphere of effectiveness, which in the long run will not work to strengthen civil activism such as the women's movement. However, positive and deliberate use of the internet in creative combination with traditional methods carried out in the public space and real realms, can bring about the most effective and altering outcome. Neither Elitism, nor Populism. The last point I would like to address is the negative perception of the role of the elites, which seems to be somewhat evident in the writings of some of the campaign members. This viewpoint, and the lack of active participation of elites and experts may in fact be a point of weakness rather than strength for the campaign. In their description of the strategy of the campaign, some campaign members have praised this campaign for staying away from the elites, from lobbying, and any top-down efforts. They have valued only the merit of the followings: "bottom-up approach; from people's homes to the street; and from streets to homes; from virtual spaces to actual spaces; etc." But I believe while these are indeed part of the strengths of this campaign, they can be much more effective if combined by participation and support of the members of the elites and experts as well.

We do not want to be elitist, but we do not need to be populist and anti-elite either. We need both the grassroots or bottom-up and the top-down efforts to change the law in favor of women's rights. It will not serve our purpose to devalue or appear hostile to those experts or elite members who work on some top-down projects toward reform. All these efforts can be indeed complimentary. Social, cultural and political struggles from around the world have owed much of their success to the cooperation, deliberation and coordination carried out by elites and experts (even at times these included some members of the ruling elites) alongside the masses and grassroots organizations of the civil society. Obviously, efforts at reform led solely by experts and elites who do not sufficiently involve and acknowledge the role of the people should be avoided.

Likewise, grassroots efforts at reform can reach their goals when they succeed in bringing along increasing number of elite members and experts. Lobbying, negotiation and advocacy, while may be beyond

the capability or inclination of some of the activists involved in the campaign, are nevertheless indispensable tools and strategies for ensuring the continuation of this effort and achievement of its goals. It is the dialectical interaction, cooperation and convergence between the elites and the people that will ultimately bring about change. Just as slavery was once considered a natural and even divinely ordered phenomenon, but today belongs to a dark and embarrassing chapter of history, the era of patriarchy and sexism (in modern as well as traditional pre-modern forms) will come to an end sooner or later. Today, we are confronted with those who are still trying to justify male-domination and perpetuate patriarchy and violence against women by resorting to patriarchal constructs of religion and male-centered interpretations of scriptures as some religious proponents of slavery did in the past. But the women's movements and global feminism, despite its young age, have made important inroads in many realms of culture and society.

Purposeful convergence of diverse groups of women at both grassroots and elite levels can only expedite the process of change toward equality, justice and peace. I eagerly anticipate progress for this movement from which I am sure I can learn new ideas and rethink my own theories and understandings of feminist strategies and tactics. I shall do my share to support this effort at the regional, international, and trans-national levels. This campaign is an important part of the rights-seeking, civil, humanitarian and timely movement of Iranian women that deserve all the support at national and international levels. Even if this campaign does not result directly and immediately in the changing of laws, the process involved in it, in and of itself, is positive. This campaign is already contributing to feminist culture-building, the configuration of a common identity among many activists, and the enlightenment and consciousness raising about women's rights in the society at large.

1. This article originally written in Persian (Farsi) by Nayereh Tohidi appeared in a number of women's sites in Iran. This English version has been translated by Taraneh Amin and edited by Sussan Tahmasebi and Nayereh Tohidi. It was first published by <http://www.we-change.org>.

2. Nayereh Tohidi, Ph.D., is Professor and Chair of the Women's Studies Department at California State University, Northridge and Research Associate at the Center for Near Eastern Studies at UCLA.

## Life is the Coffee!

**A group of alumni, highly established in their careers, got together to visit their old university professor. The conversation soon turned into complaints about stress at work and life.**

**Offering his guests coffee, the professor went to the kitchen and returned with a large pot of coffee and an assortment of cups porcelain, plastic, glass, crystal, some plain-looking, some expensive and some exquisite, telling them to help themselves to the coffee.**

**After all the students had a cup of coffee in hand, the professor said: "If you noticed, all the nice looking expensive cups were taken up, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones. While it is but normal for you to want only the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems and stress."**

**"Be assured that the cup itself adds no quality to the coffee. In most cases, it's just more expensive and in some cases even hides what we drink.**

**What all of you really wanted was coffee, not the cup, but you consciously went for the best cups... and then began eyeing each other's cups."**

**"Now consider this: Life is the coffee, and the jobs, houses, cars, things, money and positions in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold and contain life, and the type of cup we have does not define nor change the quality of life we live. Sometimes, by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the coffee God has provided us."**

**God brews the coffee, not the cups, enjoy your coffee.**

**"Being happy doesn't mean everything's perfect, it means you've decided to see beyond the imperfections"**

**Live in peace and peace will live in you.**

*taken from internet*



## US-IRAN: IS WAR THE CORRECT SOLUTION?

By: Ali Ghaemi, Ph.D.

The current hostile relationship between Iran and the United States is governed by a grave lack of trust rather than a logical and mutual beneficiary set of policies between the two countries. To a large extent one can isolate two historical events that have catalyzed this antagonistic posture. The first is the 1953 CIA orchestrated coup in Iran that toppled the popular and democratically elected government, and restored the authoritarian and inept government of the Shah back to power. This incident resulted in a profound mistrust of America which in turn led to the second momentous event, the 1979 American hostage taking, during which 52 Americans were held hostage in Iran for 444 days. Thus were laid the basis of America's mistrust of Iran. The American support of the culpable Saddam Hussein during the bloody Iran-Iraq war and the Iranian direct or indirect involvement in anti-American terrorism further aggravated this strained relationship.

Like all revolutionary movements inspired by ideology and zeal, the Iranian revolution has lost its vehemence after 27 years of war, economic misfortune and a burgeoning and restless young population that is yearning for greater socio-economic and political freedoms. A pragmatic and reforming grass roots movement began in the early 1990s questioning the shortcomings of the revolutionary promises, especially with regards to democracy. A proud and nationalistic people began to inquire why a society that was amongst the pioneers in Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Astronomy and Medicine is so far behind the modern world?

The answer, that they have found, streams most dramatically from the internet cafes and satellite televisions: Democracy, or for that matter the lack of. More than any other large Muslim country today, the grass root ideologies, foundations and institutions necessary for democracy are spontaneously budding in Iran. The Iranian people, including a sizeable reforming clergy, have learned, through hard earned experience, the incompatibility of

religion and politics. Estimates, based on actual voting events in Iran, place the proportion of the public in favor of reforms to as high as 75% to 85%. This amid the fact that the overwhelming power of the state is held by unelected conservative elements that are in direct opposition to the reformers. The uniqueness of the Iranian political divides, however; is that it is interacting in a relatively peaceful fashion. The Islamic Republic of Iran is evolving to a Democratic Islamic Republic of Iran. This evolution is not without its ups and downs but the overall progress is evident at many levels of the society. After 27 years of turmoil, violence and war, the Iranian public has no appetite for another revolution. The forces of democracy are brewing in Iran and it is only a matter of time until they peacefully transform their political system and set precedence for the entire Muslim world.

In relation to the United States, a public opinion poll in the late 1990s showed that 75% of the populace is in favor of rapprochement with the United States. This is in sharp contrast to the passionate early revolutionary distrust of America. Immediately after 9/11 spontaneous candlelight vigils were held in Tehran commemorating the innocent lives lost in the terrorist attacks. The crowd at Tehran's main soccer stadium observed a moment of silence in respect of the victims of 9/11.

In the ensuing war on terrorism the reformist Iranian government of Khatami genuinely cooperated with the United States in freeing Afghanistan of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Needless to say, all of this popular and diplomatic good will was lost when President Bush in his February 2002 state of the union address labeled Iran as a part of the "axis of evil". To the nationalistic Iranian people this was an affront and in combination with the doctrine of preemption it signaled a possible American attack on Iran. Exploiting the threat of foreign aggression the conservative elements consolidated their power, the conservative Ahmadinejad became the president, and the reform movement

has since fallen to a lull.

The current nuclear standoff between Iran and the United States and the pugnacious rhetoric between the two countries is leading to further international isolation of Iran and the buttressing of the anti-democratic conservative forces. The right to Uranium enrichment for the peaceful production of nuclear energy, which is guaranteed by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), has become a deeply nationalistic issue cutting across the reformist-conservative divide. A recent poll in Iran shows that 85% of Iranians are in favor of the nuclear energy program. Despite the sensationalism and the alarmist tone of the popular US media there is no evidence that Iran is developing nuclear weapons. This has been confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as well US intelligence sources including the CIA. The United States' unwavering stand against the Iranian nuclear program is entirely due to mistrust and is unjustifiably leading the two countries to war. Even if Iran did have a secret nuclear weapons program and were to develop nuclear weapons, history has shown that they serve only as deterrents and that many countries voluntarily give them up as their security concerns are eased. What good would an Iranian nuclear bomb be in the face of the estimated 200 Israeli nuclear war heads or the immense American nuclear arsenal? An interesting and encouraging development is Ahmadinejad's demands for direct talks with the United States.

Under Khomeini's Iran this would have been unthinkable. This shows that the conservative elements in Iran are heeding to the sensible cries of the pragmatic and reform minded populace that do not want their country to be dragged into yet another conflict, let alone against the world super power. Based upon leaked reports there are an estimated 400 identified targets for a possible United States attack on Iran. These include nuclear as well as non-nuclear conventional Iranian armed forces targets. This attack would be a declaration of war. Aside from result-

ing in the deaths of thousands of civilians and radiation fallout, Iran will no doubt retaliate by attacking the US forces in Iraq and inciting the Iraqi Shiites to rise against the American forces. Contrary to the neo-conservative and Iranian “exile groups” assertion, the Iranian people will not rise against their government. On the contrary the overly nationalistic Iranians will rally around the flag. There would be no doubt then, that even if Iran does not have a nuclear weapons program now, it will have one in the future. They have had ample time to disperse the enrichment equipment and what is most important is that the expertise will survive. The reform movement will be halted in its tracks. And the cycle of hostility between Iran and the US will resume, albeit this time with a nuclear Iran.

The nightmare scenario presented above can be avoided only if the United States engages Iran in unconditional negotiations. Recently 70 members of the Congress have signed a letter, authored by Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), urging President Bush to “initiate direct diplomatic negotiations at the highest level with Iran”.

A lifting of the US sanctions and security guarantees for Iran is among the incentives that could be used to persuade Iran to outsource its nuclear enrichment activities. These concessions will not only be beneficial to Iran but to the US as well, especially economically. The US’s quagmire in the civil unrest in Iraq, and Iran’s considerable influence with the Iraqi Shiite and Kurdish elements, presents another chance for the two governments to engage in diplomatic discussions. A stable Iraq is as much in Iranian interests as it is in America’s. A US rapprochement with Iran will also be of considerable help to the US activities in Afghanistan given the common cultural, religious and linguistic links between Iran and Afghanistan. In the long term, there is no doubt that the forces of democracy will prevail peacefully in Iran.

As Gandhi so famously said “The spirit of democracy cannot be imposed from without. It has to come from within”. A democratic Iran will pave the way for peace and stability in the region as well as setting precedence for the entire Muslim world. We must urge our government not to rush into yet another conflict that will no doubt have long-term disastrous repercussions for peace and stability in the world.

## ARE IRANIANS SLEEPWALKING INTO A DISASTER?

By Adam Javid (source: CASMII)



Never in the long history of Iran has a threat had such disastrous potential as the current threat of a US attack. In the past when the Greeks, Arabs, Mongols, etc. raided, destroyed, divided the country, there was always the potential for a strong leader to rise up in the future and re-unify the land.

Post US aerial bombardment of Iran (similar to the attack on Serbia) the central government will fall and every ethnic group will take their own pound of flesh. The ensuing statelets will be busy squabbling and fighting for generations to come and that’s exactly what the US desires.

And the sad thing is that there won’t be any possibility to reverse the damage in the future, as the big bullies through the security council will make sure of that.

For those who think, well that’s not necessarily a bad thing, I ask if this a good recipe why don’t we have a broken up United Kingdom or Switzerland (with united French, German and Italian nationals)? Why is Europe becoming the United States of Europe?

Some may still believe in the US’ honourable intentions! They only have to look back at the post WW II history of the world to see that the US has done its damndest to destroy democracies and prop up dictatorships in the developing world (Middle East, Africa, South and Latin America are all dotted with the US’ handiwork’s).

I appeal to Iranians of every faith, ethnicity and political background to wake up to this imminent threat and help the British public understand the facts about Iran by engaging with the media and challenging their lies. The British public should understand that there is no evidence of Iran attacking another country within the last two hundred years. Even the current political system with all its shortcomings has not attacked any country during the past 28 years. That’s more than what can be said about the UK and US within the same period.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

**All written submissions to *Persian Heritage* with the expectation of publication in the magazine must include the writer’s name, address and telephone number.**

# HISTORY OF TERRORISM

## PART XIII-A

David A. Yazdan

*“I think it is the inherent right of the government to lie, to save itself when faced with either a public outrage or nuclear disaster.”*

By Arthur Silvester, Assistant Secretary of Defense  
Speech from NY chapter of Sigma Delta Chia in 12/6/1962

The dilemma that we have observed in the decade of the 80's continues to puzzle and make it difficult to address all the events, which happened then. We had the creation of the Hezbollah by the Ayatollah Khomeini, which did its first disastrous deed by sending its suicide car bomber into the Marine barracks, which killed over 240 Marines. Then there was the attempted assassination of the Pope, and then of course, was the mystery of the crash of Pan Am flight 103. Each of these events in the 80's constitutes at least one or two books. One particular book which is called “The Crimes of a President.” written by Joel Bainerman in 1992, it is quite revealing and troublesome regarding the dishonesty and the crimes that George Bush Sr. committed both as a Vice President and also as President of the United States. The crash of Pan Am flight 103 is the subject of this chapter on terrorism.

Yuval Aviv was a former Mossad official who immigrated to the United States in 1978 and shortly after he opened his own investigative firm called, “Interfor.”

On a December evening in 1988, Pan American Airways Flight 103 from London to New York exploded in the air over Lockerbie in Scotland. Within hours, staff at LAP were working the phones to their media contacts, urging them to publicize that here was “incontrovertible proof that Libya, through its intelligence service, Jamahirya, was culpable. (The author of this book received a call making such a claim from a LAP Israel's Dept. of Psychological warfare source hours after the disaster.) Sanctions were swiftly imposed by the West against the Gadhafi regime. The United States and Britain issued indictments against two Libyans, charging them with the destruction of the Pan Am Flight. Gadhafi refused to hand over the men for trial.

LAP next accused Syria and Iran of being coplotter in the Lockerbie disaster. The case against the Damascus regime turned on no more than its well-known support for state-sponsored terrorism. With Iran, the accusation was more specific: Pan Am 103 had been destroyed as an act of revenge for the shooting down on July 3, 1988, by the USS Vincennes of an Iranian passenger plane in the Persian Gulf, killing 290 people. It had been a tragic error for which the United States had apologized.

LAP then named the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine as having conspired to destroy the airline. None of the journalists who widely published this story stopped to think why Libya, accused as the original perpetrator, would have needed to call for help from Syria or Iran, let alone a Palestinian group.

According to one British intelligence source. “LAP was on a roll. Lockerbie was the perfect opportunity to remind the world

that there existed the terror network that LAP always liked to promote. Lockerbie didn't need that. In fact putting in too many names in the pot was actually counterproductive. We knew only the Libyans were responsible.” However, there were facts that did not make Pan Am 103 such an open and shut case. The loss of the airliner had occurred at the time when George Bush was president-elect and his transition team in Washington was updating itself on the current Middle East situation so Bush could “hit the ground running” when he entered the Oval Office.

Bush had been CIA director in 1976-77, a period when Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had largely dictated Washington's pro-Israeli policy. While Bush publicly maintained Reagan's hand gliding toward Israel, his years at the helm of the CIA had convinced him that Reagan had been “too dewy-eyed about Israel.” Waiting to become resident, Bush needed no reminding how, in 1986, the United States had been forced to cancel a \$1.9 billion arms deal with Jordan when the Jewish lobby in Congress had intervened. Bush had told his transition team that as president he would not tolerate interference in the right of “God-fearing Americans to do business with whom and where they wished.” This attitude would play its part in the destruction of Pan Am 103.

On board the aircraft as it left London on that December night in 1988 were eight members of the U.S. intelligence community returning from duty in the Middle East. Four of them were CIA field officers, led by Mathew Gannon. Also on board were U.S. Army major Charles McKee and his small team of experts in hostage rescue. They had been in the Middle East to explore the possibility of freeing the Western hostages still held in Beirut. Though the Lockerbie disaster investigation was under the jurisdiction of a Scottish team, CIA agents were on the scene when McKee's still closed and miraculously intact suitcase was located. It was taken away from the scene for a short time by a man believed to be a CIA officer, though he would never be positively identified. Later the suitcase was returned to the Scottish investigation team, who logged its contents under “empty.”

No one queried what had happened to McKee's belongings; let alone why he had been traveling with an empty suitcase. But at the time, no one suspected that the CIA officer might have removed from the suitcase data that explained why Pan Am 103 had been destroyed. Gannon's luggage was never accounted for giving rise to the belief that the actual bomb had been placed in his suitcase. No satisfactory explanation would ever emerge as to how or why a CIA officer was carrying a bomb in his suitcase.

The PBS investigative television program Frontline subsequently claimed to have solved the cause of the disaster. Pan Am 103 had begun its journey in Frankfurt, where U.S.-bound passengers from the Middle East transferred on to Flight 103. Among them were Cannon and his CIA team, who had traveled on an Air Malta flight to make the connection. Their baggage was similar to thousands of suitcases that passed through the hand of Frankfurt baggage handlers every day. One of them was in the pay of terrorists. Somewhere in the airport baggage bay the handler had concealed a suitcase already containing the bomb. His instruction was to spot a matching suitcase coming off a connecting flight, and substitute his suitcase, and then let it continue on into the hold of Pan Am 103. It was a plausible theory-but only one of many advanced to explain the bombing.

Understandably desperate to show the destruction of; Pan Am 103 had been an act of terrorism for which it could not be culpable, the airline's insurers hired a New York firm of private

investigators called Interfor. The company had been founded in 1979 by an Israeli, Yuval Aviv, who had immigrated to the United States the previous year. Aviv claimed to be a former desk officer with Mossad a claim the service would deny. Nevertheless, Aviv had satisfied the insurers he had the right connections to unearth the truth.

When they received his report, they could only have been stunned. Aviv had concluded that the attack had been planned and executed “by a rogue CIA group, based in Germany, who were providing protection to a drug operation which transported drugs from the Middle East to the U.S. via Frankfurt. The CIA did nothing to break up the operation because the traffickers were also helping them send weapons to Iran as part of the arms-for-hostages negotiations. The method of drug smuggling was quite simple. One person would check a piece of luggage on the flight, and an accomplice working in the baggage area would switch it with a piece of identical luggage containing the narcotics. On the fatal night, a Syrian terrorist, aware of how the drug operation worked, had switched a suitcase with one containing (the bomb. His reason was to kill the U.S. intelligence operatives whom Syria had discovered would join the flight?”

Aviv’s report claimed McKee had learned about the “CIA rogue team,” which had worked under the code name of COREA, and that its members also had close ties to another of those mysterious figures who had found his niche on the fringes of the intelligence world. Monzer Al-Kassar had built a reputation as an arms dealer in Europe, including supplying Colonel Oliver North with weapons for him to pass on to the Nicaraguan Contras in 1985-86. Al-Kassar also had links to the Abu Nidal organization, and his family connections were equally dubious. Ali Issa Duba, head of Syrian intelligence, was his brother-in-law, and Al-Kassar’s wife was a relative of the Syrian president. Aviv’s report claimed Al-Kassar had found in COREA a ready partner for the drug-smuggling operation. This had been going on for several months before the destruction of Pan Am 103. The report farther claimed McKee had discovered the scam while pursuing his own contacts in the Middle East underworld in an attempt to find a way to rescue the Beirut hostages. Aviv stated in his report that “McKee planned to bring back to the U.S. proof of the rogue intelligence team’s connections to Al-Kassar.”

In 1994, Joel Bainerman, the publisher of an Israeli intelligence report and whose analyses have also appeared in the Wall Street Journal, the Christian Science Monitor, and Financial Times, wrote: “Twenty-Four hours before the flight, Mossad tipped off the German BKA that there could be a plan to plant a bomb on flight 103. The BKA passed on their tip to the COREA CIA team working out of Frankfurt who said they would take care of everything.” Pan Am’s attorney, Gregory Buhler, subpoenaed the FBI, CIA, FAA, DEA, NSC, and NSA to reveal what they knew, but he later claimed, “the government quashed the subpoenas on grounds of national security.”

Neither the Frontline program makers, Yuval Aviv, nor Joel Bainerman had been able to provide satisfactory answers to troubling questions. If there was a cover-up to COREA’S activities, how high did it extend within the CIA? Who had authorized it? Had that person or persons ordered the removal of embarrassing data from within McKee’s suitcase? Why had the German BKA police agency tipped off the COREA unit? Was it purely by chance? Or had it been motivated by a decision that the activities of COREA had become unacceptably dangerous for others in the CIA? And just what were the “national security grounds” that

had led to Pan Am’s attorney receiving a blanket refusal for his subpoenas? Over the years, these questions have surfaced within the closed ranks of various intelligence agencies, and the answers have been kept closely guarded-not least the truth about a final mystery. Why had Mossad sent a London-based katsa an Israeli Intel. Officer - north to Lockerbie within hours of the downing of Pan Am 103?

Where Aviv comes through with flying colors, is his version of what happened to Pan Am 103. Aviv’s firm was hired by Pan Am’s insurer in the spring of 1989 to investigate the crash. Of all the journalists and intelligence sources I met who knew Aviv, all of them agreed that his report on Pan Am 103 is the closest thing to the truth. The only problem is that what he has to say about the incident isn’t what the Bush Administration wants to hear. In September 1989, Interfor’s report was made public. In it, Aviv claimed that a CIA team headquartered in Western Germany is largely responsible for the bombing.

That’s not what the U.S. Administration claims.. For the first two years after the crash all the evidence pointed to Syria and Iran as the culprits. It was believed that Iran bankrolled the operation in retaliation for the July 3, 1988 shooting down of an Iranian plane killing 290 people in the Persian Gulf by the U.S.S. Vincennes. Previously, U.S. investigators had traced a wire transfer of several million dollars from Tehran to a bank account in Vienna controlled by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command under the leadership of Ahmad Jabril (U. S. News and World Report, November 25, 1991.)

The outbreak of the Gulf War changed all that. When Saddam’s troops rolled into Kuwait, the Administration needed to bring Syria into the coalition effort. The following summer bush sat down with Assad in Geneva and ushered in a new era in Syrian- American relations. As a result, focus had to be deflected away from Syrian- sponsored Ahmad Jabril’s terrorist group.

Lo and behold, in November 1991 U.S. prosecutors announced their three-year investigation produced no evidence that either Iran or Syria were involved. Instead, they believed two Libyan intelligence officials and the Tripoli government were responsible for the bombing (New York Times, November 15 , 1991.) President Bush would publicly remark: “The Syrians took a bum rap on this” (Time, April 27th, 1992).

The U.S. government based its case on a tiny piece of plastic embedded in the shirt that had come from the suitcase that held the bomb. Miraculously, it survived two harsh Scottish winters. A British forensic expert matched the fragment of the bomb timer used to destroy a French DG-10 a jet that exploded over Africa nine months after the Lockerbie tragedy and found them to be identical. Based on this evidence, indictments were issued for Libyan intelligence officials. “It seems the Justice Department would have looked a little silly asking Muammar Qadhafi to turn himself in to the American authorities.) American and British investigators speculate that Iran and Libya were plotting simultaneously to blow up an American jet, but the Libyans succeeded first. Qadhafi, it was claimed, wanted revenge for the 1986 bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi by U.S. warplanes. (Why did he wait more than two and half years to get it? They say the bomb was first loaded as unaccompanied baggage on an Air Malta flight, which departed Luqa Airport in Malta and connected with the Pan Am flight in Frankfurt. Why a terrorist would take such an indirect route and risk detection was left unexplained.

*to be continued*

# SNAPSHOTS OF IRAN

May 2006

By: David Owen

The traffic is heavy today in Tehran, a vibrant city of 13 million, that resembles Europe more than it does the Middle East. Driving is popular here, with gas subsidized at only 40 cents a gallon. Cars move fast with each driver seeming to write his own rules of the road. But there are few accidents, because Tehran drivers are both skilled and forgiving.

Our bus is climbing from the city center, upward to the neighborhoods of Tehran's well-to-do. Beyond are the snow-tipped Alborz Mountains, which separate Tehran from the Caspian Sea. We are on our way to Shahid Beheshti University where we will meet with the faculty of the UN funded, Dept. of Human Rights.

Occasional flower beds line the boulevard, but almost as common as the grass and flowers are the gigantic murals covering the windowless side of some high rise buildings that we pass. The murals are enormous faces: Here the stern visage of the bearded and turbaned Ayatollah Khomeini, father of the Islamic revolution of 1979. Elsewhere the faces of handsome men in olive green shirts. Dark eyed and mustached, these are the martyrs: some of the 90,000 men lost in Iran's eight year war with Iraq.

At the university we meet the Human Rights faculty. The presenters, all men who speak English, seem very serious, like they are being careful that the meaning of their not be misunderstood. They all wear crisp white shirts and smart business suits, minus that badge of western imperialism the necktie.

The head of the Dept. addresses us in Persian, which is translated, although we know that like all educated Iranian men he does speak good English. In fact since the Revolution, literacy has been raised to over 80% for men and nearly 70% for women, and all schools require two foreign languages: one is Arabic, the language of Muslim scripture, the other is English, the international language of science and commerce. Besides an international language, Britain also gave the world the BBC, whose aggressive TV crew pounces on us outside the airport terminal the night that we arrive.

We are 23 American men and women, members of a peace mission organized by the Fellowship Of Reconcili-



ation. Founded in 1914, for is probably the world's oldest peace activist organization, and ours is just their second mission to Iran.

As I reach our bus a blinding light shines into my eyes, and a BBC voice behind it asks: "Do you think you can really make a difference in American-Iranian Relations?"

I think to my self, gee, I don't know, it's a kind of an emotional thing. Besides as a former Republican I'm not all that experienced in peace activism. But I can't tell the BBC guy that. So I finally blurt, "Because I have faith in Iranian people," and scramble onto the bus.

The next day we pass two-square blocks of walled compound in the city's center, which was once home to the US Embassy and its staff of 1,400. It is now a training base for the student paramilitary organization that over-ran it 27 years ago.

We stop to photograph each other in front of the faded "Death to America" and "America the Great Satan" graffiti, still visible on the walls. Why "Great Satan," I ask, and our guide explains:

"Because Satan works his evil by tempting and seducing good people to sin."

In a nearby shop the women get outfitted in the attire which Iran's Islamic law requires that they wear in public: There are two choices. One is the *chador*, a black head to toe mantle that cov-

ers all but the wearer's face and hands. The other is the *manteau*, a form-fitting tunic resembling a smart raincoat, that covers the wearer from chin to knee. It must include a headscarf, called a *rusari*, and pants, which are often designer jeans complemented with stylish wide cuffs and spike heels. Although all the Americans choose the *manteau* ensemble, many practical young Iranian women prefer the *chador*, their jeans and Adidas shoes visible below the hem.

Our mission to Iran has three objectives. First is to learn about Persian culture both modern and ancient, by touring Iran's wonderful cities and historic sites. Second, is to learn what Iranians are thinking about America, and about the current confrontation between our two presidents, and deliver our own message of peace. Thirdly, we want to show the good face of America through casual encounters with Iranian citizens. And it is, of course, the third one that is the most fun.

Iranians have few places to go for pleasure when they leave home, so it is on the street and in the public parks and gardens that we meet them.

In a garden in Shiraz I approach a young couple who seem eager to talk. The wife's face beams from her black *chador*, but her children are wearing typical toddler togs, with Tweety Bird and Morris the Cat embroidered on them. Some friendly young men from the university join us. On one's T-shirt I read, Green Bay Packers, and on another, Kentucky Horse Park.

Two questions that people seem to ask with most frequency are – "Will President Bush bomb our country;" and – "How did you get a visa?"

In a carpet store in Isfahan the owner laments the loss of business since 9/11. "Even the Europeans don't come like they used to. The economy is very bad," he said. "If the people at the top really felt it, things would change."

And a taxi driver in Tehran, like cabbies the world over, has a unique



insight into the matter. "Those mullahs wind their turbans too tight," he says.

True, a xenophobic foreign policy keeps Iran isolated from the world. One US dollar buys 9,000 Rials. But Iran's president boasts that the general standard of living is still much better than under the Shah.

Our bus driver carefully negotiates a narrow lane lined with slender fir trees, and high walls just behind them. Beyond the walls we see flat-roofed, '60s-modern mansions faced in white marble, each with an unkempt lawn and dry swimming pool. These are the homes of the elite of the old regime, now owned by the government.

Our destination is a house occupied by the charity for victims of Iraqi poison gas, which is also a peace organization. Here we listen to the poignant stories of gassing victims. We also hear from a man without legs or eyes. At age 15 he was a Basij, one of thousands of boys persuaded by patriotism and Muslim piety to clear a way for the infantry by deliberately walking into Iraqi minefields. At the small home for orphaned young women in the desert village of Natanz, we are guests for lunch in typical Iranian style. In a room with no furniture but a Persian carpet and bolsters, we sit around a very large white plastic sheet on which a feast is laid out.

Our party out numbers the girls of the home, clustered together in their chadors. We are stunned when we ask for questions and hear, "What do you think of your president?" After replying we ask, "What do you think of your own president?" And answer is an exchange of nervous looks.

Later we reflect upon the proximity of the girls home to the Natanz nuclear facility, whose solid



buildings and anti aircraft batteries we passed on the way into town... because it has been cited back home as a possible pre-emptive strike target.

In Iran I met the same mentality that I encountered in Russia in the sixties. That is, dissatisfaction with the restrictions of a religion-based government, combined with pride in country and loyalty to the faith. In 1979 the Islamic Revolution ended the succession of imperial shahs, who were puppets of both the industrial West, and of their own avarice.

"But what has the Revolution really given you?" I ask a middle-aged man in Shiraz.

He looks at me thoughtfully and answers: "It gave us self respect." And then continues... "We don't like our fundamentalist President, and we don't like your fundamentalist President. But we like Americans, and want to live in peace"!\*

\* "Iran, Nuclear Weapons and the Legacy of Hiroshima". Richard Deats. 2006



## THE LAST INFORMATION ON THE HISTORY OF PERSIAN WINE

Mehdi Abusaidi

I have read with interest, the document article entitled: "The Art of Wine in Ancient Persia" written by Mr. Touraj Darayee, published in Persian Heritage Vol.11, No.42, Summer 2006. However, I have been disappointed to note therein that "... the earliest evidence of wine making and wine points to the fourth millennium BCE." If by "BCE" is meant B.C. (before Christ), the said statement is tantamount to missing approximately two millenniums of the history of Persian wine making, as explained below.

In June 1996, many radios, TV's and newspapers throughout the world reported that during the same month, archeologists of the University of Pennsylvania examined the residues of an old clay jar from the Zagros mountains of western Iran and found therein traces of a Neolithic vintage. The said examinations and tests proved that the jar contained residues of traces not only wine, but also resine as a preservative, being the earliest known evidence for wine making in the world , 7400 years ago.

The above information was reported, among a number of newspapers, by the New York Times, Sunday edition, June 9, 1996, in the form of a short article, which was translated into Persian by the writer of this note and published with some explanation, in the Persian section of Persian Heritage magazine, Vol.1, No.3, Fall 1996.

# Distorting the Name of the PERSIAN GULF Continues

**Pejman Akbarzadeh**  
*Payvand's Iran News, 11/20/06*

Until about a year ago a Google search for the term “Arabian Gulf” in the news, would generate almost 900 results. But this number has now gone down to less than 400 thanks to the efforts made by an independent and small group of Persians (Iranians).

The websites which use a fake term for the Persian Gulf are divided into two main groups; those that are managed directly by the government of some Arab countries, especially UAE, Jordan, Qatar, and Bahrain; and the second, foundations and companies with economic benefits in the oil-rich Arab states of southern shores of the Persian Gulf.

Considering the ever-expanding commercial relations between the United Arab Emirates and other international corporations as well as the media all around the world which publicize their advertisements such as ‘AME Info’ in the UAE, ‘WebIndia23’ in India, ‘Seoul Times’ in South Korea, ‘ANBA’ in Brazil, etc., many of these corporations use the term “Arabian

Gulf” in their media announcements in western languages, seeking more financial benefits, ignoring the objections posed by Persians. Policies used by most British media such as Guardian and BBC are yet more interesting.

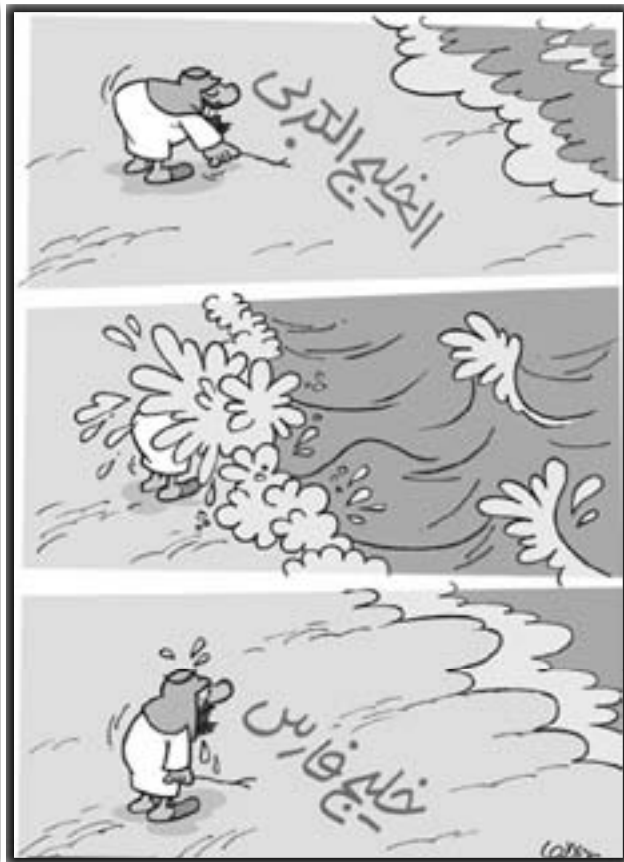
From the early 1970s when BBC adopted use of the confusing term “The Gulf” in lieu of “Persian Gulf” as a fundamental policy, other media within the UK gradually started using this new term. However the fabricated term “A... Gulf” still appears in many of their writings and once challenged, they do not make any changes in the wordings as long as it is on the main page of their website. However, after a news item is archived and no longer read by the people, they respond to protesters by often stating: “We have chosen the use of the term ‘The Gulf’ and are surprised why such error has taken place. We will correct it ...” Of course their ‘correction’ means using another silly and nonsensical term or at times no changes at all. This practice is not exclusive to the British media and extends to the Defense Ministry where use of the fake term “A... Gulf” has apparently become official policy. Bari Shaw, Chief Editor of the website’s news section, responded to the objections posed by saying: “The terms ‘Persian Gulf and ‘Arabian Gulf’ are both common.”

It is not clear why Iranian authorities have only reacted to the case which occurred in the National Geographic World Atlas, albeit insignificantly and under pressure by public opinion, and are indifferent to other organizations and the media that should be held even more responsible than the National Geographic, and continue to insist on abusing the historical identity of the Persian Gulf. Do they not see them or are deliberately ignoring them? Or prefer to pretend they are sensitive about this case by holding a few exhibitions and conferences inside the country that are received by few audiences but not so effective?

Contacting well-known geographic atlases of the world and international news agencies is one of the simplest and most effective ways of responding to such false claims; yet no action is seen to take place in this regard.

In addition to the Arab countries, distorting the name of the Persian Gulf continues in other European countries as well. Mani Parsa who teaches the Persian language at one of the affiliated foundations to the Netherlands’ Leiden University speaks of the existing situation in this country by saying: “We could say that the television networks of the Netherlands hardly have a particular policy for calling this body of water. Mostly they use the historic and real term which is “Perzische Golf” in Dutch, but at times have used the fake terms ‘The Gulf’ or ‘Arabian Gulf’ to imitate the news sources. However, the use of such bogus terms has been on the rise in the past few months. Up until few months ago, almost 1500 Dutch were working in the United Arab Emirates, especially in Dubai; however, this number has now risen to more than 4000. The expansion of trade relations between companies of the two countries as well as new policies in the Netherlands to suit Arabs do not seem irrelevant to the use of such erroneous terms for the Persian Gulf in their media. On top of that, lack of attention of the majority of Iranians who reside in the Netherlands in the use of the vague word ‘Farsi’ would eventually replace the word ‘Perzisch’ (the historic name of the Persian language in Dutch). I have repeatedly tried to seek help from the Iranian Embassy in the Netherlands for such cases but the phone always goes on the answering machine; and if I want to meet them in person, that would require standing in a long line to speak with someone from behind a window”.

A number of Arab countries are also seeking to propagate



the use of the term “A... Gulf” by renaming universities, or sport teams, etc. Examples include “Arabian Gulf University” in Manama, Bahrain, and “Arabian Gulf Rugby Team” in Dubai which is in fact an imported team among which few players of the Arab origin can be found! Hatred toward Persians (Iranians) in some communities and websites of the Arab countries is so evident that even in providing geographic information, the use of the name “Persia” or “Iran” is refrained. What is written in [www.sheikh mohammed.co.ae](http://www.sheikh mohammed.co.ae) is only one example of such attitudes: “Arabian Gulf is located between the Arabian Peninsula and Southwest Asia!”

It seems that the American media and Academia are the only centers in the world currently using the proper and historical term “Persian Gulf” in almost all cases. Yet in the branches of these American universities that are located within the UAE, ‘Persian Gulf’ is omitted from books to prevent the Arab rulers’ discontent. From the point of view of the UAE officials, everything in the region, be it gulf, island, or architecture and food must be called “Arab”. It doesn’t seem that with such extravagancy in policies and irrational attitudes, the economy of a country that imports even the soil for its gardens and the sand for its beaches from Persia (Iran), plunders the Persian architectural heritage in the design of its buildings, and whose majority of employees in the most specialized sectors are of foreign origin would remain dynamic and successful for long. Many of the professors of economics at those very same American universities believe that such fake and shallow prosperity will eventually burst like a bubble.

Putting Persia’s southern neighbors aside and examining its northwestern neighbor: A country in which the Turkish name for the Persian Gulf (Fars Korfezi) has almost vanished and has been using the term “Basra Gulf” (Basra Korfezi) for years! This is something few people in Persia (Iran) are aware of. Seemingly, the use of this term goes back to the time of the Safavid rulers (1502-1736 AD) and the wars between the Persian and Ottoman empires; a period during which the Ottoman rulers deliberately started the use of this term due to their animosity with their eastern neighbor as well as lack of geographic knowledge. In a book recently published in the Netherlands entitled “General Maps of Persia” Cyrus Alai writes: “Ottoman cartographers showed little interest in mapping Persia and limited themselves to copying a few maps of Persia designed in Europe by changing the wordings in Turkish and making slight modifications as they wish.”

One of the most famous Turkish maps of Persia (Iran) was drawn by Ibrahim Motefaraqa in 1729 in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) on which he wrote “Basra Korfezi” (Basra Gulf) for the northwestern parts of the Persian Gulf and “Bahr-e Fars” (Persian Sea) for the middle parts. However, the term “Basra Korfezi” is now widely being used in the Turkish media. More than three months ago, in a letter to the Turkish Embassy in Tehran I posed this question seeking to know “what the official policy of the Turkish Government is as regards to the name of this body of water in the Turkish language as three different names can be seen in Turkish texts for the Persian Gulf in the Turkish maps: Basra Korfezi, Fars Korfezi, and Iran Korfezi?” This letter was sent to the Turkish Embassy three times by fax and mail, but the Embassy refused any response. The situation was no better at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Ankara. Every country’s governmental organizations create an email address either on their own domain or at least on another governmental server; however, the Embassy’s email address was created on Hotmail! I decided to ask for their opinion about this issue by

sending an email to that address, but the email bounced back after a few seconds. Apparently, the Embassy’s email had not been in use for a long time and was obviously closed down.

When searching the term “Basra Korfezi” in Google’s search engine, about 35000 results come up while searching for Fars Korfezi” leads into almost 500 results, and they are mostly from the Persian websites that exist in the Turkish language such as the Turkish section of IRNA and RIB. Many of the news websites as well as those related to the Turkish government such as the Turkish History Association (Turk Tarih Kurumu or ttk), official website of the Turkish Prime Ministry, the Turkish section of Voice of America, Zaman Magazine, Turkey’s Culture and Tourism Ministry, Hurriyet Newspaper, Turkish section of the National Geographic Magazine on the web, Turkish sections of CNN, BBC, etc. also widely use the term “Basra Korfezi”.

Pirouz Mojtahedzadeh, political science expert, looks at this issue from a different perspective: “Persian Gulf was always located inside the realm of Persia during the Ottoman-Safavid conflicts. After Karim Khan (founder of the Zand Dynasty) passed away, the Ottomans succeeded in reaching to Mesopotamia and could get their hands to the Persian Gulf for the first time through Basra. However, as political and strategic rivalry continued between the Persians and the Ottomans, this rivalry turned into a completely geopolitical one at this part of the Persian Empire and the Ottomans could, after a while, bring Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain under their influence. As a result of this expansion of their influence over these areas, they created the term “Basra Gulf” to demonstrate their rivalry with the Persians. Obviously, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, this rivalry was ended and the pretexts used before to change geographic names went away automatically.

Therefore, bringing back those bogus names by the Turkish Government which is seen nowadays comes from an unprofessional and unethical attitude. Furthermore, existence of the present-day Turkey was based on the idea that this country was supposed to be one that enters into the realm of the world with a new and different identity from the Empire under the Ottoman rule, but it seems that the officials of this country forget this principal now and then.”



The concept of “survival and subsistence” is a reference to the totality of existence, consisting of the appropriation and situation of certain conditions and environments that guarantee and secure such appropriations. In the course of human intellectual history the whole concept of subsistence and survival have gone through a wide range of interpretations, in many views even the denunciation of the subsistence of other creatures, as well as certain races of human being for the sake of achieving higher standard of livelihood for white race have been legitimized and acceptable.

The Richard Chamberlain’s theory of racism and the whole political racist policy of Nazism in Germany is one, Apartheid an official policy of racial segregation practiced in the Republic of South Africa, involving political, legal, and economic discrimination against nonwhites is another.

Contrary views advocate a more humane, holistic and logical approach to human rights and human relations. They condemn supremacy of any one class or race over the others and the relinquishment of their livelihood for the benefit of others under any circumstances.

The long and brutal encounter between these two views and the consequence of such extensive struggle in the human history, eventually resulted in the creation of some international regulations and civilized commitments, the establishment of the law and order, in some civil societies, and in

our modern democratic living system pre-arrangements of some measures of civilized paradigms to guard against any subversion or aggression of one group or nation against other groups or a class against other class.

In spite of such encounters, and strenuous engagement of advocate of justice and fairness, toward eradication of prejudicial social behaviors, conflicts, or political contradictions, still there are great measures of irresolvable social justifications. It is obvious that such social or ethical evolution in human’s culture did not matured and materialized to a just and required measure for achieving the ideal civility to be led to a truly democratic social system. That is to say, the creation of a common ground, where every member of our society lives fearlessly in an environment of justice and fairness not implied by force but by the consciousness of its members.

Indeed, the ultimate concept of civility as a mechanism of fulfillment of social justice became known as “civil society” which has been severely misinterpreted, and mall arranged to a degree that became an instrument of social prejudice under a variety of devious pretexts. Countless theories have been formulated around the issues of social justice and the democratic human’s economical, political and social relations.

The central motive, which provokes and stimulates the humanity toward subversive activities and aggression, is human excessive desire to acquire or possess wealth and power more than what he needs or deserves. Human voracity is the major and compelling drive, which motivated the man to extensive wars,

massacres, and atrocities, one of the most determinant factors, and potent imputes, that will never be satisfied or hardly could ever be controlled. It would not be far from the truth, if we consider this drive as the mother of all evils, which is a cause or source of suffering, disparity, or destruction, the major cause of social evils of poverty and injustice.

The human insatiability was the major motivation for the established and widely accepted secular and non-secular preventive paradigms. The human voracity profoundly affects and determines the materialization of the general mental disposition of the concepts of justice, freedom, democracy, and human dignity.

The deliberate and conveniently revised or tainted interpretations of the concealed aspects of these sentiments, occurred through the varieties of social inflections, which identifying them, requires a thorough scrutiny. Because through a long historical, political, and cultural process, these factual sentiments have been depleted from their true meanings, erroneously and unjustly. Indeed, they

have been introduced expediently, only for the sake of satisfaction of unprecedented specific objectives fictitiously, throughout the human history. Our concern is to identify only the most common misconceptions of these interpretations among the ordinary notions of the, justice, freedom, democracy, dignity, and human rights.

Reevaluation of the concealed aspects of these sentiments as far as it could clarify the common mis-

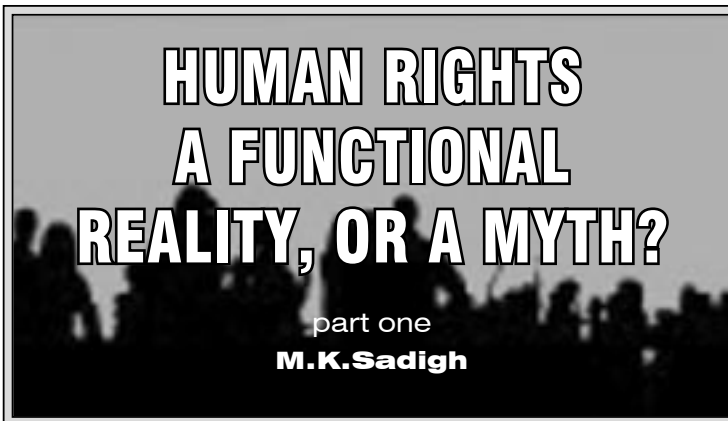
understandings, would certainly help understanding them beyond the long political, religious and even ethnical indoctrinations. This should draw the attentions of those firm believers that took their fixed unexamined notions seriously, and never bothered to reexamine their true validity beyond fix preservation. We start with an overview of each concept, and try to dissect them to the most comprehensive details possible to discover, those unknown aspects we misunderstood or perhaps did not penetrate into our intellectual maturity.

### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT FREEDOM?

Assuming that freedom is a state of reality where one is not bound and obligated to any restrictions of believes, traditions and presupposed requirements. This condition implies a state of release from slavery and confinement. In this state the only determinant factor would be “the will” which is the power of self-determination. In such level of enhancement the person is capable of being self-activated without any hindrance.

“John Locke 1632-1704 English philosopher” defines freedom. In An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690) he set out the principles of empiricism, and his Two Treatises on Government (1690) influenced the Declaration of Independence. He believes “in our being able to act, or not to act, according as we shall choose, or will”.

Holmes Oliver Wendell Jr. 1841-1935 American jurist who served as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1902-1932), many of his opinions greatly influenced the American



concept of law. He describes “right of strict social discrimination of all things and persons, [and it] is one of the most precious privileges.”

Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton. 1834-1902 British historian who led English Roman Catholics in their opposition to the doctrine of papal which is relating to, or issued by a pope’s infallibility and Incapable of erring, asserts that “By liberty I mean assurance that every man shall be protected in doing what he believes to be his duty against the influence of authority and majorities, custom and opinion.”

David Hume believes “By liberty then we can only mean a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will; this is, if we choose to remain at rest, we may; if we choose to move, we also may.” They all refer to a general and non-material state of being, which is not tangible, usable, or measurable by any predetermined measures, but it is an undeniable reality. A concept or perhaps some thing constructed intellectually activated by “will and consciousness”, freedom is not a clearly visible concept, encapsulate in one single identity the way that all of us assume its existence and placed it in one of the compartments of other concepts being introduced to us.

The freedom is not some thing to be given to us in a silver platter, it is an intellectually configured concept, which only exist if we consciously construct it and fatefully safeguard it. Freedom is not distributable and at the same time we strongly believe every member of the society ought to be privileged to assume freedom. Some believe that the existence of freedom should not be subjected by force, which a government execute such force. It should be the mechanism of social conduct directed to the survival and subsistence of all. Basically this social conduct is not motivated by individual insatiability, but rather by self-consciousness to a measure that acquired for subsistence not beyond that. It is comparative to the in take of air for respiration, which never exceeds more, and far beyond the necessity. That kind of measure is never predetermined, or prearranged but rather coordinate with mere subsistence.

Pragmatically in the realm of the living activities, then being free means every conscious individual member of a society is a self-activated being which his activities whether are calculated or instinctual is directed to his subsistence and as far as he does not subjugate others’ rights he should not be suppressed by domination of any set paradigms of religion or fate of any kinds, politics, or economical power. A free individual then not only is self-activated and is free to do what ever he wish, but also nothing has been dictated to him, no prejudgment influences his decision and under no prefabricated restrains or persuasive power, his determination and pursuit will be altered. As Lord Acton concludes, “freedom is not something we have gained through the efforts of our ancestors; but, rather, it is something with which we are born; it comes with life’s package. It is, as I have already asserted, something that is necessary to our very evolution and is necessary to our continued involvement in life.”

At any point in human relations whether religious, philosophical, political, or economic; whether it concerns prosperity, morality, equality, right, justice, progress, responsibility, cooperation, property, labor, trade, capital, wages, taxes, population, finance, or government the necessity of the self-activation of person and his freedom within the limitation of his rights should be the essential ground for social functionality. Any fabrication intentionally disorient and divert the freedom of others to exploit and precondition the social structures otherwise, not only is not freedom but also is subjugation and imposition in it true meaning.

John Stuart Mill “The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it.” Note that we refer to the individual’s possession of that precious right of freedom: I say individual. Freedom is a relative concept and can only be possessed by the individual: it cannot be possessed like a parcel of land, in common, by a group of people. An individual, a particular individual, either has freedom, or not.

It was that great French legal thinker Frédéric Bastiat who put his finger on this concept: “It is not the union of all liberties - liberty of conscience, of education, of association, of the press, of travel, of labor, of trade? In short, is not liberty the freedom of every person to make full use of his faculties, so long as he does not harm other persons while doing so?”

Thus; liberty be a state of being, where an individual is sovereign and answerable only to himself; where each is free to put at stake: his own life, his own well-being, his own time and his own property; where each, at all times, lives and acts as he wants within society at his own cost or to his own benefit, as the case may be; subject only and always to the restriction that an individual cannot proceed to act if that act clashes with or is in violation of the liberty of another.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JUSTICE AS A GUARANTOR FOR EXISTENCE OF FREEDOM

The “justice” defined as, the quality of being just, fairness, the principle of moral rightness, equity- the state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair, conformity to moral rightness in action or attitude, righteousness. As Herbert Spencer describes it, “The root of all well-ordered social action is a sentiment of justice, which at once insists on personal freedom and is considerate for the like freedom of others; and there at present exists but a very inadequate amount of this sentiment.”

As we can see the personal freedom to the extent we described it could not possibly be realized unless supported and guaranteed by justice. To understand the significant of freedom, one ought to recognize and be conscious of the value of being free vs. not being free, because we always have the tendency of taking every merit of our life for granted until that merit is missing. It is only then that the value of the missing merit will reveal to us as something that should have been guarded dearly.

So far we have been talking about the freedom and justice, the two conceptual realities, which has nothing to do with perception of a measurable or tangible entities. Justice is a holistic concept which only one part of it is social justice. Apart from this general structure, then we should begin with the “just” and “ justice” in a separate regard. This concept in Greek was equivalent to virtue and generally a reference to respected moral standard, which have a broad use in wide social practices. In our time nevertheless justice used in variety of social relation associated with any phenomena connotes virtue, or moral codes.

We talk of just men, just actions, and just states of affairs. But the last of these uses must be regarded as the primary one, for when we describe a man as just we mean that he usually attempts to act in such a way that a just state of affairs results, or at least, that a state of affairs results which is no less just than the state of affairs which obtained before his action.

Hume begins, by asking, in what does the distinction between moral good and moral evil consist? He draws the clear distinction between the dual natures, the virtue and vice as “Zarathustra” called them “Ahura Mazda or Ormazd which is the Wise Lord

ahura- lord virtue” and “Ahriman which is the spirit of evil”. Only the compliance with the virtue saves humanity from the evils. He asserts that Justice is the nature of virtue. Hume elaborate further that the objects of moral evaluation are not actions but persons and their qualities.

The distinction between virtue and vice or evil is logically prior to that between right and wrong, and actions are regarded only as signs of the possession of relevant qualities. Justice is taken as a virtue, which a man may possess for justice, is defined, not as a tendency and disposition or an attitude of mind, but as a set of principles governing men’s actions. The virtue of justice must consist in acting in conformity to these principles. This set of governing principles constructed and cumulated through an extensive examinations and reevaluations of the laws and ethical standards, which functioned as the base for our pragmatic achievements of a concept, we call it “justice”. As a general implication then, justice is not a single attitude, behavior or characterized by only few entity, but rather being responsive and confirmative of a host of variables comprising its social integrity.

Spencer’s theory of social justice is based on three general aspects, the distinction between, Absolute and Relative ethics, his attitude towards utilitarianism, which is the belief that the value of a thing or an action is determined by its utility, and the ethical implications of his theory of evolution. Clearly in both the reflection of these two is manifested. He described Absolute ethics as the study of those moral principles adopted and followed and regarded as a standard or model of perfection or excellence circumstances. These principles already recognized and respected to be practiced. In the other hand, he refers to relative ethics as principles proposed to be adopted and followed in the existing society. As a matter of fact since perfection of human is a non-existing reality therefore, we should never expect the existence and practice of perfect moral codes in any society to be materialized.

Is democracy, the principles of social equality and respect for the individual within a community? Democracy defined as, government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives, a political or social unit that has such a government. The common people, considered as the primary source of political power, majority rule, the principles of social equality and respect for the individual within a community. In French *démocratie*, adoption of Late Latin *dmocratia*, from Greek *dmokratia*, *dmos*-people; in Indo-European Roots. *kratia* -cracy.

For whom and under what social circumstances this social equality will be pragmatic and a reality? If democracy is prerequisite for social justice then, it should not be a protective instrument of privileged segment of the society, whom possess the wealth, economical or political powers.

“Social equality and respect “ refers to the respect for the dignity of every individual regardless of his or her status. Dignity defines as the quality or state of being worthy of esteem or respect. This definition signifies a universal application and the word “esteem or respect” places no distinction for any misinterpretation. Meaning, the major motivation for survival, meaning without dignity the man will be reduced to his animalistic being, stripped from the assumed desires and aspiration to higher level of growth and worth.

Deliberate deprivation of human desires results in stagnation of his intellectual capacity, which consequently reduces him to a mechanical being. Isn’t, it then the dignity, that the man of the modern democratic era, whether he lives under the theocratic government in Iran, or under the so called democratic systems of

the western world, who supposed to live in a society where under no circumstances his life should be compromised, disrespected, deprived, and his natural rights, being taken away from him?

**HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD BE A MYTH, IF THE DEMOCRACY, JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND DIGNITY OF MAN DO NOT EXIST**

The conclusion of our elaboration of the justice, freedom, dignity, human rights and democracy presents the fact that; all these sentiments are the inseparable segments of a holistic concept called “human rights”. It would be absurd to assume the humanity could possibly enjoy the freedom and live in a democratic environment, unless all these sentiments are configured in an environment of rationally structured, and morally supported society, where the liberated, self activated, conscious members created and safeguarded it.

The superficiality of claims and fraudulent statements of creation of a democratic system in an environment of archaic passivity and profoundly designated by fanatic could not allow any revision. Without the appropriation of necessary requirement, any changes are utterly deceptive and not feasible. No one possibly could manufacture freedom, justice, and democracy, except the people themselves creating the appropriate intellectual and physical environment. Most certainly, only the people who are politically and intellectually matured and capable to denounce the impositions and instigations, of religious or political indoctrinations and demoralizing fanaticism are capable to materialize it.

Human Rights became the most significant human issue that in the decades of forties finally formulated and explicitly described and entrusted the public.

The Charter of the United Nations (1945) begins by reaffirming a “faith in fundamental human rights in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.” It states, among other things, the purposes of the United Nations are, the development of friendly relationship among the people of the world.

To develop friendly relations among large or small nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights, self determination of peoples, and to achieve international co-operation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”

In two key articles, all members “pledge themselves to take joint and separate action in cooperation with the Organization” for the achievement of these and related purposes. It is to be noted, however, that a proposal to ensure the protection as well as the promotion of human rights was explicitly rejected at the San Francisco Conference establishing the United Nations.

Additionally, the Charter expressly provides that nothing in it “shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state . . .” except upon a Security Council finding of a “threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression.” Moreover, although typical of major constitutive instruments, the Charter is conspicuously general and vague in its human rights clauses, among others.

Thus, not surprisingly, the reconciliation of the Charter’s human rights provisions with the Charter’s drafting history and its “domestic jurisdiction” clause has given rise to not a little legal and political controversy.

Some authorities have argued that, in becoming parties to the Charter, states accept no more than a nebulous promotional

obligation toward human rights and that, in any event, the United Nations has no standing to insist on human rights safeguards in member states. Others insist that the Charter's human rights provisions, being part of a legally binding treaty, clearly involve some element of legal obligation; that the "pledge" made by states upon becoming party to the Charter.

Consequently represents more than a moral statement; and that the "domestic jurisdiction" clause does not apply because human rights, whatever isolation they may have "enjoyed" in the past, no longer can be considered matters "essentially within the domestic jurisdiction" of states. When all is said and done, however, it is clear from the actual practice of the United Nations that the problem of resolving these opposing contentions has proved somewhat less formidable than the statements of governments and the opinions of scholars might lead one to assume.

Neither the Charter's drafting history nor its "domestic jurisdiction" clause nor, indeed, its generality and vagueness in respect of human rights has prevented the United Nations--on the basis of individual petitions, statements from witnesses, state complaints, and reports from interested nongovernmental organizations--from investigating, discussing, and evaluating specific human rights situations.

Nor have they prevented it, from recommending or prescribing concrete action in relation to them, at least not in the case of "a consistent pattern of gross violations" of human rights, provided there has been a majority persuasive enough to force the action desired (as in the imposition by the Security Council in 1977 of a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa). Of course, governments usually are protective of their sovereignty (or domestic jurisdiction).

Also, the UN organs responsible for the promotion of human rights suffer from most of the same disabilities that afflict the United Nations as a whole, in particular the absence of supranational authority and the presence of divisive power politics. Hence, it cannot be expected that UN actions in defense of human rights will be, normally, either swift or categorically effective.

Nevertheless, assuming some political will, the legal obstacles to UN enforcement of human rights are not insurmountable. Primary responsibility for the promotion of human rights under the UN Charter rests in the General Assembly and, under its authority, in the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary body, the Commission on Human Rights, an intergovernmental body that serves as the UN's central policy organ in the human rights field. Much of the commission's activity, initiated by subsidiary working groups, is investigatory, evaluative, and advisory in character.

The commission annually establishes a working group to consider and make recommendations concerning alleged "gross violations" of human rights referred to it by its Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. (On the basis of communications from individuals, and groups, pursuant to Resolution 1503 [1970] of the UN Economic and Social Council, and sometimes on the basis of investigations by the sub-commission or one of its working groups), also, the commission has appointed special representatives and envoys to examine human rights situations on an ad hoc basis, who, in the course of preparing their reports, examine reliable information submitted in good faith, interview interested persons, or make on-site inspections with the cooperation of the government concerned.

*to be continued*

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# HERE WE GO AGAIN!!

Mohammad Ghaferi

*I read Dr. Mahvash Amir-Mokri article and enjoyed it. However, there are a few points that I have to make. The attached article, in case it is printed, could be entitled, "HERE WE GO AGAIN!!" As always I do appreciate what you are doing in familiarizing our younger generation as well as the host nation with our rich culture and Persian language. And last but not least, congratulation on the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Mirass-e Iran*. As an Iranian I am proud of you and appreciate your hard work.*  
Sincerely, Mohammad Ghaferi

I read an introduction to a new book about Iran, "*A Persian Odyssey, Iran Revisited*" with deep interest. Both Dr. Mahvash Amir-Mokri, apparently a Muslim, and Dr. Rami Yelda, a certain Christian, have expressed their heartfelt opinions. I admire and respect their candid thoughts. However, I have certain disagreements with both of them on a few points. I will try to be as brief as possible in expressing my views. I should mention here that I have not read Dr. Yelda's book, hence, any thoughts I express here are based on Dr. Amir-Mokri's review of the book.

## HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

Dr. Amir-Mokri has complemented Dr. Yelda, the author, as having "vast knowledge about history." With all due respect let us see whether this is so.

## PAST GLORY

It is obvious that when the critic mentions, "destructive influence of certain imported cultures" she means Islam. This seems to be based on the present situation in our country. And when she says "past glory" I am not certain what sort of "glory" she has in mind. Is it military expansionism or scientific achievements? I agree with her on the former but not on the latter, especially if she means pre-Islamic Iran. That's usually the norm to write-off the fourteen centuries post-Islamic era as "non-glorious!" Without going into any details in this respect I refer her and the readers to my article entitled *Ketabsooziyeh A'raab: Haghghat ya Afsaneh in Mirass-e Iran* 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> editions, and Professor Fazlollah Reza's article in *Rahavard*, 54<sup>th</sup> edition. Very briefly, the questions that were raised in both articles were why we didn't have any renowned scholar in the twelve centuries of pre-Islam era. The excuse that our books were burnt by the invading Arabs has long lost its validity. Given, we were not only a conquering nation but great administrators too. The Achaemenid's empire was and has been second to none in vastness and management efficiency. We must be proud of it too. However, in the fields of science and philosophy, our contribution to the world was close to nil.

## FOUR WEEKS AND 23 CITIES!

Dr. Yelda stayed in Iran for four weeks on his first trip and visited 23 MAIN cities. Considering the time spent traveling between these cities he did not spend even an average of one day per city. Now, let's be fair. How much can a person find out

about a village in less than one day, let alone a city? The answer is close to nothing! When the critic compares this book with that of Nasser Khosro-e Ghabadiani-e Marvazi, she does not mention that the latter was the fruit of an almost seven year journey. He, certainly spent more than one day in every city he visited. And life was much simpler then than now, thus easier to write about. By the way I did not know that we have a city named GILAN. He might mean Gilan-e Gharb in the western part of Iran. Once again I am giving my opinion based on the critic's account of the book's author. On his second trip which lasted only one week, he not only visited Andimeshk, Ahwaz, and Bushehr but he went to small towns, villages, old cities, ruins, and great historical monuments and remains throughout the country.

I don't want to sound overcritical but how can a person go into the depth of any social behavior in such a short period of time while covering such a vast area? I leave it to the readers to decide.

## IMPORTED, STRICT, AND ONE DIMENSIONAL RELIGION

The critic writes, " (all Iranians) love their motherland despite all the misdemeanors, atrocities, and discriminations they have endured under the influence of a strict, one dimensional IMPORTED religion imposed on them." Let us contemplate on a few notions that she has expressed. IMPORTED. What religion is NOT imported? If religions were not exported/imported, Zoroastrianism would have been confined to Iran, Judaism to Palestine, Canaan, and maybe Egypt, Christianity to Nazareth and maybe Palestine. In that case the critic, would have been a Zoroastrian and the book's author? I am not sure what. But certainly not a Christian. So what is wrong with adapting a non-native religion?

## STRICT, ONE DIMENSIONAL

The critic is mixing up the right message with the wrong implements. This is a message whose prophet declared fourteen centuries ago that acquiring knowledge is a duty of every Muslim man and woman, while in our country learning to read and write was limited to a certain elite. The story of the shoemaker in *Shahnameh* during the reign of Anoshirvan is an undeniable example of the situation in pre-Islamic Iran. As long as the progressive message of Islam was carried out relatively properly we had the kinds of Abu Au Sina (Avicenna), Abu Nasr-e Farabi (Alfarabus), Mohammad Zakariyaye Razi (Rhazes), Al-Kharazmi, Abu Reyhan Beirooni, Ibn-e Roshd (Averroes), Honein ibn Eshagh (Joannitus), Alkandy (Alkindus), and many more. Although Razi could be considered an infidel at the time, he was appointed as the chief of Baghdad Hospital, the largest in Islamic Empire. However, when the STRICT ONE DIMENSIONAL people came to power, the message was distorted. More details can be found in Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's book *Science and Civilization in Islam*. How can we call Islam a one dimensional religion when it declared that all people, regardless of their color, race, and gender, are equal before law? This notion did not take place in the West until recently. Islam gave women freedom over their lives and financial affairs while in our country women were considered a man's property. I suggest that both the author and the writer of this review read *An American Woman in Iran* by Janet Larsen and Mary Wollstonecraft & Islam by Dr. Stein, both in the 44<sup>th</sup> edition of *Mirass-e Iran*.

## ZOROASTRIANISM AND MONOTHEISM

She writes, " This belief (monotheism by Zoroastrianism)



later exerted undeniable influence on Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Northern Buddhism.” I have two rebuttals here. One, it is not clear which one was first: Judaism or Zoroastrianism. The start of the latter has not been established definitely. Two, the concept of Zoroastrianism being a monotheistic or dualistic religion is still in debate. Therefore, we cannot be certain that it influenced the other religions.

### NON-MUSLIMS IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES

She writes, “... a Christian living in a country where its law was taken after Shari’ a for thirteen centuries, which means no rights for non-Muslims and to some extent, for women.” Based on history books written by non-Muslims, the followers of other religions were treated fairly in Muslim countries - certainly much better than the way Muslims were treated in Christian countries. Recently a Jewish scholar wrote an article in this regard which can be accessed at Uri Avnery: *Muhammad’s Sword*. I’ll bring a couple of paragraphs here to give the readers a sense of what to expect. He writes: Every honest Jew who knows the history of his people cannot but feel a deep sense of gratitude to Islam, which has protected the Jews for fifty generations, while the Christian world persecuted the Jews and tried many times ‘by the sword’ to get them to abandon their faith. When the Catholics re-conquered Spain from Muslims, they instituted a reign of religious terror. The Jews and the Muslims were presented with a cruel choice; to become Christians, to be massacred, or to leave. And where did the hundreds of thousands of Jews, who refused to abandon their faith, escape? Almost all of them were received with open arms in the Muslim countries. The Sephardim (Spanish) Jews settled all over the Muslim world . They (the Muslims) knew nothing like the torture of the inquisition, the flames of the auto-da-fe, the pogroms, the terrible mass expulsions that took place in almost all Christian countries, up to the Holocaust. I suggest that readers who are seeking the truth read this article in its entirety.

### TEMPORARY MARRIAGE

She writes, “This manner of income (providing temporary marriage) for clerics was easily provided through ISLAMIC law.” To make it clear for the readers I should say that temporary marriage is allowed only in Shi’a Islam and not in any other faction. I am certain that both the critic and author are aware of this and it was just an oversight on their part.

### LEGAL CODE

As for the present day legal code in Iran, I should say that it is practically the same as it was during the Shah. The civil code (Ghanoon-e Madani) has not changed very much.

### POLYGAMY

Polygamy was not a common practice only in the Arabian Desert during the Prophet Mohammad’s time. It was an accepted social norm in Iran too. Professor Arthur Christensen in *Iran During the Sassanids (Iran dar Zaman-e Sassanian)* translated by Gholamreza Rashid Yassami says, “The principle of polygamy was the basis for forming a family. The number of wives that a man could have depended on his financial abilities. One of the wives was the principal one (*zane sogoli ya zane momtaz*). In lower positions were the servant wives (*zane khedmatkar ya chaker zan*). Therefore, the wives of a particular man were not equal. Only the MALE children of the *Chaker Zan* was admitted into the father’s family.” Daughters were sub humans!! He continues,”

Marrying close relatives like sisters, daughters, and mothers(!?) were permitted. It was called KHVEDHVAGHDAS (in Avesta KHVAETYADATHA), and was encouraged too. Marriage between a brother and a sister was thought to be blessed by FARRAH-E-IZADI. Kamboujeh married two of his sisters; Dariush married his sister Parysatis; Ardeshir II married two of his daughters Atossa and Amestris; and Dariush III married his daughter Stateira. The Bishop of Marbeha who lived during Khosro I, Anoshirvan, in his book *Soriani Law*, says: The justice among the worshipers of Ahuramazda is rendered in a way that men are allowed to marry their mothers, daughters, and sisters.”

Compare this with what the Holy Qur’an says. “... marry women of your choice, two, three, or four but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with them then only one ... that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice. 4:3” and justice here encompasses every aspect of their lives, materially and emotionally. Who can follow this instruction? Practically nobody can. A more thorough explanation has been given by Dr. Stein in the 44<sup>th</sup> edition of *Mirass-e Iran*.

### STONING

I searched the Holy Qur’an and could not find even one single verse regarding stoning. I will be very grateful to both the critic and author if they could refer me to the exact verse and chapter. In the Old Testament, Torah, there are many instances that it’s been allowed or even instructed.

### MORE CHILDREN

Where does the Shari’a law say that Muslims should have more children? I do appreciate it, again, if either the author or critic enlighten me in this regard. The critic implies that having more children caused the eight year war with Iraq. Or, maybe the poorly educated mullahs. Neither one makes sense. We were attacked by a mad man who was dreaming of expanding his borders on the east and the south (Kuwait).

### DEMOLITION OF HOUSES OF WORSHIP

During the reign of Shapour II while chasing the Christians he demolished the big church in Seloukieh. (Christensen 512) The Zoroastrian clerics were very prejudiced against other religions and allowed no other religion in the country. (Christensen 363) What the Sassanians did to the followers of Mani and Mazdak is well known and does not need to be mentioned here. Twenty thousand Mazdakis were planted in the ground. Yes! Planted until they died.

The author writes,” in the pre-Islamic era in addition to the fire temple, the (Bam) citadel included a church and a synagogue that were together (with the fire temple) converted to a mosque by the invading Arabs,” and the critic adds that,” To the contrary post-Islamic Iranians who are obliged to follow Islamic rules, not only do not give the right to any other religion to build their own temples but “Firstly, the church and synagogue in the Bam citadel were not converted into a mosque during Arab invasion. They were abandoned because the citadel was not inhabited any more; and this happened during the Qajar Dynasty in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Secondly, I don’t know from what sources the author and critic get their information. At the present time there is a synagogue near my sister’s home in Tehran and a church too. In fact she visited the church last Christmas together with her two sons in order to watch the ceremony. When I was a teenager there was

a church in Abadan belonging to the Armenians that I passed by it everyday to go to school. Did the author visit Isfahan? Did he see the Jolfa Church? It is 400 years old. As old as the Shah and Sheikh Lotfollah mosques.

Let me give you some more examples: Saint Stepanous church near Khoy-Jolfa Road built in ninth century AD, Saint Mary's church in Tabriz built in twelfth century AD, Saint Tatarious Monastery of the Ghara Kelissa built in 13th century AD, The tomb of Esther and Mordchai built in fifth century BC, Temple of Pir-e-Nakar near Yazd, Molla Neissan Synagogue in Isfahan, and many more. We can find all this information on the Internet.

I don't understand what the motivation of the author and critic is for stating such false statements. I don't want to accuse them of lying, but to say the least they are misinformed. If they have any problems with the present regime in Iran, they should not take it unduly on a religion that is followed by over one billion people worldwide.

I understand that the rules of not letting non-Muslims enter a shrine or a mosque is very stupid and frankly speaking non-Islamic too, Prophet Mohammad let non-Muslims not only visit the mosque in Medina but in one instance he let a group of Christians who were looking for a place of worship in that city perform it in the mosque. Considering the fact that the Medina mosque was not just a mosque but his residence as well, it behooves to appreciate what a real Islamic behavior that should have been.

Unfortunately, the author's experience in not being let enter a holy shrine is not something new. I remember that about forty years ago I wanted to take a colleague of mine to Imam Reza's shrine in Mashad and almost was beaten by the angry ignorant mob. This is an unfortunate misconception that the clerics, for whatever reason, don't want to correct. She writes, "the minorities had no right to establish their own temple until the turn of the century."

Here we go again! I assume that the critic has not been to Isfahan. Otherwise, she would have visited the four century old church in Jolfa. *DAR KHANEH AGAR KAS AST YEK HARF BAS AST.*

## MUSIC.

The author writes, "One does not have to read the sad history of this cursed (why cursed?) country in the last fourteen centuries to understand why (the Persian music is gloomy). Persian classical music with its melancholic modulation has been passed [after Islam] from generation to generation without being written (?) down and has been deeply affected the soul of the gloomy (?) Persians." Wow! What a GLOOMY judgment! Let me ask a few questions.

1. Where did this GLOOMY music originate from? Pre-Islam? According to the author music was forbidden by Islam. Therefore it must have been inherited from Barbad and Nakisa. The names of *Dashtgahha* and *Goosheha* are the same as the ones that Nezami mentions in his *Khosro va Shirin*; as well as Molana Jalaluddin (Rumi), Hafez, and others.

2. Were the lives of Iranians rosy during the 400+ years of Sassanid reign, during which time there was an alliance between court and temple? The kings, in the beginning, were religious leaders too. Ardeshir's father and grandfather were clerics of Zoroastrian faith.

3. Where in the Qur'an is there a rule forbidding music? Will either of these two scholars of Islam and history please tell me?

4. When was note invented to write music? Moreover, Mr.

Khomeini did not forbid music. In fact he allowed it to be played on the radio and television. *Naaye Haftband* by Dr. Ebrahim Bastani Parizi gives a brief history of music in early Islamic era.

## ZOROASTER

The author writes, "Zoroaster was the first in history to introduce monotheism." Maybe and maybe not. As I mentioned before this concept is debatable; because *Ahriman* has as much power as *Ahuramazda* does. People have to do good to help *Ahuramazda* to defeat *Ahriman*. In addition, if we study the history of Zarvanism we see that both *Ahuramazda* and *Ahriman* were *Zarvan's* children, thus equal. (Christensen 569) and (Pirnia 1523-1525)

## ALLAH AND COMPASSION

I don't know where either of them have read about Allah having passed such a harsh judgment. We see the phrase In the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful' 114 times in the Holy Qur'an; and many more times His forgiveness has been mentioned. There is also a chapter (soureh) named GHAFER meaning forgiver of sins.

## PUNISHING ADULTERERS

Adultery is punishable in every culture and religion. So what's wrong with punishing adulterers? I see no problem with that. Being a woman, I expect the critic to support this concept. Moreover, the punishment in the Holy Qur'an is much more lenient than the one in the Old Testament.

## PROPHET'S UNCLE

Why is the critic so worried about Prophet Mohammad's uncle? If someone hurts and insults another human being both physically and emotionally, no matter who is on the receiving side, the way that he did to Prophet Mohammad just because of his opinions and ideas what should we do to him? Isn't the freedom of speech what we are preaching and advocating? Or, since the person who is being hurt is someone whom we don't care about we should condone it. Isn't this a double standard? It's up to our two esteemed scholars to answer this simple question.

## WOMEN

Where in Avesta is the equality of man and woman mentioned? Which Avesta? The one that was written after the fall of the Sassanids or the one prior to that. I really would want to know as a seeker of truth. A lot can be written about the position of women in Islam, Dr. Stein's Article in the 44th edition of *Mirass-e Iran* is a proper place to start for those who are in search of truth.

## DRESS CODE

It is obvious that Iranian women are more covered than their western counterparts. However, on my trip to Iran in November of this year I saw young women wearing pants and a short coat, down to their buttocks. But one should admit that this dress code is as much Islamic as it is Iranian. Have we ever seen a statue of an ancient Iranian woman showing any part of her body? As a matter of fact, have we ever seen a statue of an Iranian man showing even his legs- like the Greeks and Romans? Completely naked men and women! Perhaps it's because Iranian men are very protective of their women and were too I've read or heard somewhere unfortunately I can-

not remember where (perhaps *Zan dar Zamane Sassani*) that we Iranians exported the notion of 'CHADOR' To the Islamic world. Hard to believe? I know.

**SASSANID QUEENS**

We Iranian have taken this historical fact out of proportion. Pourandokht came to power in about 630 A.D. and after a little over a year, since she could not remedy the chaos that had overcome the court and the country, resigned- or was forced to resign. The real rulers were the elite and the religious leaders- MOUBADAN who treated the young princes and princesses like puppets. After her, Pirouz II ascended to the throne but his reign lasted only a few months. Then Azarmidokht came to 'power' who like her sister did not have any authorities over what was going on in the country and had to resign- or was killed- after a few months. Therefore, when we boast about having two queens ruling Iran near the fall of Sassanids we should realize what we are talking about. The main reason for their coming to 'power' was that there were no male capable princes left after repeated massacres of them by whoever came to power. (Christensen 529) In four years between the death of Khosro Parviz and the ascension of Yazdegerd to the throne ten kings and queens came to 'power'. Yazdegerd was killed by a flour mill attendee in 64 A.D. and his body, surprisingly, was buried by a Christian bishop- not by Iranians or Zoroastrian clerics.

**POLITICS AND RELIGION**

The Sassanids were a combination of kings and clerics. The father and grandfather of Ardeshir I, the founder of the dynasty,

were Moubads of Anahid temple in Estakhr in Fars. All Sassanid kings received their kingship's blessing, supposedly, from Ahuramazda FARRAH-E-EIZADI . (Christensen 134)

And finally I have to say that when we start judging a religion which is followed by over a billion people worldwide, we should be careful in what we are saying or writing. History is a very complicated subject to comprehend. We cannot rely only on what we hear here and there. To provide an opinion we must read many books written in the past and present and do a lot of research as well. I suggest reading the following books, although most of them are in Farsi, to get a clear enough background of the Iranian history from the dawn of our civilization to the present time: *Iran dar Zamane Sassanian*, by Arthur Christensen, translated by Gholamreza Rashid Yasami; *Tarikh-e Kamele Iran*, by Dr. Abdollah Razi; *Tarikh-e Iran-e Bastan*, vol. 1-10, By Hassan Pirnia; *A History of Persia*, By Sir Percy Sikes, trans. Seyyed Mohammad T. Fakhr Daei Gilani; *Persia and the Persian Question*, by George Curzon, trans. Gh. Vahid Mazandarani; *Tarikh-e Mardom-e Iran*, Vol. 1 and 2, by Dr. A. Zarrinkoob; *Roozgaran: Tarikh-e Iran az aaghaz ta soghoote Pahlavi*, by Dr. A. Zarrinkoob; *Science and Civilization in Islam*, by Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, trans. Ahmad Aram; *An Apology for Mohammed and Koran*, by John Davenport; *Tarikh-e Oloom-e AghLi*, by Dr. Zabihollah Safa; *Naay-e Haftband*, by Dr. Ebrahim Bastani Parizi; *Safarnameh*, by Nasser Khosro Gbobadiani-e Marvazi.

I would like to apologize to both the author and critic and to the readers as well for my poor English. And a special note to the author; I recommend reading Matthew 10:33 through 39.

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**BOOK REVIEWS**

**PERSIAN GIRLS**

**Nahid Rachlin**

(Penguin Press 2007)

Once again Nahid Rachlin has given her public a book that will place you at the end of your seat. It is entertaining, informative and interesting because it is based on her own memories as a child in Iran. It seems she grew up in a family structure that gave her little in put into the way she would like to see her life. Her parents were loving but in her eyes much too controlling.

Throughout the book one is able to feel the deep commitment and love she had for her sister Pari and how devastated she was upon hearing she passed away, after she took a suspicious fall down the stairs in her house in Iran.

Her sister was forced into a loveless marriage which prevented her from ever realizing any of her own goals and dreams. It appears she went from one controlling environment to another. Nahid of the other hand was lucky enough to avoid the same life by going to America to pursue her education.

In many ways you do feel the underlying disappointment and perhaps guilt she has for her sister and on the other hand one must understand the need to survive.

The book is intriguing. She is a wonderful writer whose words easily paint an image for her readers. Having said that I believe the reader must be careful to avoid stereotyping all Iranian family units in the way she describes them.



**THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE:  
DRUGS AND STIMULANTS IN IRANIAN  
HISTORY, 1500-1900**

**Rudi Matthee**

Princeton University Press

From ancient times to the present day, Iranian social, political, and economic life has been dramatically influenced by psychoactive agents. This book looks at the stimulants that, as put by a longtime resident of seventeenth-century Iran, Raphaël du Mans, provided Iranians with damagh, gave them a “kick,” got them into a good mood. By tracing their historical trajectory and the role they played in early modern Iranian society (1500-1900), Rudi Matthee takes a major step in extending contemporary debates on the role of drugs and stimulants in shaping the modern West. At once panoramic and richly detailed, The Pursuit of Pleasure examines both the intoxicants known since ancient times wine and opiates – and the stimulants introduced later – tobacco, coffee, and tea – from multiple angles.

It brings together production, commerce, and consumption to reveal the forces behind the spread and popularity of these consumables, showing how Iranians adapted them to their own needs and tastes and integrated them into their everyday lives.

Matthee further employs psychoactive substances as a portal for a set of broader issues in Iranian history – most notably, the tension between religious and secular leadership. Faced with reality, Iran’s Shi’i ulama turned a blind eye to



drug use as long as it stayed indoors and did not threaten the social order.

Much of this flexibility remains visible underneath the uncompromising exterior of the current Islamic Republic. Rudi Matthee is Professor of History at the University of Delaware. He is the author of The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730.

“This is an extremely successful foray into the social history of Iran in the early modern period. This is a very rich and readable book. It is especially good at showing the wider significance of the pursuit of pleasure.”

**BRITAIN AND THE IRANIAN CONSTITUTIONAL  
REVOLUTION OF 1906-1911**

**FOREIGN POLICY, IMPERIALISM AND DISSENT**

**Mansour Bonakdarian**

Syracuse University press 2006

Finally there is an inclusive and unbiased book written about Iran and Britain’s relationship during the Iranian Constitutional movement. All too often books on this subject were not void of a particular position. The book addresses in depth the position of the Persia Committee founded in 1908 to lobby for a change in Britain’s foreign policy towards Iran.

The book deals extensively on the decisions of Sir Edward Grey on the politics that he inherited as British Liberal Foreign Secretary and how his decisions were based on the influence of dissenters, radicals, conservatives and liberals. He attempt to make the information understandable and digestible though at times one might still need a paper and pencil to chart out this period of history.



**THE KURDISH NATIONAL MOVEMENT, ITS ORIGIN  
AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Wadie Jwaideh**

Syracuse University 2006

This book was actually the original manuscript that the author used in defending his doctoral dissertation. His chairman secretly asked his wife to seek publication of the manuscript without the knowledge of her husband since he feared his perfectionism would halt any effort in a publication attempt. Unfortunately it was not published during his lifetime but his expertise on Kurdish nationalism was well known by other scholars. It is now published and offered by Syracuse University Press. Mr. Jwaideh was born in Basra and moved later to Baghdad. During his life he became attached to the land and people. This attachment caused him to develop a “shrewd insight” of the Kurdish politics and its society.

For one who is interested in a complete history of the Kurdish movement the book is complete. It provides an understandable narration of the Kurds fight for existence and position in a variety of wars. It is an excellent resource book.



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# IRAN'S ROMANCE WITH COMEDIES

International audiences have come to know Iranian cinema as a lyrical but slow-paced genre where horses slog through snowy Kurdish mountain passes and children spend two hours looking for a lost banknote. Such arthouse films may win plaudits at festivals such as Cannes, but they are not the sort of movies that break box office records in Tehran.

This summer's top flint in the Islamic republic was *Ceasefire*, a saccharine comedy in which two sexy newlyweds get so competitive with each other that they have to consult a psychologist to avoid divorce.

"People who spend money and time coming to movies prefer to have fun and leave smiling instead of solving philosophical problems in dark theatres," said Pouria Vali, a 21-year-old regular film-goer who has seen *Ceasefire* twice.

The film took more than US\$1 million (\$1.57 million) at the box office between May and July. Cinema tickets cost about US\$1 each in Iran. "Most people like comedies because they do not have much to laugh about these days," said Navid Etmnan, a 25-year-old student

queuing to watch the film.

"Artistic movies can reach out to foreign audiences, but not to ordinary people," he said. The success of *Ceasefire* comes as Iranian cinemas enjoy a boom, fueled largely by a greater number of home-grown romantic comedies which have lured people back to the big screen. Movie theatres took in more than \$2 million between March and May this year, up 100 per cent on the same period last year, state cinema authority Farabi said. "The stories are far better in this year's films and that is the right way to get people inside," said Akbar Nabavi, a cinema critic and documentary producer.

Romantic comedies fill a vacuum; people want to be amused but Hollywood's offerings often do not fit the bill in Iran, where censorship has been a constant factor since before the 1979 revolution.

State-imposed cultural restrictions mean many foreign films are heavily edited to meet the country's strict Islamic codes, or sometimes banned. And although people can watch blockbuster comedies from the United States and elsewhere on pirated DVDs many cannot understand them as they are not subtitled or dubbed.

There is also little appetite for home-grown films by such acclaimed figures as Abbas Kiarostami and Jafar Panahi - directors who have won praise abroad for using innuendo and metaphor, much like Eastern European directors who found ways to navigate the strictures of communist systems.

"People are fed up with stupid political games and they showed their lack of interest by turning their backs on movies as symbols of the political trends," said Nabavi. With 130 Iranian films looking for a screening each year, cinema managers tend to prefer crowd-pleasing comedies over harrowing tales of broken families.

While romantic comedies may be thriving, other genres are losing fans in a country with just 2% cinemas, 80 in Tehran. During the 1980-1988 war with Iraq, Iranian cinema



Tahmineh Milani, Iranian film maker

audiences were fed a heavy diet of war movies as directors had easy access to helicopters and tanks on the front-lines. But Kamal Tabrizi, a pioneering comedy director who used to make war films, said Iran could no longer compete in this genre.

"Making a war movie or an action film has become harder and more expensive day by day in Iran, and the Iranian films cannot compete with their blockbuster American rivals," Tabrizi said.

"People have easy access to the new Hollywood movies and compare Iranian films to those, 'and they find the Iranian products weakly crafted,' he said. The Iranian war epic *Duel*, the most expensive Iranian film, failed to make a big impression at the box office when it was released.

In 2004, Tabrizi's most notorious film was *The Lizard*, a box office hit about a thief who escapes from prison by dressing up as a cleric. Ironically, the crook then becomes very popular as a preacher.

Cinemas eventually pulled the film after religious hardliners called for it to be banned. Iran's horror scene has also failed to take off, with little appetite for *Girls Dormitory*, a bloody tale with supernatural overtones about a killer preying on female students. "A weak Iranian horror movie can only make people laugh," Tabrizi said. So, for now Iranian cinema will continue to grow on the back of innocent romances.

"I have come to watch the cute superstars in *Ceasefire* and laugh a bit, and I think that is pretty much what everybody wants from a movie," said Tina, a 17-year-old student who had bunked off from an afternoon language class to watch the film.

[www.iranian.com](http://www.iranian.com)

August 14, 2006

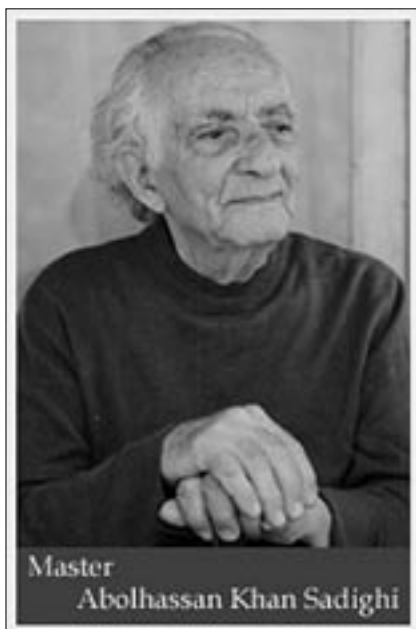


## THE SCULPTOR OF IRAN: MASTER ABOLHASSAN KHAN SADIGHI

(1894-1995)

*The following biography was originally written by Hadi Seif for Publication Centre of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO-IRAN. It was translated/revised by Jonathan Abolhassan Sadighi.*

taken from: [payvand.com](http://payvand.com)



The prominent Iranian painter and sculptor Master Abolhassan Khan Sadighi was born in the Odlaydjan area of Tehran in 1894. At the age of seven he went to the Aghdassieh school which was established by Sa'id al-Olamai Laridjani, one of the founders of the modern schools in Iran. Influenced by his family's encouragement, he entered the Alliance school after finishing his primary education. There, while learning various subjects, he instinctively was attracted to painting and drawing without any teacher or guidance. Though still unskilled and without experience, his first paintings and drawings awed the school officials, his parents, and his relatives.

His love for painting and drawing was so strong that, in the last year of his education at the Alliance school, he went away to Master All-Molk Ghaffari and attended his class in the School of Delicate

Crafts. Due to his untiring efforts in founding the mystery of creation and benefiting from the guidance and teachings of the most unique painter of the time, he became one of the most remarkable art students of the school. During his next three years in that school, he succeeded in getting a high degree diploma in painting. It was at the end of this educational time in the School of Delicate Crafts that Master Kamal-al-Molk, seeing his talent and efficiency, appointed him as a teacher of painting and drawing to that school.

Shortly after becoming a teacher, he started to find himself with a secret attraction towards sculpture. Without adequate means, he ventured to create his first stucco bust of a child and offered it to his great Master, Kamal-al-Molk. At that time, sculpture was unknown and without precedent not only in the School of Delicate Crafts, but in all of Iran. Therefore, Master Abolhassan Khan Sadighi's innovative first sculpture was the beginning of a new movement in the field in Iran.

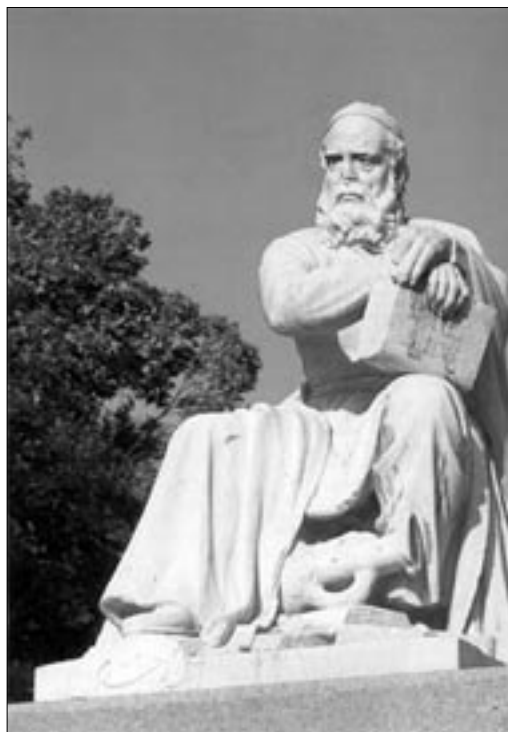
After numerous experiences in creating plaster sculptures, he made his first stone sculpture on a stucco model of *Venus de Milo*. The sculpture received so much credit and praise that Kamal-al-Molk took his apprentice and the *Venus* sculpture to the Court, and introduced him to Ahmad Shah of the Qajar dynasty. Then, after that meeting, he was offered a monthly salary from the order of Ahmad Shah and then became the director of the School of Delicate Crafts. Upon this honor, he totally devoted himself to sculpture and made sculptures from both plaster

and stone. These sculptures, such as the bust *Ferdowssi on the Eagle's Wings*, the full statue of *Amir Kabir*, and the most memorable of all, *Hadji Moqbel the Black Flute Player*, remained the most glorious artistic achievements of the School of Delicate Crafts. *Hadji Moqbel the Black Flute Player* would also be forever highly appraised by art experts around the World.

Sadly, 1928 was the year of the exile of Kamal-al-Molk to Hosseinabad of Nishabour and the dispersion of intimate pupils and friends of the school. It was so hard for Master Abolhassan to endure that, with a tiny amount of money that he had saved throughout the years, he went to Europe. In Europe he visited many countries, and for four years he studied sculpture at Ecole des Beaux-Arts in France. His teacher was Ange Albert, the skillful master of sculpture in Beaux-Arts.

Surprisingly, in Beaux-Arts he managed to prove himself more talented in competition with other art students at Ecole. During his stay in Europe, he created, in addition to sculptures, some works in oil and watercolour which showed the influence he got from the new European art movements of the time.

In 1932, after returning to Iran, he accepted a request, in obedience, from his exiled Master Kamal-al-Molk to re-open



Khayyam: Carrara Marble, Height: 185 cm, 1975  
Laleh Park - Tehran

the School of Delicate Crafts and be its director. Once again, the school became a center for the talented art students, many of whom were to play important roles in the development of sculpture in Iran.

The School of Delicate Crafts lasted almost to the death of Master Kamal-al-Molk, and then was closed forever for unknown reasons. However, sometime later another art school was established, called the School of Fine Arts. It was associated with the Ministry of Culture. After spending many years in seclusion and starting a family, Master Abolhassan Khan Sadighi did not accept the initial invitation for teaching at the new school. After a lot of persistence by those involved in the school and responsible for art, he inevitably accepted to teach sculpture in the School of Fine Arts.

A few years after the school was



**Plaster Model of Amir Kabir  
(Prepared for Bronz Cast)  
Height: 225 cm, 1976 - Milano**

established, it joined as a part of Tehran University. It then became known as the Faculty of Fine Arts and had various art branches, including a department for sculpture under the supervision of Master Abolhassan Khan Sadighi. In those active years, he taught and trained many talented young people, many of whom became sculptors later on. After spending years of hard work on teaching, training, and creating, he retired from Tehran University in 1967.

In addition to teaching sculpture to numerous art students and creating many artistically valuable oil and watercolour paintings, Master Abolhassan Khan Sadighi showed his artistic genius by making the huge and monumental stone statue of *The Angel of Justice*, which was 2.70 meters high and which was commissioned by the Ministry of Justice. This statue is undoubt-

edly one of the masterpieces of sculpture not only in Iran, but throughout the entire World.

In 1950, Master Abolhassan Khan Sadighi accepted a membership into the National Art Works Society and entered the most creative period of his life. He made many lasting statues of celebrated men of literature and science of Iran such as *Sheikh Sa'di* of Shiraz, *Ferdowsi of Tus*, the great philosopher and physician *Abu Ali Sina* (Avicenna), and the bronze statue of *Nader Shah Accompanied by His Horseman*, which was cast in Milan, Italy. The most important of his works during that period was the monumental and magnificent Statue of *Ferdowsi*, which was set up in Villa Borghese Square of Rome and made the sculptor well known to European art societies.

The career of Master Abolhassan Khan Sadighi as a sculptor ended, in fact, by making busts and statues of the Iranian poet and philosopher Khayyam. He then isolated himself from the art world almost entirely, and spent time raising his family, including my father, Farhad.

Alas, this unique old Master and forerunner of plastic arts in Iran has never said much about his past or revealed many mysteries hidden beneath his genuine creations. Had he spoken of himself or about his long life, the story of nearly one hundred years of painting and sculpture in Iran would have been more revealed to the public. When he did speak, he would only describe his paintings as some dust on paper and canvas and his sculptures as a waste heap of stone and plaster. Now it is indeed up to the future generations to evaluate Master Abolhassan Khan Sadighi's achievements and his contributions to the development of painting and sculpture in Iran and the rest of the World.



**Ferdowsi - Carrara Marble, Height: 185 cm, 1968  
Ferdowsi Piazza - Villa Borghese - Rome**



**Yaqub Leyth Saffari (Popularly Known as Rustam)  
Height: 450 cm, 1977 - Central Square of Zabul**

# READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN

by: Azar Nafisi  
(Random House, 2003)

A Review by:  
Azar Aryanpour

Part memoir and part literary critic, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* is a socio-cultural book with political implications about Iran's post-Revolutionary epoch. The work covers a period of 18 years beginning with the Khomeini era, and reveals the complexities of a traditional society engaged in a struggle for freedom and modernism. It is a mixture of personal encounter, media reports, and hearsay.

As a former student actively opposing American and Iranian governments during the Shah, Azar Nafisi supported the Iranian Revolution at first, but eventually became disillusioned with it. She studied in America, receiving a graduate degree in English and American literature, and then returned to Iran in 1979 just a few months into the Iranian Revolution. She taught at three universities for several years. Her selection of reading material for her students included *Lolita*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Daisy Miller*, and *Pride and Prejudice*. Nafisi attempted to relate the lives of Iranians under the Islamic Republic with those of the characters of her favorite authors, Nabokov, Fitzgerald, James,

and Austen. That effort may have been naïve and quixotic given the fact that the Islamic purists and revolutionaries were on the path of purifying the society of what they considered to be evil Western influences.

After several years of teaching, Nafisi became dismayed with the authoritarian and chauvinistic system. She gave up her teaching position, explaining that "My integrity as a teacher and a woman was being compromised by its insistence that I wear the veil... the issue was freedom of choice."

She then handpicked seven female students to attend private classes in her house for the remaining years of her stay in Iran. Together they continued to read several banned Western books. Nabokov's *Lolita* particularly mesmerized Nafisi. The book not only inspired Nafisi with the title of her memoir but also became its centerpiece.

*Reading Lolita in Tehran* is also a critique of the Islamic Republic of Iran with a bias for Western culture. Its account of the Islamic Republic's brutalities against innocent people is convincing. The exposé of the regime's atrocities, however, is nothing new except for Nafisi's fine diction and her intelligence in asserting literary critique, giving it a new perspective.

Azar Nafisi's critical approach in *Reading Lolita in Tehran* attempts to vilify the Iranian culture. Her socio-political views seem to be more compatible with the neoconservative reading of Middle Eastern societies and Islam. Nafisi's glorification of the previous regime is in stark contrast with her past political views, and with realities of Pahlavi Iran which in fact led to a massive revolution. In her own words, "When I first left Iran at the

age of 13, Iran had become such a shining star it was the point to which all my desires and dreams returned. When I went back home after the revolution in 1979, ... home was not really home."

She reports contradictory details in her story when she writes 'Dissatisfaction at the time of Khomeini's death was so high that at first, the officials had thought of burying him in the night.' Then, she adds that the number of the mourners was so great that tens of thousands of them were injured and some killed at Khomeini's funeral! At the time Ayatollah Khomeini was still so popular among millions of religious Iranians that it would have been inconceivable to bury him at night.

Iranians who love their country apart from its authoritarian politics, will find *Reading Lolita in Tehran* offensive to their culture. They may not see in Nafisi's book a reflection of their real lives. In a strange twist to her writing, the author shows a particular love for everything Western: coffee, ham, wine, books and friends, and much distaste for everything Iranian: music, dance, and literature. Great Persian poets and philosophers whose works are the source of pride of every Iranian, are virtually absent in her numerous references to classical literature. So are the ordinary people of Iran and their daily struggles for survival.

Despite claiming nightmares for fear of the regime's police, Nafisi tries adding drama to her story by fearlessly meeting with a secret friend whom she calls a 'magician' and with 'Jeff' "an American reporter from New York with whom I roamed the streets of Tehran for a few months." She writes, "I... longed to talk to someone who spoke English,

preferably with a New York accent, someone who appreciated Gatsby and Haagen-Dazs and knew about Mike Gold's Lower East Side."

While joining students in their opposition to the Islamic government, Nafisi often lacks a sense of emotional involvement and participation. One day as the guns start to fire on the demonstrators, she runs for her life. Then, suddenly, Nafisi meets a former classmate from long time ago and stops to chat. "In the midst of gunshots and chants we hugged and chatted about almost two decades since we had last seen each other!" Under the circumstances, it seemed an inappropriate time and place to chat even for an adventurous woman like the author.

The totalitarian regime Nafisi portrays in *Reading Lolita in Tehran* is inconsistent. The quick jail sentences, flogging, torture, and executions that take place every day are in contrast with her life style. Nafisi was never stopped for transgressing the imposed rules. Her secret friend, the 'magician', remained equally untouched. He roamed the streets of Tehran with the author, while breaking the law of a man walking with an unrelated married woman, but they did this without any incidents.

The author's criticism of the Revolution fails to provide adequate inquiry into the root causes of historical events. Turning to Iran-Iraq war, she writes, 'What triggered the war? Was it the arrogance of the new Islamic revolutionaries, who kept provoking ...regimes in the Middle East...? Was it the fact that the new regime held a special animosity towards Saddam Hussein, who had expelled the exiled Ayatollah...? Was it the old animosity between Iraq and Iran with promises of support from a



West hostile to Iran?"

In the end she does not elaborate on Iraq's growing animosity toward Iran after the 1975 treaty, which confirmed Iran's greater control over the Shatt al Arab waterway, Iraq's only sea outlet. She also remains silent in the role of America and the West in Iraq's war against Iran.

Nafisi certainly has the right to change her political views, but one wonders whether the change is due to realizing the falsehood of her idealism about the revolution or whether she is taking advantage of new opportunities. It is not Nafisi's writing per se but the political implications in her book that has disturbed many Iranian intellectuals. They fear that her self-serving memoir was written with American audience in mind by presenting mostly negative images of Iran and its culture.

Toward the end of the book and thinking of her secret friend, the "magician", Nafisi writes, "Was he real? Did I invent him? Did he invent me?"

The book left me with some questions of my own: Is the author real? Has she invented herself? Have the readers, with the help of some media, invented her? For whom did she write her book? Did she teach the Western classics in Persian or English? Were her students knowledgeable enough in English language to comprehend the writings of her selected Western authors? Would it not have been more appropriate to teach less controversial Western classics to her students?

In my opinion Reading Lolita in Tehran is an informative novel that dances around the real issues of Iranian politics, culture, and society. With this perspective, the book is engaging and worth reading.

## PASSING OF CELEBRATED IRANIAN VIOLIN PLAYER PARVIZ YAHAGHI



**Veteran Iranian violin player Faramarz Sediqi-Parsi, known as Parviz Yahaghi, died at the age of 71 in Tehran early Friday, February 2, 2007. Yahaghi died of unknown reasons in his house, according to his fellow musician Davud Ganjei.**

**Parviz Yahaghi, was born in Tehran in 1936. Yahaghi started his music career under the supervision of his uncle, Hussein Yahaghi. Since his uncle, Hussein Yahaghi, was a well-known person among the Iranian art-**

**ists, lots of great musicians of his time would gather at his home from time to time.**

**This gave Parviz a very golden opportunity to meet the top Iranian musicians like Ostad Abul Hassan Saba, Reza Mahjubi, Shahnaz, Tehrani, Zelli, Ney Davoud and others. There is no doubt that these meetings were his inspiration to turn him into one of the best musicians in the history of Iran. His first performance for children on radio proved his success.**

**He started contributing to "Golha" program when**

**he was 18, composing "My Beloved, Where Are You?" which was sung by the late vocalist Gholamhossein Banan. His presence in Golha (before the revolution) introduced a new era and made his works everlasting. He married Homeyra, a singer, but they later divorced. The combination of Yahaghi's violin and Homeyra's voice has been remained one of the best of its kind. The virtuoso composed other beautiful and inspiring works during his career.**

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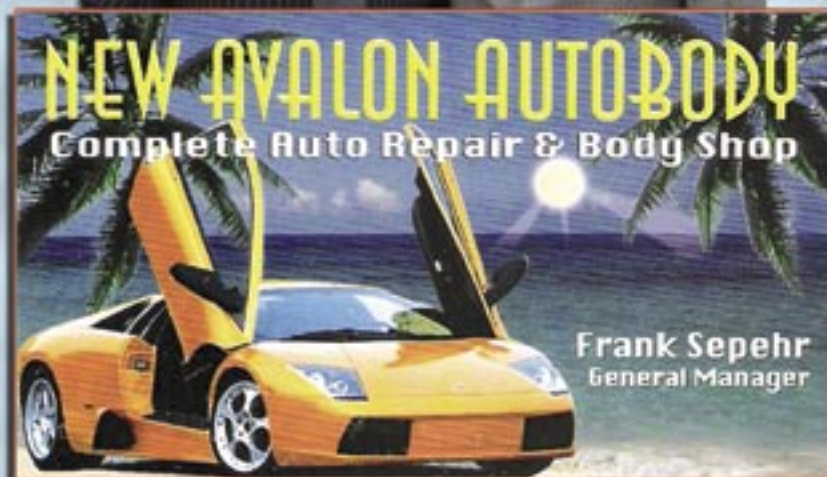
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[FrankSepehr@yahoo.com](mailto:FrankSepehr@yahoo.com)

I Fariborz Sepehrnia have been studying theology and comparative religions in the past twenty five years I have studied the Old, New and the final testaments in farsi, English and Arabic, I am well aquiented with the Torah, Gospel and the Guran, I have served in the board of directors of the Islamic center of south bay L.A.. I am involved with the Interfaith Alliance one nation Many Faith. On the last day of the Holy Month of Ramadan, 2006 I had the pleasure of meeting with Sheriff Lee Baca of the Los Angeles county Sheriff Department in West L.A at the Emon Cultural Center, the purpose of this meeting was an enter faith activity between Muslims, Christians, and Jews, Sheriff Lee Baca emphasized on some very important issues facing all of us in the faith community, such as united we stand, divided we fall, he said that interfaith activity has never been more important than now, we all should participate in our local interfaith communities with churches, Senegal's, and mosques. We all need to educate ourselves about each other, the bottom line is once we know much about each other we see that we all have more in common than what we all think, we should emphasis on our commonalities rather than our differences he said.

I Fariborz Sepehrnia have been an interfaith activist in my community since October 2001, I have had the pleasure of going to many Churches and Senegal's to deliver speeches to the youth with respect the the Great Religion of Islam, My Gole has been to establish a friendship and a good relationship within our communities Churches, Senegal's, and Masques, I hope to build bridges of understanding between our comm unites and to defuse tentions and hatred toward each other, in fact I teach tolerance and Patience for one and other, and I believe in peace and prosperity insted of death and distruction. For example in some of my speeches I inform the Jewish people did you know that in our Holy Quran God mentioned the name of Moses More than Prophet Mohammad Himself, or I tell them in (Surah 2:62) God said -Those who believe in the Quran, and those who follow the Jewish Scriptures, and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in God and the Last Day and work righteousness shall have their reward. Another Surah 5:5 - This day all things good and pure are made lawful for you. The food of the People of the book is lawful for you, and yours is lawful for them.

It was Muslim Spain, the only land the Jews knew in nearly a thousand years of their dispersion, which made the genius of physician Moses Maimonides possible.

I do encourage every one to get involve in interfaith meetings and gathering, may God bless you all.

for more information how to get involved please email me

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or call me @ 310-350-1317  
Fariborz Sepehrnia

continuing from previous issue

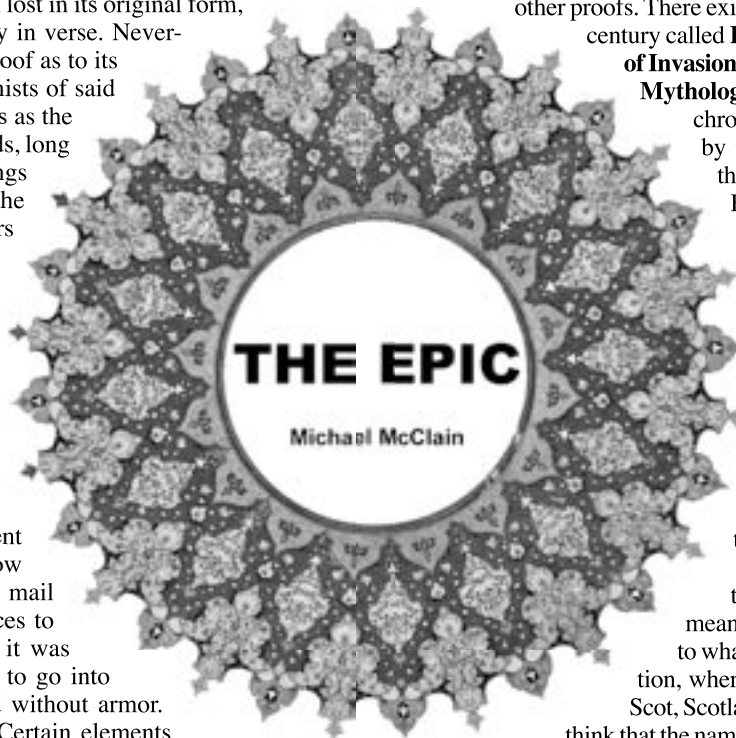
However, anyone knowledgeable in Celtic studies could inform the above-mentioned scholars that, as the English say, this is “utter bilge”. In the first place, the earliest Welsh and Breton versions of **Tristan and Isolt** are far earlier than the time of the Crusades. In the second -place, there are the Irish romances **Deirdre of the Sorrows**, which is really part of the **Ulster Cycle** and **The pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne**, which is part of the **Leinster Cycle** or **Fenian Cycle** of the Irish epic are very ancient indeed and whose plot is also that of **Vis and Ramin** and **Tristan and Isolt**. The only possible conclusion is that the common plot of these three romances goes back to a time when the Celts and the Iranians had not yet separated. This is proof of the great antiquity of the Celtic epic tradition, and is also yet another proof of the close kinship between Celts and Iranians, between Erinn and Iran. Finally, it is yet another proof that the Spanish Celts must have possessed an epic tradition. The **Ulster Cycle** has come down to us in a mixture of prose and verse, which shows that it has been lost in its original form, which was no doubt entirely in verse. Nevertheless there is no lack of proof as to its ancient origin. The protagonists of said epic cycle use the same arms as the pre-Roman Gauls, i.e., shields, long swords, lances, javalins, slings and war chariots. Also in the **Ulster Cycle** one encounters customs typical of the pre-Roman Gauls, such as the use of the chariot for transport, but combat on foot, svered heads as war trophies and giving the choicest cuts of meat to the most valiant warrior. Another ancient custom mentioned in the **Ulster Cycle** is the “heroic nudity”. Although the ancient Irish knew perfectly well how to forge armor and coats o mail (there is no lack of references to armor in the **Ulster Cycle**, it was considered a mark of valor to go into battle without a helmet and without armor. David Greene has noted: “Certain elements of the society portrayed in the **Tain bo Cualnge** (a “catha” or chanson de geste of the **Ulster Cycle**) - totem and tabu, taking heads as war trophies, combat in chariots - were unknown in Christian Ireland, and therefore cannot be inventions of literary men influenced by Latin culture”. Proof of the high antiquity of **Deirdre of the Sorrows**, and **The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne** and therefore also proof that the common plot of **Vis and Ramin**, **Tristan and Isolt**, **Deidre of the Sorrows** and **The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne** was not brought to Western Europe as a result of the Crusades. In conclusion, although the version which we have of the **Ulster Cycle** is of relatively late date (6th or 7th Century AD), it is perfectly clear that it is based on authentic epic traditions conserved with care over the centuries. It is also perfectly clear that no part of the **Ulster Cycle** was brought to Western Europe as a result of the Crusades. Many centuries after the composition of the Irish epics, the bards of Wales and

Brittany created a new epic cycle based on the life of a Celtic Briton king and his knights who fought against the Saxons. No doubt said cycle contains much material older than the time of King Arthur. As we will attempt to show later, the Grail legend appears to be in this category. En toto, the **Arthurian Cycle** is an excellent example of the persistence of the Celtic epic tradition. No doubt the **Mabinogion** and other collections of Welsh legends contain fragments of lost epic cycles. One may say the the same concerning a vast number of legends of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, as well as the ballads and romances which are so plentiful in Celtic lands. As we said before, **Tristan and Isold** as well as **Deirdre of the Sorrows** and **The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne** are examples. We shall speak of this in more detail when dealing with the Parthian gosans or epic bards.

Apart from direct evidence in Greek and Roman sources, the analogy with other Celtic peoples and the proofs of the high antiquity of the Celtic epic tradition make it very likely indeed that the Spanish Celts possessed an epic tradition. There are yet other proofs. There exists an Irish chronicle of the 7th century called **Leabhar na Gabhala** or **Book of Invasions** whose content is related to the **Mythological Cycle**. The theme of said chronicle is the conquest of Ireland by the Celts. The chronicle says that the Celts came from Scythia.

For this reason the author says that the Celts are descendants of Japhet, son of Noah, because Flavius Josephus in **Antiquities of the Jews** says that Magog, son of Japhet, was the ancestor of the Scythians. Perhaps there is a memory of the ancient relation between the Celts and the Scythians in the name **Scotta**, one of the female protagonists of the **Leabhar na Gabhala** and in the name **Scot**, which anciently meant “Irish”, but which was taken to what is now Scotland aby a migration, where it is still found in the names **Scot**, **Scotland**, **Scotch** and **Scottish**. Some think that the names “Scythian” and “Scot” come from the Iranian stem *skuth*, which means “archer”.

In the light of what we have said above, it is well to remember that the Parthians were of “Saka” or Scythian origin. The first Celts who came to Ireland were called “the People of Partholan”. These Celts were defeated by the Formorio **Afraic**, a seafaring people (*mor* = sea), apparently Indo-Europeans but not Celts. Because he did not understand the name **Afraic**, the author of the chronicle says that the Formorians were descendants of Ham, son of Noah, ancestor of the Africans. Now it is thought that “**Afraic**” is related to the Sanskrit *aparic*, which means “Occident” or “Occidental”, something perfectly reasonable in the context. In Ireland the 1st of May, the ancient feast of **Beltain**, is still celebrated as the anniversary of the arrival of Partholan in Ireland. The name “Partholan” appears to be related to the Vedic Sanskrit stem *parashu*, which means “war axe”, from which come the names **Persia**, **Parsi**, **Parthian** and **Parisi**, this last the name of



a Celtic tribe of Gaul and Britain from whence comes the name "Paris". Pliny (3,8 & 5,6) and Salustius (Jug.) speak of Persian in what is now Western Andalusia. It appears evident that said "Persians" were Celts.

After the people of Partholan two more Celtic groups reached Ireland, apparently from Gaul. The first group, "the people of Neimidh (which may mean "he who has a name" or "the renowned") or the Firbolg (whose name comes from Bolga, Celtic god of thunder, equivalent to the Vedic **Indra** was in the beginning defeated by the Formorians, but returned and succeeded in establishing themselves, although they were unable to conquer the whole island. Later arrived the Tuatha de Danaan, "the people of (the goddess) Danaan". As we said before, Danaan is an aquatic goddess, "sister" of the Iranian **Anahita** and the Vedic Danu. The Firbolg and the Tuatha de Danaan, hostile at first, soon discovered that they were kinsmen who spoke the same language. On the 1st of November is celebrated in Ireland the feast of Samhain, which commemorates the great battle of Moytura between the Formorians and the Tuatha de Danaan.

**The Leabhar na Gabhala** also speaks of a great king in Spain named Breoghan, who founded the city of Braganza among others. One of his descendants, named Milidh, served in Egypt as a mercenary and returned to Spain where he died, but soon afterward a group of Celts left Spain for the conquest and definitive Celtization of Ireland. It is interesting to note here that in the Irish tradition the three most ancient Gaelic poems were composed by a Spaniard, the bard of the "People of Milidh" called Amergin Glungel. Said poems are clearly pagan and are of a philosophical-theological nature, since their main topic is metempsychosis or reincarnation. The name "Milidh" appears to be related to two Sanskrit words: mil = "assembly" or "congregation" and, by extension, "army" (see the Latin miles) and the suffix dha, "he who has" or "owner". "Milidh" therefore means "Leader of the Army". Note that a particular city, Braganza, is mentioned together with a reasonable etymology of its name. Also, said quotation from the **Leabhar na Gabhala** is related to certain Spanish legends. The local legend of the city of La Coruna in Galicia concerns a lighthouse on a headland in the outskirts of the city. The present lighthouse is mainly of Roman construction, but according to the local legend in pre-Roman times there existed another tower on the same site. Breoghan climbed to the top of this tower, and from there saw Ireland far to the North. It was thus that the descendants of Breoghan knew of the existence and whereabouts of Ireland, and thus some of them migrated there. To this day most Cornuses call the lighthouse "the Tower of Breoghan". Celtic ruins abound in La Coruna and its immediate vicinity. Anyone familiar with Galicia who has read the novel **Bard** by Morgan Llewelyn will recognize "the stronghold by the headland" of said novel as La Coruna. However, the city of Betanzos, not far from La Coruna, which was called "Brigantia" in pre-Roman times, also claims to be the port from whence the descendants of Breoghan left for Ireland. The anthem of Galicia is called Fogar de Breoghan (home of Breoghan), and there are even soccer teams named for Breoghan.

A relative of the very old Gallego family called Caamaño, dona Mercedes Gil Rigueira of Santiago de Compostela, has in her possession a manuscript which the department of paleography of the University of Santiago de Compostela says is of the 17th Century. The anonymous author of said chronicle speaks of a local tradition concerning a king named Brigo. In a very Renaissance manner, said author attempts to relate something not well understood to the classical world. The author did not take

his information from Irish sources, since he does not mention Ireland, nor does he mention Braganza. Numerous Gallegos have told me of oral traditions among illiterate villagers concerning Brigo or Breoghan.

It is said that Arcos de la Frontera, near Jerez de la Frontera and not far from Doñana, was originally called Arcobrigan from its founder, a king named Brigo. Here we are very far south of Galicia, near the mouth of the Guadalquivir and not far from Gibraltar. The Celtic names Brigo and Breoghan are related to the Sanskrit stem brih, which means "great" or "excellent" and "prayer". The Indo-European ghw and gh are h or gh in Sanskrit, hard "g" (as in "gum") in Celtic. From the stem "brih" come the names **Brahman** and Brihaspati (lit. "Lord of Prayer"), the Vedic god of wisdom and eloquence to whom 11 hymns of the Rig Veda are dedicated as well as the name of the Celtic goddess of wisdom, Brigit. Note the similarity between the name "Brigit" and the participle of "brih", which is brihati. In reference to the names Brigo and Breoghan, the presence or absence of the final "n" is of no importance. The final "n" is a case ending of the accusative, genitive and dative in certain declensions of Old Irish and a case ending of the vocative and accusative in certain declensions of Sanskrit. "Aryan" is Arya (nom), Aryan (accus) in Sanskrit, Airya in Avestan, Iran in Persian and Eriu (nom), Erinn in Celtic. From "Erinn" comes the name "Ireland", which, like "Iran", means "Land of the Aryans". The arco of Arcobrigan may also have a Celtic etymology. In Celtic ardd, ard and ardu mean "high" or "height". Sanskrit has two words for "high" and "height", i.e., aruda and aroha. The relation between the Celtic "ardd", "ard" and "ardu" on the one hand and the Sanskrit "aruda" on the other is clear. "Aroha" is cognate with the Latin arx, "fortress" or "height", and the Persian arg, fortress. Now, within the great Indo-European family, it is precisely with the Indo-Aryan, Iranian and Italic groups that the Celtic languages have most relation. It would be very strange indeed if a stem found in Sanskrit, Persian and Latin did not at some period also exist in Celtic. By the laws of phonetic changes within the Indo-European languages, "aroha" in Celtic would be "arg", the same as in Persian. One may assume that the stem "arg" disappeared from the Celtic languages before they came to be written in the 6th-7th centuries AD, surviving only in place names. Near Noya on the Western coast of Galicia is a place called **Argalo**, once important but now reduced to a village. This name readily breaks down to "Arg-Galo", "the Fortress of the Gallaecos", the Gallaecos being a Celtic tribe from which the name "Galicia" is derived. So, at last we have something similar to Arcobrigan, "the Height of Breoghan" or "the Fortress of Breoghan". Later the "arg" fused with the Latin cognate "arx", giving "Arcobrigan". Anyone who has visited the lovely town of Arcos de la Frontera will testify to the appropriateness of this name.

Historic-linguistic studies appear to confirm the historical basis of the **Leabhar na Gabhala**. For phonetic reasons, the Celtic languages are divided into two groups, that of the "p" and that of the "q". In pre-Roman times the Celts of the "p" occupied all the island of Britain and all Gaul except for a zone in what is now the French Alps which was occupied by a tribe called the Quariates, apparently of the "q". Until the great migrations from Ireland to Scotland in the 5th-5th centuries AD and the less important migrations from Ireland to Wales and Cornwall during the same period, there were no Celts of the "q" in any part of Britain and apparently never had been. The Celts of the "q" are found in Ireland, and, after the 5th Century AD in Scotland. Also, the great



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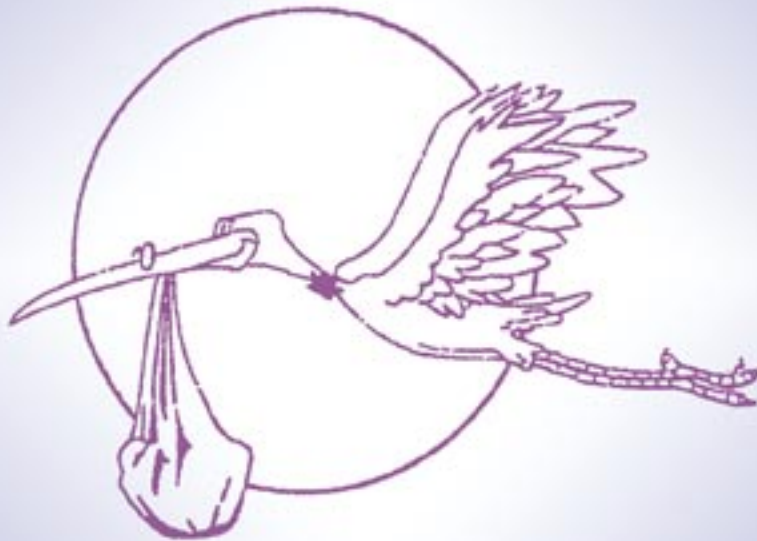
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majority of the Spanish Celts were Celts of the “q”. The latest researches affirm that there were indeed four waves of Celts who reached Ireland, the first group being little known, the second and third groups being Celts of the “p” (shown by analysis of personal and place names) and the fourth (which finally came to dominate the whole island) were Celts of the “q”. It is somewhat difficult to explain how Celts of the “q” could have come to Ireland if not from Spain; besides, it appears that there were relations between Ireland and Spain even in pre-Celtic times.

Therefore it would appear that the **Leabhar na Gabhala** has a historical basis, and that the legends of King Brigo or Breoghan, found from Galicia in the extreme North of Spain to Arcos de la Frontera in the extreme South, as well as the references to Breoghan and Milidh in the **Leabhar na Gabhala** all from an epic cycle of the Spanish Celts. In the case of the references to Breoghan and Milidh this epic cycle was in part at least brought to Ireland by a migration, as a great part of the **Ulster** and **Leinster** cycles were brought from Ireland to Scotland by a later migration. In this connection it is interesting to note that, according to the **Leabhar na Gabhala** Milidh served in Egypt as a mercenary. In the books of Henri Hubert cited various times in this work are mentioned numerous cases of Celts serving as mercenaries in the Near East, including Egypt. Also, the case of archaic words such as “aparc” or “afraic” shows the antiquity of the **Leabhar na Gabhala**. It is interesting to note here that, as was said before, “Deva”, the name of various rivers in northern Spain, is pure Sanskrit. It would appear evident that “Deva” as well as “afraic” date back to a period in which the Celtic languages were much nearer to Sanskrit and Avestan than they are at present. One may conclude that it was the “vatis” or “faith” who conserved the memory of Breoghan or Brigo in Ireland and Spain. Alfonso X “the Wise” was not completely misguided when he used the chansons de geste as historical sources. As Heinrich Schliemann demonstrated by his discoveries at Troy, the historical memory of a people who have a strong epic tradition is not to be despised, and one should not underestimate the persistence and the care with which the epic poets preserved and transmitted their traditions.

A “catha” whose theme is a frontier incursion has a special name; it is called a **tain**. The **Tain Bo Cualnge** (the tain of Cooley), the **Tain Bo Regamna**, the **Tain Bo Aigen** and the **Tain Bo Fraich** are all part of the Ulster Cycle. It is not difficult to see in these tain the forerunners of the border ballads of Scotland which deal with the constant wars and incursions on the frontier between England and Scotland. The theme of these ballads is “bonnets over the border”: “England shall for many a day/Speak of the deadly fray/When blue bonnets came over the border”, as these ballads say. In the frontier romances of Spain which deal with the frontier between Castile and the Muslim Kingdom of Granada at times one may detect admiration for the courage and chivalry of the Muslims. In the Scottish border ballads there is no feeling toward the English save implacable hatred, as these lines show:

Burn their women, ugly, untrue  
 Burn their uncouth children too  
 In the cabins and in the palaces  
 Princes and peasants, burn them all  
 While you have breath do not pardon the Sassenachs  
 (Saxons, Englishmen)  
 Drown them in the pounding waves

For the Scottish frontiersman, the only good “Sassenach” is a dead one.

*to be continued*

## A family Garden



On one rare occasion we were invited by our friends Jassem and Vida to their *bagh* (garden) near *Mohammad-Shahr* in the Karaj area, near Tehran. A *bagh* is a large or small piece of land in the country where people usually grow fruit trees, vegetables and flowers. At the lunch time, Vida and their daughter Rana and I went to gather some fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, basil, tarragon, parsley, baby leeks, green peppers etc.. We were able to have a lovely lunch, with freshly picked vegetables, fruits and herbs.

Jassem Ghazbanpour is a well known Iranian photographer whose books of photographs of Iran are world famous, especially his two collections, “The Splendour of Iran” and “Bam”.

Jassem and Vida told us that they have planted such variety and diverse type of flowers in their *bagh* that at anytime of the year when they go there, there are some flowers, even in winter they have edelweiss.

Syma Sayyah, [pavand.com](http://pavand.com)





## Interview with **SHARDAD ROHANI**

**Worldwide Famous Iranian  
Conductor & Composer**

*The night that Shardad Rohani conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Acropolis and performed a violin duel with Karen Briggs he shocked the music world. I was mesmerized as I watched him perform and was proud to see him on an international television broadcast. Shardad Rohani, through his art and understanding, is truly an ambassador of peace and a proud messenger for the Iranian community.*

Shahrokh Ahkami



*Thank you for giving us the time for this interview. You need no introduction you have been a household name at least since the mid eighties. In fact I can remember how proud I was back then to see your records and tapes displayed in the major record stores. Finally, I thought, we have an Iranian who has achieved worldwide recognition. How did your interest in music begin?*

It was at very young age, maybe five or six. My actual education started at the Music Conservatory in Tehran. After graduating I went to the Academy of Music in Vienna, Austria where I got my Masters in composition and conducting. Then I continued my studies at UCLA in Los Angeles where I learned the art of compos-

ing and conducting film music. My career thus far has been rewarding and successful and I hope to continue in this direction for many more years. By invitation I have conducted numerous Symphony Orchestras around the world. This opportunity has allowed me to get acquainted with the people and the culture of the countries I visited. This is all very interesting to me and I believe it increases the depth of my musical composition. When I travel I always try to promote my Iranian culture. I want the world to see the wonderful values and gifts of this culture. My profession has also given me the unique opportunity to understand the similarity and differences in cultures and learn from them.

***Do you go back to Iran?***

Yes and when I go there I spend a few weeks conducting and working with the musicians of the Tehran Symphony

Orchestra. I enjoy working with them very much. Working with these young people brings back memories from my own youth. I enjoy sharing my experiences with them and hope that this will enhance their musical professions.

***What was the first musical instrument that sparked your interest and how did it happen?***

My father, Reza Rohani, who passed away, was always interested in music. Because of this I was exposed to a variety of musical instruments in my own home at a very young age. My first instrument was piano and at the age of ten I studied violin at the Tehran Music Conservatory. While there I was introduced to the traditional Persian instruments such as the *santour*, the *Ney* (the Persian flute) and the *kamancheh*. My interest in conducting, as remembered by my mother, also came

at an early age. She once told me a story about how she snuck into my room one day and was suspicious as to something I was hiding behind my back. She then saw in my reflection in a mirror that it was a pencil. When she questioned me I told her that I was conducting in front of the mirror. The experience, however, that cemented my interest came at age sixteen when I conducted a 65 piece orchestra that played one of my original compositions.

***There are at least two people with Persian origin at the international music level, Zubin Mehta (Parsi from Indian) and you Mr. Shardad Rohani. How do you separate the music form the west and east and how do they influence each other and you?***



This is a very interesting question. Because my foundation of music was formed in Iran. I am able to see and use both cultures in my composition and conducting. Of course, whether by choice or not Persian music and music from the east are rooted inside of me. Having said that I am also stimulated and influenced by the culture and surroundings I received in from my travels abroad. All are ingredients to what my music is today.

In regards to Zubin Mehta and myself there is one difference. Along with conducting I also compose music. Mr. Mehta is a genius and he is one the greatest conductors of all time.

***Has your Persian culture ever been a handicap for you?***

No, not really. In every culture there are positives and negatives. The art is to learn from the positives and disregard the negatives. As I previously said I had a fortunate

foundation in music, I was born and raised in a very special part of the world. When I went abroad to study in Vienna my Persian influence came with me and I learned to incorporate it into the western culture.

***Entering the Conservatory in Vienna is very difficult what conditions should a student have to be accepted at the Conservatory?***

In 1975 when I went abroad to study the level of classic music in Iran was very high. Students from Iran desiring to study music abroad had no difficulties with the entrance exams. I remember it was not difficult for me to enter Vienna Music Academy. In fact I did not have to take some of the courses at the Academy. All I had to do was pass the oral and written exams of the course. This helped me take four years off my studies.

***The first time I saw you perform I was filled with emotion. It was at the Acropolis with Yanni and the London Philharmonic Orchestra we were all glued to our TVs. How did this project develop?***

Yanni had heard one of my CDs and became interested in my work. He got in touch with me and after that we began the project which took about one and one-half years. We also toured together throughout Europe and the United States but the highlight for me was the Acropolis concert.

***The part of the program where you played dueling violin with Karen Briggs was brilliant.***

The entire program was magical but yes this part of the program brought so much interest. There were so many articles addressing this piece and every where I go, still today, people question and compliment the performance.

***Were you nervous?***

The entire event was a bit nerve racking. Remember it was a live outdoor per-

formance and up until one half hour before the concert began, the sky was cloudy. The entire performance and technical crew were on pins and needles. Had it rained it would have been a disaster. Miraculously the clouds disappeared and the night was enchanting. As to my performance with Ms. Briggs, I have to admit that I was a bit concerned. After all this was being recorded live and unlike a studio session there was no room for any mistakes.

***How did you calm your nerves?***

Well I started by forgetting that I was Shardad Rohani, I forgot myself and just became an Iranian who was at the Acropolis with the London Philharmonic and being watched by millions of people across the world. I knew I could not make a mistake because this performance was not just about me it was about all Iranians. This was not the prestige of one person the matter was greater. These are the things that gave me strength today. It did become one of the highlights of the event and I remember one reputable American paper writing that the violin duel between Rohani and Briggs was the highlight of the concert.

***You spoke earlier of your return visits to Iran would you now expand on your activities while there?***

There is a music society in Iran and I know many of the members from my earlier days. I have always respected the work they do in improving the music in Iran and for that reason it is a pleasure for me to assist them in any way I am able. A few years ago I went there to work with the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, as I am sure you are aware, the majority of the population in Iran is under thirty, that is over thirty-five million. When I go there, I practice with these young musicians. A few weeks later we have a five night concert. This has been well received by the public who come from all over Iran to attend the event. I am told that when the tickets go on sale they are sold out within hours. The interesting part of this Orchestra and the choral group is that half of the members are women. They are so talented and bright. It is such an experience to work with these young people.

***You had an album with Mr. Ali Reza Assar and I have seen his work, they are very***

*interesting and unusual.*

I met him in Iran and I was at one of his concert. You are right his work is very interesting. He is one of the rare singers that has a musical education and knows multiple instruments, such as the piano and guitar, he even composes. Recently I recorded an album, all original compositions with the London Symphony Orchestra and poems by Rumi and Ahmad Shamlou as well as a few younger active Persian poets. You can only imagine the beauty of the final production. It is now on sale in Iran and it will soon be distributed around the world.

*You held a new concert at UCLA with a sixty-five piece orchestra. The money raised from the performance went to*



*the orphaned children of the world, can you tell us a little more about the event?*

When the invitation came to perform and conduct this event I accepted the request with my whole heart because of the cause. We used the American Youth Symphony Orchestra which is one of the best Youth Orchestra in the country. There was a fantastic thirteen year old violinist by the name of William Hagan a prodigy who performed a very difficult classic piece and of course my daughter Sara, who sang a beautiful Aria by Gluck. The event was a tremendous success.

*Give me one of your happiest and saddest memories on stage.*

I am happy to say that there are not

sad memories and happy ones are plentiful. One of the best was playing at the Acropolis and another when I returned to the Rudaki Hall in Tehran after a long absence to perform. I used to go to this hall and watch the concerts when I was a student in Tehran. Imagine how it felt to be performing on that same stage. I was overwhelmed. The first night my mother was sitting in the front row. At the end of the concert they brought a piano on stage I played a tribute to my mother. The title was Isfahan arranged for piano and orchestra and the melody is by Mr. Javad Maroufi, it was her favorite piece. What a wonderful memory, though I was performing for the people, my mind and heart was with my mother.

*In these concerts that you conduct all over the world, do you use Persian instruments.*

In my last concert in Los Angeles I combined Persian percussion instruments such as *Daf* and *Naghareh* with the western instruments that is used in Symphony Orchestra. This concert was very well received and I am intending to do more concerts like that. In some of the programs I conduct abroad I try to use instruments that are native to the land.

For example I had one in Thailand last year and a young composer from Thailand wrote a piece for an instrument called the Ranad.

*Beside your school and family did you have any professors or others who influenced you?*

Yes I had a violin teacher Mr. Abraham Rouhifar who is still alive. There is also Maestro Hossein Dehlavi who was the head of the music Conservatory in Iran, Maestro Mostafa Kamal Pourtorab and Mr. Farhad Fakhroddini. All of them helped me become who I am today.

*You are now giving that same opportunity to other young Persian musicians and this must remove a heavy load from the shoulders of those teachers.*

I hope this is the case because one of the reasons I insist to go to Iran is to transfer as much knowledge I have about music to the students and the audience.

*I am aware of a young boy about age four who has a deep interest in music and instruments. You also started at a young age. Do you believe that such a fixation on this subject at such an early age is abnormal?*

I did not start at that age but yes I was also very young. The parents of children who show a concentrated interest in the arts or anything, should do everything they can to nurture the interest. Because he is interested in music I would suggest that he'll be exposed to a variety of instruments. They should be grateful, all too often one must drag a child to music school. Parents have a duty and obligation to direct the child to the proper place for musical study. One must always remember that music is a language and a subject. As a language it is an international means of expression. As a science there is so much to learn about it. To be successful in this profession goes beyond playing talent and skills, and to be great you must have a talent and drive to constantly learn and practice.

There were many days that I practiced the violin straight for four hours, I would not stop until I met my goal of the day. Anyone who is interested in making music his/her profession must give that much time and more to its study. They must dedicate themselves to learn and advance his/her technique. And then you as the parent or teacher must watch their development and nourish their desire. Often children up to 11 years old and even prodigies, good musicians, and composers, can lose their interest and move to another profession.

If this child you speak of was mine I would do everything to help his interest, because interest is the number one condition for you to continue.

*Do you have any message for our readers?*

I hope that young Iranians, and there are many, work hard to achieve a high level in whatever profession they may select. This is not just an individual accomplishment but one that proudly represents their culture and roots.

# MICHIKO AND HAFEZ

Written by Farideh Jahanbin, from Maryland 2006

Her name was Michiko; this name suited her small figure and her little proportions. She was my daughter's roommate and during the time that they were at the same house, whenever my daughter wanted to come to our home for dinner, Michiko was welcomed to join too. She was so kind and so polite that made a good impression on everybody. She was interested in other cultures. She was trying to learn Farsi, our language. To do this, she was trying to memorize words and phrases. She pronounced words in such a cute and gentle manner that every body enjoyed listening. She loved our foods too.

One of Persia's special foods is a green food consisting of chopped parsley, cilantro, spinach and green onions. We roast the greens and mix them with already boiled red beans and pieces of roasted beef. At the end we roast some fenugreek and add it to this mixture. The seasoning is dried lemon, which gives a nice aroma to the food and makes it a little bit sour. We serve this food, "*Gormeh Sabzi*," with white rice topped with saffron. Michiko tried to learn how to make this food and when I wrote her the recipe she tried it several times.

Last year she wanted to go back to Japan, and decided to make this food at home for her parents. I gave her a few whole dried lemons and two or three spoonfuls of dried fenugreek. She took her precious ingredients to Japan and said the green vegetables can be easily found there fresh.

She left the US, and after two or three days my daughter called me to say that Michiko had prepared the food, but that she was complaining that it didn't taste as good as before. I told my daughter to e-mail her to tell her not to worry, because when *Glormeh Sabzi* stays one night in the refrigerator, it will ripen and taste much better the next day.

Every time that she came to our home, after dinner in order to amuse them, I used to recite



some poems by Hafez. Hafez has been the most popular poet in Iran for the last eight centuries.

Each of his sonnets consists of 10 or 12 lines. The language is so eloquent and the subjects are so sublime and deep, that it attracts any sensitive heart. His poems are so popular that Iranians make wishes with his book and get their answers through his words and poetical phrases. Most Iranians believe in him so much that they keep his book in their hands and make a wish, and then through the meaning of his poems they decide whether the answer is good or bad. It is similar to fortune telling.

Each time, she and my daughter wanted me to translate the meaning of

the lines carefully, I always tried to give them a positive impression. As a mystic poet, he is a positive, spiritual person who sees the world as a whole, all connected. Past, present and future are all aspects of one thing.

In the beginning there was a great globe, breakable and glassy like a mirror. Then the globe broke, and now we as human beings are trying to put the pieces back together again. We are challenged to make a unity. This is all we are supposed to follow during our lives.

I think she understands Hafez's messages very well. Every week I looked forward to seeing my daughter and her friend. We were so happy having good conversations with each other.

One time she told us about the school system program in Japan in connection with the Hiroshima bombing. She said this program repeats every year in each school. All the students sit on the floor in a big room or gym, in the dark, and you feel the breathtaking moments of silence. Then, through school sponsored station you see scenes of bombing, the crying of the wounded, and the flight of children and the elderly. It is so dramatic, so effective, that nobody moves, and everyone feels the tragedy in his gut. She said that still when she sees those scenes, she cannot help it, but to cry. I looked at her as she was crying. My dear little friend was crying and my daughter too.

My daughter called me last month and said that Michiko would be deported. I was shocked, because I knew that she was in the US on a student visa, but it would probably expire soon. Later they informed me that because she is a tennis expert, she had been hired by a Recreation Center to teach students. Apparently her boss applied for a green card for her, and now the lawyer says that she has to leave the U.S. in order to follow immigration rules. We all were sad that she would have to leave the country and go back to Japan. So I asked



Hiroshima Atomic Bomb's Victims Memorial

her if I had permission to talk with an immigration lawyer and discuss her case. The answer was yes.

I talked to an immigration lawyer who told me that if somebody sponsors her, she can stay in the U.S. and go to college. My husband and I talked to our daughter and announced that we would sponsor her. Then I talked to her on the phone and told her that my husband and I are ready to help her stay. We could even pay for her school. We believe that she has the capacity to pay us back in the future.

She was excited. She promised to come to my home at ten o'clock in the morning to talk and then we would have enough time to go to

the lawyer. Exactly at ten she showed up and said she didn't sleep well last night and all night had been trying to find a solution for her predicament. Then she said she was sorry, but that it was better for her to leave the U.S. for now and come back later. She said that if she stayed here, she would have to pay nonresident tuition for college, which is much higher than what she could pay back. She added that it was not an easy decision, and that it was better to go back to her parents and help her two teenage brothers to find their ways in life. Meanwhile, she would have enough time to work and save for her education.

I was listening; there was something in this little creature that filled me with wonder. So much caring for others, so much caring for the world!

It was now noon. I already had served her cake and black tea – her favorite. She loved our tea and she had good stories about the tea ceremonies in Japan, which I was very interested in hearing. I knew that she had not packed yet, and I knew that she had a lot of stuff to get together. Some she had to give to other friends, and some more important things she had to take with her. Still there were items that I offered to keep for her and put in our attic.

At this time I invited her to eat lunch with me and go because I knew she was

busy packing. Her flight ticket was for Saturday and today was Thursday. She said that she was not hungry. She was calm and relaxed, in contrast to me, who was worried and stressed. She was sitting there on the sofa and I had a feeling that she wanted something. I had no clue, what? Again I asked her to have a quick lunch with me and go to get her things together. I could make a quick egg-plant omelet for her, but she refused to eat. She was relaxed and quiet but I knew she wanted something. She was probably too shy to discuss it with me. Finally I told her to speak out and that she was like another daughter to me. My husband and I loved her and would do whatever we could to see her happy and successful.



She paused; she stood up and went to the corner of my living room, searching for something. Then she came back with the collection of Hafez Poetry. She handed the book to me with a very respectful gesture and asked me to please read what Hafez says about her situation. I found myself holding my breath, with a half smile on the corner of my lips and a thin filter of tears on my eyes, I was thinking how this creature from Japan far from my country and culture can connect so perfectly to the world of Hafez. It was amazing.

She sat on the chair near me. I gave her the book back to wish upon. She closed her eyes and opened the book and kept the page open, and said, "now please read my poem."

I recited the phrase that we usually say, "Ay Hafez from Shiraz, you are the viewer of every problem, please tell us about Michiko's problem!"

I began to read the poem silently for myself once, and then I read it loud for her. Then I translated each line and finally concluded that, "You are right, you'd better go back to your country and your family. You will come back soon happy and legally with a document in hand."

It seemed to me that Hafez signed her paper to come back.

## For My Grand Children

Stephen Burns

### Marina Helen

A yellow leaf fell among the green  
catching my eye

is caught by other leaves  
sustained

Summer not half over  
the leaves are coming down

I leave the porch  
for coffee and returning  
it is still there

nestled among its livelier sisters  
leaning on slender reeds  
sustained

Is this what families are like  
the young

Marina not three months  
wide eyed and tender  
in her mother's arm

the old soon to be like me  
leaving nestled in my children's arms  
for how long  
the leaf's still there  
still

### Elizabeth

Lizzie took my hand today!  
eight, still a little girl

her father says she'll lose this soon  
my son what does he know  
Seventy-five years on the other hand  
held on, thrilled

her hand was solid, large on the haft  
she held it up to her brother's  
almost coterminous  
she held me twice more, smiling  
the old man got the picture  
next time he reached out to her

Lizzie taking, gave.

## WHEN GIANTS MEET: The Queen of Persian Pop greet the Shahbanou of Iran in NY Live Concert

Darius Kadivar



Both Giants have lived up to their public image despite highs and lows of life and destiny. The Queen of Iran was the most respected and widely photographed woman of the 20th Century. Host to the Persepolis Celebrations of October 1971 and happily married to one of the mightiest rulers of the world. Her role was not just symbolic, yet deeply involved in social and cultural activities and missions throughout her reign and was to become the muse of Western Artists worldwide. Googoosh's talents were to be noticed beyond Iranian frontiers by the end of the 70's and she was awarded in France and Germany with several prestigious Awards in Music. But the dark days that followed the Islamic revolution was to be determinant in turning both living icons into Legends for the majority of Iranians beyond political and social preferences. The exiled Queen was to keep her head high and become a true ambassador for the ever growing Silent Majority of Iranians both in exile or in Iran. Her dignity and kindness have earned her the respect of her compatriots over the years. As for Googoosh, she was to equally resist in silence for 20 years after making a miraculous comeback in the year 2000 with her latest album to the Empress in the 1970's.

As for all people in the public eye be it celebrities or Royals, Googoosh and the Shahbanou's lives have always been under scrutiny by the press. Unconfirmed rumors of all sorts were circulating over the years as to why Googoosh and the Empress were not seen together in public since the Diva's return from Iran. Some claimed that Googoosh had been approached by various political groups who tried in vain to lure her into political activism. Others claimed that Googoosh was at odds with the Royal family because of alleged sexual assaults on her before the revolution by members of the Pahlavi family or that the SAVAK, the Shah's secret police, had intimidated her during their reign. Googoosh was also falsely accused by

former fans to have supported the Revolution and Ayatollah Khomeini rise to power by singing the song "Agha Khoubeh" a song which was actually written many years prior to the Revolution. In an interview given to Singer Mehrdad on an LA based Iranian TV channel, Googoosh actually denied to have ever had any political intentions in singing this song but that it was released just during the events and in the confused days of the revolution. None of these ridiculous rumors were ever confirmed but the question as to when and where the two Public Icons would meet remained a public curiosity.

The tragic death of Princess Leila the youngest daughter of the Empress which was followed by the unexpected terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, and the visa restrictions imposed on all Iranian expats in the aftermath of this attack could explain why this encounter did not take place earlier. The Shahbanou and Googoosh were equally subject to these restrictions due to the simple fact that neither had an American Passport. One or two of Googoosh's concerts in the US were simply canceled. As for the Empress, whose children and grandchildren reside in the US, she was also subject to humiliating visa controls at both American and Canadian Airports by security officers who simply would ignore her rank and identity as former Empress of Iran. The thousands of fans, packed at the Legendary Madison Square Garden Concert Hall on the evening of Oct. 21st 2006 could hardly believe their eyes when seeing Googoosh and Mehrdad announce the arrival and presence of the Pahlavi Family: The Shahbanou, her daughter Princess Farahnaz and her second granddaughter Princess Iman ( for whom it was certainly the very first public appearance before a huge crowd of compatriots). The crowd greeted the Royals with deep enthusiasm, cheers and claps as the Shahbanou responded with a bow of acknowledgment to her compatriots. After the concert the Royal Family was also warmly greeted by fans in the crowd who kissed them affectionately and asked for autographs.

Nearly 30 years had separated their last meeting. Googoosh had performed many times for the Royal Family and was a favorite of the Pahlavi children and they recalled the party given for the Crown Prince's birthday in 1977. It was high time for the third generation of the family to be presented to Googoosh in the person of an enthusiastic and fast growing Princess Iman. The Press was conveyed to retire and the Diva and Royal Family were to spend time together in private.

*Iranian.com*



I had not been to a *Sofreh* for a long time and then I was invited to three different *Sofreh-e-Nazr* ceremonies in one week, all held by second cousins of mine. All of them are traditional westernized Iranian families.

*Sofreh* is a Persian word which technically means spread but when used in conversation it means a cloth, simple or grand, usually spread on the floor on top of the carpet, on which food is served, and *nazr* means a wish or a vow which one makes with God.

There are at least two other types of *Sofreh* that I know of. The *Sofreh-e Haft-Sin* celebrates the coming of the *Noerouz* or New Year. It is one of oldest Iranian traditions left to us from Zoroastrian times. This *sofreh* is displayed from about a week before the new year until 13 days afterwards and has seven items which start with letter S in Persian (such as apple-sib, vinegar-serkeh, garlic-sirr, coin-sekeh etc.) plus the book of prayer, a mirror, some *sabzeh* – grass which families grow specially for the *Noerouz* and a few goldfish swimming in a small bowl among many other things.

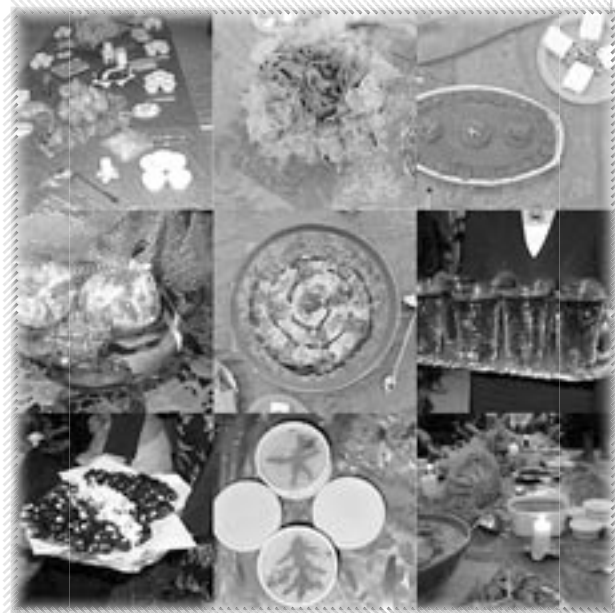
Another type is the *Sofreh-e Aghd*. When a couple in Iran choose to marry traditionally, then one of the most important parts of this tradition is that they make their vows sitting at the edge of their *sofreh-e aghd*, which is spread on the floor. At the top of the *sofreh* there is a large mirror and two large candle sticks placed to the sides of the mirror which the bride later takes to her new home, and this set is considered a very important symbolic item. There are many other items on the *sofreh* including nun sangak (a large size brown flat bread), nuts, honey and empty egg shells all beautifully decorated, and a small stool for the bride and groom to sit on in front of the Koran, for their marriage vows to be made. There are many people, mostly ladies who are specialized in preparing *Sofreh-e Aghd* and it is now a very serious business. I have seen many wonderful *sofreh-e aghds* in my time and the best that I remember was for my younger sister Mina's wedding 27 years ago, as she has such a beautiful and grand taste.

The *Sofreh-e Nazr* is a religious tra-

## SOFREH-E NAZR

### AN IRANIAN SHIA TRADITION

By Syma Sayyah, Tehran  
payvand.com



dition among Iranian Shia women and brings the ladies attending a sense of comfort, togetherness and sharing. Only women attend these ceremonies which some believe is a ritual left to us from Zoroastrian ancestors.

Prayers are made to God through one of the *Imams*. *Hazrate* Abul Fazl (the half brother of *Imam* Hossein who was very brave and suffered great pains and like *Imam* Hossein was a martyr in Karbala) and *Imam* Hassan the second Shia *Imam* (who was a very patient, thoughtful and peace loving *Imam*) are the two most common holy and pious ones in whose name *sofreh*s are held. By the way many items on *Imam* Hassan's *sofreh* are traditionally green, sometimes including the food offered. I was told by a friend that those who make a wish to *Hazrate* Abul Fazl are usually granted their wishes quickly.

A woman will make a *nazr* when she has an important wish or request to be fulfilled and then she makes a vow with God that if her wish comes true (*hajatt* is granted) she will hold a *sofreh* ceremony in the name of the *Imam* or pious one in whose name the vow was made. It is then

that women are invited to the *sofreh*. By tradition friends, family and neighbors are invited to share this event. The hostess prepares more fruit, nuts and food than is needed as it is given to the guests to take away and to share with their family who could not be there. It is strongly believed among the great majority of people that the food, fruits, nuts at a *sofreh-nazr* are blessed and can bring goodness, and many while eating it will make a *nazr* (wish) themselves so the tradition continues. Also if you help during such a ceremony it is believed that your own wishes may come true sooner and better.

The ceremony usually takes place in the afternoon to end with dinner or in the morning to end with lunch. It starts with reciting some prayers. Usually there are booklets with the prayers in Arabic that are offered to guests who wish to read them, although I was amazed that many knew the verses by heart. A lady (*khanoum*) who can read the Koran and Arabic prayers well leads the prayers and often receives a donation which they may use

for charity.

At the end of the ceremonies usually prayers are said in Persian for the souls of all loved ones, and for the wellbeing of those who are ill, as well for the hostess and her family. I was surprised that in the three *sofreh* that I attended, they also prayed for the young to stay on the straight and narrow path, and to find employment. Finally prayers were said seeking God and his holy believers' help for all present to stay pious, healthy and good.

A *sofreh* can be simple or very elaborate. Contrary to what may be believed, it is common among rich and poor alike, it is just that those who are better off invite more guests and have a bigger and more elaborate *sofreh* in terms of decorations or types of food served.

Generally one can expect to have some *Aash* or soup. *Halva* is also served, which is made of special flour, sugar and saffron. Bread, cheese, and greens are put there as well as fruits and nuts (*ajile moshgell gosha*) which are put in small satin cases and are given to each guest to take home with them. Afterwards food is served which may be something simple or rich.

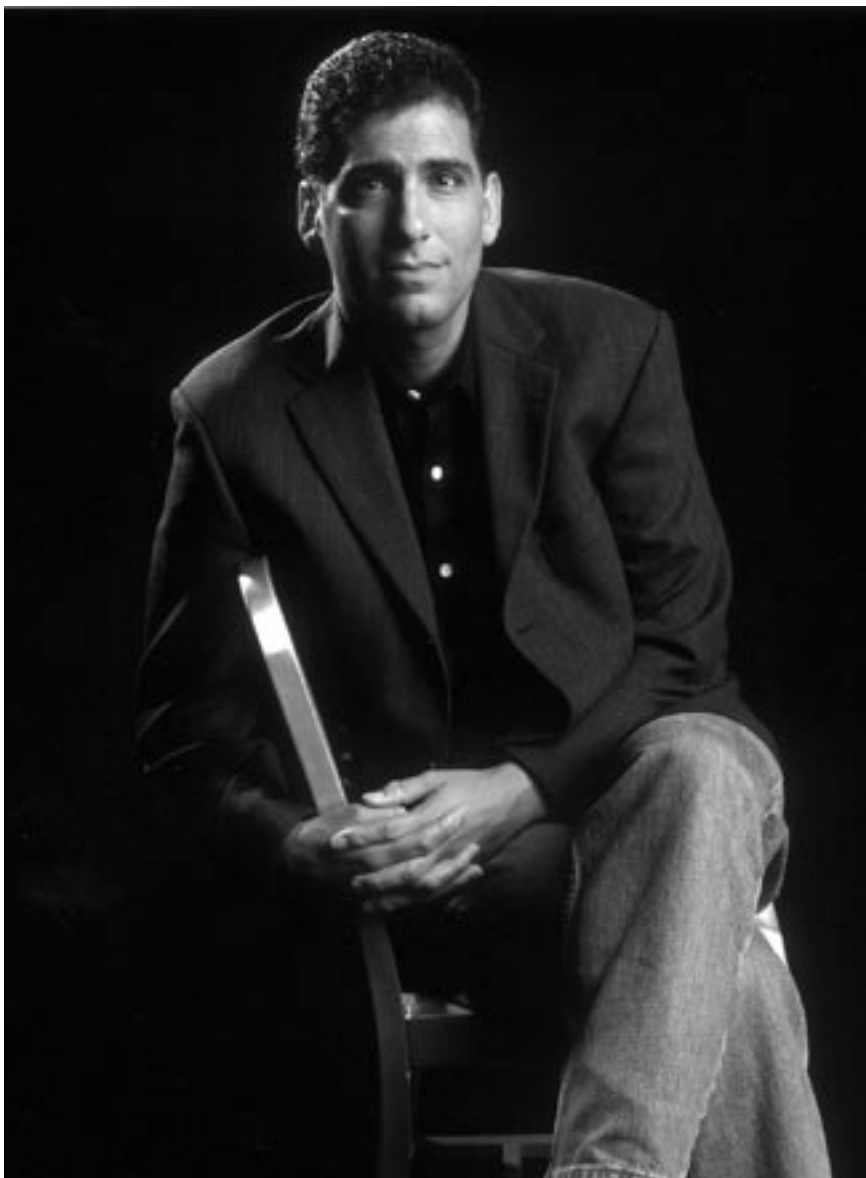
Interview with

# CYRUS NOWRASTEH

Producer & Director of “The Path to 9/11”

By: David A. Yeagley, Ph. D.

*During the past twelve years Persian Heritage has tried to introduce individuals of Iranian heritage, prominent in the fields of cultural and humanity, to our community. One of these individuals is Cyrus Nowrasteh, a producer, director and movie writer in Hollywood. With his docu dram “The Path to 9/11” he achieved a place for himself in the political and artistic world. We thank Dr. David Yeagly, of our editorial board, for making this interview possible.*



*Welcome to Persian Heritage Magazine, Mr. Nowrasteh. We are honored by your consideration, and we are proud to share your ideas with not only American Iranians, but Iranian-Americans and Americans in general! We are confident that your words are especially meaningful, and we are grateful for your willingness to share your views with us.*

Thank you for having me.

*Tell us about your beginnings, your birth and childhood. What were your first impressions of America, and of Iran?*

Though I was born in America, my parents are both Iranian and I lived in Iran for three years as a child - which is why I still speak some Farsi (though not as well as I'd like). There is a color, a dynamism to Iranian culture that is missing in other cultures. Persians laugh, love, and grieve with great passion. There's also a deep cultural heritage and history. Great pride. And also great food. After many years I went back to Iran in my twenties and what came back to me most powerfully was the food, the smells of Persian dishes, pastries, etc.

*As an American, I see Iran as an ancient older brother. I see Persia as the first America, really. Do you feel such a similarity? I know a lot got lost in the centuries in between, and it seems Iran is starting all over, in terms of democracy; but most Iranians love America, and find it very easy to be American, once they are here.*

There is a kinship between Iran and America. Historians talk of Ancient Iran as a “melting pot” of different peoples and cultures that merged and became the ancient Persian Empire – much like America was a melting pot that became a great nation. Iranians are very good at seizing opportunities and expanding their horizons – America is the ideal place for such a people. That's why it doesn't surprise me when many Iranians tell me



that even if things change in Iran they'll remain in America.

***How do you fit into the Iranian-American community? Do you even think in those terms? What is it that is "Iranian" about you? What do you think others see in you as "Iranian?"***

Obviously, my heritage is Iranian. I'm very proud of it and that heritage is part of what defines a person. Many other factors define a person, but the country-of-origin of one's parents is key. Because I'm American-born, Americans see me as one of them, part of the melting pot, but because I look so Iranian I'm often asked where I'm from. My response: "I'm American of Iranian origin." As for the Iranian community I have relatives and friends, and fellow film-makers in the Iranian community whose company and friendship I treasure.

***Most Iranians in America are in the sciences. Most young American Iranians train for engineering, medicine, or law. How did you get interested in script writing and movie making? What attracted you to this field? At what point in your life to you work in this direction?***

I was always fascinated by motion pictures and television, I loved going to the movies. I remember watching "behind-the-scenes" programs about how movies were made and being riveted. It was obvious there were many people who worked behind-the-scenes and I started to wonder if perhaps I could be one. As a child I loved MISSION IMPOSSIBLE, the TV show, and one of the directors was Reza Badiyi – obviously an Iranian. I asked my parents about him and they had met him many years earlier. So now it was clear that someone my family knew, an Iranian, was working in the American film/tv industry – perhaps I could, too?

Years later, when I arrived in Los Angeles and knew no one, I called Mr. Badiyi. He invited me to lunch on the Universal studio lot. He was filming at the time and was incredibly gracious to me.

I will never forget this act of generosity on his part. He is a wonderful man and a great talent.

***You are an American Iranian. How did this affect your professional life in your chosen profession? Was it an advantage, or a hindrance, or both? Was it a factor at all in your success?***

Honestly, I think it had nothing to do with it. I was passionate and driven about what I wanted to do – and I pursued it relentlessly. Frank Capra, the famous American director of Italian heritage, felt that the fact that his parents were immigrants and constantly reminded him of the great opportunities before him in this country, made him feel as if success were inevitable. Perhaps that worked to motivate me, too.



***Did you ever have any interest in acting yourself?***

No. I'm much too self-conscious to be an actor. I admire actors very much and believe their job to be very difficult. The good ones are worth their weight in gold. Iranian actors whom I admire include Behrouz Vossoughi and Shohreh Aghdashloo.

***With whom have you worked most? Who are your models?***

I've worked on a couple of projects with Oliver Stone (THE DAY REAGAN WAS SHOT, the upcoming JAWBREAKER). I've also worked with Steven Spielberg (INTO THE WEST).

Both men are impressive and invigorating and it's immediately clear why they are such great successes. Actors I've worked with include Richard Dreyfuss, Tommy Lee Jones, Harvey Keitel, and many others. I directed Dreyfuss in THE DAY REAGAN WAS SHOT and he was a joy to work with.

***Would you encourage other young American Iranians to enter the field of cinema? What do you think young American Iranians should be doing with their lives? How do you see the future for them? How do you recommend they find their place in America?***

I would encourage anyone and everyone to follow their heart. Find your passion and pursue it with every ounce of energy that you have. And don't worry about what others think – be true to yourself.

***Patriotism is a controversial subject in America these days, perhaps more so than in Iran. Do you consider yourself an American patriot? Do you also consider yourself a patriot of Iran? Can you describe for us your feelings about today's Iran, in terms of your personal attachment?***

Yes, I consider myself a patriot because I love America. I think, despite its faults, it's a great country full of freedom and opportunity. As for Iran, yes I have a patriotic fervor for the pageant of Iranian culture and history, a rich tapestry that we can all be very proud of. As for my feelings about today's Iran, I haven't been back since 1978 and am in no position to judge purely on the basis of media reports. Friends and family who have been back tell me that Iran is changing rapidly and they think that is a good thing.

***Can you tell us what led you to create "The Path to 9-11"? What were your concerns? And what did you hope to accomplish by this movie? Do you think you achieved those purposes? Please address***

*political concerns, and also artistic concerns.*

When I took on the assignment to write THE PATH TO 9/11 for ABC I knew it was the most important, and the most sensitive, project that I or any writer/producer could tackle. For that reason, and because of a deeplyfelt personal responsibility toward the story and those who died – indeed toward all Americans – I knew the research had to be impeccable. It was. We focussed not only on the failures of two administrations, but also the perpetrators – who are the real villains of the story. Also, we portray the unsung heroes, those who saw what was coming and tried to stop it.

The one thing I did not do in preparing this project was get the approval of politicians. Any politicians. Why? Because if there is one batch of sources with a clear agenda, with clear partisanship, it would be them. This project was a privilege from start to finish and I stand by every word of it.

*When did you begin thinking of doing a movie on 9-11? What caused you to want to do this? What was your purpose in doing this movie? I am sure you realized it would be controversial. What did you feel needed to be accomplished by the movie?*

This movie, first and foremost, needed to tell the truth and damn the consequences. There was a lot of controversy, and we expected that, but we didn't anticipate a spin campaign orchestrated by an ex-President of the United States. A campaign that included death threats against me and my family and vicious hate mail. But, I guess that's what happens when you expose the truth. Obviously, we hit a hot-button.

*Were you challenged by others when you undertook the project? Did people fight against you every step? Did you find a lot of support?*

There were challenges, but there was plenty of support, too. Especially from ABC Vice-President Quinn Taylor. My task was to back up the script with research, multiple sources, and on-site advisors. All of which I provided. If the backup is there then the network had no choice but to go with it. Once the movie aired in September numerous Washington experts, experts on terrorism, Michael Scheuer (former head of the CIA's Bin Laden unit), Steven Emerson (expert on terrorism who has briefed Congress many times), and others came forward and testified to the veracity of the movie. Unlike the Clinton people who bashed the movie, these experts actually bothered to watch it before commenting on it.



*Did making The Path to 9-11 affect your personal life in any way? Were you concerned about reactions? Did you have reason to be concerned?*

As I said above, supporters of Mr. Clinton printed my home phone number and address on the Internet with the message: "The gloves are off. Accidents Occur." It was unsettling and worrisome, but I didn't believe there was any teeth to these threats. Just nuts on the Internet who have nothing better to do.

*Docu-drama is still a fairly new form in media. Are you*

*on the cutting edge of it now?*

I may be on the cutting edge, but I don't know too many networks who will take on the controversy that accumulated around THE PATH TO 9/11. Censorship and intimidation still exist in Hollywood, don't let anyone tell you different.

*Are you willing to discuss with us some of the reactions you got, personally? For better, and for worse, we want very much to know. Name names if you feel like it.*

Mr. Sandy Berger, former National Security Advisor, went on national television and insisted that ABC "pull" the movie. Senator Harry Reid and five other Democrat senators threatened ABC with revocation of their Slaughter a powerful senator from New York suggested that my background be "looked into" for doing this movie. These are Stalinist tactics by self-proclaimed freedom-loving liberals.

It turns out that Mr. Berger had a very personal motivation for discrediting the movie and trying to kill it. If you'll remember, he was arrested in 2003 for trying to steal documents from the national archives. Those documents pertained specifically to the events behind the scenes in the movie that they were complaining about and wanted excised. So we had exposed in THE PATH TO 9/11 precisely those actions (or lack of action on their part) that Mr. Berger and Mr. Clinton have been trying to cover up. Unfortunately, very few of their willing accomplices in the media have pointed this out. Regardless, it is some measure of vindication for me. Very satisfying.

*What kind of film are you going to make next? What are your future plans?*

I'm writing a movie for Oliver Stone and Paramount Pictures about the war in Afghanistan based on a book entitled JAWBREAKER. I have also acquired the rights to an Iranian story, THE STON-

ING OF SORAYA M. and am actively developing it.

*You wrote the script for Steven Spielberg's Into the West. This involved American Indians, of course. You were recently (December 19, 2006) interviewed by BadEagle.com, the Comanche Indian web site that emphasizes American patriotism. I find your interest in American Indians to be encouraging. How did you develop an interest in American Indians?*

From the very first Western I saw I have been fascinated by American Indians. Their nobility, their sacrifice against incredible odds, and their adaptability while retaining their cultural identity amidst the swirl of history.

*How are you regarded in*

*Iran, by Iranian people? Need we ask how the government regards you?*

I have no idea. I hope they like me. Always better to be liked than the alternative.

*Do you see yourself as having any role or purpose in Iran? Are you identified with any sector that wishes to see a regime change? What would you like to see happen in Iran?*

Iran will find its path. I am too far-away, too removed to be a political participant. I make movies and television shows. There are great film-makers working there, making significant contributions to the national discourse. Iranian films have been favorites at festivals for years.

It is actually my dream to make an

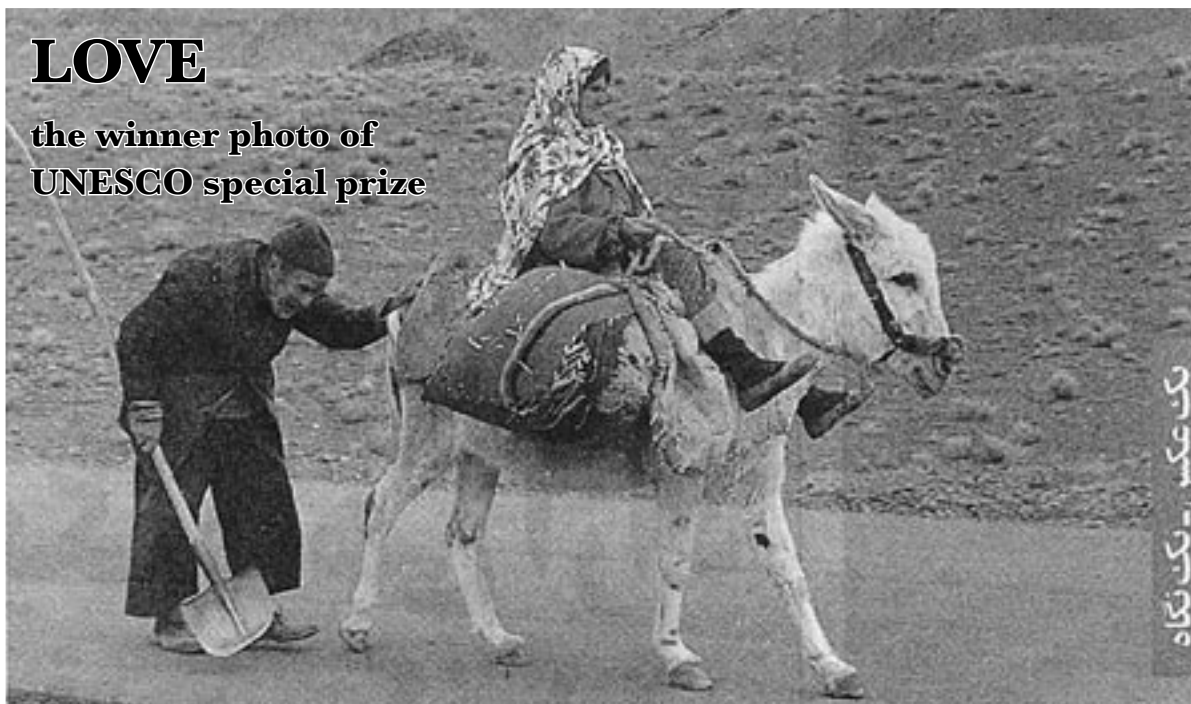
Iranian film. I have acquired the rights to THE STONING OF SORAYA M, a true story about women's rights in Iran. I don't know if I can get backing in Hollywood but I'm starting the process of talking to Iranians interested in financing the project independently. I believe this can be the MIDNIGHT EXPRESS of women's rights.

*We thank you sincerely, Mr. Nowrasteh, for your revelations. We know they are valued by many people. You have behaved in a very humble, unassuming way in your career, yet your work is so out in front, so pace-setting, and so "American," if I might say. As an American, I am especially proud of you, and I know Iranian people everywhere are too.*

Thank you. You are very kind.

## LOVE

the winner photo of  
UNESCO special prize



A young Iranian cameraman Mohammad (Shabab) Golchin won the special prize of the UN educational, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO) photo contest, which was held in Tokyo, Japan, from July 20-22. The subject of the photo is "love". Golchin is one of the members of the *Iranian Youth Cinema Association* branch office in Talesh (Gilan province). The public relations department at the association said that out of the 6,616 pieces of photos participating in the contest, more than 110 sent by 24 UNESCO member states found their way to the competition section. The jury members were from Australia, India, Japan, Myanmar, and the Asia-pacific cultural center, affiliated to the UNESCO.

# Roodkhan Ancient Castle

Iran's biggest ancient brick and stone castle. Roodkhan Castle, located some 20 km southwest of Fooman city in Guilan Province north of Iran, is a military complex which had been constructed during the Seljuk Dynasty who ruled Iran between 11th and 14th centuries AD. However, some researchers believe the castle was first built by Sassanids dynasty (between 3rd and 7th centuries AD.) The castle is built on two tips of a mount, with an area of five hectares. Its architects have benefited from natural mountainous features in the construction of the fort. Also a river known as 'Roodkhan Castle River' exists on the right side of the castle, which originates from the Alborz mountains and flows from south to the north. Roodkhan Castle occupies an area of about 5 hectares and sits at the two peaks of a mountain at elevations of 715 and 670 meters and is fortified by strong fortifications and battlements at a length of 1,550 meters. The castle's 42 towers still stand intact. After crossing a mountainous winding route and passing dense and very beautiful jungles, the first thing that the traveler discovers is the castle's big entrance gate which is grand and huge. The castle was once used as a fortress by the Ismailis under Hassan-e Sabah who lived in late 11th and early 12th centuries. Some figures slightly differ in this English text and what follows below in Persian because they are being extracted from different sources. Nonetheless, the pictures show this magnificent ancient fortress.

*Article sent by: Farrokh (Frank) Javid & pictures sent by Mojgan Manavi, Los Angeles, CA, USA*

