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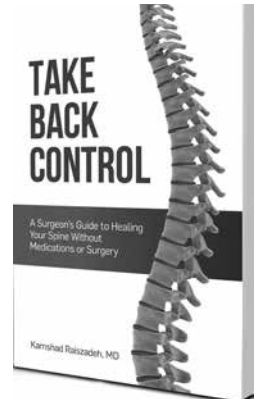
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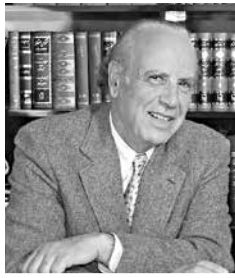
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The celebration of Norouz, which is considered the awakening of nature and the birth of Spring has been celebrated for thousands of years by Iranians around the world including the honorable people for Khorasan, the Central Asian landscapes of Kurdistan, Turkey, Iraq, Syria and the lost land of the greater Caucasus Region. It is a holiday filled with joy. The preparations for this holiday begin weeks and months earlier. The joy leading up to the actual day is filled with happiness as we prepare to replace the sadness and worries of the past and welcome the new year. It is a year we hope will bring more happiness to ourselves our families, our friends and of course the world.

This is the second Norouz that our celebration will be impacted by this horrific and brutal Covid-19 virus, one that has destroyed lives throughout the world. With all that has happened it is comforting to see the resiliency of people. It is heartwarming also to see how we are embracing this Norouz with the hope and joy that this traditional holiday brings. Of course, it is unfortunate that due to restrictions on the number of people allowed at gatherings that the large celebration parties of Norouz have been canceled or replaced with smaller gatherings. In some cases, it will be immediate family with parents and grandparents absent due to the anxiety of spreading the virus. But the fact that we are HERE at all to celebrate is the first blessing of this new year.

As I always do, I wish this coming Norouz will be a new beginning and a year celebrated with health and prosperity for all Iranians and the people of the world. And as I always do I want to thank all the dedicated individuals, who for so many years, have contributed their time and efforts to Persian Heritage which has helped us keep Persian culture alive. To all of you I am humbled by your generosity and support and wish you all a prosperous, healthy and happy new year.

This Norouz Iranians are celebrating the last year of the 14th century, 1400 centennial. (Of course, Norouz has a history of thousands of years ago prior to the Achaemenid Dynasty but the 1400 calendar in the present). Perhaps by the end of this year all the problems the people of Iran have endured will cease to exist. Perhaps the wishes we have for Iranians in this new century, freedom, equality, pride and honor, will come to fruition.

My generation and the one before me, over 40 years ago, started a movement that overthrew a regime. It was done with the hope that this action would bring new freedoms and independence for the people of Iran. It did not take long before their hopes were shattered and replaced with disappointment. In a short period of time the tactful strategy of the government leadership, Iran's vibrant youth and intellectuals were removed and replaced with individuals who had no intention to provide the people their human rights. They made their dreams and hopes unattainable.

The new leaders took it upon themselves to cleanse the country by committing mass executions and mass incarcerations of the intellectuals. Others just fled their homeland. The new

leadership took complete control of the country and this control remains today. The cleansing of intellectual and brain drain continues. Anyone who dares to speak against their policies is quietly taken away or is faced with execution.

The economic crisis in Iran is due in part to the hardening of the sanctions placed on Iran. Iranians now face dire financial situations and hardships. People in Iran are now experiencing a new era of hardships. The head of the household from dawn to dusk struggles to put food on the table. Inflation, greed and mismanagement of the country's leaders has led to bad policy making, crippling the country. One of the hardest hit areas is Sistan-Baluchestan province. Lack of leadership has forced the desperate people of this region, to smuggle fuel and gasoline across the border in an effort to support and feed their families. According to reports some have been shot by authorities.

Of course, the question remains, if the desperate people of these provinces were given the opportunity to live better lives, would the need for them to smuggle fuel across the border and possibly lose their lives in the interim, continue or end?

Today with the availability of different media platforms such as Telegram, Instagram, Facebook, information to individuals in Iran and outside Iran allows us to hear about the daily atrocities being committed and the executions and incarcerations of political prisoners. We also hear the reports of severe punishment of individuals who commit minor crimes of theft to survive, while the leaders who steal millions of dollars out of the pocket of their citizens are pardoned. Some of the corrupt leadership have fled the country with the help of authorities and migrated to Canada, Germany and other countries. Their actions show their disrespect for Iran and the citizens who continue to feel the peril of a corrupt government and economic sanctions.

In the last 40 years since the rise of the Islamic Republic Regime, religious values among the people have deteriorated. It is reported that many individuals, including those from my generation, have turned against their religious values; that many who worshiped the words of Ali Shariati (religious scholar and mesmerizing speaker) regret upholding such beliefs and some followers of Shariati's of today have lost all credibility among the people, as they are blamed for all the unpleasantness of the past 40 years.

In this new century let us hope the existing regime leadership will realize their lack of ability to successfully lead Iran into a new beginning. In this new century let us hope the existing regime leadership will realize their mistakes and step down and allow the innocent people of Iran the opportunity to take fate into their hands through new leadership, one that will stop the corruption and atrocities.

In this new century let us hope theft from Iran's treasury stops. In this new century let us hope that Iran's foreign policies will improve with the international community. In this new cen-

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

ture let us hope that the mending of international relationships will result in the release of billions of dollars of assets held in foreign banks which can be used towards the development and improvements of the country and benefit its people. When one looks at the development of neighboring countries such as Turkey and the Emirates one can only gasp as to how unfortunate it is that Iran with its geographic advantages and its natural resources is in such a dire situation.

Iranian scholars, scientists, intellectuals are head of some of the largest world corporations. If only a few returned to Iran, it could return to normalcy and have a successful future filled with freedom and progress; one that will continue the historical Iranian contributions Iran and its citizens have given to the world.

Imagine an Iran with leadership that returned to its citizens the inalienable rights of free speech, free press and religion. Imagine an Iran that is a country opened to travel by individuals, one that allows the Diaspora without fear to return for a visit with their families and loved ones and see its beautiful landscapes.

It is unfortunate that present suppression, restrictions, unethical tactics by the leadership thwarts our ability to imagine Iran as above. It is unfortunate that the successful Iranian Diaspora are not able to enjoy their successes in their home country.

A few weeks ago, the engine of a Boeing 777 shortly after takeoff failed, forcing the plane to return to the airport. We are grateful the talented and professional pilot landed the plane safely. His name is Behnam. He was praised for his talents. Such talented Iranian Americans reside around the world and call new countries home. Maybe they are part of the brain drain from Iran, maybe not. Regardless they are part of the heritage

of an historical empire and show the continued intelligence and potential of Iranians.

Perhaps a new regime will stop the desire of anyone to leave their homeland except by choice. Perhaps a new regime will stop the need of talented individuals in sports, education, science, medicine, engineering etc. to want to remain in the country of their birth and hold its flag rather than one of another nation.

The famous saying goes, "the past is the past and its gone". Wouldn't it be wonderful if Iran could recap the past and before it is too late begin to build a bright future for its citizens? Iran needs to open the doors to its Diaspora and foreigners. Iran needs to remain one country and keep its sovereignty. Iran needs to commence talking to the international community and rebuild its broken bridges. Iran needs to create a friendly harmonious space for the future of the younger generations.

Once again, I wish all Iranians a new year filled with health, prosperity and happiness. I wish for an end to this horrific killer Covid 19 virus. I wish for vaccines that will allow us to touch and hug again. Let us celebrate the welcoming of this new year and the beginning of a new century by toasting the end of this Corona virus with a bottle of Corona beer.

Hoping for more better days in the future.

Shahrokh Alavi

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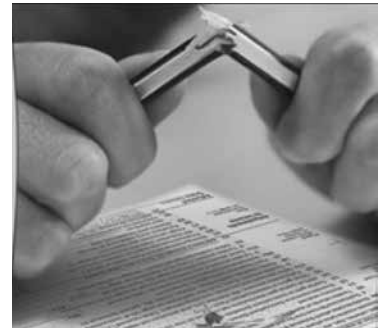
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SUCH KINDNESS

As ever, I thank you very much for your kindness in sending me this latest issue of your consistently interesting and valuable journal.

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TERRIFIC BOOK

Based on your review of the book, *Believers*, by Marc Grossman and John Limbert I ordered it. Your review was right on point. I found myself immersed in the story and the memories of the cooking, shops streets and beautiful people of Iran. It is a real must read for anyone Iranian or not

KS, NJ

SO INTERESTING

The best part of this magazine is its ability to make you interested in something for which you never had an interest. An example in the winter issue was part one of *Birds in Iran*. Birds!!! Never had an interest but now I look forward to part two. I never knew so many species call Iran their home.

Thank you, HN, CA

DIFFERENCE OF OPINIONS ABOUT YOUR EDITORIAL

Your editorial was excellent, not necessarily in your political view, but the ignorance in all of us is not to attack the person who thinks differently than you, but attack and address the issues.

Manager of Mars Program: Dr. Firouz Naderi

When Dr. Naderi was asked if after living 50 years in America, does he feel more American or Persian, he said: **“Being Persian is part of my history and being an American is part of my identity and the two are irretrievably inter-mixed—like an egg that once scrambled, you cannot separate the yolk from the white. America is my country, and Iran is my homeland. And how blessed I am to be rooted in an ancient civilization with a rich culture, and at the same time a proud American living in this young nation that has lifted me on her shoulders, allowing me to reach for the stars.”**

His elementary education was in Shiraz, Iran, where he was born in 25 March 1946. He attended high school in Tehran, Iran at an Italian boarding school (Don Bosco Boarding School) and left Iran in 1964 for the United States to pursue his college education. He received his undergraduate degree in electrical engineer at Iowa State University (ISU) in 1969, before moving to California. After working as an engineer in Santa Barbara for two years, he enrolled at University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles where he received his M.S. in 1972 and his Ph.D. in 1976 both in electrical engineering. After completing his education, he went back to Iran for three years, working at the Iranian Remote Sensing Agency but returned to America in July 1979 a few months after Iran’s revolution. He has not returned to Iran since. He is fluent in English in addition to his native Persian language.

Let me remind you Sir, the ignorance I mentioned above is not just common in Persian Diaspora. It is quite common right here in the US, especially in an election year that was marred by the horrible pandemic and by the devastating riots in many of our cities throughout the entire summer.

The other issue you alluded to is the Trump policy towards Iran. It is more complex than just the effect of sanctions on the Iranian people. Yes, they suffered immensely by the sanction, but it is also limited the mullah’s metastasis to other Middle East countries. The people’s livelihoods and finances were sacrificed pretty badly to finance the mullah’s incursion in Syria and to support the murderous Assad regime. The question is why were they doing it? What did Assad do for our motherland? The money that needed to feed our hungry people needed not to go there. Was that Trump’s fault? Yes the sanctions hurt the Iranian people but it also prevented the support of Hezbollah, Hamas and Houties. The next big question is why are the mullahs so interested in Syria and other terrorist groups? Why? Oh is it because they feel sorry for Palestinians!! Ha ha!!! That has nothing to do with it. They want to wipe Israel off the map. Remember!!!! But why, I ask, has Israel done nothing against the Iranian people? In fact, sir, Israel was the only country that helped Khomeini during the Iran and Iraq war. Yes, you are right sanctions hurt the people but they also prevent the mullahs from their malignant excursions and slowed their dash to make the atomic bomb.

So you may ask, what is the solution? How does President Biden ameliorate all these problems? Is it wishful thinking, that the new treaty’s first condition must be stopping the human right violations by the present regime? We cannot witness the atrocities of hanging the innocent people of Iran for simply criticizing the regime! The second must include the end of their support of the terrorist organizations and the third must be about their efforts in nuclear matters. Do you think President Biden can accomplish this? I wish to see it, but I don’t think we should hold our breath.

Again, thank you for bringing up these important issues.

As always, your friend David Yazdan

In Memoriam: Mr. Abdollah Bahadori

On February 11, 2021, Mr Abdollah Bahadori passed away peacefully at his home in Mashhad surrounded by his loving family. Mr. Abdollah Bahadori leaves behind a devoted wife, my dear aunt Mrs. Zohreh Rahimi- Bahadori, four children, Mrs. Bahareh Bahadori, Mr. Behzad Bahadori, Mr. Farzad Bahadori and Mr. Farhad Bahadori and five grandchildren Sam, Cornelia, Niloofar, Rousslane and Ramisan.



His legacy endures in all of the lives he touched and the many more he inspired by his wisdom and way of life. The Rahimi and Kazemian family is forever grateful for the privilege of having counted Mr. Bahadori as family and friend.

Dr. Suzanne K. Falla

SHAHRZAD SYMPHONY



Shahrzad Symphony, composed by Aminollah Andre Hossein was performed by a symphony orchestra led by Nozhat Amiri and performed by 30 Iranian women musicians.

The music video of “Shahrzad” Symphony was released with the performance of the Symphony Orchestra of the Motherland’s Ladies and a tribute to the sacrifices of the medical staff in the fight against Corona and in support of peace, friendship and health of the human race. Nasrin Enayat Mehr, the project manager, released this news to the media and said:

“This work was completed in September 2020, after months of unremitting efforts in difficult and risky conditions of Corona and going through many stages of carrying out a cultural-artistic project. We would like to thank the Roudaki Cultural and Artistic Foundation and the Office of Music Affairs and the people who had a good cooperation with us in the process of producing the music video for the Shahrzad Symphony”.

In the end, she thanked and appreciated the presence of artists and musicians who, in addition to financial aspects, joined the work with a value-creating perspective, as well as the director, his patience and double energy of the editor.

90 PERCENT OF CHABAHAR CORAL REEFS ARE DYING

Tehran Times- A rise in temperature of the water has had a negative effect on the ecosystem so that 90 percent of coral reefs in this region have been bleached and are dying, IRNA quoted Davood Mirshekar, deputy chief of the Department of Environment for marine ecosystems. He referred to irregulated scuba diving and tourism as the main factors which have harmed the coral reefs. Monitoring coral reefs in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman is one of the prioritized plans of the Department of Environment, he noted. Iran shares five ecological zones with specific flora from the lowest to the highest parts, one of which is the Persian Gulf-Oman Sea ecological zone. The forests of the Persian Gulf-Oman Sea ecological region include part of the southwest and all southern coasts, covering 2,039,963 hectares. Due to ecological differences, the main vegetation is divided into two territories of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

SADIGH KALHOUR, PARALYMPIAN

Mr. Kalhour who lost his leg in a skiing accident after colliding with a cable was never defeated. He started to train for the Paralympics and began this new career in 1998 in Japan. He then entered and participated in Salt Lake City 2002, Turin, Italy 2006, Vancouver, Canada 2010 and Sochi, Russia 2014. He hopes to be part of the 2022 event in Beijing, China

Former Iran Midfielder Minavand Dies Due to Covid-19

Tehran Times - Former Iran and Persepolis football team midfielder Mehrdad Minavand was laid to rest on Thursday. Minavand passed away at the age of 45 after losing battle against COVID-19.



Former Persepolis coaches and players including Ali Parvin, Ali Daei, Ali Karimi, Mohammad Khakpour, Afshin Peyrovani, Yahya Golmohammadi and Karim Bagheri attended the funeral.

Minavand started his career at Tehran based football club Pars in 1994 but joined Persepolis a year later.

The left winger also played for Austrian club Sturm Graz and Charleroi from Belgium before returning to Persepolis once again in 2002.

Minavand was a member of Iran national football team in the 1998 FIFA World Cup, where they registered their first-ever victory in the competition against USA. He also won a bronze medal with the Persians in the 1996 AFC Asian Cup.

Minavand was buried at the Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery on the outskirts of the Iranian capital, Tehran. He was laid to rest next to former Persepolis defender Ebrahim Ashtiani who died in 2017.

Former Iranian Football Player Ali Ansarian Dies of COVID-19



TEHRAN- Ali Ansarian, a former Iranian football professional league player and Iran national team defender, passed away after days of struggling with COVID-19, official news agency IRNA reported. The defender was 43. He had been admitted to Farhikhtegan Hospital in Tehran on Jan. 21 and was

placed in intensive care unit (ICU) after being tested positive for COVID-19. Ansarian played in Iran’s Pro League in several different clubs. He was part of Iran’s national team in several games between 1998 and 2007. While he was still a professional player, Ansarian also became a TV host and actor, and had roles in several feature movies. On Jan. 27, Ansarian’s colleague and friend Mehrdad Minavand also passed away from COVID-19.

Iranian Government Submits ‘Violence Against Women’ Bill to Parliament



(Tehran Times, 01/15/21) The Iranian government has submitted a long-awaited bill for the protection of women against violence to the parliament. The bill titled, Protection, Dignity, and Security of Women against Violence, had been under review since September 2019. It criminalizes any act or behavior that causes “physical or mental harm” to women “as a vulnerable gender”.

In line with principles and goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Constitution and in order to protect the dignity and security of women against kinds of violent behaviors, the bill has been submitted to the parliament, IRNA quoted Vice President for Parliamentary Affairs, Hossein-Ali Amiri, as saying on Thursday.

It recommends a fund for safeguarding women’s rights with provisions for providing medical expenses of the victims of violence, and imparting skill development training to them, he explained.

Vice President Masoumeh Ebtekar said in October 2020 that the government has taken major steps for the advancement of women and families in Iran. “Through an inter-sectoral process, we developed national indicators for gender equity, which laid the ground for the first result based Plan for Women and Family Advancement in 31 provinces and we recently launched the dashboard for monitoring indicators on gender equity and family prosperity.” Meanwhile, the national budget bill for the next [Iranian calendar] year (March 2021-March 2022) has been prepared in a way to support and pay special attention to women, especially female heads of households, rural women, and artisans.

Ebtekar noted that the budget for women’s and family affairs has increased by 33 percent, reaching up to 320 billion rials (nearly \$7.6 million), with remarks suggesting special support for women.

She went on to highlight that the family is the cornerstone of human development.

Iranian Women’s Group Empowers Amid Pandemic by Making Masks

By VAHID SALEMI

(Tehran, Iran (AP), December 30, 2020)



As the coronavirus pandemic ravages Iran, home to the Mideast’s worst outbreak, a women’s group hopes to empower its members by helping them make and sell face masks.

The organization called “Bavar,” or “Belief” in Farsi, formed in 2016, allowing women looking for work to make handicrafts with donated sewing machines. It gave widows and others a way to earn cash in a country whose anemic economy only worsened since, two years later, President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from Iran’s nuclear deal with world powers. Sara Chartabian, the founder of Bavar, said the group tries to teach women to be self-sufficient as unemployment and inflation remain high. “We teach them fishing instead of giving them a fish,” Chartabian said.

The pandemic, however, has seen the demand for handicrafts drop. Iran has 1.2 million reported cases of the virus, with about 1 million recoveries and over 55,000 deaths — with officials acknowledging the true toll could be far higher. Meanwhile, the women in need still had to earn money to support their families.

So, the women at Bavar decided to begin making cloth face masks. Today, some 50 women sit with their sewing machines, creating two-ply cloth masks. A third layer can be added with material sold in local pharmacies.

Elham Karami, a 41-year-old woman who works five days a week to support her two sons, said she makes around 10,000 rials (3 U.S. cents) for each face mask she sews. Clients for Bavar include companies and others. “I am grateful for this (organization) because they turned me to a skilled tailor for free,” Karami said. “They allowed me to use a sewing machine to learn how to sew. They also provided materials for me to work on.”

Depending on the order size, Bavar then sells the masks for as much as 250,00 rials (96 U.S. cents) apiece.

In Iran, where the capital of Tehran has been hard-hit by the virus, authorities have mandated mask wearing. While fines for not wearing a mask remain low and poorly enforced, the public increasingly has been seen wearing them.

Chartabian said Bavar’s sales help support buying materials, sewing machines and other matters. The organization also provides women with psychological counseling and other support. She declined to offer specific sales figures for the masks so far, but said every bit helped support women in need. “Maybe the money is not so much, but we provide them services such as psychological counseling and also equipment,” she said.

University of Toronto Receives US \$6M to Establish the ELAHE OMIDYAR MIR-DJALALI INSTITUTE OF IRANIAN STUDIES

NOVEMBER 2, 2020 BY DIVISION OF UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

With a storied history reaching back 10 millennia, Iran is one of the major cradles of civilization. Its achievements in the arts and sciences have profoundly uplifted human culture through the ages. Now, with a generous endowment of US\$6 million from Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute, the University of Toronto is launching the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies, which is named after the scholar and philanthropist who founded Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute in 2000. The new institute will focus primarily on research and outreach by leveraging the strong educational programming already in place across the University of Toronto, fostering advanced research in a collaborative community, and promoting intercultural dialogue.



“The University is delighted to partner with Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute in this new initiative to further interdisciplinary scholarship in Iranian Studies,” said Meric Gertler, U of T’s president. “We look forward to a rich cultural exchange not only between scholars across our departments and around the world, but also with Toronto’s vibrant Persian diaspora.”

We look forward to a rich cultural exchange with Toronto’s vibrant Persian diaspora. “I extend our sincerest thanks to Dr. Mir-Djalali for her generosity and for the opportunity to broaden our links with the Iranian community and to deepen the wider public’s understanding of this remarkable civilization.”

A world-leading program to support studies in Persian culture

“We are honored to establish the first research institute for Iranian studies at the University of Toronto, home of one of the largest and best clusters of faculty, post-doctoral fellows and students in the field in North America — if not the world. I personally am proud for the opportunity to advance the knowledge and appreciation of Persian culture through this new Institute and am inspired for the positive impact it will have on generations of students and scholars in Canada and the world for years to come,” said Mir-Djalali.

Through its grant-making operations, Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute has provided millions of U.S. dollars in grants and endowments to establish or strengthen academic Persian programs at some of the most prestigious universities in the world.

I am inspired. Advancing knowledge of Persian culture will have positive impact on generations of scholars.

Mir-Djalali is an expert in language education, cross-cultural communication and Persian studies; and is widely recognized for her pioneering efforts in nurturing the next generation of Persian studies specialists. Born in Iran, she received a doctorate in linguistics from Paris-Sorbonne University and was a faculty member at Georgetown University and the University of California at Berkeley. In 2018, Mir-Djalali was honoured by the French Ministry of Culture with the title of Chevalier de l’ordre des Arts et des Lettres — one of France’s most prestigious awards — in recognition of her lifelong and significant contributions to Persian arts and culture in France and around the world.

SWITZERLAND NEGOTIATING TO BUY COVID-19 VACCINE FROM IRAN



The Swiss health ministry is negotiating with twenty countries, including Iran, to buy the coronavirus vaccine, and has established ‘special contacts’ in this regard. “We have good relations with the Iranian health sector. Health institutions in Iran are well organized and fully equipped for clinical trials and data sets,” Nora Kronig, Vice-Director General of the Federal Office of Public Health of Switzerland, said, IRIB reported on Thursday.

Five Iranian institutions are on the list of the World Health Organization’s candidates for the vaccine, she noted.

Production of COVID-19 vaccine is being followed by 16 Iranian companies since the beginning of the outbreak, and so far 12 companies applied to produce the vaccine, 8 of which are operating, one of the companies have entered the human trial phase, and two more companies will soon test the vaccines on human, the Iranian Food and Drug Administration spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said on January 10.

COVIRAN BAREKAT, the first coronavirus vaccine made by Iranian researchers of the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, was unveiled and injected into three volunteers during a ceremony on December 29, 2020. On January 11, the second dose of the vaccine was injected into the three volunteers. So far, 35 people have received the first dose of the vaccine, and this number should reach 56 people in the first clinical study phase. Mohammad Mokhber, the head of the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam said on January 19 that over the next month, 2-4 million doses of vaccine will be produced monthly, which will soon reach up to 4-24 million doses.

On January 18, the second home-grown COVID-19 vaccine developed and proposed by the Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute has been approved to begin a clinical trial.

Tehran Times, January 30, 2021

Contrary to Expectations, Marriage in Iran Increased Amid Pandemic

Contrary to expectations, the marriage rate in Iran has been increasing over the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 20, 2020), amid the coronavirus pandemic.

It was expected that the outbreak would affect the marriage rate leading to a downward trend, but studies have shown that the policies and cooperation of the related organizations increased the marriage rate by 0.3 percent over the first nine months of this year compared to the same period last year, Mohammad-Mehdi Tondgooyan, deputy minister of sport and youth stated.

“Also, the number of divorces decreased by 0.1 percent,” he highlighted, Mehr reported on Monday.

Marriage threefold of divorce in Iran

Some 307,349 marriages and 99,679 divorces have been registered in the country during the first seven months of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21-October 21), according to the statistics of the National Organization for Civil Registration.

In December 2020, Seifollah Aboutorabi, the National Organization for Civil Registration spokesman said that during the first 9 months of the current [Iranian calendar] year, some 853,084 births were registered across the country, as well as 397,501 deaths during the same period.



POPULATION GROWTH POLICIES

Official statistics of the country and the forecast of demographic experts indicate that if the trend of decreasing fertility rate, increasing single-child families, and decreasing marriage rate continues for the next 30 years, old age will prevail in the country and one in three people will be over 60-years-old, which will be the beginning of a crisis.

Some 14 policies to support childbearing and the family were announced by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in [the Iranian calendar year] 1393 (March 2014-March 2015) when he stressed that social, cultural and economic development should be done in accordance with these general policies to support families.

The policies address the need to increase the population and the various dimensions of it, including childbearing, facilitating marriage and strengthening the family, reproductive health, promoting the Iranian-Islamic lifestyle, empowering young people, honoring the elderly, and the environment, which can lead to an increase in the quantity and quality of the population if it is timely and continuous implemented.

Kimia Mohammadzadeh, a member of the working group for women's and family at the independent association of the University of Tehran, told Mehr news agency that thus, instead of considering family support and youth marriage, policymakers adopt policies that lead to delays in marriage and family formation.

Childbearing, which should be a public issue, became an inefficient policy due to lack of follow-up, she said.

Most recently, the Majlis (Iranian parliament) has developed a support plan to encourage families to increase childbearing.

The plan stipulates health insurance for infertile couples, providing services and facilities to working women, providing health and nutrition support packages to mothers and children, educational opportunities for student mothers, providing livelihood support to families, and ongoing medical services to pregnant women.

Tehran Times, 07/22/20

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Encyclopedia of Iranian Herbs, Medicinal Plants Unveiled



An encyclopedia of herbs and medicinal plants endemic to Iran was unveiled in a ceremony on Wednesday. In this line, data related to 7,400 different plants in the fields of botany and ecology, pharmaceutical plants, and edible plants have been gathered in the encyclopedia along with some 9,000 pictures, ISNA reported.

In terms of pharmaceutical use, the plants have been categorized into 135 sections. For instance, there are 73 plants effective in lowering blood sugar.

Some 2,300 species of medicinal plants are cultivated across Iran, of which 1,738 species are endemic species, Tarahom Behzad, deputy director of the Forests, Ranges, and Watershed Management Organization, has said.

Of the 8,425 species of herbs identified in the country, 2,300 have medicinal, aromatic, and cosmetic properties, he added. Iran earns some \$500 million annually by exporting medicinal herbs, Mohammad Hassan Asareh, an official with the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology said.

About \$350 million of the revenue is related to saffron and the rest is related to other medicinal herbs, he noted. A 10-year plan for the development of technological activities in the field of medicinal plants and the growth of herbal industrial products was prepared by the headquarters for developing medicinal herbs.

The plan is considered as a roadmap in the field of medicinal plants industry, according to the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology. According to this program, the most important medicinal plants with useful properties are identified, then knowledge-based, creative, and technology companies that are active in the industry are supported. In order to determine the appropriate indicators for control and expert supervision in the process of production of seeds and seedlings of medicinal plants and the development of required standards, the roadmap was developed. The main activities of the project are carried out in three fields, one of which is the registration of plant genetic resources, indigenous and local cultivars of medicinal plants.

Source: Tehran Times

Sun Children shortlisted for 2021 Oscars



Iranian feature 'Sun Children' directed by acclaimed filmmaker Majid Majidi has been shortlisted for the 2021 Academy Awards. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has announced the shortlists for nine categories for the upcoming Oscars, according to Variety. The categories and number of films include documentary feature (15), documentary short subject (10), international feature (15), makeup and hairstyling (10), original score (15), original song (15), animated short film (10), live action short film (10) and visual effects (10).

The shortlist voting concluded on Feb. 5, and the remaining will move on to the official phase one voting, which will take place on March 5-9. The Oscar nominations will be announced on March 15, with the show scheduled to take place on April 25. The full list of international features accepted are: "Another Round" (Denmark) - directed Thomas Vinterberg; "Better Days" (Hong Kong) - directed by Derek Tsang; "Charlatan" (Czech Republic) - directed by Agnieszka Holland; "Collective" (Romania) - directed by Alexander Nanau; "Dear Comrades!" (Russia) - directed by; "I'm No Longer Here" (Mexico) - directed by Fernando Frias; "Hope" (Norway) - directed by Maria Sodahl; "La Llorona" (Guatemala) - directed by Jayro Bustamante; "The Mole Agent" (Chile) - directed by Maite Alberdi; "Night of the Kings" (Ivory Coast) - Philippe Lacote; "Quo Vadis, Aida?" (Bosnia and Herzegovina) - directed by Jasmila Zbanic; "Sun Children" (Iran) - directed by Majid Majidi; "Two of Us" (France) - directed by Filippo Meneghetti; "A Sun" (Taiwan) - directed by Chung Mong-hong; "The Man Who Sold His Skin" (Tunisia) - directed by Kaouther Ben Hania.

Directed by Majid Majidi, the film tells the story of 12-year-old Ali and his three friends. Together, they work hard to survive and support their families, doing small jobs in a garage and committing petty crimes to make fast money. Everything changes, however, when Ali is entrusted to find a hidden treasure underground but must first enroll at the Sun School, a charitable institution that tries to educate street kids and child laborers.

The movie had its Iranian premiere during the 38th Fajr Film Festival in Tehran last February, garnering the Crystal Simorghs for best film, script and set design.

Source: Mehr News Agency

Alzheimer's

ORANGE COUNTY

Q & A With

Jim McAleer

President and CEO of Alzheimer's Orange County

Tell us about Alzheimer's Orange County!

Alzheimer's Orange County began as an independent 501c3 nonprofit in 1982 with a primary mission of providing care and support for those impacted with dementia and their caregivers in Orange County. As you may know, Alzheimer's is a devastating neurodegenerative illness that weakens the memory and other cognitive and emotional functions.

To put some context to the importance of our organization and mission, today there are more than 84,000 Orange County residents living with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, and that number is projected to more than triple by 2025. In Orange County alone, Alzheimer's disease is the third leading cause of death.

Alzheimer's Orange County provides life-changing programs, support services, and advocacy for those living with memory loss, including older adults and frail seniors, as well as the people who love and care for them. We provide support to Orange County families and individuals through brain health and dementia education, care consultations, community resource connections, Adult Day Health Services, residential, memory care services, and much more.

We operate the Irvine Cottages residential memory care business, which has 12 neighborhood locations in Newport Beach, Irvine and Mission Viejo with 72 beds. Founder Dr. Jacqueline DuPont, Gerontologist, donated the business.

Describe a few of the programs the organization offers.

We are a one-stop shop for all things related to Alzheimer's and dementia. A few of our stand-out initiatives include our Annual SoCal Alzheimer's Disease Research Conference co-hosted by UCI MIND; our live online webinars; our Memories in the Making® signature art program; the MindFit OC health education program based on the latest research from the Cleveland Clinic; and our special fundraising events, including our annual gala and Walk4ALZ & Run 4ALZ. To reflect the diversity of our county, we provide educational and support services in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

We also offer support groups for Chinese, Farsi, and Korean speakers.

How did Alzheimer's Orange County respond to the COVID-19 Crisis?

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic first developed in Orange County and then became increasingly dangerous to the health and well being of thousands of residents of who are affected by Alzheimer's disease or other related dementia, we took immediate steps to address it and implemented a plan of action.

The difficult decision was made to postpone this year's Gala after governmental recommendations and the CDC and California Public Health Department issued warnings. The spread of the virus and its potential impact on the community, particularly older adults, was not something to be ignored or underestimated. Later, a successful virtual gala was held earning more than \$500,000 to support many life-saving and life-changing programs.

After the California State Department of Aging required us to close Acacia Adult Day Services of Garden Grove and South County Adult Day Services in Laguna Woods, our team began nursing and social work support and connecting families in need of food and supplies.

To keep connected to adults now unable to go to the centers for nourishment and socialization, the staffs began a service to prepare and directly deliver meals and other items like games and puzzles to keep them engaged - all at no charge.

AlzOC transitioned services, like educational courses, on-line and ramped up PPE distribution efforts to help keep essential workers safe.

Caring for someone with Alzheimer's can be an intensely emotional journey. So we used our Facebook Caregiver Support Group to help people stay connected with other caregivers, care partners, and people living with Alzheimer's or dementia. We also began virtual Zoom support group sessions via video call or telephone.



How can someone become involved with Alzheimer's Orange County?

There are several ways. We are seeking donors and advocates to help us meet the needs and assure rights of people with Alzheimer's disease and their families. We invite everyone to visit <https://www.alzoc.org> to learn more.

Bio of Jim McAleer



Jim McAleer began his career in the nonprofit world at age 18 while pursuing an undergraduate degree in Savannah, Georgia.

For the next 22 years, he worked with individuals with mental retardation, issues of mental health and other disabilities. He earned a master's degree in Public Administration at Northeastern University in 1994.

After relocating to Southern California, Jim began a comprehensive nonprofit consulting business specializing in organizational leadership and change, management transitions, strategic planning, and fundraising.

McAleer & Associates, Inc. served dozens of clients over the next six years including Friends of El Faro, Street Poets, Crystal Cove Alliance, and more.

Since 2004, Jim has settled into his role as President and CEO of Alzheimer's Orange County, serving the 84,000 + people living in OC with, or at risk of, dementia.

He manages \$9.2 million in income and a staff of 100. He has made more than 100 professional presentations and has served on five nonprofit boards of directors supporting at risk children's causes, and the board of Cal Optima.

Jim created the Orange County Aging Services Collaborative in 2009, now gathering together more than 30 nonprofits serving seniors for regular collaborative projects and promotions.

He continues to co-chair that group.

<http://www.ocagingservicescollaborative.org/>

In 2016, Jim began to convene the Orange County Strategic Plan on Aging (OCSPA), which now boasts 18 cities, the County, 13 nonprofits and four funders as its members. The plan has created two 18-month strategic initiative tracks (so far) as well as the OC Report on Seniors released in 2019.

He currently serves as chair of the group.

<http://www.ocagingplan.org/>

Contact Communications Director:

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To Those of Us Born 1925 - 1955

TO ALL THE KIDS WHO SURVIVED

THE 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s

This article's author is unknown, but it is food for thought! Who knows what one will write at the end of another fifty years, ENJOY

First, we survived being born to mothers who may have smoked and/or drank, while they were pregnant. They took aspirin, ate blue cheese dressing, tuna from a can, and didn't get tested for diabetes. Then, after that trauma, we were put to sleep on our tummies in baby cribs Covered with bright colored lead-based paints.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, locks on doors or cabinets and when we rode our bikes, we had baseball caps, not helmets, on our heads. As infants and children, we would ride in cars with no car seats, no booster seats, no seat belts, no air bags, bald tires and sometimes no brakes. Riding in the back of a pick-up truck on a warm day was always a special treat. We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle. We shared one soft drink with four friends, from one bottle, and no one actually died from this. We ate cupcakes, white bread, real butter, and bacon. We drank Kool-Aid made with real white sugar, and we weren't overweight.

WHY?

Because we were always outside playing... that's why! We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on. No one was able to reach us all day, and, we were OKAY.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then ride them down the hill, only to find out that we forgot about brakes. After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve the problem. We did not have Play Stations, Nintendo, and X-boxes. There were no video games, nor No 150 channels on cable, no video movies, or DVDs, No surround-sound or CDs, no cell phones, no personal computers, no Internet and no chat rooms.

We Had Friends

And we went outside and found them! We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and lost teeth, and there were no lawsuits from those accidents. We would get spankings with wooden spoons, switches, ping-pong paddles, or just a bare hand, and no one would call child services to report abuse.

We ate worms, and mud pies made from dirt, and the worms did not live in us forever. We were given BB guns for our 10th birthdays, 22 rifles for our 12th, rode horses, made up games with sticks and tennis balls, and although we were told it would happen- we did not put out very many eyes. We rode bikes or walked to a friend's house and knocked on the door or rang the bell, or just walked in and talked to them. Little League had tryouts, and not everyone made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment.

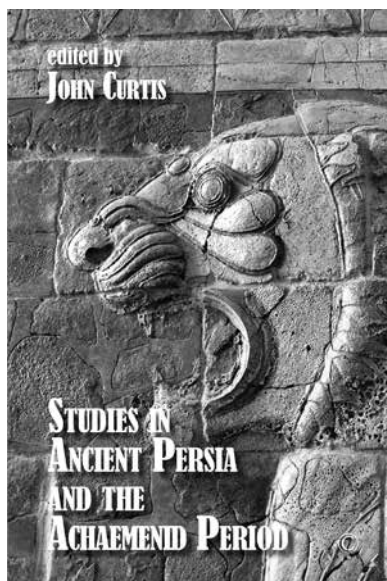
Imagine that!!

The idea of a parent who didn't bail us out if we broke the law. That was unheard of...They actually sided with the law!?? These generations have produced some of the best risk-takers, problem solvers, and inventors ever. The past 60 to 85 years have seen an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all.

Studies in Ancient Persia and the Achaemenid Period

EDITED BY: JOHN CURTIS

Published by: Iran Heritage Foundation



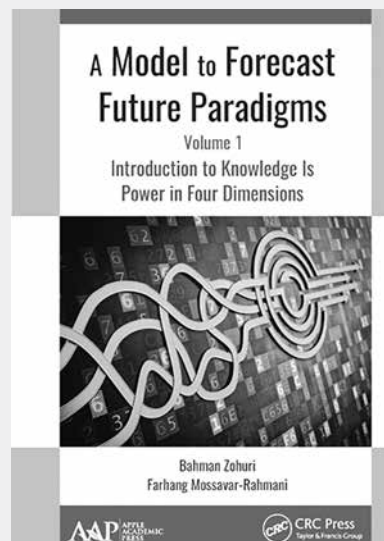
The Iran Heritage Foundation is pleased to announce the recent publication of a book entitled *Studies in Ancient Persia and the Achaemenid Period*, edited by John Curtis, the Academic Director of IHF. The book is published by James Clarke & Co and has been sponsored by IHF.

The publication has an appreciation and biography of Terence Mitchell, Keeper of Western Asiatic Antiquities at the British Museum 1985-1989, as well as articles by: Paul Collins on ‘Five unpublished Persepolis relief fragments in the Ashmolean Museum’; John Curtis on ‘Where did the Persian kings live in Babylon?’; Christopher Walker on ‘The use of seals in Babylonia under the Achaemenids’; Alan Millard on ‘An Iranian in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar’; Terence Mitchell on ‘Biblical archaeology in the Persian period’; Shahrokh Razmjou on ‘Textual connections between the Cyrus Cylinder and the Bible with particular reference to Isaiah’; Prudence Harper on ‘Interpreting Sasanian beards: significant images in an interconnected world’; and Mahnaz Moazami on ‘Sasanian-Zoroastrian intellectual life in the 5th and 6th centuries AD’.

A Model to Forecast Future Paradigms

Volume 1: Introduction to Knowledge
Is Power in Four Dimensions

Bahman Zohuri, Farhang Mossavar-Rahmani



In this volume, the authors’ two-fold objective is to lay out a methodology and approach that allows the reader to learn how to utilize existing technology in the form of computer software and hardware for forecasting and decision-making and to discuss factors that affect upcoming events that, in turn, shape future paradigms.

With the sheer volume of information available and the ever-greater ease of access, it is becoming increasingly difficult to introduce an appropriate methodology of decision-making that is fast enough to be effective. The demand for real-time information processing and related data—both structured and unstructured—is on the rise. This rise makes it challenging to implement correct decision-making within enterprises at a level that keeps organizations robust and resilient against natural and man-made disasters. This volume provides an understanding of these factors and will help decision-makers be better prepared to face future challenges and will assist them in coping with unexpected circumstances.

This volume is divided into two parts. Part one discusses a “technological infrastructure” so that readers can gain a greater understanding based on the knowledge of tomorrow’s computing functionality. The second part goes on to discuss the key indicators in the areas of population, culture, economics, climate change, and the impacts of technology in commerce and socially—which all need to be considered when forecasting a future paradigm.

The authors will follow this introductory volume with additional volumes that review and analyse other critical indicators in the areas of geopolitics, the nature of political power around the globe, and other applications of technology and energy.

THE HILL WE CLIMB

Amanda Gorman

*Amanda Gorman and her poem at the Presidential Inauguration
Poised, elegant, mature, she delivered an honest untainted look at our history
past, present and future.*

*Regardless of your ethnicity each of us should feel her passion to complete
this GREAT country we live in. We need not to dwell on our faults wherever
and whomever they fall on, because we all have them.*

When day comes, we ask ourselves,
Where can we find light in this
never-ending shade?
The loss we carry, a sea we must wade.
We've braved the belly of the beast.
We've learned
that quiet isn't always peace.
And the norms and notions of
what just is, isn't always just-ice.
And yet,
the dawn is ours before we knew it.
Somehow, we do it.
Somehow, we've weathered
and witnessed
A nation that isn't broken,
but simply unfinished.
We, the successors of a country
and a time,
where a skinny Black girl
descended from slaves
and raised by a single mother
can dream of becoming president,
only to find herself reciting for one.

And yes we are far from polished,
far from pristine,
but that doesn't mean we are striving to
form a union that is perfect.
We are striving to forge a union with purpose,
to compose a country committed to all
cultures, colors, characters and
conditions of man.
And so, we lift our gazes,
not to what stands between us,
but what stands before us.
We close the divide because
we know, to put our future first,
we must first put our differences aside.
We lay down our arms
so, we can reach out our arms
to one another.
We seek harm to none, and harmony for all.
Let the globe, if nothing else,
say this is true:
That even as we grieved, we grew.
That even as we hurt, we hoped.

That even as we tired, we tried.
That we'll forever be tied together,
victorious not because
we will never again know defeat,
but because
we will never again sow division.
Scripture tells us to envision
that everyone shall sit
under their own vine and fig tree
And no one shall make them afraid.
If we're to live up to our own time,
then victory won't lie in the blade
but in all the bridges we've made.
That is the promise to glade
the hill we climb
if only we dare it.
Because being American is
more than a pride we inherit.
It's the past we step into
and how we repair it.
We've seen a force that would shatter
our nation rather than share it,
would destroy our country if
it meant delaying democracy?
and this effort very nearly succeeded.
But while democracy
can be periodically delayed,
it can never be permanently defeated.
In this truth,
in this faith, we trust.
For while we have our eyes on the future,
history has its eyes on us.
This is the era of just redemption
we feared at its inception.
We did not feel prepared
to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour,
but within it we found the power
to author a new chapter,
to offer hope and laughter to ourselves.
So, while we once we asked,
How could we possibly prevail
over catastrophe?
Now, we assert,
How could catastrophe possibly prevail
over us?
We will not march back to what was,



but move to what shall be.
A country that is bruised but whole,
benevolent but bold, fierce and free.
We will not be turned around
or interrupted by intimidation,
because we know our inaction
and inertia will be
the inheritance of the next generation.
Our blunders become their burdens.
But one thing is certain:
If we merge mercy with might,
and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy
and change our children's birthright.
So, let us leave behind a country
better than the one we were left with.
Every breath
from my bronze-pounded chest.
We will raise this wounded world
into a wondrous one.
We will rise
from the gold-limbed hills of the west.
We will rise from the windswept northeast,
where our forefathers
first realized revolution.
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities
of the Midwestern states.
We will rise from the sunbaked south.
We will rebuild, reconcile and recover,
and every known nook of our nation
and every corner called our country,
our people diverse and beautiful will emerge,
battered and beautiful

When day comes,
we step out of the shade,
afire and unafraid.
The new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it
if only we're brave enough to be it.

Quchan

Sent by Tara Sharif



Hezar Masjed Mountains are a group of mountains that form the southeastern section of the Kopet-Dag Range. Located about 40 kilometres east of Quchan and 70 kilometres north of Mashhad in Razavi Khorasan Province in Iran

“While I was looking at pictures of Kopet-Dag, Hezar Masjed, and the Tondureh National Park I thought: this looks a bit like the Dolomites with a touch of southern California, but different. And sure enough, it turns out that at least some of the mountains around Quchan are Jurassic and made of limestone, which is indeed like the Dolomites ... and the Jurassic area along the Swiss-French border.”

In the 19th century the genesis of the Dolomite Mountains was one of the great geological mysteries. Fossils provided clues that the rocks composing the mountains were formed once in the sea by living organisms, but in these early days of geology almost nothing was known about the bottom of the sea and the sedimentation occurring in oceans. So how did the ocean become mountains?

During his voyage on board of “HMS Beagle” (1831-1836), young geologist C. Darwin studied Lyell’s “Principles of Geology” and the chapter about reefs in the Pacific stimulated his imagination. In Chile, February 20, 1835, Darwin had experienced a very strong earthquake and shortly afterward noted evidence of several meters of uplift in the region. In accordance to Lyell’s view

Darwin imagined that mountains could rise and sink by many similar events during geological time.

Based only on the description in the book of atolls, and assuming slow movements of the surface of earth, Darwin developed a preliminary hypothesis to explain the formation of atolls in the middle of the sea. He admits in his 1887 autobiography:

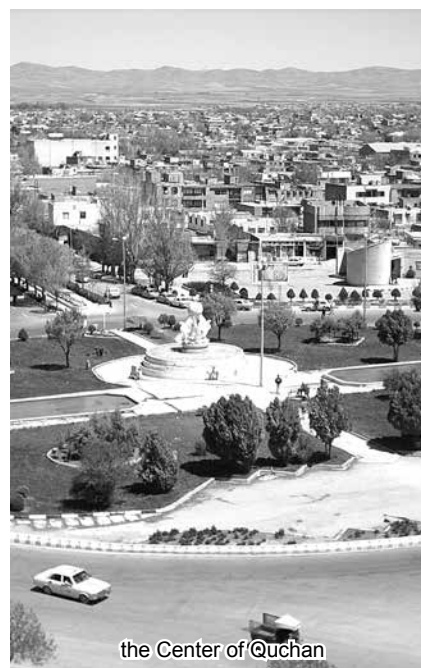
“No other work of mine was begun in so deductive a spirit as this; for the whole theory was thought out on the west coast of S. America before I had seen a true coral reef. I had therefore only to verify and extend my views by a careful examination of living reefs. But it should be observed that I had during the two previous years been incessantly attending to the effects on the shores of S. America of the intermittent elevation of the land, together with the denudation and deposition of sediment. This necessarily led me to reflect much on the effects of subsidence, and it was easy to replace in imagination the continued deposition of sediment by the upward growth of coral. To do this was to form my theory of the formation of barrier reefs and atolls.”

These observations of living reefs in

the tropical seas provided new impulses to interpret the geological relationships in the Dolomites. In 1860 the Austrian geologist Baron Ferdinand F. von Richthofen (1833-1905) visited and studied the area of the Dolomites. He discovered that the sandstone and tuff deposits, surrounding the isolate peaks of dolostone, contained large limestone boulders, some containing still recognizable fossils of corals. Based on the theory of evolution of a reef as proposed by Darwin, Richthofen suggested that the isolated peaks were the intact remains of an ancient reef, still surrounded by clastic sediments of an ancient ocean basin, in which, from time to time, landslides from the steep slopes of the reef deposited large boulders of corals.

I remembered the many earthquakes we experienced in Ghoochan and also our tea pots being lined with a hardened layer of lime and my mom and azizjoons losing some tooth to what might have been the quick calcification of any plaque they had at their gum lines.

In fact, all 3 sisters were very young (around 30) when they lost some teeth. I remember Dr. Ajami being a part of many conversations. Of course, they did not know about flossing and electric tooth brushes at that time to do a better job. So all that calcium from the sea animals sent them to the dentist office? And Choochan was a sea at some time?





Azita Ghafouri



A Life of Passion

Born in 1931 in Ghoochan, Mashad province of Iran to Shokufeh Bazargan as her mother and Abdol-Ghani Ghafouri as her father, Parivash Ghafouri accomplished a cultural life as an earnest educated person and an educator through her life. She was the second of five girls in the family and always ready with a helping hand to other siblings, especially to me as the youngest. She took upon herself acting as a second mother for me, which I was blessed with her wise attention and love for a better world and kinder humanity.

She started her teaching career as early as seventeen when still in school. But that did not stop her from continuing further studies at the higher educational system towards the doctorate degree. She got her bachelor's degree in Persian literature from Shiraz University while making a lot of friends inside and outside work and university. Later she got her master's degree in Linguistics from Tehran University. The love of her life was traveling inside Iran and abroad. She had an exceptional talent and capacity to tackle the other cultures, religions and histories with an open mind through languages and travel. She was fond of the Avesta, and curious about ancestral backgrounds. She was in love with Haféz and his poems, many of which she could recite by heart for different occasions.

As she got older, she went from being a direct educator to a policy maker for the education system. She served many years in Ministry of Higher Education and Sciences where she eventually became one of the managing directors under the Minister of Sciences, until she was retired due to the revolution of 1978.

She was full of love for everything new and old. She was among one of the first cultural delegates from Iran to visit China which for her was a dream come true and was making friends in all her trips and in any corner of this world. I can hardly recall any person with so many friends around and from all range of society and diversity. Although she was not married and with no children, all these friends filled her life during the retirement period. Her life and kindness affected people around her as well as family members and neighbors as well. Here is a eulogy written by her nieces and nephews on social media: "Khaleh Parivash, you were the best aunt in the world, and a great human being. Your love and endless devotion to the family will never be forgotten. Words cannot express the loss we feel today. A highly-cultured connoisseur of the arts, with a compassionate heart, and a seeker of justice for all is how we will remember you."

She passed away January 5, 2021. Rest in peace Paba!

A School in her name will be built in Ghoochan to commemorate her love and lifetime goal of attaining education for all.

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Croat volunteer of French Army, wearing Cravat, 17th century

British scholar Noel Malcom in his book "A short history of Bosnia" printed in Britain offers valuable research about the racial relationship between Iranians and some ethnicities of the former Yugoslavia. He writes: "The name Croat, or Hrvats in Serbian, is not a Serbian word. It is similar to the Iranian name Choroatos, found on tombstones of Greek dwelling regions of south Russia." He goes on to add that the original form of the word is "Khoravat" as mentioned in Avesta, meaning "friendly".

Historical studies indicate that the Croats started migrating from the Iranian homeland to Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia about 3,000 years ago. However, a much larger migration took place about 1,700 years ago. Probably the reason behind

Croatians and Cravats Are of Iranian Origin

M. A. SEPANLU

this migration was the suppression of the followers of Manichean faith during the Sassanid era. The said scholar LSO says that the word Serb has also Iranian origin, which can be recognized in the word "Charv" meaning cattle. According to top ancient documents, these two ethnic groups were tribes of Iranian origin that had accepted Slavic subjects among themselves.

Noel Malcom says that new theories confirm historical knowledge. Some Croatian nationalist theoreticians have opted to adopt the theory linking their origins to Iran, thereby preserving their cultural and psychological independence, in order not to merge into the neighboring cultures.

Such a theory gained particular popularity during World War II, for Iranians were considered to have a higher ranking compared to the Slavs in terms of racial hierarchy. However, in Malcom's words, the plain historical fact is that both the Croats and the Serbs migrated at the same time, and both have some characteristics of Iranian peoples.

One point is clear: the early immigrants called themselves Khoravat or Croat in order to distinguish with other tribes of that region. These Iranian-origin immigrants also did something more to stress the difference: they tied a handkerchief around their necks, something which later gained global popularity under the name of Cravat.

In 1656 CE, Louis XIV

formed a regiment of Croat volunteers inside his army. The members of this regiment, in accordance to their ancient tradition, wore a neckerchief of plain of floral silk, its ends dangling from the tie. It could also be used as bandage if the soldier was wounded. After this time, the Croatian scarf was accepted in France, above all in court, where military ornaments were much admired. The fashionable expression, 'a la croate', soon evolved into a new French word, which still exists today: la cravate. Some 170 years later, the necktie became a universal fashion.

It would be worthwhile

to add that the Croatian national flag is derived from the chessboard, thus some nationalist historians consider Croats the descendants of Bozorgmehr, the chess master and minister of the Sassanid era. Talking of the global influence of Persian, it would also be interesting to note that the word Pajamas has Persian origins, meaning "leg ware".

My mind drifts back to the Mauritanian desert. In an isolated oasis, an old man opens an ancient book, reading with not so familiar accent, one of the great poems of Sa'adi "Human beings are organs of one body."

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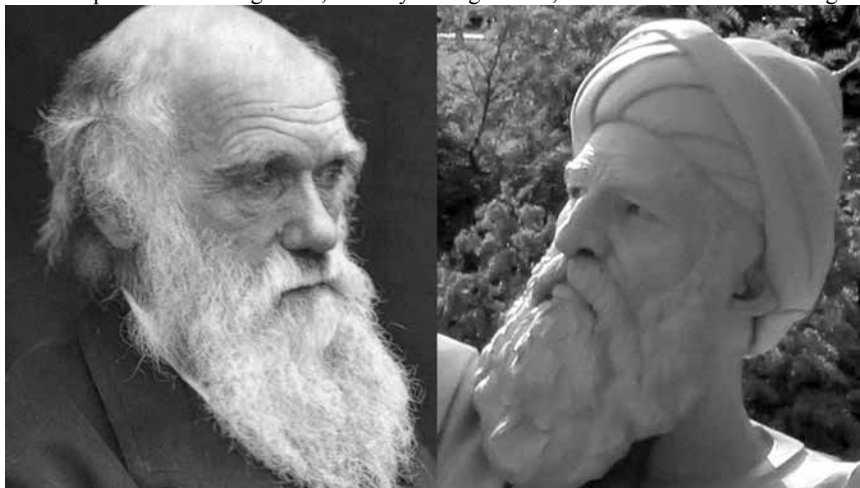


The First Theory of Evolution is 600 years Older than Darwin

TIJANA RADESKA

Sent by Dr. Kaveh Farrokh.

This version first published on August 27, 2016 by Vintage News, has been edited from its original version



Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī (1201-1274) was a Persian polymath and prolific writer: An architect, astronomer, biologist, chemist, mathematician, philosopher, physician, physicist, scientist, theologian and Marja Taqleed.

He was of the Ismaili, and subsequently Twelver Shī'ah, Islamic belief. The Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) considered Tusi to be the greatest of the later Persian scholars.

Tusi has about 150 works, of which 25 are in Persian and the remaining are in Arabic, and there is one treatise in Persian, Arabic and Turkish. During his stay in Nishapur, Tusi established a reputation as an exceptional scholar. Tusi's prose writings represent one of the largest collections by a single Islamic author.

Writing in both Arabic and Persian, Nasir al-Din Tusi dealt with both religious ("Islamic") topics and non-religious or secular subjects ("the ancient sciences"). His works include the definitive Arabic versions of the works of Euclid, Archimedes, Ptolemy, Autolycus, and Theodosius of Bithynia.

In his Akhlaq-i-Nasri, Tusi put forward a basic theory of the evolution of species almost 600 years before Charles Darwin (1809-1882) was born.

Tusi begins his theory of evolution with the universe once consisting of equal and similar elements.

According to Tusi, internal contradictions began appearing, and as a result, some substances began developing faster and differently from other substances. He then explains how the elements evolved into minerals, then plants, then animals, and then humans. Tusi then goes on to explain how hereditary variability was an important factor for biological evolution of living things:

"The organisms that can gain the new features faster are more variable. As a result, they gain advantages over other creatures. [...] The bodies are changing as a result of the internal and external interactions."

Tusi discusses how organisms are able to adapt to their environments:

"Look at the world of animals and birds. They have all that is necessary for defense, protection and daily life, including strengths, courage and appropriate tools [organs] [...] Some of these organs are real weapons, [...] For example, horns-spear, teeth and claws-knife and needle, feet and hoofs-cudgel. The thorns and needles of some animals are similar to arrows. [...] Animals that have no other means of defense (as the gazelle and fox) protect themselves with the help of flight and cunning. [...] Some of them, for example, bees, ants and some bird species, have united in communities in order to protect themselves and help each other."

Tusi recognized three types of living things: plants, animals, and humans. He wrote:

"Animals are higher than plants, because they are able to move consciously, go after food, find and eat useful things. [...] There are many differences between the animal and plant species, [...] First of all, the animal kingdom is more complicated. Besides, reason is the most beneficial feature of animals. Owing to reason, they can learn new things and adopt new, non-inherent abilities. For example, the trained horse or hunting falcon is at a higher point of development in the animal world. The first steps of human perfection begin from here."

Tusi then explains how humans evolved from advanced animals:

"The human has features that distinguish him from other creatures, but he has other features that unite him with the animal world, vegetable kingdom or even with the inanimate bodies. [...] Before [the creation of humans], all differences between organisms were of the natural origin. The next step will be associated with spiritual perfection, will, observation and knowledge. [...] All these facts prove that the human being is placed on the middle step of the evolutionary stairway. According to his inherent nature, the human is related to the lower beings, and only with the help of his will can he reach the higher development level."



Inspired by the surreal and uplifting TED[®] *Tehran Women*[®] Talk accompanied by the sublime operatic solo performance of maestro virtuoso **Ariana Vafadari**, I remain in awe sitting in my nook on a gloomy and frigid autumnal day and amidst the COVID-19 catastrophe. As I glare at the dusk silhouette of the pregnant clouds, high above in the sky of the lower Hudson Valley of New York, I find myself interspersed in a twilight zone of a void at the infinite crossroad between space and time.

In dire hope of snapping out of my somber melancholy and its accompanying heart wrenching emotions, encore, I again listen to Ariana's divine songs. While her Gathas song, inspired by the ancient Zoroastrian poetic hymns of Iran in the Avestan language performed in D-Minor is immensely sad, her *Anahita* song named after the Goddess of water, mother-earth and fertility leading the listener's soul to a transcendence toward the ultimate and only source of one's inner-consciousness, is jubilant. Sortie out my trance in France and as I wake up from a state of conundrum kudos to Ariana, and after nearly twenty years of my having remained timidly silent about when it all began, I find myself in an elating state of ecstasy and the impetus to eventually share this reflective prose herein.

Her video is the latest in a series of Ariana's fine artistic expressions that I have watched with mixed melancholia and euphoria since her father Kasra Vafadari, a stellar professor of social studies, history, Iranian and contemporary western studies and law was beheaded most horrifically in Paris back in 2005. Whether or not her father's slaying as surmised, was due to certain family feud triangulation that went spiral haywire into the deep end, instigat-

The Spiritual Zoroastrianism or Zoroastrian Spiritualism and its Roots in Persian Ethos since Antiquity

Davood Rahni

ed by a third party assassin or by both, is irrelevant to the core heart of this essay. While humanity should ethically remain most sympathetically compassionate to, and learn much from their two daughters and alike, especially Ariana who despite all odds of despair stood up again and are strolling through the rough terrain of life. Five years after heinous crime, a French court convicted an Iranian national for his despicable and hideous crime of killing Professor Vafadari in 2010; the convict jailed for life, has no parole or clemency (France has a ban on the death penalty). Kasra was a most outspoken civic activist scholar and the steward protecting human rights, due process and the rule of law especially as endured by the indigenous people of his native country, the Zoroastrians to whom he also belonged.

A genuinely forthright human being though, his professorial but pontificating oratory style that frequently crossed the social decorum when he frustrated, used vulgarity and disparaging or pejorative remarks to impart his points across, cost him pay the most precious price, HIS LIFE. The proverb "*never mind his barracuda face, but instead, mind his Persian Pussy cat heart deep down,*" was most fitting to Kasra's expressions of his emotions.

What is most startling however is how his daughter Ariana, who fled Iran along with her binational family at five and caught in between the 2 cultures since and detached from it all, has now triumphed to define and embrace her sense of higher calling and purpose in life. She has moved on far beyond the myriad ordeals and injustices in her own still beautiful life, such that the loss of her father has led to an epiphany of drawing from her Persian Zoroastrian ethos and her innate and acquired artistic talents to compose and sing the divinely sublime and humanistic operatic music. Her expression truly integrates what the fine arts, cultures and ethos of the orient-*vis a vis* Iran-and its interconnectedness with the Occident's opera and music, can seamlessly offer humanity as a whole.

Ariana's outreach to the very inner-essence of human consciousness has conjured up vividly the memories of my jour-

ney home back in early 2000's. A dozen of us, Iranian professors and physicians from across the globe, were serendipitously fortunate to get to know Kasra Vafadari and as we were rudimentarily familiar with his scholarship and legacy beforehand. We fortuitously crossed paths with him and the other Iranian expatriates as we spent a week giving lectures in several mother universities in Shiraz, Esfahan, and Tehran while visiting archeological monuments in Iran interspersed with attending music concerts.

We literally lived together for a week that in retrospect now seems like only a quantum lightning leap. Kasra resided outside Iran since age ten whereby his last twenty-five years was in Paris the Bastion City for stewardship of "*humanity, liberty, fraternity and solidarity.*" As a result, the expression of his state of mind and actions came across to most as somewhat "flamboyantly eccentric." Well intentioned, when speaking to large audience, his righteous candor quickly threw most, especially the authorities, peers and students in Iran, over the edge into the gutter and out of their comfort zones. Consequently, his oration monologue came across as a bit too far-reaching and nerve-racking.

The above notwithstanding, the late Professor Vafadari was a well-read, well-trimmed, well-dressed and boat tied, and prolifically published scholar having swum across the turbulent seas of a half dozen languages of classical and contemporary literatures and cultures on the three Nordic continents. Although forward-looking, he lamented with melancholic nostalgia the loss of much of the past glories of ancient Persia aka Iran and as perhaps innately felt by most Iranians.

Zoroastrian heritage in Iran has dwindled; a respectable volume of it persist since 1500 years ago, not only among current the 150000 Zoroastrians worldwide, but also among the nearly 200 million Iranians and the regional brethren of Iran. His Zoroastrian heritage from the isolated Zarthusti community complemented his scholarship on pre-Islamic through modern Iran, and instilled in him a crisp calling to pursue and "proselytize" on the Persian culture and heritage, LOUD and CLEAR! After

all, Ksara Vafadari had embedded into himself and onto others a long-standing Persian ethos (one could yearn the same for the whole humanity) that had ethically compelled him to avoid cursing futilely against utter darkness or lashing high seas or windmills, but rather instead, hold the LIT torch of enlightenment and truth against the darkness.

Kasra and Laurence raised their two daughters Ariana and Afsaneh. The couple had for the most part raised and nurtured their children in a universal, humanistic, and Persian culture and ethos and anchored on Zoroastrian spiritualism. Their lifestyle resonated well with French humanistic liberalism, in particular. A number of siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins, scattered on three continents in the northern hemisphere, have survived him, too. The trials and tribulations endured by Ariana's Zoroastrian family remain inextricably unbearable; nonetheless, one should realize that Vafadari's ordeals are somewhat similar to the same fate borne by five to six million Iranian expatriates in the past few decades.

Then again, one could not fathom the same excruciatingly painful sentiments when the ancient nation of Iran formerly Persia, currently 83 million strong, still struggles to step into the secular and democratic modernity of the 21st century? Yes indeed, Iran has yearned for freedoms, democracy and the secular rule of law for the past 150 years. In fact, it was such yearning that led to the overthrow of a modern dictatorship, just to witness it hopelessly replaced overnight with an opportunistic theological kleptocracy. What has remained most uplifting though is how Ariana has moved on from her faith to actualize humanistic spiritualism thereby transcending closer to the invisible and never proven source: *Farvahar* the ultimate ascension to *Parvaregar*, the creator if not the originator of it all and more...

There indeed has existed a historically rich plethora of Persian mythologies comprised of vast volumes of poetry and prose as well as heart-to-heart transmittance against the backdrop of Iran's recorded history of 10,000 years. This is exemplified by Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, the epic 30,000 verses poetry book of the Persian Kings of Peshdadian and Kayanian Dynasties written 1000 years ago based on legends from millennia earlier. The invading Arab desert dwellers and some among them the Caravan raiders, who brought with them one book which claimed to have "answers" to all questions, literally set ablaze the mas-

sive collections of Persian manuscripts and, in essence led to weakening Iran's previous faiths of Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity. The sporadic little literature left from the pre-Islamic era and what has since been regenerated especially amid the past decades, has become a magnificent source for fine composers and performers like Ariana, her peers and her protégés to generate operas, theaters, and movies that could easily surpass the impressive European and American performances.

Each of the Persian poetic stories or mythical tales in the *Shahnameh* is narrated in four cyclical solar seasons: Fall, the joyous era of egalitarian approach to communal protection and survival, peace, bounties and health of the nation. Winter, the saddened era of injustice, tyranny, pain, pillar and plunder famine and diseases afflicted by darkened forces. Spring, the era of triumph of light over darkness, enlightenment, justice, equality, fairness, harmony, tranquility and peace. Summer, the era of transforming or eradicating forever the darkness and injustice, thereby eating the fruits and drinking the juices in the paradise of mother-earth.

Hominids and Homo sapiens including the ancient Persians/Iranians had instinctively recognized the most crucially pivotal role of women in the continuation and sustenance of life since the beginning of time and place. They had grasped and revered the role of bearing, fertility and productions as they depended on the sun, moon, earth and its many bounties of flora and fauna, and women. Therefore, it is not surprising that throughout the history of Iran and her Persian cultures, mythology and ethos, that the celestial objects, earth, moon and sun among others in Persian language and cultures have remained female since the beginning of time. In fact, deities and goddesses, as evidenced by smaller and larger figurines and statues and sculptures collections in Museums as Louvre and as in the book the Royal City of Susa, are women. Historians surmise the three Abrahamic religions, transposing the icon image of their prophets over the sun to use it as sacred halo, transformed matriarchy into patriarchy. Somewhere along the historical timeline, around five to three thousand years ago, Goddesses become gods and then one god as believed by the three Abrahamic religions. This power transfer from female to male became the pinnacle of socio-economic, political and military power.

Hushang the second king of the

Peshdadian Dynasty, amid his reign in the Stone Age when hunting alone once, is said to have serendipitously discovered the power of fire when he struck off another lint boulder when his aim was to scare off an incoming humongous venomous snake toward him! This led to keeping the fire eternally sacred in temples harnessing its light, energy, heat, cleansing, disinfecting, and deterrence effects against wild animals, and for metallurgy and material making. The evolution of thoughts, that led to the cognition of the four basic elements essential to safeguard for creating and sustaining life, namely fire (sun), water, earth, and air, followed.

Later Jamshid the just King of the Peshdadian Dynasty instituted and ushered in the jubilant Nowruz, the Persian New Year heralded on the vernal spring equinox. He was however, killed and overthrown by the despot Zah'hak at the winter that followed. As soon as Angra Mainyu (aka Ahriman, Eblis, , Sheytan, Stan, Demon, Div, Djinns) wet kissed Zah'hak's two shoulder calves, two grotesque snakes emerged from his extremities. The snakes, repeatedly, made love to copulate over Zah'hak's hollow skull until their feeding time at noon was upon them. They required devouring a daily dose of the fresh flesh of a young newlywed Persian couple offered at them. The premise was that if this offering was not provided before each dusk that they would begin annihilating, in bits and pieces, the tyrant Zah'hak himself so to send his soul deep down to *Douzakh* the hell, until he was burnt to ashes at day-time and frozen over at nights, forever.

The majority serf populace, horrified of such repeated cataclysmic episodes, had all but lost hope and the impetus to live. Then on the last Tuesday night before spring, the blacksmith Kaveh emerged with his leather apron staffed on his tall javelin called since *Derafsh Kaviani*. He called on all Iranians and led them up Mt. Damavand where they dug up Zah'hak hidden deeply in his dark and swampy damp dungeon and beheaded him and his two snake companions with one mighty strike of the strongest sword ever made but himself. Despite the pleas of his compatriots, the patriotic Kaveh was not interested in ruling Persia and so he suggested Fereydu be crowned onto the Peacock Throne as the next King of the Keyanian Dynasty. Fereydu restored justice, peace and happiness again until the end of time. And, so, the Iranians lived happily ever after! (Or so they wished)

For Ariana as the child of only one

Persian parent with a secular Persian/Zoroastrian culture, and with the dominant French mother's ethos, to have her petty bourgeois comfort zone interrupted by her father's grotesque death, and for her to achieve such a deep level of "Persian Zoroastrian" consciousness, is simply remarkable. What is even more startling is the same evolution of thoughts which has been only accelerated among the majority of Iranians, the "Muslims," though Shiites are deemed "deviant despots" according to the more traditionalist Sunni's and as led (ideologically and financially) by Wahabism of Saudi Arabia.

Individuals, communities or a nation when feeling committed to the universal golden edict of moral ethical conducts, and as in spiritual Zoroastrianism pillared by the three tenants of good thoughts (visions), good words (dialogue and plan), and good deeds (actions) will have a humanistic sense of purpose that benefits the whole transcendentally. After all, It is not any longer surprising when the first European Feminist, Francesca Speranza Wilde, wrote extensively on common mythologies between Iran and Ireland of nearly eight thousand year ago, and she relied on archaeological

and anthropological evidence for the two common ethos and the central role women again played in the distant past.

Thence, matriarchy as the epicenter of human survival and as emulating the sun, moon and earth and their roles for the same purpose, has existed since the beginning of time. This has in turn, led to far more reaching evolutionary outcomes for women. As evidenced by recent brain imaging techniques such as MRI, women's two hemispheres are more interconnected, thereby allowing them for life necessity to multitask more efficiently than men. Women with two XX gender chromosomes carry almost twice genes to pass on offspring compared to the two XY chromosomes in men.

History or better yet *Herstory* has taught us that the most profound lesson of global consequences in life is for communities and counties to safeguard the natural rights of individuals and uphold reverently to their own faith and rituals while respecting others'. However, when faith devolves into an entrenched politicized religiosity and in essence serves, as the other side of the socio-economic and political exploitations be it in the west or the east, then it must be subject to same scrutiny if not

stronger as any other socio-economic and politicized acts.

In fact, such a paradigm shift from adherence to literal and superstitious religious dogma to a pragmatic and eclectic humane spirituality and ecumenical guardianship of Mother Earth, is also self-evident among Iranians born in the faiths of Mithraism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Mazdeism, Manicheism, Gnosticism, agnosticism, aestheticism, Islam (Shi'ism, Sunnism, Sufism, Bahaism) and above all spiritual humanism.

The Persian ethos is the distinct characteristics of a nation far above decadent secularism or ultra-nationalism; it serves as the common instinctive human conscience for lifestyle and rituals embraced and enjoyed by all humanity. Anchored on its vast and deeply embedded history, literature, music and culture, and arts and architecture, be it trampled or influenced by others over at times or adopted in part by neighboring nations, Iran's ethos remains unparalleled worldwide.

Epitomizing, so long as Mother Earth outputs from her bosom and nurtures *Ari-anas*, there is still hope for humanity as a whole in the global village of life.

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MEET DR. ALI NOURI

Dr. Ali Nouri, a molecular biologist, is the President of the Federation of American Scientists, an organization that for the last 75 years has addressed issues at the intersection of science and public policy. Nouri's policy focus is centered around enhancing Congress' science and technology capabilities; informing policy makers on the COVID-19 pandemic; and combatting rampant disinformation. Prior to assuming his role at FAS Nouri served in Congress advising Senators Jim Webb and Al Franken over a ten-year period. He served in various positions including as legislative director, national security advisor, energy and environment advisor, and as a science and technology advisor. He began his Senate career as a AAAS Congressional Science and Engineering Fellow. Nouri is co-chair of the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine's New Voices initiative; he is co-chair of the NAS Forum on COVID-19; and he serves on the National Academy's Global Science Diplomacy Roundtable on which he is co-chair of the subcommittee on countering disinformation. Prior to his service in the US Senate, Nouri served as an advisor in the office of then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and as a research associate at Princeton University where he developed initiatives to reduce the risks of dual-use biotechnology. He obtained a BA in biology from Reed College and a PhD in molecular biology from Princeton University.

Persian Onager



The Persian onager (*Equus hemionus onager*), also called the Persian wild ass or Persian zebra, is a subspecies of onager (Asiatic wild ass) native to Iran. It is listed as Endangered with no more than 600 individuals left in the wild and only 30 individuals living within North American institutions.

The Persian onager is also simply named gur, meaning "swift" in the Persian language, in which the word gur is preserved as the second syllable for ono, which meant "donkey". Hence, onager. Sometimes, the term "onager" is reserved specifically for this subspecies. However, as the whole species of the Asiatic wild ass is known simply as onager, it now also serves as the Persian wild ass's scientific name, as well (*Equus hemionus onager*). Information on the basic biology of the subspecies and how it differs from others is lacking, which hampers conservation efforts.

Onagers used to be numerous from the Middle East to China. However, until the 19th century, their population has been reduced from several thousand to a few thousand. Currently, more than 600 Persian onagers are living in the wild.

Persian wild asses are known to inhabit mountain steppes, semidesert, or desert plains. They are usually found in desert steppes. Their largest population is found in Khar Turan National Park. The Persian onager is listed as endangered by IUCN Red List, as it is close to extinction. Currently, poaching for meat and hides, competition with livestock, and drought are the greatest threats to this species.

Asiatic wild asses are highly and legally protected; hunting them is forbidden. The European Endangered Species Programme reserved for European Association of Zoos and Aquaria is helping save the Persian onager from extinction, by breeding them in captivity and reintroducing them to their former ranges, including in new locations once inhabited by Syrian onagers in Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Ukraine.

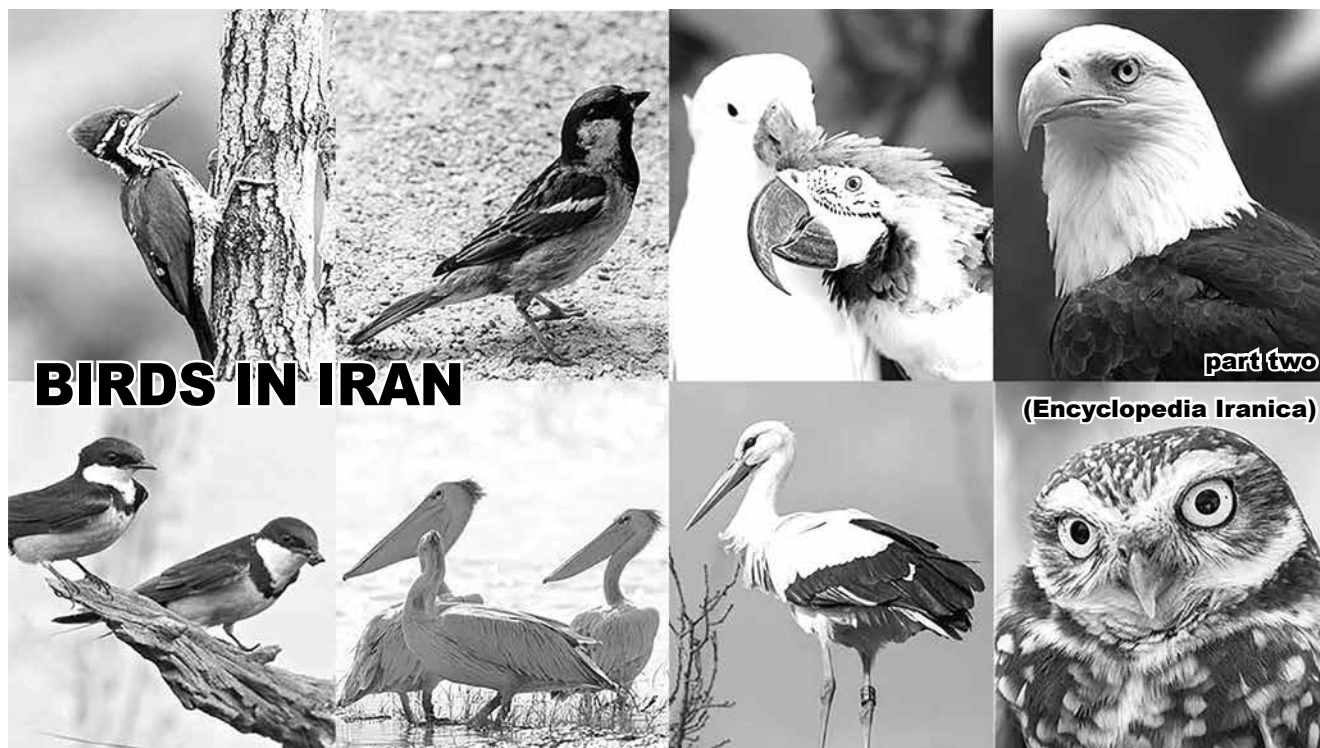
On August 30, 2014, Iranian officials reported that three Persian onagers were born in Khar Turan National Park reserve near Shahroud in Semnan province, where it also has the largest populations of the equids.

A few Persian onagers are breeding in various zoos of Europe and the Middle East, such as Chester, Whipsnade, and Yotvata. The Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal, Virginia, also breeds Persian onagers, including two born in June 2015. The first ever artificial insemination of any wild equid was in this species, and resulted in two Persian Onager foals at the Wilds conservation center in Southeastern Ohio, in collaboration with experts from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute.

Since 2003, Persian onagers have been introduced in Saudi Arabia, where the Syrian wild ass once lived. Introduced Persian onagers live in deserts foraging on grasses and branches or woodier plant material in dry seasons.

In 1968, 11 Persian and Turkmenian onagers were flown from their countries to Israel in exchange for Israeli gazelles. These were bred in captivity at the Hai Bar Yotvata wildlife sanctuary. Together, they bred a few Persian/Turkmenian hybrids in Israel. Offspring were introduced into the wild in the Negev Mountains area, intended to replace the local subspecies gone extinct. The introduced onagers have since established a stable population around 200 individuals.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



2. ORNITHOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN IRAN

Prior to the mid-1960s our knowledge of the avifauna of Iran was very sketchy and based to a large extent on the work of a handful of naturalist-explorers who traveled widely through Iran in the second half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. The first major account of the birds of Iran to appear in the literature was that of Blanford and the Persian Boundary Commission of 1870-72 (Blanford), which summarized all information obtained till then. The Russian ornithologist N. A. Zarudny traveled widely in Iran between 1884 and 1904 and published a number of papers in Russian and German on the results of his studies. He summarized many of these in tabular form in a paper which appeared in the *Journal für Ornithologie* in 1911. From 1935 to 1945, Walter Koelz made extensive collections throughout Iran and Afghanistan. His material was studied in depth by Charles Vaurie and the information incorporated in a series of over thirty papers which appeared in *American Museum Novitates* between 1949 and 1961 (listed in Burgess, Mokhtarzadeh, and Cornwallis and in Erard and Etchécopar).

Other important contributions were made by Buxton, Streseman, Heinrich,

Paludan (1940), Trott, Meiklejohn, Norton, and Passburg in north and west Iran; by Missone and Schuz (1959) in the south Caspian region; by Witherby, Capito, and Paludan (1938) in the Zagros and southwest Iran; and by Sharpe, Cumming, Ticehurst, Cox and Cheesman, and Ticehurst in the Persian Gulf, Sīstān, and Persian Baluchistan. In 1958, S. H. Jervis Read produced a provisional check-list of the birds of Iran (1958) and, shortly after, Vaurie's important work "The Birds of the Palearctic Fauna" (1959 and 1965) included a concise summary of range, habitat, and geographical variation of all species of birds occurring in Iran. A general account of the birds of Iran appeared in *The Cambridge History of Iran I*, and a comprehensive bibliography of the early work was produced by Burgess, Mokhtarzadeh, and Cornwallis at the same time.

In the mid-1960s the newly created Iranian Department of the Environment (or Game and Fish Department as it was then called) set up an ornithological section in its research division and since that time has pursued a variety of research programs on Iranian avifauna. Eskandar Firouz's booklet "Environment Iran," published in Tehran in 1974, gives an excellent summary of the activities and programs of the Department of the Environment. Earlier

summaries appeared in Firouz, Hassinger, and Ferguson (1970) and Firouz (1971a). Initially, the ornithology unit of the Department of the Environment focused its attention on birds of economic importance, notably the migratory wildfowl and some of the game-birds. However, in the early 1970s studies were expanded to include a variety of rare, vulnerable, and endangered species, and a nationwide atlasing project was initiated. At the same time the universities in Iran began to take an increased interest in the birds of Iran, the universities of Tehran and Shiraz being particularly active in this field.

The Department of the Environment's major ornithological programs have included the following: *Bird banding (ringing) program*.

A national banding scheme was established by the department in 1966. Emphasis was initially given to migratory wildfowl wintering in the south Caspian region, but by the mid-1970s the program had been expanded to include banding studies of white pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, greater flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber*, herons and egrets Ardeidae, common cranes *Grus grus*, and shorebirds Charadriidae and Scolopacidae. By the end of 1976 a total of 22,064 birds of 239 species had been banded in Iran, including

797 white pelicans, 8,766 greater flamingos, and 2,385 ducks. Banding activities and all recoveries reported up to the end of 1975 are discussed in Cornwallis and Ferguson, Argyle (1975 and 1976).

1974 White stork inquiry. In 1974, the Department conducted a nationwide census of breeding white storks *Ciconia ciconia* as part of an international census of storks in Europe and the Middle East. The census revealed an Iranian population of some 3,300 pairs, two-thirds of which were nesting in Azerbaijan province (Fotoohi and Scott).

Greater flamingo studies. Since its discovery in the mid-1960s the breeding colony of some 20,000 to 25,000 pairs of greater flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber* on islands in Lake Urmia, Azerbaijan, has been the subject of continuous study by ornithologists from the department. The entire lake and its islands, an area of 483,000 ha, were given reserve status in 1967 and the flamingo declared a fully protected bird. Banding studies have revealed that immediately after fledging young birds undertake a wide dispersal out of the Iranian region, with recoveries coming from as far afield as Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Pakistan, and India. The adults, however, winter mainly within Iran, in the Baġtagān Protected Region in central Fārs, and along the coasts of the Persian Gulf and Baluchistan (Scott, 1975).

The wetlands and their wildfowl. The wetlands of Iran constitute one of the main wintering areas for wildfowl belonging to the West Siberian-Caspian-Nile flyway population. The millions of ducks, geese, and coots in this flyway have long supported an annual harvest in the south Caspian region (Schuz, 1957; Savage, 1963; Firouz, 1968) and are increasingly attracting the attention of sport hunters. In an attempt to conserve and manage this valuable natural resource the Department of the Environment has introduced realistic game laws and regulations, created a number of protected regions and wildlife refuges, and drawn up a detailed inventory of the nation's wetlands. Nationwide mid-winter wildfowl censuses have been conducted annually since 1966, and these have provided valuable information on population size and trends. A booklet entitled *The Wetlands and Waterfowl of Iran*, published by the Department of the Environment in 1971 (Firouz, 1971b), gives a general account of the situation in Iran, while a paper by Ferguson looks

at the south Caspian region in some detail.

Iran has played a prominent role in international efforts to conserve wetlands and waterfowl. In 1971 it hosted the International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl, at which the final text of a convention—the so-called Rāmsar Convention—on the conservation of wetlands especially as habitat for waterfowl was adopted (Carp, 1972). Iran has since ratified this convention and designated eighteen major wetlands for inclusion in the list of wetlands of international importance under the terms of the convention (Scott, 1976a; Carp, 1980).

Caucasian black grouse studies. A small population of the rare Caucasian black grouse *Lyrurus mlokosiewiczzi* was discovered in the upper deciduous forest zone of the Kaleybār mountains in northern Azerbaijan in 1971. A special reserve, the Arasbārān Protected Region, was established to protect the dwindling habitat of this bird, and studies of the bird's ecology were initiated (Scott, 1976b).

Pheasant research and management. The common pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* occurs widely in forested regions in northern Iran. Four subspecies have been described: *colchicus* in northern Azerbaijan, *talischensis* and *persicus* in the southwest and southeast Caspian regions respectively, and *principalis* in northeastern Khorasan. Management of populations for sport hunting has centered on the south Caspian region, where special management areas have been set aside and stocks manipulated (Scott and Howell, 1976).

Crane project. An estimated 2,000 to 3,000 common cranes *Grus grus* spend the winter in Iran, principally in the wetlands of Kūzestān, central Fārs, and Sīstān. In addition, some 10 to 15 of the very rare and endangered Siberian white crane *Grus leucogeranus* were rediscovered wintering in Māzandarān, in the southeast Caspian, in 1978 (Scott, 1980). A cooperative project has been initiated between the Iranian Department of the Environment, Soviet biologists, and the International Crane

Foundation (Baraboo, Wisconsin) to establish a new population of Siberian white cranes using a cross-fostering technique as developed with whooping cranes *Grus americana* and sandhill cranes *Grus canadensis* in North America. Thus common cranes which breed in western Siberia and winter in southern Iran will be used as foster parents for Siberian white cranes.

Aside from the work of the Department of the Environment, the greatest contribution to our knowledge of Iranian birds in recent years has been the work of Lindon Cornwallis, who spent five years studying the birds of Fārs province in the late 1960s and early 1970s. His work, plus all other recent unpublished material, is currently being written up for publication in a comprehensive work on the bird fauna of Iran by L. Cornwallis, H. Morāweġ Hamadānī, and D. A. Scott.

Other recent published work on the birds of Iran includes the results of a three-month survey throughout Iran in 1967 (Erard and Etchécopar), surveys in the south Caspian region (Feeny, Arnold, and Bailey; Nielsen and Speyer; and Nielsen), a survey at Lake Urmia, Azerbaijan (Savage, 1964), a survey of mountain ranges in Kermān and Baluchistan provinces (Desfayes and Praz), a survey through the central deserts (Misonne, 1976), and a study of secondary contact zones of birds in northern Iran (Haffner).

As regards field guides to the birds of Iran, only two works cover the whole of the country; that of Hué and Etchécopar, which covers the whole of the Middle East but is now somewhat out of date, and a field guide entitled *Parandagān-e Irān* (the birds of Iran), published in Persian by the Department of the Environment in 1975 (Scott, Hamadānī, and Mirġosaynī). However, several of the European and West Palearctic field guides and handbooks deal with the majority of the birds occurring in Iran (see particularly Cramp, Simmons, et al., 1977 and 1980; Heinzel, Fitter, and Parslow; and Bruun and Singer).

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The 1,500-Year-Old Love Story Between a PERSIAN PRINCE and a KOREAN PRINCESS that Could Rewrite History

Mark Oliver

Ancient Origins, May 8, 2018

More than a thousand years before the first European explorer reached Korea's shores, the Persian Empire was writing love stories about Korean princesses.

It's a little-known story that could change the way we see our history. Recently, historians took a second look at an old Persian epic written around 500 CE (during the time of the Sassanians) and realized that, at the center of the tale, was the unusual story of a Persian prince marrying a Korean princess.

It's an incredible discovery. Up until recently, we weren't sure that the Persians of that time even knew Korea existed. This new revelation shows Persia didn't just make contact with Korea – these countries were intimately connected. And it might just call for a total rewrite of history.

The *Kushnameh*: A 1,500-Year-Old Persian Epic About Korea

The story is called the *Kushnameh*, and, in itself, it's hardly a new discovery. It's one of the most popular stories to come out of the Persian Empire, one that's been told and retold countless times in the 1,500 years since it was written.

The *Kushmaneh* is a massive, epic poem about an evil creature with elephant tusks named Kus who terrorizes a

Persian family throughout the generations. The whole story spans across hundreds of years and thousands of lines of poetry – but the really interesting part is somewhere around the middle. There, the author sat down and dedicated an incredible 1,000 lines of poetic verse to describing life in Korea during the Silla dynasty.

A Love Letter to Korea

Korea comes into play when the story starts to focus on a young, noble prince of Persia named Abtin. For his whole life, Abtin has been forced to live in the woods, hiding from the evil Kus the Tusked. He has only one thing to keep him safe: a magic book that tells him his future.

It's almost like breaking the fourth wall – Abtin has a copy of the book we're reading, and he's not above flipping ahead a few pages to see how it all ends. In fact, that's just what he does. He reads the next chapter and finds out that he's supposed to go to the Silla kingdom of Korea, and – after briefly getting confused and going to China – he winds up being welcomed with open arms by the king of Silla.

From here, the story is just page after page of lavish descriptions of how beautiful Korea is. Admittedly, some of it seems a little over-the-top. It says, for example, that Korea is so overflowing with gold

that even the dogs are kept on golden leashes. But on the whole, the description is so accurate that modern historians are sure the author must have visited it himself.

Abtin is mesmerized by the beauty of the country, and, soon after, by the beauty of its princess Frarang. He falls madly in love with Korean princess, begs the king for her hand in marriage, and she soon becomes his wife and the mother of his firstborn son.

The Story of a Korean Hero

It's unlikely that any of this really happened, of course. For one thing, there's limited evidence that Persia spent 1,500 years being terrorized by an immortal monster with elephant tusks, and even less that any early Persian princes had magic books that could tell them the future.

But the symbolism of having a Persian prince taking refuge in Korea and falling in love with a Korean princess is undeniable. This is hard proof that Persians didn't just know about Korea 1,500 years ago; they had a deep, profound admiration for their nation.

What happens next, though, is what makes it a really big deal. Frarang's son isn't just a minor character. His birth is a turning point in the whole story. The fully Persian prince spends his whole life

in hiding and, when he finally returns to his homeland, ends up getting killed by Kus's men. But it's his half-Korean son who turns things around.

Frarang and Abtin's son ends up raising up an army and leading the revolt against Kus. For centuries, in this story, Persia gets tormented by an evil, tusked monster. It's only under the command of a half-Korean boy and his mother that Persia finally wins its freedom.

A Secret Hidden in Plain Sight

For 1,500 years, people have been reading this story without any idea what they were looking at. For a long time, we assumed that the story was just about China.

In the story, the Korean Silla kingdom is referred to as "Chin", a name that could refer to either China or Korea. It's even a plot point in the story, in fact. At first, Abtin, like most historians, misreads the "Chin" in his magic future-telling book and thinks he's supposed to go to China. And, just like modern historians, it takes him years before he realizes that it's actually talking about China.

Recently, though, historians have taken a look at those descriptions again and realized just how perfectly they really do match up with Korea. The descriptions in this book don't sound anything like China, but

they're a perfect, vivid description of 6th-century Korea – a place where, believe it or not, they really did keep their dogs on leashes of pure gold.

A TOTAL REWRITE OF HISTORY

This really might completely change the way we see history. For a long time, Korea has seemed an isolated, distant place from the Western world; but this story suggests that the east and west may not have been so disconnected after all.

It took until 1653 before the first European explorer reached Korea. That's more than 1,100 years after Kushanama was written.

We've always known that Persia had some kind of contact with Korea. They were both a part of the Silk Road, and we've known for some time that Persian goods somehow ended up in Korea. Generally, though, it was assumed that they were just part of a bigger trade network.

In this story, though, Korea isn't a trade partner. They're a trusted ally, and they're so important to the Persians that they literally can't overcome evil until they trust the leadership of a half-Korean, half-Persian prince. It's an incredibly symbolic marriage of cultures.

It puts other relics under a new light, as well. In an ancient tomb in Gyeongju, for example, there is an old monument to a Korean war hero who looks an awful lot more like a Persian soldier than a Korean one. Now, some people are starting to wonder if this might really be the monument to a forgotten Persian hero who fought for Korea.

There's no telling how far this could go. It could change everything about how we see the history of these countries. After all, this is far more than a love story between two people. It's a love story between two nations.

Khuzestan, Iran's Unique Haven for Birds

Tehran Times, photos by Mehdi Pourabedi



The southwestern province of Khuzestan is the most diverse region in terms of different bird species, its unique and pleasant climate, as well as rich natural habitats have turned this province into a paradise for rare and endangered species of birds.

Khuzestan is home to some 379 recognized species of birds supporting a variety of breeding and wintering waterfowl and seabirds. Every year, with the onset of the cold season, flocks of migratory birds come to winter in the province from the cold regions of Central Asia.

Due to the existence of numerous rivers, wetlands, and special bird habitats, at least 6 species of rare birds of Iran that live in the margins of wetlands and rivers have been recorded in Khuzestan province, two species of which have been seen only in this region.

From terns and ibises to house sparrows, various subspecies of birds will surely be recorded in Khuzestan province by researching and expanding the science of bird watching in the country.

While today, poachers and hunters travel to Khuzestan from neighboring cities and in addition to hunting birds, endanger the species by pushing them toward extinction.

In this regard, Mohammad Javad Ashrafi, chief of Khuzestan's department of environment, stated that about 20 percent of the country's wetlands are located in Khuzestan, this is why the province is home to most migratory birds, along with the favorable weather conditions.

BIRD-WATCHING IN IRAN

Iran is home to more than 527 bird species. In fact, although large portions of the country are arid to semi-arid, Iran possesses a very rich and diverse bird fauna.

Two main factors are responsible for this; the great range of habitats—from permanent snows to deep deserts and from lush deciduous forests in the north to palm groves and mangroves in the south—and Iran's position at a crossroads between three major faunal regions, according to the Iran Paradise website.

The bulk of the country lies within the Palearctic faunal region, which stretches from Europe and North Africa across north and central Asia to the Soviet Far East and Japan. Lying along the southern edge of this region, Iran's bird fauna includes a large Western Palearctic faunal element, reaching its eastern extremity in the central Alborz and Zagros mountains, and a smaller, but still marked, Eastern Palearctic element, which extends into northeastern Iran in the highlands of Khorasan.

On Iran's south coast, the tidal mudflats, mangrove, sand beaches, rocky shores, and sea-cliffs support a variety of breeding and wintering habitats for seabirds. Breeding species include Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*, Great Thick-knee *Burhinus recurvirostris* (only in the sea); several species of herons and egrets such as Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii*, Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* and Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* (in mangrove); and several species of terns.

Wintering species include Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, and also many shorebirds notably African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Plovers *Charadrius* spp., *Scuas Stercorarius* spp., Gulls *Larus* spp., and Terns *Sterna* spp.



Celebrating Persian New Year at Spring, Norouz

Davoud N. Rahni

Persian New Year at Spring vernal equinox, is the beacon of hope & reconciliations, forgiveness & love, and the yearnings for liberty, dignity, fraternity, equality, tranquility, justice & peace!

The flower buds of yellow, violet, red and white crocuses of the saffron bulbs, interspersed with the blossoming daffodils, hyacinths, tulips and the Persian violets, herald the arrival of *Norouz* in Iran and the broader neighboring region. The Persian New Year, signaling the rebirth, rejuvenation and reconciliations, aptly arrives at the spring *vernal equinox*. Spring in Iran and the wider region is the harbinger of harmonious jubilation for the earth and the sun, with pristine streams percolating down the snowcapped mountains, the greening of the prairies and the pastures, the flowering of fruit trees and the herbs, and the luscious green seedling and germinating of staple crops. Hence, it is surmised that the *Norouz* celebration must have been observed at one level or the other since the inception of agriculture and domestication of animals, as far back as 10,000 years ago. *Norouz* has not only been revered on the Iranian Plateau stretching between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, and Indus to Tigris Rivers, but also in Mesopotamia, the Caucasus, and central and west Asia. *Norouz* is prominently praised in the mythological story of King Jamshid, credited as the first *Norouz* celebrant of the *Kiyanian*

Dynasty, & as cited in (*Paradiso*) Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.

Norouz (چشمن نوروز) aka *Norouz*, *Navroz*, *NowRoos*, etc. (variation in dialectic and vernacular pronunciations) in Persian *lingua franca* literally translates as the first day [of the New Year]. It is the most prominent seasonal celebration of the solar calendar that has persisted since prehistoric era. It was conceived by the agricultural people just north of the Tropic of Cancer who have since revered the sun (*Sol Invictus*), fire, light and enlightenment ever since. *Norouz* is preceded by *Purim*, the Jewish celebration of bounties as in the Torah that also began in Iran when Queen Esther married the Persian King Ahasuerus. This contrasts with lunar calendars as followed by the southern and western neighbors to Iran, who used the lunar skies and traversed through the arid hot deserts at nights. In addition to Iran, *Norouz* as a national holiday transcending class, color, creed, ethnicity, race, religion, or national origin, is currently commemorated by well over a dozen countries of nearly five hundred million inhabitants in central, south and west Asia, northwestern China, Asia Minor, and the Caucasus.

In fact, the commoners and serfs in Europe and later the pilgrims landing on Plymouth Rock in the US in today's Massachusetts also observed a New Year beginning at the beginning of spring until the mid-18th century. This jubilee holiday was acknowledged in the Gregorian calendar as well; the month of March coincides with the first month of the Julian calendar when Europe was still under the influence of Persian Mithraism from the 1st through the 5th centuries CE. *Norouz*, according to the Zoroastrian Mazdayasni calendar is at 3758. *Norouz* commences with the prelude festival of *Chaharshanbe Suri* on the last Tuesday night of the exiting year. At this Zoroastrian fire ritual, everyone jumps over fire, singing a Middle Persian poem that translates as:

“O’ sacred Fire, take away my yellow sickness and give me in return your healthy red color!”

The most symbolic manifestation showcased at *Norouz* is the *sofreh haft-seen*. Adorned on a table covered with an antique hand-woven *termeh* silk cloth are laid the seven plant-derived items whose Persian names begin with the letter “S”: *sabzeh*- wheat and lentil germinations symbolizing rebirth; *senjed*- the dried oleaster fruit and a close family member to olives symbolizing love; *seer*-garlic symbolizing medicine; *seeb*-apples symbolizing beauty and earth; *somaqh*-sumac berries symbolizing sunrise; *samanu*- cooked germinated wheat for affluence, and *serkeh*-vinegar symbolizing ripeness, longevity, and perseverance. A round, ticking classical clock, signifying the passage of time, a fishbowl with two gold fish (added later, due to influences from China) signifying companionship and life, decorated eggs for fertility which found their ways into Easter, and a saucer of coins from the five continents to reflect prosperity are also on display. The *haft-seen* table is completed with daffodils, tulips and hyacinths, a triple flag of Iran’s colors green, white, and red, flickering candelabra, and an ancient book of poems, *Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh* the Persian epic book of the Kings, *Rumi’s Mathnawi*, *Divan Hafez*, or the *Omar Khayyam’s Quatrains* from which the poem *The Persian Nightingale Bemoans* is well known in the west.

In the U.S., presidents release annual *Norouz* best wishes message and in recent years an all-day extravagant *Norouz* celebration that concludes with Persian music and dance, and exquisite Persian food has been hosted at the White House (Obama, Bush and Clinton era). The UN has for some time declared the International Day of *Norouz*, and celebrated it at its headquarters with a large festival and Persian foods and pastries. Spring vernal equinox 2018 was also rightly declared as the International Forest Day which we trust it will continue!

The celebration of *Norouz* that was instituted by the

25,000 Iranians residing abroad back in 1979 is now commemorated by to 8 million Iranians in diaspora, whereby in every major city as in New York, there are hundreds of *Norouz* congregations, each with up to over a 1000 guests, to choose from. Among the several congregations we have attended each year for decades, the grand one with 600 guests and organized and hosted by Mehrangiz and Isfandiar Sayadi in northern New Jersey with its most exquisitely expansive *sofreh haft-seen* and highly inclusive dance and music has remained our most favorite! It is serendipitously fortuitous that their noble Persian names means the one who pushes the last old month of the year behind, while she heralds the reverence of the loving sun forward! The nostalgic music and dance from every corner of Iran and south/west Asia including Armenian, Jewish, Tajiki, Afghani and of course American will abate any preference for the best Persian foods and pastries for the night at every *Norouz* event!

Legend has it that once upon a past juncture, *ZaHawk*, a mythological, tyrannical, unjust, and cruel predator, ruled over Persia. Filling an ambivalent hiatus with his absolute power, he crowned himself on the Persian peacock throne as if he was immortal. He reigned with iron fist and tyranny, and coupled with hegemony and heavy taxations over the vast Persian Empire to the fatal detriment of most serf commoners. His ever expansive territory stretched from the Indus and the Oxus Rivers of the Orient, to the Nile Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers of the Occident. *ZaHawk* was horrified of vengeance wraths by the masses he had oppressed; consequently, he had chronic insomnia as he feared the populace would at any moment turn up against him and bring about his utter demise. In the meantime while self-sequestered, he was barely alive in a pitch black, damped and pungently odorous cavern on Mt. Damavand a volcanically semi extinct peak, so long as his lackeys fed the fresh flesh kill of a bright and beautiful young newly married couple each day to two the ugly serpent beasts rising out of *ZaHawk’s* shoulders. *ZaHawk* knew though that the two serpents could devour him in a lightning annihilation moment, before a midnight if they were not in time fed with the two newly wed before one of these sunsets.

In fact, it was a whispered knowledge amongst the masses, serfs and slaves, that while they took refuge with *Spen-ta Mainyu*, the good spirit emissary from *Ahura Mazda* who was the Lord of light and wisdom and his sol invictus *Mithra*, that *ZaHawk* was directed by the impure fire and filth spitting dragon *Ezhdeha* drawn from *Angra Mainyu* aka *Ahriman*, who lived deep in the volcanic shaft. It was *Ezhdeha* that had grafted the two serpents into *ZaHawk’s* calves so he could outpour misery, famine, disease, pain and suffering to people and mother earth.



As injustice is not to remain in place forever however, Kaveh the Ironsmith, gravely irate for the well-beings of his compatriots, hung his toughened leather apron the Derafsh Kaviani, over a javelin and marshalled forward the disgruntled after silhouette dawn of Yalda on the rebirth of the sun. His bravest diehards followed him shoulders to shoulders as a Si-Morgh (metaphorically speaking 30 birds forming one unified body at a time) up the treacherous Mountain. There, Kaveh did behead the three culprits on one body in the cave with his mighty sword strike, thus eradicating injustice and reinstated equality and happiness on mother earth. Kaveh had in reality reincarnated what his ancestors Cyrus and Darius of the Achaemenes, when they had also eradicated injustice and inequality, and reinstated love, equality, inclusivity, harmony, tranquility, and peace on earth. And so, de ja vu all over again, with Phoenix once again rising out of ashes of oblivion, the much anticipated and ever brightened and warmer SUN re-emerged out of the dark chilling clouds and proudly shone as the most enlightened beacon of hope and happiness on the hill. And along with it the soil was purified and poured down into the valley and the prairie and the fresh air thinned out all around.

Ecstatically exhilarated by the short period of happiness, most had not realized that Ezhdeha, the dragon father of all miseries and the creator of now the obliterated ZaHawk, was still alive deep into the vertical volcanic shaft of Mt. Damavand.

The nocturnal dragon would unexpectedly appear in his chosen communities to instigate catastrophe by kissing the two shoulders of a replacement beast for ZaHawk so two new serpents were mounted. Houshang, the newly selected king of the Pishdadian dynasty followed the Ezhdeha back into the cave, whereby he threw the biggest flint rock and killed him. The flint bounced from dead corpse and struck another rock. The resulting spark, which seeded a sacred soothing fire revered cheerfully by all down the valley, still burns eternally alive today. Hushang caught slayed in the crossfire, was replaced a bit later by King Jamshid Kiyani and crowned at Norouz the spring vernal equinox and the birth of Zarathustra.

And so, they all lived happily thereafter when they enjoyed and shared infinite love every day. In a while though, and after the people ever became complacent again to allow their liberty denied, the Ezhdeha reincarnated with added heads reappeared again and again in the same or other regions, from within or more painfully form without, so to bring about chaos through his ever growing strong despot, enabled by his linchpins and lackeys, charlatans and shysters, and hoodlums and hooligans. Norouz celebration was the most effective

junction year after year for the people to ward off all evil spirits including the ZaHawks and Ezhdehas, as they sprinkled rue and frankincense over glazed holly fire yielding a strongly pungent scent from which the beasts escaped from.

As narrated by Ferdowsi, the “Homer of Iran,” this tale from his *Shahnameh* wends its wisdom and relevance through tens of thousands of years of Iran’s history, bringing a hope of salvation from evils in altruistic acts of courage. *Shahnameh* the Book of Persian Kings - an epic poem composing 30,000 verses and written over the course of 30 years more than a thousand years ago, still remains alive in every Iranian’s psyche heartily.

The patron King Mahmoud who had promised the poet a golden coin for each verse broke his promise. The improvised Ferdowsi, having instead resided *tranquilly* in the luscious rich paraissi style (paradise the meaning of his name) of his own imagination, never saw the coins which arrived by the repented King after had died.

Anchored on trilogy of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, everyone reaffirms their commitment to by one or more of the following virtues, namely, to volunteerism, altruism, philanthropy, benevolence and above all, to advancing humanism as the pinnacles of life. The belief in the golden rule of “*treating others as you would expect to be treated*” anchored on the tripartite pedestal of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, conjures up in mind with the acclaimed Persian poem by the 13th century Sa’adi:

*All humans are members of one frame,
Since all at first, from the same essence, came.
When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed,
The other members lose their desired rest.
If thou feel’st not for others’ misery,
A human is no name for thee!*

A *Norouz* holiday cycle is concluded at the Sizdah Bedar Picnic (at Bear Mountain State Park in New York), which falls on the 13th day, *aka* April fool’s Day. Every family spends the full day outdoor in parks, crop fields, or the orchards, when they play, sing, dance, eat and drink. Unmarried celebrants tie knots with grass blades to wish for a soulmate; the elders nostalgically compare this *Norouz* with those past while remembering the deceased, and the children look forward restlessly to many more *Norouz* celebrations to follow.

***Norouz Piruz,
Harruz Norouz
va Khojasteh va Shad Bad!***

