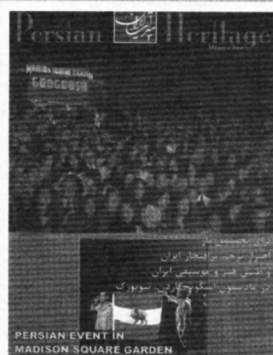


# Persian Heritage

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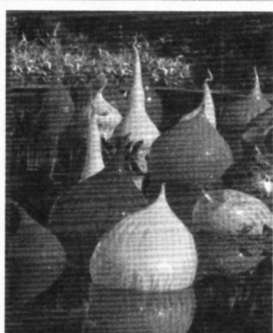
Winter 2006



Googoosh in New York – p. 14



Mary Wollstone – p. 21



Chihuly – p. 40



Dr. Masoud Mirshahi – p.47

**FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK** 6

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** 8

**NEWS BRIEFS** 10

**COMMENTARY**

**An Understatement of the Decade** 14  
(David A. Yazdan)

**How Iranians Perceive One Another  
Democracy... Prizes Self-Criticism** 15  
(Goli Irani)

**An American Woman in Iran** 17  
(Janet Larsen)

**History of Terrorism — Part XII** 19  
(David A. Yazdan)

**Mary Wollstonecraft & Islam** 21  
(Dr. Stein)

**Facts from the 1500's** 23

**Spotlight on the Iranian Foreign Born** 24  
(Shirin Hakimzadeh & David Dixon)

**Persia & Democracy** 27  
(Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh)

**A Look at the Iranian Cinema** 34  
(Kamrouz Pirouz)

**THE ARTS & CULTURE**

**Book Reviews** 36

**Man Push Cart** (Ramin Bahrani) 37

**I Believe** 39

**Chihuly at the New York Botanic Garden** 40

**YOUR PERSIAN HERITAGE**

**The Epic** (Michael McClain) 42

**Interview with Dr. Masoud Mirshahi** 47  
(Shahrokh Ahkami)

**Al-e Ahmad Remains a Voice to reckon With** 50  
(Siah Armajani)

**“Calligraphies” by Reza Vali** 51  
(Pejman Akbarzadeh)

**Champagne Safari** 53  
(Darius Kadivar)

**Tribute to Dr. Zabih Ghorban** (Masood Khatami) 55

**The Persian Heritage 11th Anniversary Gala** 57

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The week ending November 17 seemed busier than ever. Between closing the paper and magazine, surgeries, office hours and getting ready for Thanksgiving I was exhausted. When I finally had a free minute I went to the computer to check the latest news. I could hardly keep my eyes focused. Suddenly, a headline caught my eye, "Iranian student from UCLA was tasered six times." It was like a shot of adrenalin. My heart raced as I focused on the commentary e-mails being sent across cyber space on the incident.

Some of our readers, outside of the U.S., may not be familiar with the incident. Briefly, an Iranian-American student Mustafa Tabatabai-Nejad was studying at the UCLA library, where he was a student. Earlier that evening he went through a security screening without his ID card. Later that evening, 11PM, a random ID check was held. Mustafa was unable to produce his identification card and was asked to leave. When he protested against the request the campus security called the local police. He was on his way out of the library when the police arrived. They grabbed his shoulder to which he replied, "leave me alone." Normal protocol at this point should have been for the police to take him under custody. Unfortunately, unnecessary emotional reactions on both sides caused the situation to escalate and the police tasered the student. The first shot fired caused him to fall to the ground. He was ordered to stand, but stated he was unable to stand because of a medical condition and then was repeatedly tasered a total of six times. The incident was witnessed by a number of individuals including fellow students as well as being captured on video and telephone cameras by a bystander. Mustafa, now on the floor cried out, "This is your Patriot Act, here is your law." The police insisted that he get up and when other students came to his assistance they were told by the police to step back or they would also be tasered. Mustafa was finally handcuffed by the police and taken to the police station. Interestingly enough he was released without any other identification. Students witnessing the incident stated it was the worse thing they ever saw.

While this was a terrible situation for the student, as a parent I could not imagine the pain and suffering of his parents having to watch such actions taken against their son. A cold chill entered my body, as I thought about the distinct possibility that this incident could happen to any one of us. Think about it for a moment, if such an incident could unfold at a prestigious university, in their own library, in public view how easy would it be to occur out of the public eye.

Ladies and gentlemen this incident and others like it, happening in this country, must serve as a wake-up call!

One of the web sites reporting the incident event posed a question... "would the reaction by the police be the same if the student's name were Bob Smith?" Others considered Mustafa a champion for standing up to the police and his rights. Some believed him to be a terrorist. Still others believed him guilty for not complying to the rules, but believed the punishment of six taser shots was beyond excessive. One network website reported their surprise that the student spoke English so well and still another tried to neutralize the event by stating "remember we are living post 9/11."

The reaction from the Persian-American community was not much different. Some believed he was innocent, others found him guilty, some called him a terrorist, some did not believe the force used by the police to be excessive and sadly some were simply unaffected by the event, believing that it did not affect them.

We are all entitled to our opinion on this incident BUT TO CONSIDER THIS INCIDENT INSIGNIFICANT, especially for Persian Americans is ridiculous. If other ethnic groups did not bring excessive abuse towards them, out into the open, I shutter to think where they would be today. Ladies and gentleman if we do not take this situation seriously I fear for what will happen to us tomorrow.

Efforts have been set in motion by the Persian community to call for a thorough investigation into the matter. They are encouraging us to call our congressmen and other political leaders to address this situation.

Our window of opportunity, to show the world that we are not the terrorists in-



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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

involved in September 11, is closing and once closed it will be hard to reopen.

It is unfortunate that circumstances like September 11, The Iran Iraq War, the Iraq- Kuwait war and the rhetoric by the current regime in Iran has given our host country an opportunity to abuse our rights. Yes, there is a need for a Patriot Act but it should not be something that equates or leads to legalized discrimination. We as a nation must learn to respect each other and engage in fact finding before we react so harshly. Unless we stand up against incidents such as this, we will be living in a carved out police state within this beautiful democracy. Unless we demand our deserved respect every speeding ticket or questionable action on our part will be an opportunity for those in power to belittle us.

Yes, prejudice has existed in the world since the beginning of time. And yes, considering the horrific nature of September 11, there is justifiable fear and intolerance. But this fear, intolerance and prejudice has grown way out of proportion.

During one of our gatherings that include very successful Iranians from all walks of life a suggestion was made that we chose a group of Iranians to represent us. Their mission would be to show the world the true face of the Iranian people. Some believed the idea valid, while others believed that it would be a fruitless, since it is a fact that we are not seen in a good light by most of the world. **HOW COULD THIS BE ACCEPTABLE ? WHY WOULD ANYONE ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE SO DISRESPECTED AND, IF IN FACT THAT IS THE WAY YOU FEEL, THEN CHANGE IT, OR FOREVER BE CALLED A "MUSLIM TERRORIST."**

Each day of our lives should be dedicated insure that we are seen separate from our governments! The fact that a handful of Muslims from Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, caused such devastation does not mean that the remaining 1 and 1/2 billion Muslims of the world are terrorists! Are all Germans guilty of the atrocities brought on by the Nazi's? No, and therefore we are not all guilty of the events of September 11.

It is my hope that this Mustafa's suffering does not repeat itself. It is my hope that this will be a wake up notice to us. It is

important for us to define ourselves in this country.

There is continuous chatter amongst ourselves to change a regime, when there are more important and pressing matters, a change to our weak position in this country. We need to build a strong foundation. Once we have it there will be a ripple effect that will provide us all with a better opportunity to stop the destruction of Iran and give our traditions and culture a chance to survive and flourish outside of its original boundaries. It is time for all of us to learn from the immigrants before us who suffered from the hands of discrimination. So many of these individuals like many of us came to this country with empty pockets. Through organizing themselves and fighting for their rights as citizens of this great nation we now call home, they became successful and secured positions here they considered once unattainable because of their ethnicity. They broke the stereotype imposed upon them and so must we.

Yes we can have our poetry and music nights, but we also need nights and gatherings where we can organize our efforts to defend ourselves and the future of our children.

This is the time of year when the world begins to celebrate the holidays. It is a time when we share so much joy and love and participate in long established traditions and customs. It is as time when we enjoy family and friends. It saddens me that for Mustafa and his family and friends this joyous time of the year will be darkened by this incident. We must all work together to insure that this event will never repeat itself. We must all work harder to make this world, the only one we have, a better place to live! A place where we are all free and live without fear, a place where speaking your mind is met with open arms rather than with a bullet to your head, torture, imprisonment or harassment and a place where our children and grandchildren can be proud of who they are and where they came from.

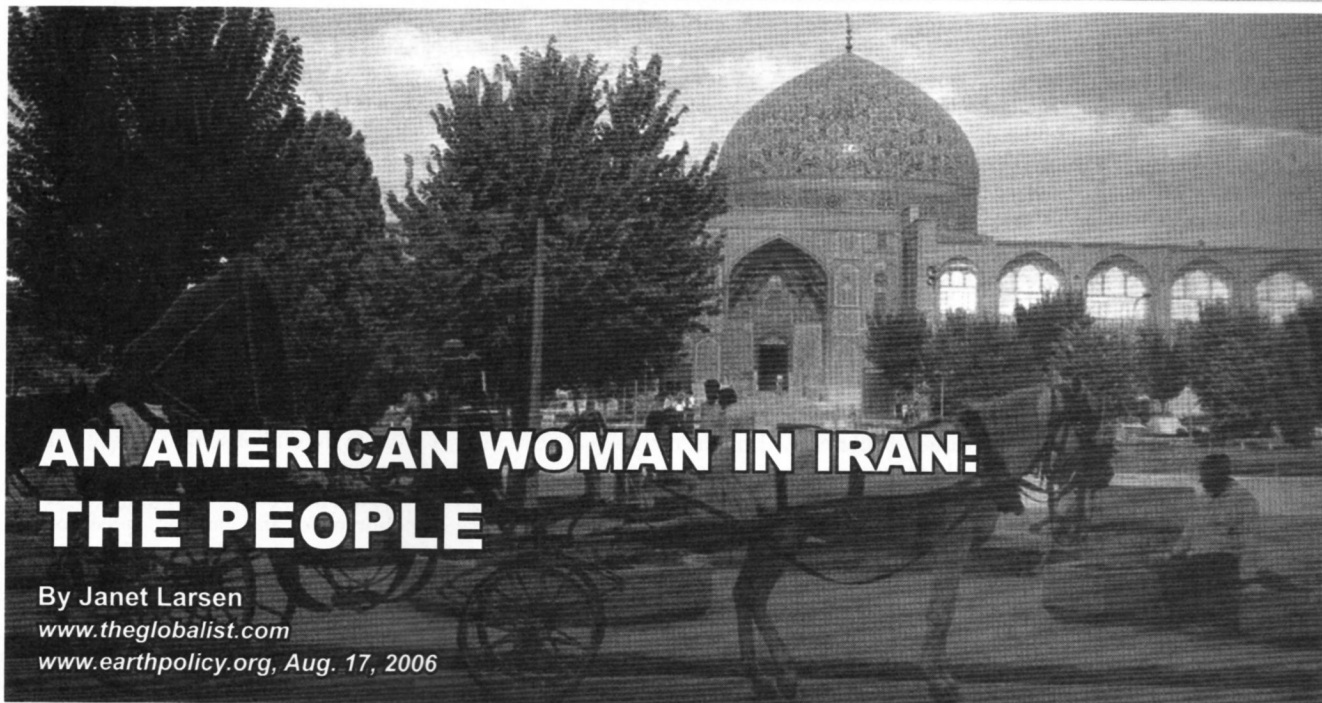
My best wishes to you all for a happy holiday season.

*Shahrokh Alesani*

*On behalf of the entire staff of*

*Persian Heritage Magazine*

*We want to wish all of you a Happy Holiday Season  
and a very Healthy, Peaceful and Prosperous New Year*



# AN AMERICAN WOMAN IN IRAN: THE PEOPLE

By Janet Larsen

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

[www.earthpolicy.org](http://www.earthpolicy.org), Aug. 17, 2006

*Last May, Janet Larsen traveled to Iran to join representatives from around the globe for an environmental summit. From the architectural wonders of the city of Esfahan to the welcoming nature of Iran's people, she describes how she was exposed to a side of Iran not often seen by Westerners.*

## ESFAHAN NESF-E JAHAN

Esfahan is half the world. This half-rhyme just begins to sum up the grandeur of Esfahan's blue tiled domes and minarets, endless labyrinthine bazaars, fragrant spices, secret gardens and ancient palaces. The Iranian Department of the Environment had arranged the trip there for three associates and myself. They all were at the May 2004 United Nations Environmental Programme conference and hailed from New Zealand, Canada and the United States. I was eager to soak up the city's charms. The Safavid monarch, Shah Abbas the Great, moved the Persian capital to Esfahan at the end of the 16th century. He rebuilt the city around the Naqsh-e Jahan "Pattern of the World" Square, now known as Iman Square. Today, horse-drawn carriages carry people past the dancing fountains in the center of the square — the world's second largest after China's Tiananmen Square.

## THE CENTER OF ESFAHAN

The shops on the square's perimeter

were filled with tapestries, miniature artwork, confectionaries, enameled copperware and piles of Persian carpets. The secret of the carpets' distinctive reds, blues and golds was revealed to me when one kind shopkeeper led me down a set of stone steps to a cavern-like basement room.

A single sunbeam shined through a hole cut in the ceiling, hitting a giant circular stone in the center of the room. This wheel was rolled over pomegranates and other natural items to coax out their brilliant hues.

## THE HOLY SITES

In the nearby Jameh Mosque, Iran's largest, I saw such carpets put to use by turbaned men at prayer time. Religious activity in this site dated back at least as far as the Zoroastrians in the 11th century. I walked in silence through the courtyards and arcades and among the imposing columns supporting perfect domes high above.

At the Zurkhaneh, "House of Strength," boys and men gathered together for a sort of religious gymnastics designed to keep up sound mind and body.

As a foreign woman, I was happy to be allowed in as sort of an honorary man. The champions of old sat in a line against one wall and photos of others from years past covered the high walls of the square room from floor to ceiling.

A drummer and chanter seated on an elevated platform rang a large bell to signal the participants to descend into the sunken ring. With his first slow drum beats, the men began doing pushups.

## GYMNASTICS

Over the next hour, the pace escalated until the men were tossing heavy clubs made from tree trunks high into the air and spinning around in a blur, interspersed with recitation and chants.

An English-speaking Iranian explained on our exit that the men had been calling out for peace and goodwill among peoples and nations.

## ART AND CULTURE

I continued to make my way between holy sites and palaces. The paintings in Chehel Sotun "40 Pillars" Palace, originally built for Shah Abbas II in the middle of the 17th century, were quite impressive — both for their artistry and for their depictions of musicians, dancing girls, lavish feasts and parties.

I later learned that invading Afghans had covered some of these paintings with whitewash in the 18th century and that they only survived the 1979 revolution because diligent caretakers stood ground between the artwork and the fundamentalists keen on destruction.

In the entryway of the late 16th century Ali Qapu "Magnificent Gate" Palace,

I met an Iranian woman who showed me how I could stand facing one corner of the entryway and hear perfectly her quiet voice across the room. "It's like a telephone," she whispered into the opposite corner. She introduced me to her parents, sister and nephew, who invited me to come to their home.

### THE SHEIKH LOTFOLLAH MOSQUE

Together we climbed to the Palace's six-story terrace and admired the painted ceilings and the sparkling dome of the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque across the square. We ventured to the mosque, where my new friend pointed to where the turquoise and gold tiles that covered the interior walls spelled out verses of the Koran or the words Allah and Mohammed repeated in geometric script.

### THE REALM OF THE DIVINE

She explained that unlike in the palaces, the decorations of religious sites generally did not showcase human or animal forms, as their creation, even in symbolic form, was restricted to the realm of the divine. And so it went for the rest of my stay in this city filled with students of English, students of the world. I traded snippets of life stories with a group of female students in their first year studying English. Many had on dark lipstick and wore blue jeans under their trendy manteaus.

The most outgoing of the group, a trained midwife in her thirties, married and with a child, bought us all pineapple juice to sip as we discussed our common stories. I shared my appreciation of the artistry of Iranian filmmaker Majid Majidi with one film student and she confessed her admiration for Stanley Kubrick.

### BEYOND PLEASANTRIES

Another woman said she was one-year away from earning a doctorate in mathematics. She proudly informed me that in universities in Iran female students outnumbered the men. As with many of the other people I met in the country, our conversation moved beyond the basic pleasantries and the burning question came forth. "What do Americans think of Iran?" Some went a step further. "Do they think we all are terrorists?"

### THE AMERICAN OPINION

It was easy to state my personal opinion, but much more difficult to serve as a spokesperson for nearly 300 million

people in a country of 50 states — half of which I have never visited.

How many people in the United States understand Iran beyond the unfortunate "Axis of Evil" moniker? I don't know. For better or for worse, many of the Iranians with whom I spoke with understood all too well that the views of a country's figurehead do not always represent the sentiments of its citizens.

Late one night, as we were flipping through the television channels, my New Zealand friend and I came across an English-language news show. If she hadn't been there to assure me that I had heard correctly, I might not have believed my ears. There on the screen was a prominent religious leader, translated as saying, "America hates Iran because here we love freedom."

### THE WEEKENDS

When Thursday night came, the start of the abbreviated weekend, the city was filled with energy. I grabbed a quiet moment at sunset in a window seat of a teahouse set beneath the Chubi Bridge.

Dozens of bells and lanterns and colored lights hung overhead, the water of the Zayandeh River rushed by and the mildly scented smoke from the water pipes that graced many a table filled the room.

### IRANIAN WAY OF LIFE

After the sun made its descent, I walked along the river passing several other bridges, marveling at the number of strollers silhouetted by the lights shining through the bridges' many arches.

I walked over to the Armenian quarter with its large Christian cathedral and enjoyed a warming stew and good conversation with the restaurant owner. After eating their late dinners, families congregated in the public parks and gardens, spread out Persian carpets and set up elaborate teapots to converse well into the wee hours, children and all.

My New Zealand friend recounted trying to convey to one family, who had invited her to tea, that it probably would not be prudent for a woman to go to a park alone in the middle of the night in many major cities of the world.

### A SAFE PLACE

It was hard for her hosts to comprehend reasons why that would be so. "You could even sleep here if you wanted," they explained, gesturing around the grassy expanse. "Really?" was her incredulous

reply. "Well of course. It is warm enough now." In sharp contrast to the worries of my own friends and family before my trip, it is hard for me to think of another place where I have felt safer. Other than a brief incident of being tempted with illicit playing cards from the inner pockets of a smuggler's coat, the few international travelers I did meet in Iran were without complaint.

### WOMEN TRAVELERS

I ran into my carpet seller friend again on my last day in Esfahan. By then, I had nearly gotten over the surprise that even in the city of some 1.6 million I still seemed to be recognized everywhere.

Iranian families congregated in the public parks and gardens, spread out on Persian carpets and set up elaborate teapots to converse well into the wee hours.

Because there are so few tourists, foreigners tend to stand out and are remembered. He approached me in one of the dusty and winding halls of the bazaar and asked if I was looking for my husband. "My husband?" I exclaimed, thinking of my husband far away in Washington. "Yes, your Canadian husband. Because he's around the corner buying some plates." A wave of concern passed over his face. "Oh, but maybe they're for a surprise. I shouldn't have said anything. I'm sorry!" My laugh dissipated his concern. "No, it's okay," I assured him. "He's not my husband. Just a friend, probably buying an anniversary present for his wife."

### BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES

His confused expression reminded me that traveling with a man other than my own husband was something of a novelty for those who could understand it and practically a scandal for those who could not. I apologized that I had not bought any carpets on my trip. "Oh, no, no, no!" It was his turn to reassure me. "Yes, I am carpet seller. But I'm not here just to sell carpets. You are a visitor. You are here for a good time. And I want you to have beautiful memories."

### A DESIRE FOR PEACE

I nodded, another habit that seemed odd to the Iranians I met, but one I couldn't turn off, but before I could open my mouth to assure him that I most certainly had accumulated many beautiful memories, he continued. "We want you to have beautiful memories, because beautiful memories for you mean no bombs on us."

# SPOTLIGHT ON THE IRANIAN FOREIGN BORN

BY SHIRIN HAKIMZADEH AND DAVID DIXON

*Migration Policy Institute*

While recent news headlines focus on escalating tensions between Iran and the United States over Iran's nuclear energy program, less attention has been paid to the United States' Iranian-born population.

This spotlight focuses on the Iranian foreign born in the United States, examining the population's size, growth, and geographic distribution over the last three decades using data from the Census Bureau, the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS), and the US Department of State (DOS). OIS and DOS data were used to measure migratory flows while the census was utilized for stock data.

*Note: All yearly data is for the government's fiscal year (October 1 through September 30).*

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

• The Iranian foreign born are a relatively new population whose migration to the United States was concentrated around the years of the Islamic Revolution (1978-1979).

Iranian immigration can be conceptualized as two back-to-back waves before and after the revolution. The first wave, which started in the mid-1950s and continued until the start of the revolution, primarily consisted of college students, who were studying abroad in order to meet the needs of the rapidly industrializing oil-based Iranian economy, and families closely associated with the monarchy of Mohammad Reza Shah. An estimated population of 34,000 left during this first phase.

From the Islamic Revolution of 1978-1979 to the present, a second wave of emigration, primarily exiles, political refugees, and asylum seekers, took place. Approximately 330,000 came to the United States during this period. The exiles were disproportionately members of religious and ethnic minorities, such as the Bahai's, Jews, Armenians, and Assyrians. Also in the second wave were young men who fled military service and the Iran-Iraq war, followed by young women and families who came for educational and political reasons.

**Iranian Foreign-Born Population in the United States by County: 2000**



• **Between 1980 and 1990, the number of foreign born from Iran in the United States increased by 74 percent.**

The foreign-born population from Iran increased from 121,505 in 1980 to 210,941 in 1990, representing an increase of 73.6 percent.

• **The number of Iranians granted lawful permanent residence peaked in 1990, with an estimated 24,977 Iranians admitted.**

According to the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS), from 1970 to 2004, 356,642 Iranian-born immigrants were admitted to the United States. The largest number entered in 1990 (see Figure 1). About 13 percent (47,977) entered between 1970 and 1980, while 43 percent (154,857) entered between 1981 and 1990, and 32 percent (112,597) entered between 1991 and 2000. Just 41,211 immigrant visas were issued to the Iranian foreign born from 2001 through 2004.

• **From 1980 to 2004, more than one out of every four Iranian immigrants was a refugee or asylee.**

According to OIS, of the 319,075 Iranian immigrants admitted between 1980 and 2004, 83,376 (26 percent) were refugees and asylees adjusting to permanent resident status.

**STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF IRANIAN FOREIGN BORN IN THE UNITED STATES:**

• **There were about 280,000 Iranian born in the United States in 2000.**

According to the US Census Bureau, there were approximately 283,225 foreign-born Iranians living in the United States in 2000.

However, the Iranian-American community claims the number is much larger than the Census Bureau figure suggests.

• **Immigrants from Iran accounted for less than one percent of the total foreign-born population.**

Of the 31.1 million foreign born in the United States, only 0.91 percent were immigrants from Iran, according to the results of Census 2000.

• **Between 1990 and 2000, the number of Iranian foreign born increased over 34 percent.**

The Iranian population went up by 72,284 between 1990 and 2000, from 210,941 to 283,225.

• **Over half of all Iranian immigrants lived in the state of California in 2000.**

While all 50 states received Iranian immigrants according to Census 2000, 55.9 percent (158,613) lived in California. The states with the next-largest Iranian immigrant populations were New York (17,323 or 6.1 percent), Texas (15,581 or 5.5 percent), Virginia (10,889 or 3.8 percent), and Maryland (9,733

or 3.4 percent).

• **The metropolitan areas with the most Iranian immigrants were Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York City, and the Washington, DC-Baltimore metropolitan area.**

In 2000, 41 percent (114,712) of the Iranian foreign born resided in Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County, 10 percent (27,112) in San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, eight percent (21,971) in New York City, and seven percent (19,726) in the Washington, DC-Baltimore metropolitan area. The next three largest destinations were San Diego (7,675), Dallas (6,376), and Houston (6,287), respectively.

• **During 2005, 5,314 immigrant visas were issued to Iranians.**

According to the US Department of State, the majority (2,900) of immigrant visas for Iranians were granted through immediate relative petitions. Another 1,808 visas were granted

based on family preference, and the remainder included diversity immigrants, employment preference, and returning residents and armed forces special immigrants, respectively.

• **In the last five years, the most commonly issued nonimmigrant visas for Iranian nationals have been the student (F), temporary worker (H), and foreign government representative (G) visas.**

Between 2000 and 2005, 20 percent of the 15,824 nonimmigrant visas issued to Iranian nationals were student visas (3,323), 21 percent were temporary worker visas (3,316), and 19 percent were visas issued to representatives of foreign governments (2,987) (see Figure 2). The next two most frequently issued

nonimmigrant visas were the K, issued to fiancés of US citizens (18 percent or 2,786); and the J, issued to exchange visitors (12 percent or 1,900).

**SOCIOECONOMIC OVERVIEW OF FOREIGN-BORN IRANIANS IN THE UNITED STATES:**

• **Three in every five Iranian immigrants were naturalized US citizens.**

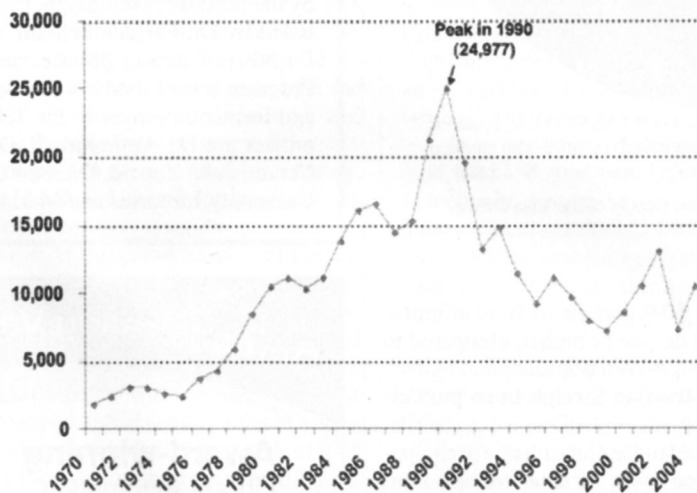
According to Census 2000, 60.7 percent of Iranian immigrants in the United States were naturalized citizens while 40.3 percent of the total foreign-born population was naturalized.

• **Over 90 percent of the Iranian foreign born spoke a language other than English at home.**

Among the Iranian foreign born, 92.1 percent in 2000 spoke a language other than English at home, while 83.0 percent of the total foreign-born population spoke a language other than English.

• **The majority of the Iranian born had a bachelor's**

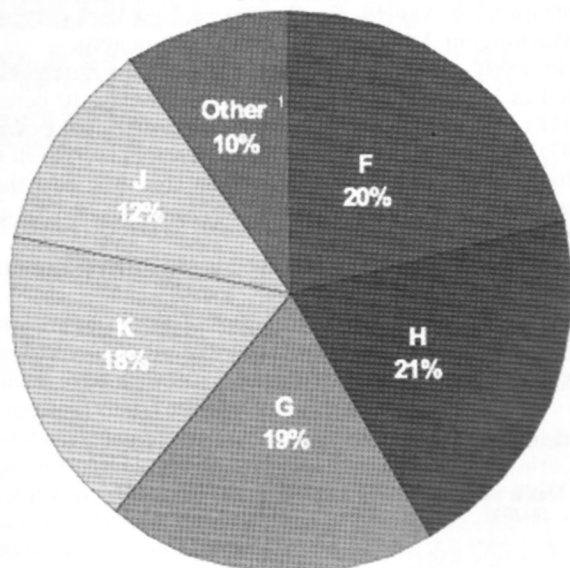
Figure 1. Iranian-Born Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1970 to 2004



Note: This figure includes both immigrants admitted and those who adjusted their status after arrival. Therefore, the 1990 peak is partially a result of people who arrived in the 1980s but did not adjust until the early 1990s.

Source: US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1970-2004.

Figure 2. Nonimmigrant Visas Issued to Iranian Nationals, 2000 to 2005



Note: 1-Other includes A,O,P,T-N,TD,R,I,M,NATO, V, L, and E nonimmigrant visa categories. Data based on those who claimed Iranian nationality, not necessarily Iranian born. N=15,824

Source: US Department of State, Report of the Visa Office, 2000-2005

**degree or higher.**

According to Census 2000, 50.9 percent of Iranian immigrants have attained a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 24.0 percent among the total foreign-born population.

• **Nearly two-thirds of the Iranian foreign born participated in the labor force.**

Iranian-born immigrants had a higher labor force participation rate (63.1 percent) compared with the total foreign-born population (60.6 percent). Among those in the civilian labor force, 4.7 percent of the foreign born from Iran were unemployed, while 6.8 percent of the foreign born were unemployed.

• **More than half of the Iranian immigrant population were employed in management, professional, and related occupations.**

In 2000, the top three occupation categories for the Iranian foreign born were management, professional and related occupations (51.8 percent); sales and office occupations (27.5 percent); and service occupations (9 percent). By contrast, 28.4 percent of the total foreign-born population were in management, professional and related occupations; 20 percent in service occupations; and 19.9 percent in sales and office occupations.

• **The self-employment rate of the Iranian foreign born was almost double the rate for the total foreign-born population.**

According to Census 2000, 11.6 percent of the Iranian born were self-employed workers in their own not-incorporated businesses, while 6.5 percent of the total foreign-born population were self-employed.

• **In 2000, the median income for Iranian-born males and females who were full-time, year-round workers was \$52,333 and \$36,422, respectively.**

For the total foreign-born population, the median earnings for male and female full-time workers was \$30,288 and \$25,260,

respectively. Iranian-born males earned 42 percent more than the male foreign born overall, and Iranian-born females earned 31 percent more than the total female foreign-born population.

**SOURCES**

- Census 2000, US Census Bureau
- US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1970-2004
- US Department of State, Report of the Visa Office, 2000-2005

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There is serious buzz about Shafi's collection of scholarly material to become part of the Rutgers University Library in New Brunswick, NJ. The collection has been offered as a donation and covers the spectrum of Iranian civic and social life and history, a collection openly coveted by the Sorbonne, Oxford and Princeton, etc. The movement is led by Dr. Farideh Tehrani, Interim Associate Director for NB/Piscataway libraries and head of the Preservation Program at the Libraries. The donor is a close family friend and former employer of Dr. Tehrani. Also working on the project are Dr. Amirahmadi, Director of the Middle East Center, Julia Zapic, Director of Development at Rutgers University Libraries and Marianne.

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## A BRIEF LOOK AT IRANIAN CINEMA, PARTICULARLY “GILANEH” THE LATEST MOVIE BY RAKHSHAN BANI-ETEMAD

KAMROUZ PIROUZ

Cinema has been an important form of artistic expression in Iran's post-revolutionary period. In 1969 Daryush Mehrjui with his movie “The Cow” began a renaissance in the Iranian cinema, and since this time Iranian films have become an important medium of expression dealing with existing contradictions and socio-cultural issues of the day. Over the last two and a half decades, the Iranian cinema has become internationally recognized.

This phenomenon reached its peak in 1997 when Abbas Kiarostami's movie “Taste of Cherry” received the *Palme d'or* at the Cannes International Film Festival. And in 1998, Samira Makhmalbaf, at the age of 18, with her first feature movie “The Apple” became the youngest director ever to have a film accepted at the same prestigious festival. Later on, in 1999, Majid Majidi's film “The Children of Heaven” was nominated for an Oscar as the best foreign film of that year.

However, even more important than achieving such international recognition is the active role of Iranian female directors in a country and society which is heavily male-dominated and in many respects treats women as second-class citizens. It is extraordinary how these female directors have flourished despite many social obstacles and governmental restrictions.

Three of Iran's female directors, Samira Makhmalbaf, Tahmineh Milani, and Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, have gained international recognition and their movies have received numerous international awards. Like everyone of Iranian ancestry we should take great pride in the country's film-makers, both female and male, who in the last two decades or more have made Iranian cinema a respected and honored presence in international film festivals.

Rakhshan Bani-Etemad initially

began her career as a documentary filmmaker. Dealing with important social and cultural issues of her time, she has bravely and dramatically portrayed the underlying problems of the underprivileged, the dispossessed, and the poor in Iranian society. She later on turned to making full-feature films, and with such movies as “Narges” (1991), “The Blue Veil” (*Rosari Abi*, 1994), and “The May Lady” (*Banoe' Ordibehesht*, 1998) she has established herself indisputably as Iran's leading female director. Her latest movie “Gilaneh” (2005), which she has produced and directed in collaboration with Mohsen Abdolvahab, is a tragic but moving depiction of the impact of the Iran - Iraqi war and the sacrifice and the devotion of a mother for her war-inflicted son.

“Gilaneh” is not a political or propaganda movie. Bani-Etemad is not trying to please anyone either right or left. Her movie is a debt owed by all of us to the younger generation of Iran who took part in an ugly and bloody war in order to save our country from the invading armies of Saddam Hussein. It is a debt owed by all of us who had no part in this war but lived in the comfort of our homes far away. “Gilaneh”, played brilliantly by Fatemeh Motamed Arya, is a widowed mother and the centerpiece of this intense saga of how war alters the life of her family in a remote area of Iran.

It takes place on the eve of the *Now Ruz* (the Iranian New Year) in 1988 while Iraqi bombs rain in Tehran as Iranians are trying to celebrate. The movie begins with a dark screen while one can hear the sounds of an air strike. Gilaneh's daughter Maygol, who is pregnant, (played by Baran Kosar) wakes up terrified by the sound of the bombs. Her mother, who is worried about her condition, tries to comfort her. She wants to go to Tehran to look for her husband



Rahmat who has deserted the army. The same day Gilaneh's son Ismaeel (played by Bahram Radan) is heading for the front.

The story then continues 15 years later on the same date, when the United States is bombing Baghdad. The U.S. is now the aggressor and Iraq is being invaded. Ismaeel has returned from the earlier war devastated by chemical weapons. He is now disabled and bed-stricken in their modest hut which is located next to a major highway. Gilaneh now acts as both mother and nurse who takes care of Ismaeel day and night with selfless devotion. Gilaneh's hut, along with a modest cigarette kiosk next to it, is a place that those who have fled the war torn cities stop to rest and buy a pack of cigarettes. One can hear some of them, well dressed and on their cel phones, trying to make or break deals in hope of making quick money in time of war.

Fatemeh Motamed Arya's masterful acting in “Gilaneh” is impressive and a big credit to Iranian cinema. She is a loving and devoted mother whose hope for a happy and fulfilling life have been shattered by a war fought by mad men of our time who so mercilessly crush the weak and the powerless. Arya's acting along with that of Bahram Radan, combined with the masterful cinematography of Morteza Poursamadi depicting the beauty and the calm of the rural Gilan province, make this film another unforgettable classic in the repertory of Rakhshan Bani-Etemad.

continuing from previous issue

In the first place, both the Iranians and the Celts called themselves "Aryans". The Old Irish *Eriu* (accusative *Erinn*) is cognate with the Sanskrit *Arya* or *Aryan*, Avestan *Airya*, Persian Iran. Mercenaries recruited in Ireland by the Romans were called *Ariani*. Periplus of Avienus uses the name *Aryium* to designate the coast of Asturias and the northern coast of Galicia. This is quite obviously the Sanskrit **Arya** plus the Latin genitive plural case ending of the third declension.

As is well known, the name "Celt" is not Celtic, being derived from the Greek *Keltoi*. Perhaps the most widely extended names by which the Celtic peoples called themselves were those derived from the stem "gal" or "gaul". The examples of this are very numerous: Gaul, Galicia (in Spain), Galizia (in Poland), Galatia (in Western Anatolia, mentioned by St. Paul in his epistles), Gael, Galway (in Ireland), Galloway (in Scotland), the "gal" in "Portugal" and a long etc. In fact, from Ireland to Anatolia, wherever the Celts were present at some time in history (relatively recent history at least) one finds tribal, clan and place names derived from the stem "gal" or "gaul". The etymology of this stem is unknown.

Keeping in mind the Celtic reverence for the cow – something very visible even today – perhaps the most reasonable etymology of the stem "gal" or "gaul" is one suggested by James Tod. According to Tod, said stem is related to the Sanskrit *gao*, *gau* or *go* (Persian *gav*), which means "cow". "Gal" or "Gaul" would therefor mean "cowherd", perhaps shortened from *gaulashanika*, meaning "one who knows the good points of a cow".

In the field of art also the Celts show their relation to the Iranian peoples. So close is the resemblance in this field that it is often impossible to distinguish between Celtic and Scythian pieces. The similarities between the Hindu Brahmins, the Persian Magi and the Celtic Druids have been noted by many. Says Henri Hubert:

"Here one is dealing not only with comparable priesthoods, but with identical priesthoods, which were only well preserved in the two (geographical) extremes of the Indo-European peoples."

And Henri Beer:

"Certain elements of Druidism proceed from the depths of the Indo-European souls, and are related to the doctrines of the Brahmins and the Magi."

The existence of the belief in reincarnation among the Hindus is well known. Although the **Avesta** and other Zoroastrian books tend to be ambiguous on the subject, the persistence of the belief in reincarnation in Persia in Islamic times certainly indi-

cates that said belief was very deeply rooted and widely extended in pre-Islamic Persia. There are abundant testimonies of the belief in reincarnation among the pagan Celts. Said belief is very persistent among people of Irish origin. In Celtic literature this belief is evident from the Welsh poet Taliesin in the 6th Century to the Irish poet W.B. Yeats in the 20th. Constantino Cabal noted the persistence of the belief in reincarnation in Asturias, and I myself have encountered it in Galicia. Says Henri Hubert:

"The Druids apparently believed in metempsychosis, of which we find evidence in myths and stories."

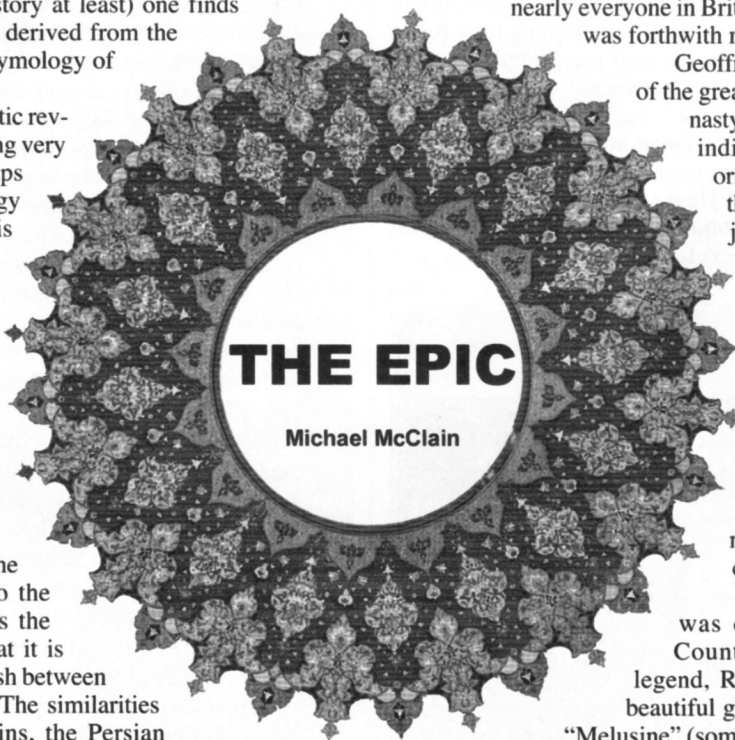
Geoffrey Plantagenet, called *Li Bel* (the handsome), son of Henry II and brother of Richard *Couer de Lion* (the lionheart), was killed in an accident in 1186. A short time later, his wife, the beautiful countess Constance of Brittany, gave birth to a son. Geoffrey being dead, Constance hesitated in giving the child a name. A Breton bard proclaimed the new-born prince and count to be the reincarnation of King Arthur. This was believed by nearly everyone in Brittany and Wales, and the child was forthwith named Arthur.

Geoffrey Plantagenet "Li Bel" was of the great Plantagenet or Angevin dynasty, who, as the name "Angevin" indicates, were not of Norman origin, but rather were originally the Counts of Anjou from Anjou, that lovely and fertile land so near to Brittany and La Vendee, where the *planta genesta*, from whence the name "Plantagenet", still grows in profusion. The family name of the Counts of Anjou was "Lusignan", which, as we said in another place, indicates an ancient Gaulish and Celtic pedigree rather than a Roman, Frankish or Viking origin.

Raymond de Lusignan was one of the earliest of the Counts of Anjou. According to legend, Raymond fell in love with a beautiful girl with the very Celtic name "Melusine" (sometimes spelled "Melusina" or "Melisinde"). Melusine Married Raymond on the condition that he never see her on Saturday. But finally curiosity got the better of Raymond, and, horrified, he saw that on Saturday Melusine became a blue and white serpent from the waist down. Melusine died of the shock, but her ghost continued to haunt the castle of Chinon, frightening people with the swishing of her tail. To this day visitors to the ruins of the castle of Chinon are warned to watch for and beware of snakes with blue and white tails. Melusine was a female ancestor of the Plantagenets or Angevins. In a Scythian origin myth recounted by Herodotus, the Mixoparthenos, mother of Scythes, ancestor of the Scythians, was a woman from the waist up but a snake from the waist down.

As is well known, chiefs of the Scythians were interred with rich grave goods in mounds called "kurgans", said mounds being topped with life-size monolithic stone sculptures.

In certain periods at least, the Celtic chiefs were interred in



## THE EPIC

Michael McClain

a manner identical to that of the Scythian chiefs, complete with a life size monolithic stone sculpture topping the burial mound.

It is well known that the ancient Aryan peoples used a hallucinogenic drug called *soma* in Sanskrit, *haoma* in Avestan. The juice was pressed from said plant, mixed with cow's milk (*haomayo gava* in Avestan) and drunk after an elaborate ceremony. The Druids rigorously preserved the *soma* or *haoma* ceremony even though they had migrated to areas where said plant does not grow, the only difference being the absence of the *soma* itself. The words which have to do with religious ceremonies are nearly identical in Sanskrit and Celtic. Lighting a fire (part of the *soma* ceremony) is *andaid* in Celtic, *inddhe* in Sanskrit; to drink, Celtic *ibim*, Sanskrit *pibami* (Sanskrit *piba* = drink, *mi* = approach). This seems to indicate that by drinking the sacred beverage one approaches the gods. Cow's milk as the sacred beverage was called *suth* by the Druids, which means "pressed". In Sanskrit *suta-soma* means "prepare the *soma*" (*suta* = producir). Arthur MacDonell relates the word *soma* or *haoma* to the Sanskrit *su*, Avestan *hu*, which means "to press". The above appears to me to be conclusive proof that the Celts separated from the Indo-Aryans and the Iranians after the discovery of the hallucinogenic properties of *soma*. I cannot think of any other reason why cow's milk as the sacred beverage should be called by a name which means "pressed". in the book by Alwyn and Brinley Rees cited so many times in this work, it is difficult to find a single page without a reference to the Indo-Aryans or the Iranians.

The Druids as well as the Magi had their sacred fires, called *Atarsh* in Avestan, *Atur* in Pahlavi. Says H. Hubert:

"In Kildare (Ireland) the nuns of St. Bridget – who took the place of a goddess (of the same name) – avoided the contamination by their breath of the sacred fire which they maintained with the same care as did the Persian Magi."

In pagan times said sacred fires were far more numerous. Among the pagan Celts, the sacred fires, whether permanent or temporary sacrificial fires, were always triple. The ancient Indo-Aryans apparently had no permanent sacred fires, but sacrificial fires were always triple and were called **Ahavaniya**, **Garhapatya**, and **Dakshina**. This was also true among the ancient Iranians.

In Sassanian times the three sacred fires were called *Farnbag*, *Gushnasp* and *Burzin Mihr*. In Ireland the main permanent sacred fires were at Tara, site of the royal capital and at Uisnech, traditionally considered to be the geographical centre of Ireland. In the Rig Veda one may read: "*Agni* (god of fire) is at the centre of the universe".

In Gallego and Asturian "Bable" the word *aturuxo* (*aturusho*) refers to a sort of yell generally thought to be derived from a Celtic war cry. This word is obviously not of Latin derivation, nor does it resemble any word in the surviving Celtic languages. However, its resemblance to the Avestan *Atarsh* and the Pahlavi *Atur* is perfectly clear. Since the Celts as well as the Iranians had their sacred fires, the most logical explanation is that "Aturuxo" comes from a Celtic word meaning "sacred fire". Said word, because of its pagan connotations, was suppressed and did not survive in the written Celtic languages (which date from the 6th–7th Centuries AD). In this connection it is interesting to note that the yell to which the word "aturuxo" refers is generally transcribed "hu–hu–hu". The Sanskrit root *hu* (present stem *juhu*) means "sacrifice".

The word *aturuxo* is highly interesting in yet another connection. The Hispano-Muslim historian Isa al-Razi (9th–10th centuries), whose grandparents were Persians, says that the name "al-Andalus" (Muslim Spain, Andalusia) comes from the *al-Andalush* or *Alandalush*, a pre-Roman people of the Peninsula who were descendants of Japhet and were *Majus* (Magi = "fire-worshippers" or Zoroastrians) by religion. Flavius Josephus in **The Antiquities of the Jews** says that Japhet was the ancestor of the Scythians, and, of course, the other Iranian peoples. Note also that al-Razi says that the "al-Andalush" (or "Alandalush", it not being clear if the initial "al" is the Arabic definite article or part of the name) were not *kafiri*, i.e., pagans or polytheists, but **Majus**, i.e., "fire-worshippers" or Zoroastrians. Coming from someone of Persian origin, this is highly significant. Obviously al-Razi believed that the "al-Andalush" or "Alandalush" were Iranians. Since, of the pre-Roman peoples of the Peninsula it was the Celts who had most in common with the Iranians, particularly in the field of religion, al-Razi is, in effect, saying that the al-Andalush or Alandalush were Celts. But, does the name "al-Andalush" or "Alandalush" have a possible Celtic etymology? It has several. One possibility is *Erinn-de-Lug*, "the Aryans of (the god) Lug". **Alan** may mean "beautiful" (Gaelic *alainn*, Sanskrit *alan-kara*, "ornament", literally "that which makes beautiful", Persian *alan-gau*, "bangle", literally "beautiful ball or sphere) or **Aryan**, **an** may be part of "alan" or refer to the goddess Danu; **de** may mean "of" or "a god"; *lus* may mean "light" or refer to the god of light and the sun **Lug** (Latin – *lux*; Greek – *leuk*; Avestan – *raokh*; Indo-European – *leuk*; English – light; Old Irish – *lugni*).

Observe the word "aturuxo". The final "o" is almost certainly of Vulgar Latin rather than Celtic origin. Drop the "o" and we have **aturux** or **aturush**. Nasalization of the vowels is very common in many Indo-European languages, including Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, Gaelic, French, Gallego, Portuguese and in the accents of parts of the Spanish regions of Extremadura and Andalusia. By nasalization of the "a" one may get "an". Now we have *anturush*. "T" and "d" are both dental sounds, the "t" being unvoiced and the "d" voiced. Confusion and changes between "t" and "d" are common in all languages. Now we have *andurush*. Confusion between the "t" and the "r" occurs in many Indo-European languages, including Vedic Sanskrit and is particularly prevalent in Andalusia. We now have *andulush*. One may therefore postulate that the "al-Andalush" were a Celtic people whose name means "(People of) the Sacred Fire". Note how well all this meshes with the words of al-Razi concerning the etymology of "al-Andalus".

One may ask why the hypothetical Celtic word "aturush" or "atarush" survived almost unchanged in Galicia and Asturias while it was so deformed (although in a manner congruent with the laws of phonetic changes) in Andalusia. The answer is not difficult.

Andalusia was occupied by the Carthaginians, large areas were intensely Romanized. At least the valley of the Guadalquivir was strongly occupied by the Visigoths, and finally the whole area was Islamized and Arabized, although these last two processes were far from complete in the time of al-Razi. Asturias and Galicia were very thinly Romanized, very little affected by the Germanic invasions, and virtually unaffected by the Muslim invasion. Therefore, it is no surprise that a Celtic word should be more deformed in Andalusia than in Galicia and Asturias.

Water as well as fire was an element sacred to the Brahmins,

the Magi and the Druids. In the Rig Veda the aquatic goddess "Danu" appears as the mother of the *Danavas*, a race of gods or demons connected with the wind and rain. *Vritra*, one of the *Danavas*, is slain by *Indra*, god of thunder, thus releasing the rain from the clouds. Danu, in the words of the Rig Veda, "mourned for her slain son like a cow for her calf". Among the ancient Iranians, Danu appears as the aquatic goddess **Anahita** (*hita* = Persian *hiz*, "female"). The name Anahita may be interpreted as "(D)ana the Lady". In Avestan times the river Yaxartes, or Sur Darya, was known as "Danu". This goddess was known as *Danaan*, *Ani*, or *Anu* among the ancient Irish, *Don* among the Welsh. In all cases she is an aquatic goddess. The name of this goddess survives until today in the names of a series of rivers from the river Don in the Ukraine to the river Don in Scotland, passing by way of the rivers Dnieper, Dniester, Danube and Rhone. The name of this last river is Rodanus in Latin. It is thus a combination of the name of the goddess plus the Indo-European root which means "flowing" (Sanskrit - *ri*; Persian - *rud*, both of which mean "river": Persian - *ravan* = "flowing"; French - *riviere*; English - *river*; Spanish - *rio* = "river"). In Spain the name of this goddess probably survives in the name of the river **Guadiana** (Arabic - *wadi* = "river" + *Ana*). Before the Muslim Conquest the Guadiana was known as the river *Anas*. The great marshes of **Donana** at the mouth of the Guadalquivir are no doubt also named after this goddess. The very ancient annual pilgrimage to the shrine of Nuestra Senora del Rocío (Our Lady of the Mist), very near Donana, is also most probably a dim memory of this goddess. The river **Darro** or **Dauro**, which passes through Granada, was anciently called **Dan-rus** or **Dan-ro**, obviously the same as **Rodanus**, though with the elements in reverse order. In another way the name of this goddess survives in the names of various rivers in northern Spain called **Deva**. This name quite obviously proceeds from the Indo-European **Dewas**, "a god", Old Irish **Dia** (nom.), **Dee** (gen.), Gaulish **Deuo**, Welsh **Duw**, Avestan **Daeva**. In Sanskrit **Deva**, with a short "a", means "a god", with a long "a" means "a goddess". The fact that the name of the rivers Deva is virtually identical to the Sanskrit and Avestan words indicates that it is very ancient, since in the known or documented Celtic languages the "v" either has fallen away (Old Irish) or has become vocalized (Gaulish, Welsh).

The memory of this goddess also survives in a multitude of sacred wells and springs in Ireland, Scotland, France and Spain. Said sacred wells and springs are particularly abundant in Spain, where the place names "Fuensanta" and "Fonsagrada" are found in all parts of the Peninsula. As said before, another memory of this goddess is found in the outskirts of Santiago de Compostela, where the medieval chapel of Our Lady of the Spring still exists beside a strong spring of very good water and where a huge bonfire celebrates the Night of St. John every year. The goddess Danu survives in Asturias, though with her status reduced to that of a water sprite or nymph known as the **Xana** (*shana*). Compare the name of the Celtic god of the sea **Triath** with that of the Vedic aquatic god Tritah and Thraetona, a companion of Mithra.

The number three was also sacred to the Brahmins, Magi and Druids. As I said before, the sacred fires of the Celts, Indo-Aryans and Iranians were always triple. The Celtic "trinity" was Brian, Iuchar and Iucharba. Thus, the shamrock or cloverleaf is the symbol of Ireland. The "trinity" of the Achaemenian Persians and the Parthians was Ahura Mazda, Mithra and Anahita; Parthian coins have been found which show three fires burning on three altars. Even among the Ismailis in Islamic times there existed a "trinity"

of the "Unnamed, incomprehensible Being", the "Pre-Existent Being" and the "Subsequent Being". The "trinity" of the Vedas is Indra, Mitra and Varuna, and in later Hinduism is Brahman, Vishnu and Shiva.

Other similarities between the Celts and the Indo-Iranian peoples, particularly in the moral and literary fields, will be discussed in their place. This rather lengthy discussion should, among other things, serve to assure the Iranian reader that the Celtic peoples are indeed ethnic cousins, not strangers. We now proceed with a discussion of the Celtic substratum of the Castilian epic.

Some have thought that the Castilian Epic proceeds from Latin poetry, classical and/or medieval. This theory is based on the supposition that all literature written in a Romance language proceeds from Latin, except, of course, in the topics. This supposition is now discredited, since it is abundantly proven that entire literary forms, including rhyme and metre, may pass from one language to another.

The Latinist theory also clashes with the fact that the Latin language has no epic tradition. The **Aeneid** of Virgil is an erudite work which has no traditional roots at all, and was written in imitation of the Greek epics. Among a people so fond of the written word as the Romans, the fact that there does not exist the most minimal reference nor mention of a Roman epic tradition may be considered as virtually conclusive proof that said tradition never existed, or that it was lost at a very early date. Besides, it is difficult to find anything of Roman character in the French and Castilian epics. The Latin (not Roman) influence consists only in the fact that the medieval Latin verse, with its rhymes and syllabic/accidental metres, had a profound influence on the formation of all literatures in Romance languages. As Manuel de Montuliu has said:

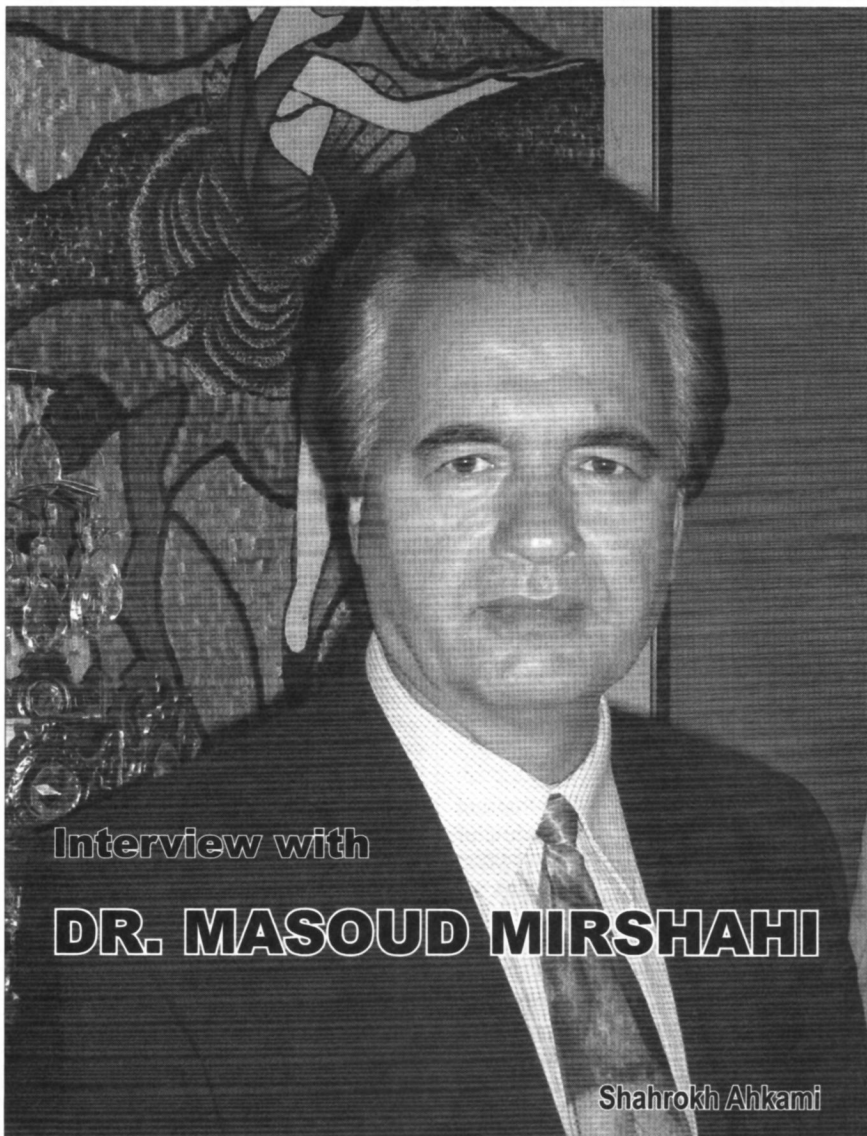
"Outside of this general relation between the medieval Latin verse and the poetry of our chansons (de geste), there is no indication of any possible influence of the former upon the latter".

In another place Sr. de Montuliu says:

"On the origin of the (Castilian) heroic-popular epic, some have suggested, though without demonstrating it, the idea that it proceeds from the songs and traditions of the primitive (i.e., pre-Roman) peoples of the Peninsula. But those testimonies which we have in the ancient Greek and Roman sources are insufficient to build a theory or even an hypothesis".

Typical of the testimonies of which de Montuliu speaks is a quotation by Strabo which states that the Cantabrians had songs of victory similar in some respects to the Greek paenes. As a direct testimony, this quotation is interesting, but is too vague in itself to be the basis for any conclusions. Nevertheless, the quotation by Strabo and other similar quotes are supported by indirect testimonies which are much more complete and detailed. The Gallaecos, Astures, Cantabrians, Lusitanians, Celtiberians and other peoples of the Centre and Northwest of the Peninsula were Celts, and the Celtic peoples have a very ancient and extensive epic tradition closely related to the epics of other Indo-European peoples. Therefore, the direct and indirect testimonies mutually confirm one another. Let us briefly examine the Celtic epic tradition.

*to be continued*



Interview with

**DR. MASOUD MIRSHAHI**

Shahrokh Ahkami

**A gentleman, scholar, researcher, physician and individual dedicated to his culture best describes Dr. Masoud Mirshahi. In the following interview he discusses his medical research and his views on certain aspects of Persian Culture.**

*Please tell us about yourself.*

I was born in 1954 in Neyshabour which is in the province of Khorassan, the city of *Omar Khayam* and *Attar*. I am married with two wonderful children.

In 1984 I was proud to receive my medical degree from Limburg University in Holland. Later I received educational degrees in blood coagulation, bio chemistry and a PhD in science and immunology from Paris University and a higher degree in cancer from the University of Paris.

Currently I am the Director of the Cancer Department at the Medical School of Paris University and The Center of France Medical Research (INSERM) and CNRS. I have served as a board member of the medical school in Paris from 1998-2002 and now I am a member of the Board of Directors at the Medical School and a Professor at Tajikistan University.

*Have you had any of your research published?*

Yes, over 150 articles have been published in various journals and books. Twenty-four of my research works have been presented at over 190 international conferences. In 1984 I received the Paris Foundation Award, in 1986 and an award in immunopathology in Tokyo. In 2001-2002 I received a prize from the Society of Toxicologists of America.

***Tell us more about your research in the medical field.***

There are three important sections to my research the eyes, blood coagulation and cancer. The first, the eyes, deals with blindness resulting from an inflammation. In this disease sight is lost in both eyes. My research led to the discovery of a molecule called arrestin. Along with my colleagues we abstracted this molecule, the protein arrestin, from the human eye and were able to create the anti toxin that would work against arrestin.

This discovery led to many questions in the scientific world, one which was discussed in Darwin's theory - that this kind of protein should not be able to survive in the life cycle of humans and animals. Our records, however, showed that arrestin was not only in the eyes of animals but also in fish, insects and plants. Knowing this we were able to prove that over 600 million years ago this protein had a large role in the development of the eye. From this discovery other questions formed, such as why is it that this protein in such early stages of life existed and why the receptors of light for the eyes of all beings and plants has this protein.

Our group, with these findings and in collaboration with others discovered that this molecule plays a great role in the field of vision. Its presence is necessary for vision. So now we can imagine that where arrestin exists there is a light receptor and these light receptors are found in the third eyes of aquatics or in the pituitary gland of animals and humans.

The pituitary gland, which is found in the center of the brain, secretes melatonin, which controls sleep and awake-cycles, the birds cycle for migration and the movement of aquatic life. With the injection of arrestin we can stop the function of this gland. This gland was named by Descart as "the center of the sole."

The publication of this research in international journals started additional research in Japan, the United States and Germany. Today the role of arrestin and

the physiology of all human beings tissue has been identified.

The first time I presented this information at a conference for The American Society of Cardiologist in Texas resulted in my receiving two prizes one in Paris and one in Japan. These days the antidotes that recognize and find light receptors are now commercially made and available for researchers. Arrestin has an important role in the control of light receptors in the eye and the hormones found in the heart, brain and arteries.

The other part of my research deals with the receptors of aldosterone hormone, which controls the excretion of sodium from the kidneys. It has been known for a long time that aldosterone receptors are in the kidney cells. Our group also found these receptors in the heart, brain, arteries and blood cells. This research became very interesting for other researchers all over the world. Today we know that the aldosterone receptors has an important role in the heart rhythm. The finding of this receptor in the arterial wall had a very important factor for the pathology of the heart and vessels. I introduced a hypotheses that showed the aldosterone hormone increases the amount of sodium collection in the endothelial cells of the heart and arteries will cause the cell walls to swell and reduces the inner cavity, thereby creating hypertension. I was also able to explain the role of the aldosterone receptor in connection to the eye.

My other research is about the blood coagulation. With a special technique we were able to find the cause of blood coagulation. We found out that the amount of fibrin in the blood is the major cause of coagulation and we are now able to prevent heart and brain infarctions. Commercially those elements against fibrins are ready for use. The third part of my research is about cancer. Since my immigration to France I began to find factors that allows us to recognize blood cancers, especially in children. As I stated earlier I am the Director of the Cancer Research Center at the Medical School and Research Institute of France. At this time my group is investigating why the cancer cell, after its creation, it cannot be destroyed. What are the factors around the cancer cell that help its growth? Why does breast cancer in women and prostate cancer in men mostly metastases to the bone? We are looking to find a factor to use in the future as a treatment against cancer. Up until now we have found a few.

**... Besides your research you are involved in many cultural activities can you tell us about these activities?**

Like many Iranians I think about my homeland Iran, its people regardless of their ethnicity or religion, its politics, social movements, philosophers, poets, writers and artists. They had great vision and greatly impacted the world. I am proud of all of them and believe that this ancient culture, which existed since the beginning of creation, must continue to be recognized.

**How do you interpret Iranian philosophy?**

Its roots are from Zoroastrians that gradually conformed and the result was a new form of "Platoism." That was later transferred to the Islamic world and really since then not much has been added.

**... What is your view about Mysticism?**

Iranian Mysticism seems to be absent from the teachings of Mani and some of the visionary views of Mithraism. Mani used the views of Zoroastrians and the world of physics and metaphysics. Light has the roots of God and the body has the roots of the devil. In the human, light is imprisoned by the body and only with running away from its environments and respecting nature and other human life can one keep that Godly light that is only a loan. He must keep the light clean until the time of his death, at which time the light leaves the body, joins God and is free. Our great thinkers in Mithraism have found this path.

**What is your view about religion?**

I believe we should all begin to follow the Zoroastrian statement, "good behavior, good speech and good thought," in our daily life and waste no more time on other things. Most of us need to realize that we spend too much time on this matter while others are progressing in science, technology etc.. If we do not wake up soon it will be too late and we will have betrayed future generations.

In other words our work should be in securing health, job and education for our children and not who, what and why

they worship.

**How do you appraise Iranian art?**

There are three forms of Iranian art known in the world painting, architecture and the carpet. The roots of Iranian architecture is made of four walls, which came from the time of Darius the Great in Susa. This concept developed with the Achamides and Ashkanis (Parthians) and during the Sassanid period we added the dome like and curved ceilings. They were so strong that they were able to withstand the hands of time, man made and natural disasters. They can be seen today in Buchara, Amir Ismail Samani Tomb.

The Sassanid architectural style became known as the Islamic architecture and is found in the mosques and tombs. It truly represents of Persian style.

**And your thoughts on the Persian rug?**

It is known worldwide for its quality, design, weave and texture. Today we see famous paintings being woven into rugs. What is most interesting is that the quality of our rugs continues to improve.

**What do you think about Iranian painting?**

This art has a long history in Iran. Paintings have been found in the caves and in the mountains of Lorestan and Hamedan to the mountains Kashan and Mahallat. These are all signs of the early presents of the art of painting, even before the Neolithic period in Iran. We have the honor of having a Prophet such as Mani give us his prophetic messages through painting and music. It shows the importance of these two arts in our history. Five centuries have been deprived of this art, an art that was very sacred in this land. This has had a devastating affect on Iranian credibility and pride. Finally, after the removal of Abbassid Caliphs, the art of painting was revived in Iran. Art schools opened in Tabriz, Shiraz, Isfahan, Herat and Buchara. The Iranian painting that was called the miniature, up to the Safavid period had its ups and downs, but after the Qajar period it remained dormant. Today it is again revived.

The difficulties of today's Iranian paintings is that its characteristics are not defined. The Iranian artist of today only knows the art of painting and does

not have any knowledge of mythology or Persian culture.

***It is interesting to me that you are in the field of medicine and research yet have a deep interest in art and music, what about Iranian clothing?***

On the Iranian plateau, because of its climate and environment, the people were forced to cover their bodies, face and heads to protect themselves from the wind and sand. In the third and fourth millennium before Christ the clothes were made of animal skin. The royal family had them sewn in beautiful designs. In the next period the fashion were made of cloth. When you look at the engravings at Persepolis they appear to be glamorous for this period. Unfortunately there is little known about the female design during this period. During the Ashkani (Parthian) period the clothing became more interesting and we find the women's clothing to be similar to what was worn in Samarkand. There is indication that women were becoming interested in makeup and hats. There designs were so beautiful that the neighboring countries copied their design. As to the Sassanid clothing it is easily seen in the miniature paintings of this period.

***What about your studies in the Persian language, Dari and Tajiki?***

Greater than 100 million people speak the Persian language. All ethnic groups including Azaris, Lors, Kurd, Balouchi, Urdo, Pashto, Pamari and Uzbek have used this language called Persian. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan they call it Tajiki and in Afghanistan it is known as Dari. Despite all of this the language has no support. It's scientific words and irregularity in speaking and writing and influence of Arabic words has made the language more difficult. The other difficulty for Persian language in the other parts of the world with Persian culture, such as central Asia western China, Kashmir, northern Pakistan and Uzbekistan, is that these countries have their own official language. Unfortunately, there are no publications or journals to help protect the language. The only teacher of the language they have is Goughoush, Shoreh, Leila Foroher, Aref, Darioush, Iraj and other Persian singers.

These artists, especially our singers, have a great role in keeping the Persian

language in the three Persian language speaking countries and we should thank them for making the Persian language a household language. The people who claim to be the guardian of the Persian language, instead of trying to change the alphabet, should be continual to use the original, and authentic Persian words. This will revive the Persian language. This is of extreme importance. The cultural organizations that have the financial power of printing and publishing the books of the writers, poets, and scientists in these countries must also be careful to insure they are in Persian.

Using the scientific terms of the Persian language should be done not only in Iran but also in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The science organizations must get together and assign people to come up with the scientific term in the Persian language.

***What do you think about Persian poetry?***

An interesting question. Even though I am not an expert in this field I believe that modern Persian poetry is insufficient in comparison to our older poetry. The Iranians have such a historic wealth in poetry and should be forerunners on the subject. We, however, are too often individualists and we end up following rather than leading. As a result, the new age poetry of Persians seems to lack the depth and structure of our masters and is almost monotonous. And, I do not see a window of hope.

***How do you find Iranians in general, our character?***

Another interesting question! By nature we are kind, hospitable and peace loving. Despite these gentle traits. But, too often we all portray these characteristics only to receive God's mercy. Look at our literature and speeches. We are always giving advice, advice that is seldom practiced.

***What do you think about Pre-Islamic Iran?***

Our political history starts in 700 BC. This of course does not mean that we have no history prior to this date. The excavations and discoveries found in Susa, Jiroft, Gorgian, and in the deserts of Lute and Namak such as Tappeh Hessar, Tappeh Silak or Marlik in Gilan (northern

Iran), Hassanlou in Azarbijan and also in Marv and Ashkbad and in the Burnt City, Balouchsten, in the Farghaneh Valley and Zaraf Shan Valley and many other regions all indicate our existence since 5000BC which is 3000 to 4000 before the Achamnid era. Today's discoveries clearly show the Iliam civilization of 1700BC. You can even find Iranian plateau civilization and in central Asia (Amou Darya Civilization), the southern point of the Caspian Sea and Burnt City around Hamoun Lake. This all bare witness to the existence of a great and ancient civilization.

***Talk about your cultural organizations?***

Well my work schedule is very heavy but I do set aside time for cultural organizations. I am a member of two the Roudaki Society and Farhang Iran. Farhang Iran was founded in 1986 by a group of Iranians and French literary people in Paris. Its purpose is to recognize and present the traditional culture of Iran. I have been in charge of the organization since 2000. In 1993 I organized the Roudaki Society with a group of people from Tajikistan. Our goal is to connect the literary research of Central Asia and Caucasus out of their political borders. We have yearly gatherings and the next one will be in Moscow.

***Why do you concentrate on the activities in Central Asia and the Caucasus?***

In my opinion the people of Central Asia and the Caucasus have thousands of years of common culture and tradition. Today, however, they are separated. In this common cultural body Iran is the trunk and the other two regions the branches or arms. In the last few centuries this region "Shadow of God" has been lost, along with all its values. It has been only since the beginning of the 20th century that stability is reaching this region. If you look at Afghanistan, Iran and Tajikistan it is only Tajikistan that has vigorously attached itself to its ancient heritage. It is sad that the leaders of Afghanistan and Iran in the last three years have done nothing but insult and humiliate their ancient traditions and heritage. They are not aware of the importance of clinging to tradition during such turbulent times. If you listen to the speeches of the leaders of these three countries you realize the difference in their values. If, however you put your politics and religion aside and

allow the cultural values to dominate their survival will improve.

*Let's talk about your literary works.*

In the year 2000 I organized a program for UNESCO in Paris, France which honored Afghani women. In conjunction to this event I prepared a book which

contained the works of sixty Afghanistan women poets. The introduction contained a brief statement of the history of the female poets of the Sassanid and Qajar periods. I also wrote a book about the literature and culture of Afghanistan and two other books about Tajikistan.

The poetry of these women is indicative of the power and influence they had in society and on their culture. This is

also a great indicator of the importance of Iranian culture and language. On this subject I have written in Samarkand and Buchara also about women poets of yesterday and today. Currently I am preparing a book which discusses Persian women poets outside of Iran and the women of Tajikistan. Finally I am preparing to write a book *Rasteh* that takes a deep look into the physicians of the Sassanid period.



## AL-E AHMAD REMAINS A VOICE TO RECKON WITH

Siah Armajani

Al-e Ahmad died in 1969 at the age of forty-six, ten years before the revolution. Al-e Ahmad in his hasty rushed accent of southern Tehran, sometimes leaving the syntax behind, spoke for the millions of dispossessed, downtrodden, and oppressed, who were strangers in their own country. They were made to feel diminished and insignificant, and were judged, and condemned by others for the way they talked, walked, dressed and believed.

Al-e Ahmad was something in-between; between intellect and belief. He was full of contradiction, but he was his own man. He was not "the gatekeeper of the graveyards." It is tragic that Al-e Ahmad is greatly misunderstood, just because some have appropriated him. Al-e Ahmad was two: one East, one West; one full of tradition and history, the other of equality and modernity. He was a pivotal person. He was crucial to the understanding of the history of pre and post revolution. He not only revealed the evolution from 1919 to modernity, but also revealed the models. He presented some models that he eventually discarded. But, he also saw potential in the path he tried and false steps he took.

Al-e Ahmad was an exploration of steps lost and found. Al-e Ahmad's

life-long involvement in education and his social and cultural import have been overlooked. Education was and still is the first and foremost problem in Iran and his quest for some remedy and some solution was and still is being ignored. His cry was also for the lost hopes and lost heritage of his past. He was crying over the displacement and fragmentation of his past. Al-e Ahmad occupies a special place in Iran's quest for modernity.

*Garbzadagi* was published in 1962, seventeen years before the revolution. It was not a condemnation of western civilization, but rather it was against the west colonial aspirations and unlimited cultural penetration into all aspect of Iranian lives. Al-e Ahmad in all of his writings draws from the everyday of everyday life. In his restlessness and in his constant questioning he was searching for an answer. The question was "What was the nature of Iranian culture?" and what was the nature of Shi'a Islam and what is its tradition?"

At long last someone should read Al-e Ahmad's "on the service and disservice of intellectuals." Al-e Ahmad in *Garbzadagi* engages in a new evaluation between the traditional society and a forced colonial state. Did anyone ever ask why *Garbzadagi* was condemned during the deposed Shah's time? Did anyone ever ask, why almost all of the Iranian intelligentsia set itself apart from Al-e Ahmad? He was not a demagogue, he was a man who recognized the disastrous consequences of subordination to the West. He, in *Garbzadagi*, did not draw any conclusion or suggest any solution. That was left to the reader. It is of import to remember that using historical evidence to prove a thesis was

something new in Iran 1962. *Garbzadegi* anticipated Edward Said's orientalism which signifies the relationship between orientalism and imperialism. Orientalism remains one of the most important books of our time. *Garbzadegi* was about national identity, a phrase with is bandied about nowadays in Iran in defining the 1979 revolution. The critical writings on *Garbzadagi* are personal, sophomoric and for many years "the object more of gossip than of discussion." They are ridiculously naive and blindly supportive of the west. Al-e Ahmad, as early as 1961 bemoaned the lack of literary criticism in Iran. In his lecture to the college students in Abadan he complained, because the seeds of literary criticism have not yet fully matured and because the leading experts often remain silent on contemporary literature and agreed to the force of this backwardness to cry out from the depth." Al-e Ahmad could anticipate the fate of *Garbzadagi* and his own.

Ali Shariati (1933-1977) understood him and was closer to him than anyone in the literary intelligentsia in Iran. He supported *Garbzadagi* and its thesis. He saw in it "cultural authenticity." Ali Shariati will play a prominent role in the future, in the period of reformation and modernity.

From time to time a book appears in France, America or somewhere else, which ignites a firestorm nationwide, and induces the notion into a convulsion. "*Garbzadagi*" was such a book in Iran. "The fruits of the earth," by Andre Gide was such a book in France. "The grapes of Wrath," by John Steinbeck, was such a book in America.