

Persian Heritage

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

In life most of us face emotional and financial obstacles. And, in life most of us are blessed with the gift of friends and family who give us beautiful and lasting memories, these make all obstacles unimportant. *Persian Heritage* is no exception, we have seen good and bad times and through it all my dedicated staff and the magazine have survived. During our years in existence we also have been gifted with wonderful memories. We have had the honor of making new acquaintances with writers, producers, musicians, engineers, architects, physicians, scientists, journalists etc., some of whom I am proud to say have become good friends and supporters of this magazine.

Recently, *Persian Heritage* was accused of being used as a vehicle to "hang" with the rich and famous in an effort to gain financial support for the magazine. I would like to take a moment to set the record straight. As a magazine *Persian Heritage* has received invitations to events that we only dared to dream of. I am honored that we have been recognized as a justified and reputable magazine.

Persian Heritage, as a magazine, certainly has taken advantage of these opportunities in order to improve the magazine's content, this is called "net working." And yes, we solicit advertisements every chance we get, this is called "marketing." To accuse this magazine and its staff of hanging with the "rich and famous" for financial gain is shallow and a misstatement. In fact it would be safe to say that my personal expense in attending fundraisers and the like far exceeds any financial gains that this magazine has received in return. It is not, however, THE FINANCIAL GAIN that is most important it is the spiritual gain the magazine, the staff our readers and I have received by meeting so many people in all walks of life, the rich, the famous, the poor and the common citizen; all have impacted our lives and the life of *Persian Heritage*.

To my accuser I say one thing: no false rumors, destructive campaigns or jealous mind will stop the spirit of the magazine. We have proven over the past ten years to be a magazine for and of the people and an effective communicative tool. With that taken care of I would like to get to the heart of the editorial and share a few personal experiences with you. My subject deals with the way people, all too often, judge people and base friendships on outward appearance and actions, rather than seeing them for what they are within.

Often at gatherings I become involved in conversations that evolve into heated discussions and debates. Frequently, I walk away but there are occasions when I feel I must continue the battle in order to, at the very least, get my point across. This past May I was in Las Vegas where I attended a gathering organized by my friend Mr. Arakel Khajetorians, honoring Nader Naderpour, a famous Iranian poet, writer and combatant against oppressive regimes. The night before there was a private party. In attendance were well-known writers, musicians, actors etc. All present were praising Naderpour and expressing their love for him and his literary achievements, but they also criticized him.

You see, Naderpour was moody, he isolated himself from most of the world by refusing to accept invitations or participate in organizations. He was looked at by some as rude and indifferent and they were disappointed in him.

As I listened to them, I thought how interesting that they were disappointed in him, perhaps they should have been discussing how disappointed he was in them. I kept quiet for a while, but then felt the need to defend Naderpour. We were not close friends but during one of his visits to New Jersey, I hosted him at my home. During his stay I became privy to his tormented soul. He was completely opposite of the public perception. He was a kind, gentle and generous man. He was a man whose soul was tormented by years of personal disappointment.

We should not be complaining about a man so few really knew and not able to defend himself. What we should be doing is looking at ourselves and at the Iranian media and Iranian organizations that turned their back on him. What support did Naderpour receive from anyone, as he independently took on the defense of what he perceived to be as a medieval and oppressive government? Did we rush to buy his books and attend his speeches? No, instead we sabotaged him. Every event where he was scheduled to speak or teach was preceded with a campaign of fear. Telephone calls were made threatening people not to attend his events for fear of never being able to return to Iran for a visit. It made no sense that we wanted to destroy this man, a man who is one of the most recognized and honored Iranian poets of our time. We validated



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our actions with lameness excuses.

Ladies and gentlemen, Naderpour did not choose isolation, financial and emotional exile; they were imposed on him by those he loved. How then, could we expect a different reaction from this man who placed himself in tremendous personal peril. Despite this exile, Naderpour continued to fight for his cause, freedom, using his most powerful weapons, his mind and words.

It is sad that young people born during and after the revolution will not have the opportunity to know Naderpour or hear his penetrating voice or feel his gentle heart. And, it is sad that those of us who lived during his lifetime did not take the time to know him, to know a man who was moved by emotions. A man who became shocked and silent when told, a book had been published in Iran that contained twenty pages about him. For Naderpour and for all of us it was too late to make a change.

This discussion about Naderpour brought back thoughts of a long ago friend. One who has passed on and with his passing taught me a valuable lesson, a lesson I should have learned a long time ago from the movie *Tomorrow Is Too Late*.

Each time I visit Paris I make my way to Montmartre, to the Place du Tetre, where the artists gather and wait to be discovered. I was told by a fellow Gouchani friend that another friend from Gouchan lived in Montmartre. Eager to see him I rushed there but night after night he did not appear. I did, however, find out that he was an accomplished artist and a wonderful person. This did not surprise me; it was easy to remember his warm and charming smile.

I left Paris that time without seeing Ismail. We lost track of one another fifty years ago and I wondered how many more years would pass before we would again meet.

Shortly thereafter I made another trip to Paris and another trip to Montmartre which were also unsuccessful in my search for Ismail, but I did receive his telephone number. I wanted so to call him but for whatever reason every time I went to dial him I was interrupted by an emergency or I lost my nerve.

This past April I attended a conference in Paris. Before unpacking I dialed Ismail's number, the call did not connect. I rushed to Montmartre to the Place du Tetre confident that this would be the time we would reunite. It was a beautiful morning and the Place was filled with tourists and artists, I went down each aisle looking deeply at the weathered faces of the older artists. I could not decipher which one was Ismail. Finally I stopped and asked another artist, by the name of Behrooz, if he knew Ismail. I knew he was Iranian yet he acted as if he did not understand Persian. I wanted to scream at him for not accepting his ethnicity but realized my visit to Montmartre was not to lecture Behrooz but to find Ismail. I asked him in French and in English and finally annoyed with my insistence he turned to another artist and said wasn't Ismail the guy who died a few months ago. I looked at his face and he nodded his head in agreement. NO, this could not be! I began to tremble and sought another artist to ask about Ismail. He confirmed Ismail's passing.

Why did it take me so long to find my lost friend? Why was I driven this day to Montmartre to learn this unsettling news? Why couldn't I have just ignored my desire to meet him again and be content with childhood memories? It was all for a reason, and that reason was to make me understand that TOMORROW IS SOMETIMES TOO LATE. I hope that you will learn this lesson from my simple story before tomorrow is too late for you.

Again As always I thank you for your support and interest in our magazine.

Shahrokh Alavi

CONVERSATION IN THE DARK

By Nader Naderpour
Los Angeles, December 1999



To: My Dear Jaleh

*In the middle of the night when I am sick and awake
there is no familiar light from any opening
the calm sound of your deep breathing
and the continuous ticking of the clock
harmonize with the rhythm of my heartbeat.
Then I realize that even though my thoughts are lonesome
my heart is no longer lonesome in my chest.*

*Slowly I bend my head over your bed
I kiss your sleep-filled eyelashes softly
You feel the weight of the kiss on your eye
You smile and I patiently kiss your cheek
Even though your laughter spreads in my ears.
But in the dark waves of the night
your smiling face is not obvious.*

*I calmly light a match
to light up your face from its illumination
But very soon that red sparking phosphor
falling and rising on my two burning fingers
dies in kinks and twists of dancing.
Once again the space of our small bedroom
is overcome with darkness.
I tell myself except for a short time,
at the moment of seeing your dear face:
my eyes don't have a chance of seeing you.*

*Just like a child frightened by darkness.
I find my way to your arms.
Terrified by something unknown.
I whisper this secret in your ears:
O! Kinder than the world's kindest!
O fellow-traveler! O friend! O sweetheart! O mother!
Scream so loudly that even the heavy death of the heart
Won't be able to separate us at the moment of farewell
Because we both know, in the chaos of the world
from the crowded population
from what exists in the endless horizon
our lot is just our solitude
This house smaller than a boat
We its distressed passengers
Moving forward in the wide sea of exile
But in the frightening horizon of this sea
Night is overwhelming,
From every vicious side there is no path to tomorrow.*

[Unpublished. Translated by Farhad Mafie June 2000.]
(His last poem, composed on Dec. 1999 and dedicated to his wife Jaleh)

CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS! WHAT CIVILIZATION?

N. M. Tejaratchi

These days, the media is full of statements like "Clash of Civilization," "Acts of Barbarism," "Breach of Democracy," and the like...

Ironically, the world leaders who abuse these terms have been behaving much worse than their victims. Just look at the mistreatment of war prisoners (which includes torture, sadistic treatment, and sexual humiliation of their captives—some of whom were innocent civilians); the destruction and plunder of Baghdad's museums; and the damage to some historical sites (namely, remnants of the ancient city of Babylon) by reckless military operations. Then who is committing more acts of barbarism?

In the Greek language, the word "barbar" means the sound of sheep. Ancient Greeks used it to refer to non-Greek speaking people, and hence their enemies, whose languages they did not understand. Interestingly, Romans later called German tribes "the noble barbarians" because of their impressive physique! In Iran they have called people of Central Asia "barbar" — a trend reminiscent of the old Iran-Turan conflicts and wars. It is, by the way, interesting to note that the ancient Turanians were ethnically close to Iranians. Later on, they gradually mixed with and were dominated by Turkish-speaking people.

In North Africa, some non-Arab communities have been called "Berbers." These are the descendants of people from some other Mediterranean lands who migrated to North Africa, like the ancient Carthaginians who had migrated from Phoenicia.

Nowadays, some politicians use the word "barbarian" against any country or community that they consider their adversary. Today, we are living in the wealthiest country in the world, which happens to be intellectually and morally backward. How did we end up here? Well, some of us came here a long time ago, during the post World War II era, lured by the abun-

dance of opportunities and impressed with things like Hollywood movies. That is, Hollywood before decadence and trashy music set in!

Things have gradually changed for the worse. Another backward trend, these days, is the spread of religious zeal and extremism, despite the fact that many of us were raised in a secular environment. Recently, I have noticed an increase in articles written by different ethnic groups boasting about their religion and trying to condemn others. Some even claim their people are superior or "chosen" because their "holy book" says so! Isn't that pure self-righteousness? Aren't there many nationalities who believe they are the best, such as the Japanese, English, German, French and... Iranians? But they don't brag too much about it. Certain teachings in some of these "holy books" are not actually original but imitations.

When you read the translation of Hammurabi's (the Assyrian king, circa 2000 B.C., or about 4,000 years ago) code of law, which consists of wrong doings, crimes and their punishment, you will notice almost all of his teachings were later used in the context of the "ten commandments." Incidentally, Hammurabi's laws and punishment interestingly include very harsh punishment for physician's malpractice!

Religious zeal or fervor has never been associated with progress (a good example is that the spread of Christianity in Europe was followed by many centuries of Medieval darkness).

Now, what do you expect when those that consider themselves the leaders of the "free world" believe they are the new "crusaders" and "providentials"? In some Southern states, they are already omitting Darwin's theory of evolution and substituting it with religious teachings about Adam and Eve! Are we returning to the Dark Ages?

How about Democracy? The Greeks, again, must be credited with creating the

word, even though the idea has never been practiced in Greece. In ancient Greece — like other parts of the world at that time — there was a "caste system," and only an elite section of society was relatively free. Alexander, who was "great" only in war strategies, was actually a tyrant and a despot. For example, when his lifelong friend was badly wounded and eventually died, Alexander ordered his (Greek) physician to be executed, even though he had done his best for his friend and for Alexander himself! His conquests brought only destruction and chaos to the vast lands that he had invaded. Even Greece itself was soon taken over by the newly emerging Roman Empire.

The revival of "democracy" was an outcome of the French revolution as was "separation of church and state" (*separation de religion et gouvernement*). In an effort to avoid a similar revolution, England took some measures toward Democracy but their "caste system," still continues, and includes the privileged Lords and their "House of Lords" along with the "House of Commons" (not to mention the royal family and their entourage).

American Democracy has been influenced by both the French and the British. American independence movements, which were not actual revolutions, were fueled by the ideas of French pre-revolution writers and thinkers like Voltaire, Rousseau, Beaumarchais, etc. But the U.S. has continued its own caste system: different groups of its society are ruled by "WASPS," "big businesses," the "two-party" system, and are reinforced by "lobbying." Meanwhile, in Western Europe, people can vote for different parties and no party can be outlawed. As for the rest of the world, "Democracy" is what is determined by the foreign press.

According to European news agencies, during recent elections in Afghanistan (a country with a population of about twelve million), fewer than one hundred thousand people voted, even with the usual manipulation! The result was as everyone had expected: the same puppets were elected! You can imagine the outcome of Iraq's elections. And how about that country referred to by some as "the only democracy in the Middle East"? Can we really consider them democratic when they have such double standards? We all know very well about that....

Oh God of Democracy! Where art thou? ■

PERSIAN-IRANIAN PARADE 2005 (1834) IN NEW YORK CITY SETS A NEW MILESTONE

David N. Rahni

The Second annual Persian-Iranian Parade, sponsored by the non-profit public Persian-Iranian Parade Foundation (PIPF), held along fifteen blocks of Madison Avenue in New York City on March 20, drew huge cheering crowd of Iranian Americans, curious tourists and mainstream Americans, despite the inclement weather. "Rain or Shine, We Will Shine," Nina Ghavami, one of the Parade Funding Members & co-organizer eloquently put it.

An educational pamphlet, distributed in the crowd that described the historical aspects of celebrating Nowruz the Persian New Year, a brief history of Iran, and information on the status and stature of Iranian American Community of one million strong, received much attention by the thousands along the parade route.

"We trust the parade will facilitate the process by which our second and third generation children remain proud of their cultural heritage and thus committed to carry the [torch] in the US," Nahid Ahkami another founding member and parade co-organizer commented.

"In lieu of a few obstacles imposed on the planning of this parade by isolated cynic individuals in the community, what impressed me the most was the cordial and cooperative sense of broad team-spirit that moved everyone-from the seniors to the juniors in our community - forward," said Dr. Sam Davoodi, who coordinated the parade.

Another parade coordinator, Afshin Tajian, a vibrant young man, was most thrilled to note that this was the first time at least in the past several decades, where Iranians of all walks of life, regardless of

their religious or ethnic orientations, had gathered to celebrate one common theme, Nowruz!" He further elaborated by saying that Iran is where Iranians gather in the world to commemorate their common



cultural heritage, and as typified by Madison Avenue's parade.

The parade had two themes:

It displayed the historical role the Iranians (Persians) have played in the advancement of human civilization from as far back as 5,000+ years ago. The parade also showcased the more contemporary face of Iran and the multifaceted contributions of Iranian Americans in particular, toward the betterment of life in the US and the world.

"I truly enjoyed the parade as it taught me to have a more positive perception of the [Middle East] and Americans whose origin is from this region. This is in contrast to the heavily distorted picture at times of what I have been [fed] on media in recent time, "an American in the crowd whispered.

"Notwithstanding the political im-

pediments in our native land, it's about time that we were able to celebrate our rich and diverse cultural heritage, while aspiring to see a homegrown sustainable reform that our compatriots back home can truly enjoy," opined Dr. Mahshid Arfania Assadi, a long time Cardiologist in New York City who has also served along with her husband, a renowned surgeon, among the founding members.

It is envisaged that the NY Persian-Iranian parade will be emulated by many other Iranian Communities worldwide.

The parade organizers are already into the planning mode for next year's event.

As such they envisage a larger and more colorful parade that requires ever increasing participation of ALL community members throughout the year. "The parade belongs to ALL Iranians worldwide, and as such is not an exclusive club belonging to one individual," Jamshid Irani, a NYC based attorney observed.

Accordingly, the broadly based transparent Parade Planning Committee of the PIPF is cordially asking those civic leaders interested to periodically visit the Website www.persianparade.org and call 1-888-PARADE-9 at once for the upcoming planning events.

Background on Nowruz and Iran (the former Persia):

The Nowruz Festival is immortalized in the Decree of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian Achaemenid Empire, granting national and religious freedoms to the peoples of Babylon in 542 BC:

"When I entered Babylon ... I did not allow anyone to terrorize the land or its people ... I kept in view the needs of Babylon and all its sanctuaries to promote their well-being. The citizens of Babylon... I lifted their unbecoming yoke (slavery). Their dilapidated dwellings I restored. I put an end to their misfortunes."

— Thus said the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden (Isaiah, XLV-1-3)

The Iranian Nowruz, meaning the new day or the New Year, is the cyclical celebra-

tion of the Spring/Vernal Equinox, as the most cherished and celebrated of all Iranian festivals. The Nowruz has been observed by all peoples of the Iranian plateau and the territories surrounding classical PERSIA for thousands of years. The Nowruz commemorating the cyclical re-birth and rejuvenation of nature, has indeed been observed in one form or another since 3000 BC by all the major cultures of ancient Mesopotamia, southwest and south central Asia including the Sumerians, Babylonians, Elamites, Akaddians, Chaldeans and the Persians. Today, the Nowruz is celebrated annually in a huge arc of territory extending from the Aral Lake and Sind River on the east, Caspian Sea to the north, the Black and Mediterranean Seas to the west, and the Persian Gulf to the south. Iranian peoples (Persians, Kurds, Lurs, Tajiks, Baluchis, Afghans, Tats, Gilanis, Azeris) as well non-Iranian peoples in proximity (e.g., Armenians, Assyrians, Kazakhs, Kashmiris, Turkmens, etc.) all participate in the Nowruz celebration. It is also worth noting that the first day of the spring season was also observed by the Europeans through the Middle Ages and by the American pilgrims through the early 18th century as the "common" new-year as well as the Aztecs in Mexico. The roots of Nowruz can be traced to Zoroastrianism and Mithraism, which was the world's first monotheistic religion; Zoroastrianism considers Nowruz as the last day of the seven-day creation epoch, thus the ritual of the Haft Sin, or the seven life-related, mostly plant based symbolic heralds beginning with the letter "S" in Persian language. During the Nowruz holiday, families and friends visit each other, pay their respects to the elderly, reconcile with adversaries and reach common grounds, make donations to the impoverished and the sick, and give and receive presents in the thirteen day period that ends with April first (April fool's) during which everyone spends the whole day in orchards or on the prairies dancing, singing and playing. Hence, the commemoration of Nowruz connotes the seventh day of creation, when people pay homage to the creator, or Mother Nature. NOWRUZ celebrates the Lord of Wisdom and the holy "halo" fire as a prelude to Spring Equinox. The oldest archaeological record for the Nowruz celebration comes from the Achaemenid dynasty over 2500 years ago. The inscriptions of Persepolis depicts the Persian Monarch, Darius the Great, accepting gifts from a wide and diverse array of peoples who lived

in a federation of territories stretching from Asia to Europe and North Africa. Cyrus is cited as the world's first true supreme emperor who ruled his vast realm with compassion and justice, a legacy acknowledged by the Greeks (Herodotus) of that era.

Historically speaking, back in 1821 a young Englishman, following his passion for unearthing the lost world of the ancient east, came upon a peculiar monument in the heart of the Iranian plateau. He wrote in his diary:

"The very venerable appearance of this historical ruin instantly awed me. I found I had no right conception of it. I sat for near an hour on the steps contemplating it until the moon rose on it, and I began to think that this, in reality, must be the tomb of the best, the most illustrious, and the most interesting of Oriental sovereigns."

The resting place of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire in 550 BC had been identified. This was followed by the identification of ancient Passargadae, the capital of the Empire, in the nearby plain. The few sources on Cyrus portrayed him not just as an empire builder, but a man possessing rare qualities, deeply rooted in his ancestral sportsmanship of horseback riding, mobility, an appreciation of the earth bounties, cultural diversity of humanity and celestial objects in the sky. In the Bible (Old Testament) for instance, the Book of Ezra tells of Cyrus's liberating the scattered Jews of Babylon, restoring their temple which had been destroyed by Assyrian king Nabopolassar. Cyrus invited the scattered Jews back to Jerusalem to freely practice their cultural and religious rituals without fear of persecution.

Iranian (from the Satem branch of the Indo-European) Medean and Persian tribes had settled in the Iranian plateau from about the eleventh century B.C. This plateau has always been regarded as a crossroad between East and West for cultural, scientific, and technological discourse. The name Iran is derived from the ancient Iranian genitive plural *aryanam*, meaning [land] of the Aryans. It is interesting to note the appearance of the same terminology in Europe as Ireland, again meaning the [land] of the Aryans.

Cyrus's ultimate dream of unifying nations from south Asia to Asia Minor and North Africa was finally realized during the reign of his successor, Darius. In Choga Zanbil, a "ziggurat" or sacred city multi-level high rise urban structure, built by the Elamite king Untash-Gal around

1250 BC, substantiates the vast contributions of these inhabitants. Going further back, one can discern the existence of organized tribes of hunters/gatherers in northwestern Iran dating as back as 12,000 years ago. There have been a plethora of discoveries of early successive settlements built atop one another. These have been excavated in northwestern Iran's Godin Tepe, a region dating back to at least 8,000 years ago. Iran has been a unified cultural and historical entity for at least 2500 years.

In recent times, although there have been sporadic numbers of Iranians who have immigrated to Europe and North America starting in the 19th century, a mass exodus has occurred since the 70's due to political changes in Iran. There are an estimated three million Iranians living abroad today. According to the US census and other independent think tanks, the Americans of Iranian ancestry are among the most educated and the most affluent communities in the US, and have substantially contributed to the US economy in the hundreds of billions of dollars, and thus immeasurably to the US quality of life. For instance, one can hardly find an American university or college, medical, business or civil sector, or artistic area where Iranian-Americans are not well represented. The Iranian-American Community of one million strong is found in every corner of the US and Canada. There are large communities in the New York metro area, Boston, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, San Jose, Dallas, Houston and Atlanta, as well as in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. The total number of peoples of Iranian ancestry worldwide, including 70 millions in today's Iran, is estimated at 150 millions. ■

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PERSIAN GULF ETERNALLY REMAINS IRANIAN

Davood N. Rahni (New York)

National Geographic Society (NGS), the premier American learned organization dedicated to the "better" understanding of the world anthropology, geography, history and natural resources was ultimately compelled to retract from its abuse of fabricating new names for the Persian Gulf, and Iranian Sovereign islands. The revision of the map came about due in large part to tremendous pressure exerted by nearly one hundred thousands signatures in a petition, and hundreds of scholars expressing their concerns on this sensitive issue. This is regarded as a giant triumph, but the vigilance of free thinking Iranians when it comes to their cultural and historical interests both inside and outside their homelands, is just beginning.

NGS had recently attempted to unilaterally amend the legally and historically registered nomenclatures of certain geographical locations in the 2005 eighth edition of its Almanac of World History and Atlas of the World. The NGS has in particular, included a new terminology, namely "Arabian Gulf" in brackets and underneath the historical, legal and internationally referred name PERSIAN GULF in their maps. This has in turn led to immense number of protest worldwide, especially by the peoples of Iranian heritage who consider the new name "factious." "We try to retain our independent judgment and not to be swayed by a response from a group with a particular interest," National Geographic Chief Cartographer Allen Carroll says. In a statement on the society's web site, he defends the atlas, but promises to add "explanatory" and "clarifying language" to future editions and on the NGS website. NGS claims that for as many as 15 locations on the recent atlas maps, they use the secondary names in parentheses to allow those looking for such names to locate them. The NGS has, however, no answer when asked why stop at fifteen since there are ample numbers of occupied or disputed territories with divergent names. Ironically, cartographers and heavy users of the maps

are on the strong scholarly opinion that the inclusion of such [secondary] names makes the work more convoluted and cumbersome rather than less confusing as NGS claims. Another allegation against the NGS is their recent first inclusion of the term [occupied by Iran] for the Iranian sovereignty of *Greater Tumb, Lesser Tumb* and *Abu Musa* Islands, and the fresh "Arabic" naming for two other Iranian islands historically named Keish and Lavan. Iran has 2,000 Km. of maritime border with the Persian Gulf in contrast to all the sheikhdoms and the Arab countries bordering the waterway. The eighth edition of the NGS Atlas of the World is 416 pages with more than 140,000 place names, and costs \$142.00. More than 15,000 cartographic changes and updates were made in the course of creating this edition, which was five years in the making, the NGS claims.

The consensus as recognized by the international community of scholars is to solely employ the legitimate historical name, Persian Gulf in all communications. The belief is on the premise that this is factually the name recorded and continuously used in the regional literature, history, poetry and science since Herodotus as *Sims Persievs* 2500 years ago. Many believe that the recently fabricated name "Arabian Gulf" for the PERSIAN GULF is regarded as a politically charged fallacy, which opens up old wounds and "Pandora's box" in the region unnecessarily. The unilateral action by the NGS is deemed as a direct challenge to the Persian Gulf region's ancient history and civilizations as recent and ancient historians (Greeks, Romans, Persians, Turks, and Arabs), United Nations conventions, U.S. Board of Geographical Names (BGN), U.S. Department of State (e.g., as recorded in their 1917 Gazette) and many other world organizations have consistently employed the name, PERSIAN GULF.

The newly fabricated name Arabian Gulf has been tossed around by the late 20th century by pan-Arab nationalists such

as Saddam Hossein the deposed Iraqi President. The term was repeated after the [physical] departure of the British Imperialist forces from the region in the early 70's when the Emirates were established as sheikhdoms. This [abusive] name is now insisted upon by the Sheiks of the Emirates in the southern borders of the Persian Gulf. Some believe the NGS decision to include the new name for the Persian Gulf was prompted after its President in recent years met with the Sharja Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qassimi; the Sheik was presumably introduced to the NGS President by Benjamin Ladner, the DC based American University President with vested self-interest to seek endowments and support for satellite AU campuses in the Persian Gulf Emirates. Sharja, one of the seven Emirates in the Persian Gulf collectively referred to as the UAE, has been in existence as sheikhdom since 1972.

Paradoxically, the 26 years of ambivalence at best by the government in Iran since 1979 and its weak isolationist foreign policy, has further exacerbated the abuse of the name Persian Gulf; in retrospect, one should also cite the invasion by the Iraqi Saddam under the same pre-text, as another factor influencing the international stature of Iran, Iranians and anything Persian.

The abuse of the name, Persian Gulf has in recent years become more frequent, primarily by the British enterprises, which are heavily vested with the Emirate Sheikhdoms. The US official foreign policy as articulated through the State Department continues to refer to it as the Persian Gulf. Recently, however, certain components of the US military units, especially those stationed along the southern shores of the Persian Gulf have begun, presumably upon recommendations by their local commanders, to use the Arabian Gulf in their communiqué to appease [patronize] the local Sheikhs. Such [foul] language has increasingly found its way back to the Pentagon.

After the publication of the World Atlas, immense numbers of objections were registered with the NGS through various means. An objection petition for instance, endorsed by nearly 75,000 signatories most of whom also took the opportunity to write in their own specific sentiments was submitted to the NGS; many have threatened to unsubscribe their membership and withdraw the use and support of the NGS services. A group of

internationally renowned academicians submitted an open letter to the NGS President John Fahey, and met with him and his Board of Directors in Washington, DC on December 6, 2004. In their letter, they stated, "We do hereby register our grave concern and disappointment on the abuse of the new name included which unless it is ameliorated immediately, it would not only undermine the credibility of NGS to which each of us have contributed so substantially over the years, but that it would also set a precedent for the world, which its adverse ramifications will remain with us for the ensuing history." NGS has also received tens of thousands of phone, internet, and regular mail based protest over the past month, thereby yielding an avalanche of objections.

The worldwide objection against the NGS to include the new name was reverberated through international media including BBC, Time, that covered the development of the event extensively.

There has emerged a consensus among the three million people of Persian/Iranian heritage abroad [nearly one million in the US alone] that has now converged with the same sentiments as communicated by the 70,000,000 compatriots inside their homeland. After a pause, even the Government in Iran was also compelled to react by barring the NGS reporters from entering Iran, and not allowing the import and sale of the NGS products including its otherwise renewed popular magazine. "Alternative" recently fabricated name "Arabian Gulf" for the PERSIAN GULF is regarded as a politically charged fallacy by immense number of world citizens including Iranians. It is a direct challenge to the Persian Gulf region's ancient history and civilizations as recent and ancient historians (Greeks, Romans, Persians, Turks, and Arabs), United Nations conventions, U.S. Board of Geographical Names (BGN), U.S. Department of State and many other world organizations have consistently employed the name, PERSIAN GULF.

Moreover, it is meritorious to cite the rather substantially large citizens of today's Arab sheikdoms, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Iraq who are of Persian heritage notwithstanding their *in congnito* retention of their cultural identity; for instance, the majority in Bahrain, which itself was a sovereign province of Iran through early part of the 20th century, are Indigenous Persians.

Tehran Times, the Iran Daily moderate English language daily wrote in its November 27th issue: "The American institute of National Geographic in an unprecedented move used the forged name "Arabian Gulf" to designate "Persian Gulf", as the Arab littoral states of the Persian Gulf watched this plot unfold in satisfaction when Israel tried to change the name of Aqabah Bay into Iliad Bay in a UN meeting in 1970, representatives of 22 Arab countries stood up in protest. They argued that Israel's proposal was racist and that it contradicted all geographical and racial norms. In the current case, Arab countries are apparently the beneficiaries of this name-change. And they should answer the same question today: Isn't changing the name of Persian Gulf against racial and geographic norms?"

The Scientific community worldwide, that includes tens of thousands of Iranian American university professors, scholars and researchers, anticipate an amicable resolution of the matter. This should in turn lead to their continued financial and scholarly support of the NGS and its multifaceted endeavors; otherwise the NGS's credibility might remain undermined.

When one looks back at the modern Iranian history, there are hardly any other topics of concerns that has so heatedly united all Iranians and peoples of Iranian heritage other than a threat to their common cultural heritage, and as exemplified by the recent action taken by the NGS with respect to the Persian Gulf. Some even go further and anticipate such cultural unifications such as the defense of the name of Persian Gulf as the theme that might facilitate the independent home grown democratic reforms that Iran has been struggling to sustainably achieve for some-time.

The Iranians and Persians are proud of their past national heritage and recognize that they can never claim and rightly so, a vast country like the Archaemenid dynasty era of 2500 years, but that they would certainly aspire to preserve their today's cultural heritage and territorial integrity. The community reassures the world of their pledge of non-aggressions; they never conceptualize the notion of greater Iran as it was hundreds of years ago, comprised of the vast area as in Figure 6 that included the entire Arabia and many more regions; a vast region that is currently made up of over fifty sovereign countries. ■

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US-IRAN RELATIONS 1877-1979

Ibrahim V. Pourhadi

Students of history and diplomacy are puzzled over the besetting problems between Iran and the United States. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran is said to fund terrorist activities. But the people of Iran assume an esoteric attitude and believe peoples throughout the world are different from those at the helm of power and that world organizations should study the power which supports terrorism rather than punish the hired terrorists.

Iranians have been appreciative of American educational and various philanthropic works done throughout Iran as well as President Truman's Point Four Program, which enormously helped Iranian agricultural industries and health facilities in Iran. In particular Iranians are grateful to him for his ultimatum to the Soviet Union to leave Iranian Azerbaijan soon after the Second World War.

I think a brief review and an evaluation of Iran and its people by the first representative of the United States who served in Iran is necessary to mention. Mr. Samuel Green Wheeler-Benjamin (1873-1914) was the first United States Minister to Iran. He was an eminent scholar with a keen analytical mind. His book, *Persia and the Persians*¹ has served as a guide and in fact a textbook for understanding Iran and Iranians. He represented his country in Iran during 1882-1984. He studied Iranians carefully and on page 43 of his book stated:

"I have gained more genuine artistic satisfaction from this provincial residence at Rescht (Rasht) than from the most sumptuous structures I have ever seen in the United States. Everywhere I saw beauty combined with feeling of repose. In a word, adaptation, simplicity and thorough artistic effect...."

It was Minister Benjamin's book and his observations on Iran and Iranians, which made other United States diplomats want to go to Iran. One of such diplomat who craved to serve in Iran was

Minister Beale Truxtun (1856-1936). He was appointed by President Harrison to represent the United States in Iran from February 27, 1891 to July 27, 1892. Mr. Truxtun otherwise called "An Ambassador of Good Will to Tehran" had an inquisitive mind and he did not care about the hardship of traveling on horseback to the remotest parts of Iran to obtain exquisite art objects, indigenous shrubs, rose bushes, seedlings, cucurbitaceae plants and any rarities found throughout Iran. His interest in art and rarities was unbounded. He received special permission from the Iranian Government to go to Persepolis and, while there, he secured two molds in papier mache.²

Mr. Truxtun returned from his wearisome journey throughout Iran and presented the two molds of cuneiform inscriptions and the base relief to the Smithsonian institution in Washington, D.C. The officials there were extremely pleased that a U.S. Museum could have such copies of rare relics from ancient Persia. A letter dated July 29, 1892 acknowledged the receipt of this rare gift. The Cuneiform inscription in the language of ancient Persian, which says:

"Great God is Auramazda who created this earth, who created the heaven who created mankind, who gave prosperity to mankind, who made Artaxerxes king, the sole king of the multitude the sole ruler of multitudes."

The most interesting of Minister Truxtun's taste was for rare Persian fruits, flowers, and indigenous plants. The following indigenous rarities he gathered from Iran and presented to the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C.:

1. Two packages of Persian clover
2. Two packages of Isfahan melon seed
3. One tin can of tobacco seed
4. Two long tin cans of cuttings from Shiraz vines

5. One package of Persian wild rhu-barb. Today Persian melons and cantaloupes delicately favored in U.S. soil need no advertisement.

An appreciative letter from the Department of Agriculture dated July 14, 1892 acknowledged the receipt of the indigenous plants. Iranian relations with America is on continued basis. Since 1979 Islamic Revolution hundreds of thousands of Iranians arrived in the United States with huge sums of capital as well as professional talents and they are serving throughout the United States. Terrorists activities by a select hired individuals whose real racial identity is a wide divergence of opinion and those hired terrorist cannot sever, the historical USIran relations.

1. *Persia and the Persians*. Samuel Green Wheeler Benjamin. Boston, Ticknor and Company, 1887.

2. Squeezes, the art of marking molds in papier mache known to the officials of the British Museum.

* Ibrahim V. Pourhadi is an Area Specialist for Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia, in the African and Middle Eastern Division of the Library of Congress. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Library of Congress.

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TROPICAL SOLAR ZOROASTRIAN CALENDAR

Part I: Time Measurement, Time Zones, and the International Date Line

Ali A. Jafarey

The two natural cycles on which time measurements are based are the year and the day. The year is defined as the time required for Earth to complete one revolution around the Sun, while the day is the time required for Earth to complete one turn upon its axis. Earth needs 365 days plus about six hours to go around the Sun once, so a year does not consist of a round number of days; the fractional day has to be taken care of by an extra day every fourth year.

But because Earth, while turning upon its axis, also moves around the Sun, there are two kinds of days. A day may be defined as the interval between the highest point of the Sun in the sky on two successive days. This, averaged out over the year, produces the customary 24-hour day. But one might also define a day as the time interval between the moments when a certain point in the sky, say a conveniently located star, is directly overhead. This is called:

Sidereal time. A sidereal day is the time that it takes the Earth to complete one rotation on its axis so that a particular star can be observed twice at the meridian that runs directly overhead. Because the Earth is moving around the Sun as it rotates on its axis, the sidereal day is about four minutes shorter than the solar day, being equivalent to 23 hours, 56 minutes, and 4 seconds in mean solar time. As a result, a star will appear to rise about four minutes earlier every night, and different stars will be visible at different times of the year. Astronomers use a point that they call the "vernal equinox" to determine local sidereal time.

Apparent solar time is the time based directly on the Sun's position in the sky. In ordinary life the day runs from midnight to midnight. It begins when the Sun is invisible by being 12 hours from its zenith. Astronomers use the so-called Julian Day, which runs from noon to noon; the concept was invented by the astronomer Joseph Scaliger, who named it after his father, Julius. To avoid the problems

caused by leap-year days and so forth, Scaliger picked a conveniently remote date in the past (4713 B.C.) and suggested just counting days without regard to weeks, months, and years. The reason for having the Julian Day run from noon to noon is the practical one that astronomical observations usually extend across the midnight hour, which would require a change in date if the astronomical day, like the civil day, ran from midnight to midnight.

Mean solar time, rather than apparent solar time, is the basis for local civil and standard time. The mean solar time is based on the position of a fictitious "mean sun." The reason why this fictitious sun has to be introduced is the following: Earth turns on its axis regularly; it needs the same number of seconds regardless of the season. But the movement of Earth around the Sun is not regular because Earth's orbit is an ellipse. This has the result (as explained in the section that Earth moves faster in January and slower in July. Though it is Earth that changes velocity, it looks to us as if the Sun does. In January, when Earth moves faster, the *apparent* movement of the Sun looks faster. The mean sun of time measurements, then, is a sun that moves regularly all year round; the real Sun will be either ahead of or behind the mean sun. The difference between the real Sun and the fictitious mean sun is called the *equation of time*.

Time zones. But if all clocks were actually set by mean solar time we would be plagued by a welter of time differences that would be "correct" but a major nuisance. A clock on Long Island, correctly showing mean solar time for its location (this would be *local civil time*), would be slightly ahead of a clock in Newark, NJ. The Newark clock would be slightly ahead of a clock in Trenton, NJ, which, in turn, would be ahead of a clock in Philadelphia. This condition prevailed until 1884, when a system of standard time was adopted by the International Meridian Conference.

Earth's surface was divided into 24 zones. The standard time of each zone is the mean astronomical time of one of 24 meridians, 15 degrees apart, beginning at the Greenwich, England, meridian and extending east and west around the globe to the International Date Line. For practical purposes, this convention is sometimes altered. For example, Alaska, for a time, consisted of four of the eight U.S. time zones: the Pacific standard time zone (east of Juneau) and the 6th (Juneau), 7th (Anchorage), and 8th (Nome) zones, encompassing the 135°, 150°, and 165° meridians, respectively. In 1983, by act of Congress, the entire state (except the westernmost Aleutians) was united into the 6th zone, Alaska standard time.

The eight U.S. standard time zones are: Atlantic (includes Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), eastern, central, mountain, Pacific, Alaska, Hawaii-Aleutian (includes all of Hawaii and those Aleutians west of the Fox Islands), and Samoa standard time.

The Date Line. While the time zones are based on the natural event of the Sun crossing a meridian, the date must be an arbitrary decision. The meridians are traditionally counted from the meridian of the observatory of Greenwich, in England, which is called the zero meridian. The logical place for changing the date is 12 hours, or 180°, from Greenwich. Fortunately, the 180th meridian runs mostly through the open Pacific. The Date Line makes a zigzag in the north to incorporate the eastern tip of Siberia into the Siberian time system and then another one to incorporate a number of islands into the Hawaii-Aleutian time zone. In the south there is a similar zigzag for the purpose of tying a number of British-owned islands to the New Zealand time system. Otherwise, the Date Line is the same as 180° from Greenwich. At points to the east of the Date Line the calendar is one day earlier than at points to the west of it. A traveler going eastward across the Date Line from one island to another would not have to reset his watch because he would stay inside the time zone, but it would be the same time of the *previous* day.

History of the Calendar

The purpose of the calendar is to reckon past or future time, to show how many days until a certain event takes place—the harvest or a religious festival—or how long since something important happened. The earliest calendars must have been strongly influenced by the geographi-

cal location of the people who made them. In colder countries, the concept of the year was determined by the seasons, specifically by the end of winter. But in warmer countries, where the seasons are less pronounced, the Moon became the basic unit for time reckoning; an old Jewish book says that, "the Moon was created for the counting of the days."

Most of the oldest calendars were lunar calendars, based on the time interval from one new moon to the next — a so-called lunation. But even in a warm climate there are annual events that pay no attention to the phases of the Moon. In some areas it was a rainy season; in Egypt it was the annual flooding of the Nile River. The calendar had to account for these yearly events as well.

The Egyptian Calendar

The ancient Egyptians used a calendar with 12 months of 30 days each, for a total of 360 days per year. About 4000 B.C. they added five extra days at the end of every year to bring it more into line with the solar year. These five days became a festival because it was thought to be unlucky to work during that time.

The Egyptians had calculated that the solar year was actually closer to 365 $\frac{1}{4}$ days, but instead of having a single leap day every four years to account for the fractional day (the way we do now), they let the one-quarter day accumulate. After 1,460 years, or four periods of 365 years, they added an entire leap year of 365 days. This means that as the years passed, the Egyptian months fell out of sync with the seasons, so that the summer months eventually fell during winter. Only once every 1,460 years did their calendar year coincide precisely with the solar year.

In addition to the civic calendar, the Egyptians also had a religious calendar that was based on the 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ -day lunar cycle and was more closely linked with agricultural cycles and the movements of the stars.

Lunar Calendars

During antiquity the lunar calendar that best approximated a solar-year calendar was based on a 19-year period, with 7 of these 19 years having 13 months. In all, the period contained 235 months. Still using the lunation value of 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ days, this made a total of 6,932 $\frac{1}{2}$ days, while 19 solar years added up to 6,939.7 days, a difference of just one week per period and about five weeks per century.

Even the 19-year period required adjustment, but it became the basis of the

calendars of the ancient Chinese, Babylonians, Greeks, and Jews. This same calendar was also used by the Arabs, but Muhammad later forbade shifting from 12 months to 13 months, so that the Islamic calendar, even today, has a lunar year of 354 days. As a result, the months of the Islamic calendar, as well as the Islamic religious festivals, migrate through all the seasons of the year.

The Roman Calendar

When Rome emerged as a world power, the difficulties of making a calendar were well known, but the Romans complicated their lives because of their superstition that even numbers were unlucky. Hence their months were 29 or 31 days long, with the exception of February, which had 28 days. However, four months of 31 days, seven months of 29 days, and one month of 28 days added up to only 355 days. Therefore the Romans invented an extra month called Mercedonius of 22 or 23 days. It was added every second year.

Even with Mercedonius, the Roman calendar eventually became so far off that **Julius Caesar**, advised by the astronomer Sosigenes, ordered a sweeping reform in 45 B.C. One year, made 445 days long by imperial decree, brought the calendar back in step with the seasons. Then the solar year (with the value of 365 days and 6 hours) was made the basis of the calendar. The months were 30 or 31 days in length, and to take care of the 6 hours, every fourth year was made a 366-day year. Moreover, Caesar decreed the year began with the first of January, not with the vernal equinox in late March.

This calendar was named the **Julian calendar**, after Julius Caesar, and it continues to be the calendar of the Eastern Orthodox churches to this day. However, despite the correction, the Julian calendar is still 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes longer than the actual solar year, and after a number of centuries, even 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes adds up.

The Gregorian Reform

By the 15th century the Julian calendar had drifted behind the solar calendar by about a week, so that the vernal equinox was falling around March 12 instead of around March 20. Pope Sixtus IV (who reigned from 1471 to 1484) decided that another reform was needed and called the German astronomer Regiomontanus to Rome to advise him. Regiomontanus arrived in 1475, but unfortunately he died shortly afterward, and the pope's plans for

reform died with him.

Then in 1545, the Council of Trent authorized Pope Paul III to reform the calendar once more. Most of the mathematical and astronomical work was done by Father Christopher Clavius, S.J. The immediate correction, advised by Father Clavius and ordered by Pope Gregory XIII, was that Thursday, Oct. 4, 1582, was to be the last day of the Julian calendar. The next day would be Friday, Oct. 15. For long-range accuracy, a formula suggested by the Vatican librarian Aloysius Giglio was adopted: every fourth year is a leap year *unless* it is a century year like 1700 or 1800. Century years can be leap years *only* when they are divisible by 400 (e.g., 1600 and 2000). This rule eliminates three leap years in four centuries, making the calendar sufficiently accurate.

For in spite of the revised leap year rule, an average calendar year is still about 26 seconds longer than the Earth's orbital period. But this discrepancy will need 3,323 years to build up to a single day.

Reform Adopted Gradually

The Gregorian reform was not adopted throughout the West immediately. Most Catholic countries quickly changed to the Pope's new calendar in 1582. But Europe's Protestant princes chose to ignore the papal bull and continued with the Julian calendar. It was not until 1700 that the Protestant rulers of Germany and the Netherlands changed to the new calendar. In Great Britain (and its colonies) the shift did not take place until 1752, and in Russia a revolution was needed to introduce the Gregorian calendar in 1918. In Turkey, the Islamic calendar was used until 1926.

Despite its widespread use, the Gregorian calendar has a number of weaknesses. It cannot be divided into equal halves or quarters; the number of days per month is haphazard; and months and years may begin on any day of the week. Holidays pegged to specific dates may also fall on any day of the week, and few Americans can predict when Thanksgiving will occur next year. Since Gregory XIII, many other proposals for calendar reform have been made, but none has been permanently adopted. In the meantime, the Gregorian calendar keeps the calendar dates in reasonable unison with astronomical events.

The Hindu (Indian National) Calendar

The Indian National Calendar, often called the "Hindu Calendar," is based on

both lunar and solar years. This calendar was introduced in 1957 in a government push for all of India to use the same calendar, but various traditional calendars are also used. The start of the Indian National Calendar year coincides with March 22, except in a leap year, when it coincides with March 21. The year is counted from the first year of the Saka era, in A.D. 78. The year 2005 translates to Saka era 1926–1927. (Iranian Saka emigrated and settled in India during the Parthian and Sassanian times and established their kingdoms)

The Chinese Calendar

The Chinese lunar year is divided into 12 months of 29 or 30 days. The calendar is adjusted to the length of the solar year by the addition of extra months at regular intervals. The years are arranged in major cycles of 60 years. Each successive year is named after one of 12 animals. These 12-year cycles are continuously repeated. The Chinese New Year is celebrated at the second new moon after the winter solstice and falls between January 21 and February 19 on the Gregorian calendar. The year 2005 translates to the Chinese year 4702–4703.

The Jewish Calendar

The Jewish calendar is based on both solar and lunar years. The average lunar year of 354 days is adjusted to the solar year by the addition of a leap year and an intercalary month. Nisan is considered the first month, although the new year begins with Rosh Hashanah, on the first of Tishri, which is in fact the seventh month—the calendar has different starting points for different purposes. The year 2005 translates to the Jewish year 5765–5766.

The Islamic (Hijri) Calendar

The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar year of 354 days. The number of days each month is adjusted according to the lunar cycle, beginning about two days after the new moon. The months drift backward over the seasons, beginning again on the same day every 321/2 years. The Islamic year begins on the first day of Muharram, and is counted from the year of the Hegira (*anno Hegirae*)—the year in which Muhammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina (A.D. 622). The year 2005 translates to A.H. 1425–1426.

* **Author's Note:** Islam, like Christianity, is a product of Judaism. In fact, it is closer to Judaism than Christianity. However, the Quran prohibits the addition of the intercalary month (Quran: Surah 9:36-37) and therefore, the Islamic calendar is based purely on lunar months. Islam does not follow any solar or intercalary lunisolar year.

THE PASSING OF A FRIEND OF IRAN AND IRANIANS — SIR DENIS WRIGHT

Sir Denis Wright, a friend of Iran and Iranians, a scholar of Iranian History, a former British Ambassador to Iran, a personal family friend is no more.

I mourn his loss. I enjoyed his wit, scholarship, and kindness enormously. I have many fond memories of sitting cramped in his tiny upstairs office-library and him reminiscing about his Iranian Years — and after Iranian Years still so inextricably Iranian-Connected-Years.

He had an incredible perspective on Iran's Who's Who. Knowing Iranians so intimately well, toward the end of his Life, he had tended to refrain from making public comments about almost all of them....

A couple years ago he told me sadly that he feels a lonely man ostracized and shunned and deliberately marginalized by many of his friends about whose roles or their ancestors roles he had written in a less than flattering manner....

I feel at a loss by his absence. Last time I talked to him was in March 2005, when I had called him up to invite him and Lady Wright as my Guests of Honor for the Iran Heritage Gala Dinner Table. When I enquired about his health, he said "Not very well! I am in my Nineties! And I have been very ill in the past year. I do not feel well, and I have a feeling that I am at the end of my life." I could not make it to visit him again. I could have a bouquet of flowers with a Get Well Message delivered to him though.

Given my emotional state, I shall write more about my time with him, and about his illustrious life later.

For now, I hope all would take a few moments off, and pray for the gracious and gentle Lady Wright. Her poise and dignity always impressed me. Since my childhood days till recent times, she has remained who she really has been — A Lady!

Sir Denis and Lady Wright were a very dedicated couple.

Nader Rastegar
(Taken from the Internet)

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BABAK & FRIENDS

We as adults all too often are quick to dismiss children's feelings of disappointment. This dismissal, or lack of interest/concern, is not meant to intentionally harm the child; it comes rather from our inability as adults to think as a child.

Babak, a/k/a Bobby, a young boy, in **Babak & Friends, A First Norooz**, is extremely disappointed in his parents not celebrating traditional American holidays. He feels left out and abnormal. It is not clear in the movie if Babak was born in the United States or came at a young age with his parents. What is clear is that he is very Americanized and what is even clearer is his parents intentional bypass of traditional Iranian holidays.

This all changes when Babak comes home in a bad mood one March morning. He is annoyed that he is not going to go on an Easter egg hunt like his friends. Seeing his disappointment his mother decides to introduce him to the holiday of Norooz for the first time. Fortunately she will have re-enforcements since her sister and family are arriving the next day from Iran.

While all believe that this will be a good thing troubles do arise. And now I will say no more except that this delightful cartoon, written by Dustin Ellis, pictures by Rodd Miller, with the voices of Shohreh Aghdashloo, Catherine Bell, Ah Poutash and Parviz Sayyad is a must have.

In addition to learning about Norooz the more valuable lesson in the film is how children from different yet similar worlds learn to give and take. Eventually that which divides them brings them together. They learn to respect, understand and love each other yet maintain their identity.

A tremendous amount of gratitude should be sent to the developers of this short film, which is accompanied by a storybook written in Persian and English. In my opinion, this book will have a major part in helping our children understand not just the Persian culture better, but all those who are initially judged as foreign.

NEGAR AHKAMI EXHIBITION

April 2005, New York City



Although commenting on such works of art through computer images is as incomplete as judging a book by reviewing its summary, I still stand firm on my belief that "negareha-ye" Negar embodies a great deal of maturity, unique style, and promises an outstanding future. What surprises me, however, is the degree of departure from the set of work I had seen before. True, a young artist should free her imagination to explore new realms of creativity, but the sooner she develops her own "vocabulary" of expression, the sooner she will be walking on the path of success and universal acceptance. Negar, to my judgment, is rapidly finding her path. I admire her work and look forward to see more of it.

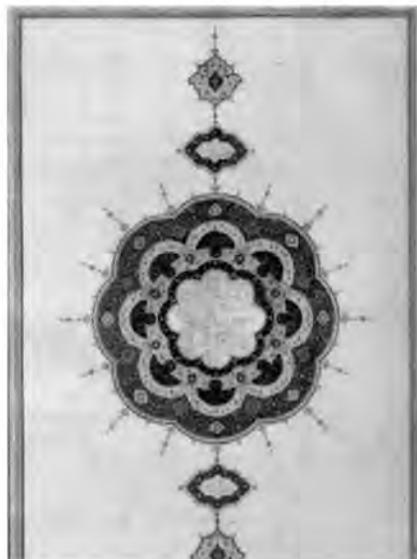
Jahangir



MASTERPIECES OF PERSIAN PAINTING AT TEHRAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Syma Sayyah, Tehran (Payvand's Iran News)

The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA) once in a while does something truly great and very Persian. This time the new exhibition of masterpieces of Persian Paintings may be considered a great achievement. They have gathered works from several Iranian museums as well as the Golestan Palace and put them all in one place for viewers; to see, to imagine and dream on when they see these masterpieces of Iran's most distinguished artists.



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I was so impressed with the simplicity of the frames which gave room to wonder over the works on display alone. The only shortcoming to me was the fact that once again the book which is expected

to accompany the exhibition was not yet available. However, my congratulations to the curator and museum staff who were behind this work.



Work of Iranian master Behzad

I have a few pictures for you that I bought from the museum which I have scanned for you; but please go to the TMCA site and enjoy the beauties of the works there, over 16 pages of them. You will be impressed how much you may like it. Give it a go!



A page from Shahnameh

This was a real treat and I was lucky to catch it and see this lovely exhibition before it ended on the 5th May. During the exhibition, there was a very informative educational video which explained the different schools and periods of the works on display which was very helpful and enlightening like the rest of the exhibition.



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