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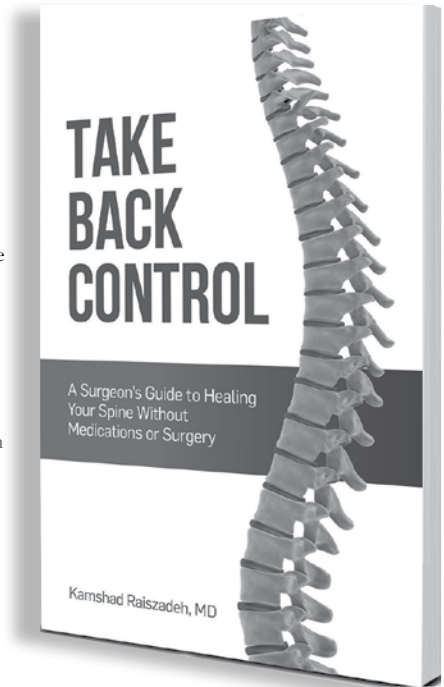
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Norouz-e Bastani, the ancient Persian New Year, marks the beginning of a new year for nature, the awakening and the staying awake of nature until the time comes when autumn and winter compel it to silence, stillness, and sleep. It holds it within with the hope for another spring to come, burying a few months within itself until the time of its awakening arrives. How much of this nature's attribute holds true for humans and creatures on Earth? The Iranian people, who have been struggling for years, are still in the throes of movement and upheaval, not having reached their promised spring. Yet they are still hopeful for a new day when they can attain freedom, equality, the right to choose their faith and religion, and uphold their dignity and values in a way that does not harm the fundamental principles of Iran's independence, stability, and unity. They desire to display their worthiness and pride to the world and its people.

In these critical days, where many plans are being discussed to attack Iran, aiming to achieve the ultimate goal of its designers, namely the division and fragmentation of Iran, the concerns of Iranians and their loved ones who cherish the unity, independence, and stability of Iran are growing day by day. However, on the other hand, considering the indifference of the Iranian authorities to the lives of the people, not only does not help to heal or alleviate these concerns, but, on the contrary, some of them seem happier and more joyful because in recent days some officers and commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps outside Iran have been targeted by missiles and bombs, seeing these incidents as signs of weakness and perhaps anticipating the regime's downfall sooner rather than later.

In addition to the regime's external problems and its predicaments, which could exacerbate the current war in the region and increase the likelihood of an attack on Iran, internal predicaments, including thefts, hoardings, pressures, and the capture of thieves, are on the rise. Cultural extremism and the greed of corrupt leaders and powerful individuals continue unabated. Among these revelations is the scandalous land-grabbing case of a hypocritical cleric who, prior to the revolution, opposed the revolutionaries and engaged in conflict with them. After the revolution, he suddenly became a revolutionary himself, donning the garb of clericalism and occupying a prominent position in the country's judiciary, playing a significant role in the execution of numerous educated youth and elites of this nation; executions that those like this cleric and his accomplices, ostensibly motivated by the best intentions of achieving paradise, did not anticipate. For years, he was the exclusive eulogist for the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, but now, with the courageous disclosure by a bold and courageous journalist, documents of land-grabbing and embezzlement of public property by him and his children have been exposed. Unable to deny the documents, he initially claimed that someone had forged his

signature. However, it soon became apparent that this cleric himself, with his own feet, had gone to the presence and, by signing the document, seized four thousand square meters of land in the best location in Tehran. Then, realizing that the situation was very dire and the disclosures were undeniable, he sought repentance in the presence of the Leader, seeking forgiveness from the leader for his theft. But the story did not end here and did not remain limited to this cleric as a thief, and the authorities responsible for matters, in order to silence the uproar and support this embezzlement of public property, escalated audacity to its extreme. The newspaper Hamshahri, the organ of the Tehran municipality, wrote: "All this filth and corruption has come to light, and then Mr. Mehdiyan in Hamshahri titles the disgusting face of a cleric with a heavenly smile, saying that a believer should deal with [this land-grab] in a faithful manner and ethics and piety should be observed" (taken from the Hamshahri website). Interestingly, in contrast to this major theft, the interim Friday Imam of Tehran, the official eulogist of the Supreme Leader, the judge and head of the judiciary, judges, and ... who imprison many individuals and young people for very minor crimes such as stealing a loaf of bread and brief sins, now request a faithful treatment for such an individual and, by writing a letter and seeking forgiveness from the Leader, not only are his sins forgiven, but he and his children have become owners of vast estates; they are not obliged to return them, nor are they required to apologize to the noble people of Iran; and there will be no trial or imprisonment.

The level of embezzlement of people's properties and the emptying of the country's treasury is occurring while pressure on the people, injustice in the rights and benefits of workers and employees, seizing the savings of employees in social security and retirement funds, lack of funds for employee pensions, closure of factories and shutdown of production sources, and increasing reliance on imports are all on the rise. All of these are nothing but signs of incompetence and lack of experience among the ruling leaders. The product of the Imam Sadiq University, which was once thought to be the successor to the Qom seminary for the production and training as auxiliary civilian attire costumes, is now a producer, Minister of Cabinet such as minister of foreign affairs (State Dept.), and manager of various organizations. Those who have neither experience in managerial and administrative affairs nor have they studied much about their religious duties to become the successors of the Qom scholars, people like the current mayor of Tehran, who claims to be a doctor of nuclear medicine, and whose daughter resides in Switzerland, while he himself is thinking about building mosques in the parks and recreational areas of Tehran. To quote the famous actor Reza Kianian regarding the construction of a mosque in the Qeitarieh Park: "I remember God more with pure intentions than building a mosque next to other mosques..."

My question to the mayor of Tehran, his colleagues, and his fellow clerics is this: Will building more mosques increase the number of devout Muslims and believers? Does this action by the mayor bring people closer to religion and faith? Or are these pressures, embezzlements, lies, and high-level corruptions the reasons and motives for distancing oneself from religion and religiosity? Does closing gardens and parks during the Norooz holidays, especially on the thirteenth day (Sizdah Bedar), deter people from celebrating Sizdah Bedar, or does it provide motivation for defiance and serve as an excuse to confront authorities and their thugs?

Just as the fight against hijab, despite all the pressure, killings, and blinding of the eyes of the youth, not only did not help veiling become more widespread day by day but with severe crackdowns on women, youth, and supporters of women's rights activists, the rate of unveiled women in the country has increased. In my opinion, the issue of hijab and unveiling is a diversion created by the authorities to keep half of Iran's population, the brave Iranian women, busy fighting against compulsory hijab, without addressing the fundamental issues of the people. In the forty-odd years of the regime, most of the efforts and struggles of our courageous women have been about the hijab, and surely if the hijab issue were not a stumbling block for our lion-hearted women, and their energy, life, and efforts were not wasted on this issue, they could have played other, more effective roles alongside men to tackle other problems that the regime has placed in the way of the people, and our Iran could have had a different situation. Today, the Leader once again stated that opposition to compulsory hijab is part of the "foreign agenda" and demanded "legal and religious action by officials". Occupying people's minds with these foolish matters, which are examples of the incompetence and lack of foresight of the rulers, increases dissatisfaction and insecurity day by day and ultimately brings the people closer to revolt and uprising.

I was searching for news and concerned about the political, social, and security situation in Iran when I saw a post on Telegram about the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic talking about

someone who apparently sat on the floor next to him. He said, "At that time, I went to my friend's house on the former Shahbaz Street, and it was prayer time, and I knew my friend wasn't into these things. I asked him which direction is the Qiblah (direction for Mecca prayer). My friend replied, 'I don't know. I've only been living in this house for two years.'"

This joke or jest by the leader about his friend indicates that he himself knows well that these days people do not show much interest and attachment to religion and religious beliefs. Despite the insistence of the mayor of Tehran and his associates on building 400 more mosques in Tehran, they know very well that most of these mosques are currently empty of believers. An example of this was during this year's Norooz holiday, which coincided with the month of Ramadan, where the number of travelers and visitors to places like Hafezieh and Saadieh (in Shiraz), Pasargad, Shiraz cities in northern Iran, Tehran, and Khuzestan were the highest, while Mashhad, the pilgrimage site for Shiites, was in the sixth or seventh position. Perhaps this is also a warning sign for the authorities to realize that increasing pressure and threats, alongside exposing corruption and indifference to people's lives, all serve as negative evidence of the religiosity of these gentlemen, further

alienating the youth from religion and religiosity.

Leaving aside this painful and distressing issue, there is another matter that has troubled me for a long time and forced me to make a decision that I was very hesitant and unhappy about. The truth is that after 28 years of hard work, dedication, and selflessness from the colleagues and associates of "Mirass e Iran", we are now forced to discontinue the print editions of the magazine, and starting from the summer issue, we will make it available digitally with the same layout and formatting as always to the enthusiasts of this magazine. At the age of 85 and nearing retirement, it may no longer be possible to continue the legacy of "Mirass e Iran" in the final years of life under financial pressure and constraints. The cost of printing, postage, and mailing of the magazine, along with insufficient income from subscriptions and advertisements, does not allow us to continue this situation. Many of our loved ones and close ones have seen that for years, both my spouse and I have shouldered the heavy burden of "Mirass e Iran", which I am deeply attached to with my heart and soul. However, with the increasing economic pressures, especially in recent years, and advancing age, continuing work in the same manner is no longer possible. But we have decided that instead of permanently closing the magazine, we will present it in digital format on our website to the readers and enthusiasts. Therefore, we express our gratitude to the readers, subscribers, and dear ones who have supported "Mirass e Iran" for years by placing advertisements, and we will never forget the kindness of these dear ones. The colleagues and allies of "Mirass e Iran" who have been my companions and supporters from the beginning of the publication until now will always remain dear and respected by me, and I consider myself indebted to all of these dear ones.

This farewell and discontinuation of the print edition of the magazine from the summer issue has changed me so much that I no longer want to bring anything on paper, except for a heartfelt note from Forough Farrokhzad, which may express my wish, a wish to present "Mirass e Iran" to the enthusiasts until the end of my life.

"Forough Farrokhzad says:

My wishes are many, they are tall, they are long,

But my most important wish is this:

To be human, to remain human, to become enlightened as a human,

Time is short, while I still have time, I must show kindness

Time is short, I must be good, be kind

And love all the beauties...

For the readers, friends, and dear Iranians inside and outside the borders, I wish health, and reaching their long-term aspirations. I hope that dear Iran will one day witness the end of pressures and difficulties, and be able to establish relationships of peace and amity with neighbors and all nations, and day by day, take longer steps towards progress and victory for the welfare of all people and securing freedom of belief, religion, personal choice, and living with personal preferences.

Wishing you all well!

Shahrokh Alavi

Marjan Satrapi Is a Member of the French Academy of Fine Arts

R.F.I., 03/03/2024



The French Academy of Fine Arts announced that Marjan Satrapi, a French-Iranian artist, painter and cinematographer, has joined the Academy's Department of Cinematic and Audiovisual Arts. Her arrival at this prestigious cultural institution has not yet taken place.

Marjan Satrapi was awarded the fifth seat of cinematic arts division. The seat previously belonged to French producer and actor Jacques Perrin who died about two years ago.

Founded in 1816, the Academy of Fine Arts replaced the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, which had been

dissolved by the French Revolution. It is one of the founding bodies of the French Institute or the French Foundation which also includes the Academy of French Language or the Academy of Sciences. The task of the Academy of Fine Arts is to spread culture and artistic knowledge as well as to contribute to artistic creation. It also serves as a government advisor in cultural and artistic matters. Several museums and cultural sites are also run under the auspices of the Academy.

The Academy of Fine Arts has 67 permanent members who work in eight sections of painting, sculpture, architecture, music, cinema and audio-visual, photography, design and drawing, and finally choreography. A section entitled "Free Membership" is dedicated to characters whose expertise does not necessarily match the eight above.

The Cinematic and Audiovisual Arts Department, which has embraced Marjan Satrapi, has six members including Roman Polanski, Jean-Jacques Anno or Regis Varnier.

Marjan Satrapi, now 54, rose to fame in France with the series of comic books "Persepolis." Then the motion picture based on this series brought her international fame.

Marjan Satrapi is currently working on a film called "Paris of Paradise." Last year, she released an illustrated album with several writers and artists entitled "Woman, Life, Freedom." In addition, the site of the Academy of Fine Arts reports that Ms. Satrapi is designing a carpet that will be woven by government agencies to mark the Paris Olympic Games.

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ISC Ranks Iranian Universities Based on Six Indices

TEHRAN TIMES: DECEMBER 26, 2023

The Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC) has released a report, ranking 115 governmental and 17 non-governmental universities according to six indices.

Education counts for 30 percent, Research counts for 25 percent, Technology and Innovation counts for 20 percent, International Outlook counts for 10 percent, and Social Services, Infrastructure, and Facilities counts for 5 percent, ISNA quoted the ISC head Ahmad Fazelzadeh as saying.

The universities of Tehran, Ferdowsi of Mashhad, Tarbiat Modarres, Shahid Beheshti, and Shiraz were placed first to fifth in the ranking.

GLOBAL RANKING

The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2024 has listed 36 Iranian universities among the world's top 1,000 institutions, compared with 29 universities in 2023. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2024 include 1,904 universities across 108 countries and regions.

The ranking is based on 18 carefully calibrated performance indicators that measure an institution's performance across five areas: teaching, research environment, research

quality, industry, and international outlook.

Sharif University of Technology ranks first among Iranian universities with a rank in the range of 301-350.

Amirkabir University comes next with a rank in the range of 351-400.

The University of Tehran and Iran University of Science and Technology both are in the range of 401-500.

Shahid Beheshti Medical University, Tehran Medical University, and Iran Medical University are in the range of 601-800.

This year's ranking analyzed over 134 million citations across 16.5 million research publications and included survey responses from 68,402 scholars globally. Overall, it collected 411,789 data points from more than 2,673 institutions that submitted data.

Oxford University is at the top of this ranking for the eighth year in a row. The highest new entry in this ranking is the Catholic University of Italy, which is ranked 301-350. However, most of the institutions joining the rankings for the first time this year are in Asia.

The United States is the most represented country with 169 institutions, as well as the most represented among the

top 200 institutions, with 56 universities.

India, with 91 institutions of higher education, is currently the fourth most represented country and has surpassed China (86).

Four countries entered this ranking for the first time, all of them in Europe. The addition of Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Armenia is contrary to last year's trend, which has caused these countries to be represented in the ranking of the world's top universities.

In addition to the 1,904 ranked institutions, an additional 769 universities are listed with "reporter" status, meaning they submitted data but did not meet the eligibility criteria to receive a rank and agreed to appear as reporters in the final table.

The world's top ten universities in 2024 are as follows:

University of Oxford, Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University, University of Cambridge, California Institute of Technology, Imperial College London, University of California, Berkeley, and Yale University.

ACADEMIC RANKINGS 2023

Multiple organizations annually rank universities around the world based on different criteria.

According to an early release from the 2023 edition of the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) Global Innovation Index (GII), Tehran ranks 34th among the top 100 Science and Technology (S&T) clusters in the world.

In September, Iranian higher education institutions once again demonstrated their global prominence, with 18 universities making their mark in the prestigious "Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities," also known as the "Taiwan Ranking," released annually by the National Taiwan University.

The University of Tehran has emerged as the torchbearer of Iranian academia, securing an impressive global ranking of 286 in the 2023 Taiwan Ranking. This distinction cements the University of Tehran's reputation as a world-class institution committed to research excellence. In August, the second edition of the Webometrics ranking 2023 of the World Universities ranked 440 Iranian institutions among 30,000 top universities worldwide. Tehran University, ranked 305 in the world, is the top among Iranian institutions on the list followed by Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences.

The first edition of the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities 2023, in June, ranked 457 Iranian institutions among around 32,000 top universities across the world.

Universities (ARWU), also known as Shanghai Ranking, placed ten universities from Iran among the top 1000 universities in the world in the Shanghai Ranking, 2023. The University of Tehran is among the top 500 universities in the world with a rank of 401-500, the best among Iranian universities, IRIB reported.

In the 2023 edition of the Times Higher Education Young

University Rankings which includes 605 universities, Iran became the third most represented nation with 39 institutions.

The latest edition of the QS World University Rankings placed seven Iranian universities among the world's top institutes. The Leiden ranking system published the 2023 report, according to which 46 Iranian universities were among the 1,411 top universities in the world. Among Islamic countries, Iran ranked first, followed by Turkey and Egypt with 36 and 13 universities, respectively. In the 2023 edition of the Times Higher Education's Asian University Ranking System, 669 institutions from 31 Asian countries are included and 65 Iranian universities are among the top Asian institutions.

NASA Selects

Simulated Expedition Mission to Mars; An Iranian on a Four-man Team



The U.S. space agency NASA has announced the group chosen to take part in a simulated trip to Mars, in a habitat at the Johnson Space Center in Houston; Iranian scientist and astronaut Kamak Ebadi is one of four members of the group.

Alongside Abhishek Bagat, Susan Hilbigg and Ariana Lutsic will enter the ground facility on Friday, January 26, to live and work

like Mars astronauts for 45 days during a simulated mission to the Red Planet, NASA reported. The men will be removed from the facility on March 11.

During this time, scientists are supposed to study how crews adapt to the isolation, enclosure and working conditions astronauts will experience during future space missions.

Speaking about the mission, Abadi said: "Since January 26, I have been living and working with three other crew members on the same spacecraft, simulating scenarios of Mars exploration. Our responsibilities include a range of scientific tasks, technology displays, spacecraft operations, maintenance and handling of unexpected anomalies during a round trip to Mars," he said.

"The mission will closely examine the conditions of long space missions, including communications delays, lack of access to fresh food, lack of privacy, lack of access to telephones and internet, and complete isolation from the outside world."

The Iranian researcher also noted that "the main purpose of this mission is to develop and approve countermeasures aimed at minimizing the adverse effects of isolation, imprisonment and work in stressful environments, and these efforts are aimed at enhancing the well-being and safety of astronauts and the success of future deep spaceflights."

The mission is the first of four simulated missions to Mars that will take place in 2024. Each mission consists of a different crew of four research volunteers, and the final mission is scheduled to end on December 16.

MUD VOLCANO: a Rare Geological Phenomenon Attracts Travelers in Southeast Iran



Tehran Times, January 30, 2024: Nestled in the heart of Iran's Baluchestan region, the Mud Volcano, locally known as "Panag", continues to captivate the imaginations of travelers with its rare and mesmerizing geological phenomenon.

Beyond its geological significance, the Mud Volcano has become a focal point for various purposes, including pottery, gas production, and even therapeutic mud applications.

Drawing tens of visitors daily, this natural attraction offers a unique scene that combines mud extrusions, gas emissions, and the occasional ground shake. That phenomenon stems from some mud volcano springs, which are situated on a flat surface, with three small hills dominating the landscape.

One of these hills resembles an active volcano, while the others remain dormant. The mud, gray and composed of clay and marble, emerges with a cold, pressurized force, accompanied by a distinctive sound reminiscent of bursting bubbles. This occurrence repeats approximately every fifteen minutes, synchronized with a subtle soil shake. As mentioned by Visit Iran, experts believe that the Mud Volcano is a direct result of tectonic activities in the region, highlighting the geological complications associated with the area's oil and gas reserves. The gases emitted during these eruptions include methane, carbon dioxide, nitrogen, and carbon monoxide, contributing to the uniqueness of the phenomenon. Local authorities have recognized the tourism potential of this natural wonder and have established facilities to enhance the visitor experience, making it more accessible and enjoyable.

The site is surrounded by vast wilderness, adding to the allure of the Mud Volcano as a destination for nature enthusiasts and curious travelers. The correlation between the geological complexity of the region and its abundant oil and gas reserves has turned this location into a particular phenomenon, making it not only a geological wonder but also a key point of interest for those seeking a unique and educational travel experience.

The collective province - Sistan in the north and Baluchestan in the south - accounts for one of the driest regions of Iran with a slight increase in rainfall from east to west, and an obvious rise in humidity in the coastal regions. In ancient

times, the region was a crossword between the Indus Valley and the Babylonian civilizations. The province possesses special significance because of being located in a strategic transit location, especially Chabahar, which is the only ocean port in Iran and the best and easiest access route of the middle Asian countries to free waters.

The vast province is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert.

23 Historical Monuments under Restoration in Semnan



Tehran Times, December 10, 2023: A total of 23 historical monuments in Semnan are currently under restoration as part of the province's campaign to safeguard its cultural heritage for coming generations. Currently, 23 historical monuments, including residential houses, mansions, inns, bathhouses, and other public places are being restored by teams of cultural heritage experts across the province.

Last September, the capital city of Semnan joined the International Tourism Alliance of Silk Road Cities, officially launched in China's Jingdezhen as a tool to help broaden tourism cooperation.

The main populated centers of Semnan province lie along the ancient Silk Road (and modern-day Imam Reza Expressway), linking Rey (Tehran) with Khorasan (Mashhad). While few visitors spend much time in the area, driving through, you can easily seek out several well-preserved caravanserais (notably Dehnamak and Ahowan), cisterns (the Cafe Abenbar in Garmsar is a special treat), and ruined mud citadels (Padeh is lumpy but fascinating.). The large, bustling cities of Semnan, Damghan, and Shahrud (Bastam) all have a small selection of historic buildings and Semnan has a fine old covered bazaar.

Semnan is bounded by the provinces of Khorasan Razavi and South Khorasan on the east, Isfahan on the south, Qom and Tehran on the west, and Mazandaran and North Khorasan on the north.



QESHM ISLAND: a Journey Through Iran's Geological Wonderland

Tehran Times, February 26, 2024

Qeshm, the largest island in the Persian Gulf, stands out as one of Iran's most enchanting destinations.

Shaped like a dolphin, this island is rich in natural wonders, geological marvels, and a diverse array of wildlife. Its intriguing history reflects influences from Dutch, French, and Portuguese settlers, evident in the ruins and ramparts scattered across the landscape.

Situated in the Strait of Hormuz, off Iran's coast, Qeshm boasts a vast expanse where traditional Bandari livelihoods thrive, revolving around trade, handicrafts, and Lenj-style fishing—a tradition dating back centuries.

Qeshm's formation history, shaping its unique appearance, has earned it recognition as a UNESCO Global Geopark.

Here are five natural treasures awaiting exploration on this captivating island:

HARA MANGROVE FOREST

Embark on a day trip to the Hara Mangrove forests, immersing yourself in a fairy-tale realm of underwater trees, tranquil waters, and melodious birdcalls. Herons, flamingos, and pelicans grace the landscape, alongside an assortment of reptiles and peculiar sea creatures. These mangroves serve as vital ecological nurseries for both birds and fish, accessible primarily via local shrimp fishing boats or limited tourist tugs.

Optimal viewing occurs during low tide, revealing the full majesty of the Hara trees emerging from the water.

STARS VALLEY

For avid backpackers, visiting the vast island, the picturesque Stars Valley beckons, showcasing remarkable rock formations sculpted by weather erosion over millions of years.

Red pointy cones, pillars, arcs, and bulkheads adorn the landscape, reminiscent of an otherworldly realm.

The valley's appearance evolves with each heavy rainfall due to its weak structural composition, offering an ever-changing

spectacle.

NAMAKDAN SALT CAVE

Discover the geological marvel of Namakdan Salt Cave, a dynamic creation shaped by rainfall-induced transformations.

Accessible to the public for the initial 100–200 meters, this living salt cave mesmerizes visitors with its colorful salt crystal tunnels. Torchlight exploration unveils a surreal landscape, inviting guests to witness nature's intricate artwork firsthand. Adjacent beaches complement the cave's allure, adding to the charm of any excursion.

CHAHKUH VALLEY

Located in Qeshm's northwestern region, Chahkuh Valley entices visitors with its serene ambiance and captivating rock formations. Carved by heavy rain and tectonic movements, the ivory cliffs stand as a testament to nature's artistic prowess. Strict conservation measures protect this geo-site, prohibiting any damage to its pristine cliffs. Ingeniously utilized by local communities, natural rock formations serve as wells, storing and cooling water for dry seasons. Nature's ingenuity shines in this breathtaking valley.

HENGAM ISLAND

Despite its small size, Hengam Island offers boundless beauty and recreational opportunities. Silver beaches invite relaxation, while the pristine sea beckons swimmers and divers alike. Scuba enthusiasts flock to explore the coral reefs and shipwrecks dotting the coastline. Early mornings present the chance to witness playful dolphins, setting the tone for a day filled with wildlife encounters. Tropical birds, gazelles, and turtles call Hengam home, adding to its allure as a nature lover's paradise.

Each of these natural treasures on Qeshm Island promises an unforgettable experience, blending natural beauty with cultural intrigue.

U. S. Has Managed to Push Iran to the Russian Fold: A Disaster with Unwelcome Consequences

M. REZA VAGHEFI

“Washington has helped perpetuate animosity. The United States has displayed a callous disregard for Iranian grievances and security concern. Giving a medal to a ship’s captain who just inadvertently killed 290 civilians and then wondering why Iran might harbor resentment is just the most obvious example of American obtuseness.” The Twilight War, David Crist, p.572

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this research is to investigate the causes and effects of a relationship that could have produced significant benefits for both sides instead of animosity, belligerency and counterproductive moves and use of resources that could have produced mutually beneficial results instead of continuous frictions and a very destructive results that have damaged what could have been a role model for many nations in the region as well as worldwide. Forty-four years of estrangement is too long and has been too unproductive for the people of Iran and the United States.

The Chronic and Irritating Issue

A major irritating issue on the US side has been the infamous “Hostage Crisis”. But why did it happen and what were the circumstances under which such an irrational tragedy took place. The tempestuous period after the revolution was ripe for any minor or major disturbance. In an explosive environment where scores were being settled and individual security was at stake, it would take great deal of imagination and statesmanship to understand that normal affairs needed to be carefully crafted.

The fluidity of the environment was ripe for anything to trigger emotions and actions which could have unintended consequences. Unfortunately, the fragile situation was not carefully appreciated on both sides.

Ayatollah Khomeini in Exile

While in France as an exile from Iraq, Ayatollah Khomeini had informed the

United States, through his representative Dr. Ibrahim Yazdi, that Iran will continue her relationship with the United States after the Shah. Based on that promise Mr. Bazargan, the new Prime Minister and Dr. Ibrahim Yazdi, the foreign minister were meeting with American officials without having publicly announced such meeting. They met in Sweden and then in Algeria. The meeting in Sweden went along but the one in Algeria was leaked though a Kuwaiti reporter. The author of this paper was a professor at Tehran University and heard that some student radicals wanted to occupy the American Embassy for a few hours to express their anger. They did so and Ayatollah Khomeini did not act either way but public pressure was immense, he acquiesced and the saga began which has created a most contentious issue coloring the relationship between the United States and Islamic Republic of Iran.

It may be necessary to state here that the atmosphere in non-communist countries as well as non-NATO members and especially countries like Iran is highly affected and influenced by who is in the White House. The political philosophy of the occupier makes a world of difference as witnessed by the recent presidents. John Kennedy was relatively a peaceful president. He fired the CIA director after the Bay of Pigs disaster. Lyndon Bay Johnson’s bid for the White house was challenged due to his disastrous Gulf of Tonkin and the Vietnam war. Carter had good intentions but was ill-informed in international affairs. Reagan was the most humane of the recent American leaders, “Mr. Gorbachev bring down this wall” made history in the annuals of American literature, is mark of a great statesman.

It is not uncommon for the members of a government to have different views on the same issues but having dogmatic opinion without understanding cultural or political issues involved creates disasters that may end in an impasse and sometime dangerous outcomes. Former President Carter was the one who praised Iran “as an island of stability in the volatile region”. And he was the one who, just after a year, orchestrated the Shah’s downfall in Gua-

deloupe. You wonder who was feeding him in the process or was it simply an act of pure stupidity. And then you wonder why the leaders in Iran do not trust the United States. In broad daylight they see massive contradictions in critical matters which continue to this day.

Why President Carter chose Mr. Cyrus Vance as Secretary State and Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski as National security advisor. Two with almost opposite positions in the most critical post. Then an ambassador who had no idea about the local culture and specially of the clergy, nature of opposition in the country he was serving the interest of the United States. Of the three officials mentioned above, ambassador Sullivan was most definitely uninformed and arrogant in his evaluation of the Shah regime. His utterance about Ayatollah Khomeini is proof of his lack of knowledge. After a short visit to Qum where he began his campaign against the Shah, he went back to Tehran. His Ignorance about the clergy mentality, which is true in almost all religions: Christians, Jewish, Budaist, Hindus, etc., indicates the shallowness of one’s erudition about the environment he operates in, and Ambassador Sullivan was the proof. Why would such ill-informed person represent a superpower is itself an indication of the unpreparedness of the United States in international settings.

Iran’s Strategic Location

Over the centuries, the strategic location of Iran has attracted many kings, emperors, Tsars and just hungry armies. It was the rivalry between the two superpowers that constituted the essence of their global strategies world-wide. It was true hundreds of years ago and it is manifestly true now in 2023-4. The only difference is that now China has replaced USSR as a potential threat to freedom seeking nations.

Contentious Issues

Two unforgivable issues that continue to this day and create negative attitude, phobia and a roadblock to a better relation have been overthrow of a legitimate gov-

ernment of Iran by CIA in 1953, installing the Shah back on his job which began 25 years of economic progress, some social reforms, not thoroughly comprehended, and rise of poverty and communist ideology and ultimately a revolution with religious orientation which was a cover for so many different and at time opposite ideologies. These were the issues, relative to Iran, when Ronald Reagan assumed the Presidency of the United States. Two achievements of President Carter stand out as significant. He managed to return management of Panama Canal to Panamanian, and he concluded a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, which now he calls Israel an Apartheid state. He also helped people of Nicaragua to oust Somoza hoping the Sandinistas would provide a democratic government for the people. The latter turned out to be the opposite of what President Carter wished, which renders essence to the idiom be careful of what you wish which applies to Iran as well as Nicaragua. In sum, President Carter's naiveness about global and cultural issues and specially Iran, harmed millions with a result far worse than Shah's period. Execution, Poverty, political suppression and prison for anyone perceived to oppose the Islamic regime is unprecedented in Iranian history.

Reagan Era and Age of Optimism:

Ronald Ragan presidency, a breath of fresh air, brought new hopes, challenges and opportunities. A perennially optimistic leader, Reagan embarked on how to face a menacing USSR in addition to the problems that he inherited from the Carter Administration. As for Iran, the new Islamic regime had neutralized almost all forms of oppositions. Some of the leading intellectual clergy had been liquidated by a mysterious group called "Forgan". Names like Ayatollah Mofatah, Dean of School of Theology, at Tehran University, Ayatollah Motahari, a professor at that school in addition to Ayatollah Beheshti, the brain behind the regime, Ayatollah Taleghani who led the movement while Khomeini was in Paris, and a few other notables top clergy were assassinated. Ayatollah Taleghani had a heart attack due to Khomeini's pressure. Mehdi Hashemi who organized some tugs in opposing a Reagan delegate was summarily executed by Ayatollah Khomeini's order. Additionally, the last Prime Minister under Shah, Shahpur Bakhtiyar, was executed in Paris in addi-

tion to a competent general Owaisi. The militia group that had managed to destabilize Shah's regime had left Iran fearing elimination and others went underground fearing execution. The National Front leadership that spearheaded the movement was sideline and many left Iran fearing jail. At this critical moment, Vladimir Kuzichkin a KGB spy, had defected to Great Britain and had disclosed a "treasure throw of documents indicating massive Russian spying system in Iran in addition to the name of Pro-Moscow Tudeh (Communist) party members. The information was passed on to the CIA which surreptitiously transmitted to the new Islamic regime. They were all rounded up and eviscerated." D.C.Ibid.

The Islamic regime continued to support and arm the Mujahedin in Afghanistan through Northern Alliance. So, there was some common cause shared with U.S. which was heavily arming the Mujahedin, money from Saudi Arabia and arms from U.S. Such efforts ultimately led to Russia's departure from Afghanistan, emergence of Mikhail Gorbachev realizing the disastrous outcome of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and collapse of USSR.

Reagan's Humane Attitude

The United States was pursuing two objectives in the conflicts taking place between Iran and Iraq. One was to make sure that Islamic revolutionary zeal does not spread in the Middle East and the other was to watch the Soviet Union and its expansionist appetite, located on Northern border of Iran. One sure thing was that Ayatollah Khomeini was totally against atheism. But in Iraq the Americans were tilting toward Iraq and the Iranians knew this which affected their outlook toward the United States. This added to the feeling that the United States was against the Islamic regime even though Carter's national security advisor had announced that the United States accepted the outcome of the revolution and recognized it. President Reagan wanted to establish a formal relationship with Iran. There was a common understanding that Iran's strategic location, was critical to western economies. The massive reserves of oil in and around the Persian Gulf was the Aquiles Hill for the western economies.

The problem facing the Islamic republic was that its power had not yet been completely consolidated and there were hawks in the regime that were against re-

proachment with the United States. Reagan administration did not give up attempt to pursue the policy of wooing Iran to the West. In his mind attempting to court Iran looked very much like President Nixon strategic decision toward China to keep it away from USSR. It was a worthwhile attempt and he used everything possible in addition to getting the release of hostages left over from Carter's era. Reagan's vision and willingness to help has had no rival in recent years among the American leaders. His humane philosophy always prevailed even against serious odds.

After Reagan, the Bush sailing under the Reagan positive era, came to Office at a very critical time in U.S history. The war between Iran and Iraq had ended without either side getting much out of it except the fact that during 8 years of war more than a million people lost their live and billions of dollars had been evaporated including the destruction of world's largest oil refinery in Abadan.

Bush's Legacy

President George Herbert Walker Bush was the most experienced president in recent decades. He had been Director of CIA and Ambassador to China. The hostage issue had not been resolved yet and his policy was to resolve it as early as possible. Given the past Iraqi-Russian relationship President Bush wanted rapprochement with Iran as a counterweight. In his first inaugural he emphasized the issue by indicating: "Assistance can be shown here and will be long remembered. Goodwill begets goodwill. Good faith can be a spiral that endlessly moves on". Then he added "great nations like great men keep their word. When America says something, America means it whether a treaty or an arrangement or a vow made on marble steps". C.D.p.381. Bush released some money, \$567 million, kept in an escrow account, left from Algiers accord. But kept limited intelligence exchange with Iraq. Iranians learned about this which enhanced their suspicion of the United States. Iran had succeeded releasing all the hostages using tremendous political capital. But Bush reneged using another event as an excuse. Goodwill did not beget goodwill. A United States President's word did not mean much which confirmed Iranians' suspicions.

The Kuwait Crisis

In a normal meeting with the Iraqi dictator, Ms. April Gillespie, a U.S Offi-

cial, had mentioned that the United States does not intervene in inter-Arab affairs (which may have been a bait). The Iraqi dictator took this simple conversation seriously assuming that he could annex Kuwait. As part of scheme to topple the Kuwait regime, remove Saudi Arabian regime and bring Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan back as the protector of Islam in Mecca and consequently, Saddam would become the new Khalif given the fact that largest populated Arab country, Egypt, had accepted Israel.

So, in short period of time his army occupied Kuwait the latter's leadership fled to Saudi Arabia. The United States, with support from the United Nations, organized an international force (Japan alone paid \$8 billion) which forced Iraq to evacuate Kuwait. Iranians promised help in case of need. But this successful achievement did not help the President in his bid for a second term given the nature of the economy:

"It is the economy stupid", a campaign slogan led to presidency of Bill Clinton election and 8 years of leadership which revived the economy, managed the conflict among the republics of Serbia, Croatia and others, and left \$700.00 billion budget surplus. Immediately after Clinton, George W. Bush ran for the presidency. He almost lost to Al Gore, former V.P., in terms of votes in Florida. A re-count of paper votes was underway when Supreme Court stopped it and George W. Bush became the president of the United States.

9/11 and Iraq attack

Two dramatic events marked George W.'s presidency and determined his legacy. The 9/11 and the war on Iraq. One unpredictable and the other as the consequence of the first.

The 9/11 was indeed the work of a fanatic who thought the Christian soldiers should not have put their feet on the soil of holy places of Islam (during Kuwait issue). Osama Ben Laden led a movement called Al Qaeda, meaning "base". He began in Sudan and under pressure moved to northern part of Afghanistan, at the time run by Taliban. From there he trained many fanatics in the art of sabotage and destructive behavior in the name of Islam. From this liquidous group came some Arab young men that flew three passenger planes into World Trade Center Towers in New York City and Pentagon in addition to one that was brought down by passengers before it had an opportunity to do mischief

in Philadelphia.

So, the first order of business was to annihilate Ben Laden by draining his swamps. With direct help from Northern Alliance (fed mostly by Iran), the American forces (under General Tommy Franks) scattered Ben Laden. He ran away, many of his followers were eliminated. With direct help from Iran's emissary Dr. Javad Zariff United States installed Hamid Karzai. There were strenuous efforts by Afghans to bring back Zaher Shah who had been deposed years ago by his cousin, Davood Khan. But the negotiating skills of Dr. Zariff was impressive, and Karzai was selected and installed as President of Afghanistan.

During the latter part of Clinton presidency, a group of influential conservative American, known as Neocons (most of American Enterprise Institute), wrote to President Clinton recommending overthrowing Iraqi regime because it was a threat to Israel. Clinton disregarded the letter, but such thought did not die. When George W. Bush became president, with V.P. Dick Cheney on his right, the Neocons revived the old notion, it seemed very much like an Israeli cabal was back in power, in various capacities, with the intention of attacking Iraq.

Bush's Blunder:

With Afghanistan problem behind him, Bush focused on Iraq. A subject that had drawn his attention. So, in January 2002, in his State of the Union, he singled out "North Korea, Iraq and Iran" as an axis of evil aiming to threaten the peace of the world. Why he added Iran in that group is interesting. The Israeli Cabal had finally brought its enmity toward Iran on the TV screens. And Bush who was not known as an articulate and intelligent man read most of what was handed over to him in a statement written by Mr. Frumm. Bush's lack of articulation became one more piece of evidence of his animosity toward the Islamic Republic. He must have been totally unaware that it was the competent Iranian delegate Dr. Javad Zariff who had helped the United States install Karzai as president of Afghanistan.

There was a sharp reaction in Tehran and taken together with a belligerent statement from Newt Gingrich, speaker of the house, it left a bitter impression on the Islamic regime which increased the level of apprehension and plus phobia about United States intentions.

Given all the evidence it may be fair

to say that George W. Bush Administration was highly influenced by Israeli Cabal who at every turn scuttled an opening with Iran to settle the issues that were resolvable if the two parties would enter into negotiation in good faith. On many occasions Iranians offered to normalize relationship with United States. "We are ready to normalize". Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs emphatically mentioned. Supreme leader was quoted saying that "everything is negotiable". This spirit was repeated on many occasions and the Cabal in the State Department, National Security Council and Defense made every effort to scuttle it. On one occasion, John Bolton, the cheer leader in the Cabal, attacked the Swiss officer, who had carried Iran's message of good faith, as someone who had irresponsibly interfered in the U.S. affairs. In a way one could argue that the attempt by people of goodwill was hijacked by the Cabal.

Additionally, it seemed that the American policy toward Islamic republic was based on prejudice and suspicion which remains unresolved. Former President who squandered \$700.00 billion surplus handed to him by Clinton in addition to a shattered Iraq, and the U.S. economy in total disarray in addition to laying out the conditions that created Islamic states have become part of G.W. Bush legacy.

Obama's Reign

It seemed that finally a clear-headed leader had entered the Whitehouse. Barack Obama was the most educated president, since John F. Kennedy, to assume the leadership of the United States and the free world.

Looking at the behavior of former presidents, Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush and his son George W. Bush and the way they handled the treatment of mutual issues between the United States and Iran President Obama announced that: "he would sit down and meet the Iranian leaders without preconditions. Demanding that a country meet all your conditions before you meet with them is not a strategy, it's just naïve, wishful thinking", *The Twilight War*, D.C. p.539 Iranians have a bad memory about capitulation.

President Obama did not stop. He continued to emphasize that the two nations could negotiate to resolve sticking issues with mutual respect. He even wrote letters to the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei. At one point the latter referred to some sanctions that could be removed

as a sign of goodwill. Obama even quoted the first line of the most famous poet Saadi saying.

“The children of Adam are the limbs to each other, having been created of the same essence”. But sanctions, most of them imposed on the Islamic Republic buy previous presidents seemed to hurt and they rendered nuances by President Obama ineffective. Iranians had been had before and was hard to believe Obama’s statements serious.

Although Obama had noted the Iranian nuclear activity not threatening if they did not create a rivalry in the neighboring states like Saudi Arabia. In his mind nuclear capable was different from making Bomb which so many U.S. officials including, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff and Israels providing timeline for a bomb had predicted. They all proved false.

The last Phase of U.S. Iran Relations.

President Obama referred to America’s mistakes in removing the legitimate government of Dr. Mossadegh. Additionally, he emphasized Iran’s right to peaceful nuclear power but not nuclear weapon. Before leaving the white House President Obama together with other members of the UN Security Council plus Germany initiated an agreement, signed to curtail Iran’s nuclear activities and Islamic regime accepted the agreement. But former president Trump withdraw from the agreement. Applying “Maximum Pressure” strategy, stupidly, pushed the Iranian regime further away from “Satan”. It simply showed that the United States has a deep misunderstanding of other cultures, to the detriment of its own long-term strategy.

It should be stated here that the Iranian Supreme leader, who has the final word on critical issues agreed to the effort having said that “Sky is not falling”, in response to the hawks in the regime. Which also means that the leader is not against reasonable actions. However, as a great nation, the United States, could have removed some sanctions as a goodwill gesture to entice the suspicious regime. But the great Stateman, George Herbert Walker Bush never came forward with a winnable strategy and the problem remains unresolved as it has been for decades.

Sources:

- A Twilight War, David Crist,
- All the Shah’s Men, Stephen Kinzer

Archeological find corroborates Japan-Persia Ancient Ties

THE TEHRAN TIMES: JANUARY 14, 2020



Japan has unveiled a rare discovery of ties between the then mighty empire of the East and people from the then Persia (now called Iran). Newly-found results of a research by the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties on previously discovered objects reinforces the idea that at least one Persian man lived in the ancient city of Nara in the eighth century CE.

A team of Japanese researchers has succeeded to read the notes of an ancient wooden tablet, which dates back to 765 CE, using infrared imaging techniques, the news agency reported based on Japanese sources. The tablet bears a name, attributed to a Persian man, who is believed to be an educator or trainee at the Japanese imperial court of the times. While it’s long been accepted that Japan enjoyed trade connections with countries and cultures all along the Silk Road, records of these exchanges in ancient Japan are sparse and hard to come by, according to Japanese sources. Present-day Iran and Japan were known to have had direct trade links since at least the 7th century, but new testing on a piece of wood — first discovered in the 1960s — suggest broader ties. At the time, wooden tablets (rather than paper) were commonly used for record-keeping.

While the ancient city no longer exists, much of the remains of Heijo-kyo have been excavated over the past 70 years. Today, the area serves as a large civic park located just to the west of Nara’s city center. It should come as no surprise that in the 8th century, someone from Persia would end up living and working in Japan, which was located at the end of the Silk Road. The route connected Japan with countries and regions far to the west, including Persia and the Byzantine Empire. Ancient Japanese culture incorporated a continuum of cultural influences from south and central Asia, as well as from Persia. Many deities and demigods in the Japanese Buddhist pantheon had their origins from other parts of Asia. This statue of an Asura, dating from the 12th century, is thought to have its origins in part from a similar ancient Persian deity.

(Kindly note that a) the text printed below has been slightly edited from its original version in the Tehran Times and b) all images and accompanying captions posted below do not appear in the original Tehran Times report.)

A REVOLUTION ON CANVAS



A Revolution on Canvas is a powerful and timely documentary. In this hybrid political thriller and verité portrait documentary, Sara Nodjoumi, working with co-director and husband, Till Schauer (When God Sleeps), makes her directorial debut with this personal film, diving into the mystery surrounding the disappearance of more than 100 “treasonous” paintings by her father, seminal Iranian modern artist Nickzad “Nicky” Nodjoumi.

The film had its World Premiered at the 2023 Tribeca Film Festival, HBO will be debuting the film on March 5th (off the record). Born in Iran but living in New York City, Nodjoumi traveled back to Iran to join the Islamic Revolution, making paintings and posters criticizing the Shah’s regime. In 1980, the painter fled his home country following the vandalization of his solo exhibition, “Report on the Revolution,” and its subsequent shutdown by Islamic radicals at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.

Decades later, as Iran is once again embroiled in protests following the suppression and killing of Iranian women and activists at the hands of Iran’s “morality police,” the renowned artist and his daughter attempt to track down the missing paintings in hopes of reclaiming them. During the search, Sara, drawing on disarmingly frank conversations with both her father and mother, celebrated artist Nahid Hagigat, and grappling with complex feelings and mysteries tied to her own upbringing, traces a timeline of events to understand the circumstances that led to her homeland’s perpetual state of political turmoil and to her parents’ personal estrangement, echoing the treacherous path of many immigrant families caught in the crossfire of politics and life.

Equal parts introspective and investigative, filmmakers Sara Nodjoumi and Till Schauer expertly weave together the personal and political to tell a gripping political thriller that culminates in the soul searching of one family and a moving narrative about the power of art, sacrifice, and family bonds. Sara and Till’s kids are now the new generation fighting for change.

Their song in support of the young women in Iran fighting for freedom went viral with over 1.5 Million views overnight LINK. As a timely update, there was a first ruling in Tehran confirming that there is a fraction of Nicky’s paintings in the museum and that the artist should be entitled to the get them back.

HOMA
or Bearded Vulture

Footage circulates on social media purportedly showing the sighting of a bird similar to “Homa,” or Bird of Saadat in the Alborz Highlands. This bird, which has a mythical status in Iranian culture, is a symbol of happiness and prosperity, and it is said that its shadow falls on the head of whoever falls to happiness.

Hafez says in one of his sonnets:

If you are in the midst of the Gospel of Revelation, we will be in the midst of you, and we will be in the midst of the Gospel of Revelation and the Gospel of Psalms and the Gospel of Revelation

Saeb Tabrizi also says in Ghazli:

The fruit of Paradise is not pure in the shade of the sun, the grace of grace has gone behind the wall in the shade of Homay, and happiness is not left.

In fact, Homa is the bearded vulture that is also considered native to Iran. The recent images on social media have caused a variety of reactions from Iranian users and attracted a lot of attention. The Israeli page in Persian with the release of a video of this bird wrote: “Homay Saadat, a sign of happiness and happiness that awaits the freedom-loving people of Iran on the eve of the New Year. Homa’s presence in Iranian literature, history and symbols has a long history. From the reliefs of Persepolis to the national airline of Iran and Persepolis Football Club, the bird’s footprint can be seen as a symbol of happiness.

A page entitled “Plateau of Iran” in X, reads: “About Homai Saadat, we have to say that it is not a rare and mythical event at all. This is the only vulture that eats the bones of the carcass and saves the earth from contamination.”

Another user, Akbar Nemati, has detailed a tweet about it. He said, “Holy, and Huma or happy chicken is a bearded vulture. Perhaps you were wondering why a vulture or vulture became the bird of bliss in our Iranian beliefs?” he said.

He added: “Homaye Saadat or Chicken Saadat has a special place in the literature and culture of Iran and is known for its shadows on whoever falls to happiness, happiness and prosperity. For this reason, Homa’s role exists in many columns of Persepolis and many poems have been written in Persian literature, in which Homa plays a fundamental role. The ancient Iranians honored and sanctified the four elements of water, wind, soil and fire, and considered them to be the creator and controller of the world; insofar as the ritual of most ancient Iranian peoples was the same elements of nature. They didn’t believe in the dead and they believed that the earth should not be contaminated, and our ancestors would place their bodies in the catacombs, believing that if Homa went to a corpse, that person would be happy in the eternal world and in the next world would be paradise.”

Mr. Nemati has written that contrary to the beliefs of Homa is not a rare bird in Iran, it lives in both the Alborz and Zagros ranges, but since it chooses its nest on top of the cliffs, it is a bit difficult to see, although it is threatened in terms of protection.

Layers of Lies



Returning to Iran after many years in exile in Finland, Sam (Ramin Sohrab) finds that he has not yet escaped his past. A shady figure kidnaps his wife Emma (Jessica Wolff) in order to drag him into a violent scheme for revenge.

But Sam is a relentless fighting machine who will stop at nothing to rescue the woman he loves. When it comes to deciding their future, the past will not stand in their way... *Layer of Lies* is an adrenaline-fueled thrill ride through the bustling, diverse metropolis of Tehran.

Ramin Sohrab, a new insightful director and actor, is renowned for his exceptional skills in martial arts and stunts. Born in Tehran in 1985, Ramin began his training at the age of four under the guidance of his father, Alireza Sohrabzadeh, a master of Shaolin Wushu who introduced the discipline to Iran and trained thousands of students.

Ramin Sohrab and his family moved to Finland in 1990, where he spent his formative years. Ramin's passion for performance led him to

participate in numerous movies and TV shows, as well as showcase his talent in performances around the world. Seeking to further develop his skills, Ramin moved to Los Angeles in 2008 and enrolled at the prestigious Stella Adler Academy of Acting and Theater, a distinguished institution where iconic actors such as Marlon Brando, Robert DeNiro, Benicio Del Toro, and Mark Ruffalo had previously studied. After honing his craft, Ramin graduated from the academy in 2011, marking the beginning of his career.

Following his graduation, Ramin devoted himself to building his career as a director and actor in the motion picture industry. He successfully led the development and production of the first-ever Finnish-Iranian action film, which was filmed in Tehran and starred a strong western female lead. Adding to this milestone, the film was produced by a female producer, making it a groundbreaking achievement for Ramin and the Persian film industry as a whole. *Layers of Lies* has been

making waves in the festival circuit, having garnered an impressive 13 awards so far, including accolades for best directing, best feature film, and best cinematography. His achievements have also caught the attention of the Golden Globes, and he is featured in an article about his unbelievable journey of making the first Finnish-Iranian action film. Ramin's artistic abilities, combined with his martial arts expertise and his passion for storytelling, have won him numerous awards for his films. He continues to break new ground and push boundaries, as he seeks to bring unique stories to life on the big screen.

For as long as I can remember, action films have captivated my imagination. As a director, my goal is to bring my vision of a proper action movie to life. *Layers of Lies* is the culmination of that dream - a feature film that combines classic action drama with the power of low-budget

filmmaking.

My experience as an actor and stunt coordinator has given me a unique perspective on the art of action filmmaking. I understand the importance of telling a compelling story while delivering pulse-pounding action sequences that keep audiences on the edge of their seats. *Layers of Lies* is not just another action film - it is the first Finnish-Iranian action film, a testament to the power of collaboration and the beauty of diversity. It is a movie that celebrates both cultures and brings them together in a way that has never been done before.

Making this film has been a lifelong dream of mine, and I am honored to have had the opportunity to work with such a talented cast and crew to bring it to fruition. My hope is that *Layers of Lies* will inspire a new generation of action filmmakers and demonstrate the limitless possibilities of low-budget filmmaking.

After One Year the Death of Pirouz Cub Determined



Finally the death of this special cub who was born in Semnan Jozes Breeding Center has been determined. A small piece of plastic was eaten by the cub, causing a blockage to the intestines. This was not seen by specialists during scans.

The cub who was expected to live in Pardisan Park, in the middle of Tehran, was one of three cubs rejected by their mother.

Saffron Prayers

BY ELLEN ESTILAI

My new favorite Persian word is *ghalambor*. It used to be *zaferaan*, or saffron, but after reading my friend Bahram's article on the *ney*, the reed plant, I am partial to *ghalambor*. It is a graft of two words, *ghalam*, a reed pen, and *bor*, from the verb *boridan*, to cut. A *ghalambor* is someone who, with a sharp knife and steady hand, fashions reeds into the pens used by a calligrapher.

I like the fluidity of *ghalambor*, the way it catches at the back of the soft palate in an uvular plosive—almost a gagging sound to the Western ear—then skims the alveolar ridge, and pauses between compressed lips before gliding out on that final, accented syllable—open, soft, unfettered by the final “r.” *Ghalambor*.

It's my new favorite word as much for its sound as for the surprising obviousness of its meaning. The word is not even in my *Haim's New Persian-English Dictionary*, but it should be. As much as I've admired the acrobatic, layered lines of Persian calligraphy, I never thought about the centuries of pen cutters who made them possible. Apparently, Mr. Haim didn't either.

This oversight made me feel guilty and sad for the forgotten and marginalized *ghalambor*. It made me think of Rumi's poem about the Persian reed flute, cut from the same reed bed as the *ghalam*. Rumi says the flute's mournful sound is the cry of the reed longing to be reunited with its reed bed. Does the *ghalambor* long to be reunited with his pens? Does he long to write his own story?

This is the kind of melancholy that calls for saffron. *Zaferaan* and saffron, its softer English equivalent, are still favorite words—conjuring up languid Friday lunches with fragrant, steaming, saffron-laced rice. After years of cooking with saffron, I thought I knew all about it—how to grind it into a fine powder before dissolving it in hot water; how much to use before it becomes bitter and overwhelming; how, with the right person and the right paella, it's an aphrodisiac. I knew that the ancient Welsh used it to cure melancholy, and that Iranians believe too much of it could cause a person to die laughing. But from one of Bahram's books, I learned something else: to dispel unhappiness or grief, some devout Iranians write prayers in saffron ink, soak the prayer sheets in water, then drink the saffron-tinged liquid left behind.

The *ghalambor* should do this. The pen cutter should become the penman. He should grind the saffron the way a calligrapher would grind pigment for his ink. Inhaling the honey-sweet saltiness, he should steep the powder until the water turns sunset orange, then wet the sharpened reed he kept for himself and write prayers of remembrance. He should bear witness as the marks he made swirl away into amber water, then drink the diffused prayers—prayers for the lost reeds and prayers for himself, that he be remembered.

SAFFRON PRAYERS, A GHAZAL

by Ellen Estilai

Do not forget our pen cutter, frail *ghalambor*.
Who severed the reed from its bed? Hail, *ghalambor*!

Rumi's reed flute cries out, longs for its marshy home.
Pen, like flute, bereft—an orphan's wail: *Ghalamboooooor!*

Knife scrapes away bark, bevels to acuity,
abrades tender core—his hands can't fail, *ghalambor*.

Others will guide his pens, stream swirls and wisps of ink.
Scribes ignore their agents and prevail, *ghalambor*.

Inks dark as the reed bed's loam obscure the parent
of their pens, obliterate, assail *Ghalambor*.

Do you cry out, ache for reunion with your pens,
long to write your story of travail, *Ghalambor*?

This manner of melancholy calls for saffron,
honey-sweet saltiness to restore pale *Ghalambor*.

Dip your pen in liquid saffron, write your prayers,
steep them in water orange as sunset's veil, *Ghalambor*.

Drink sunset water laced with prayers for lost reeds,
prayers for you, that we hear your tale, *Ghalambor*.

Let Ellen, deep in inky doubt, steep saffron prayers,
that of your lost pen she may avail, *Ghalambor*.

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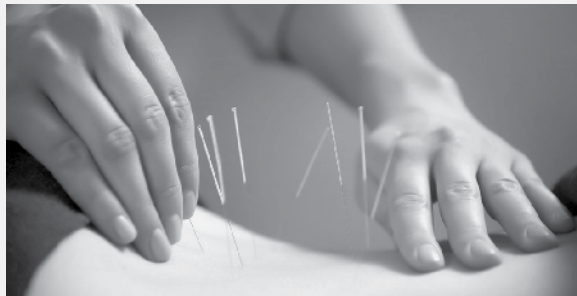
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ZAYANDERUD

From Wikipedia



GEOGRAPHY

The Zayandeh starts in the Zard-Kuh subrange of the Zagros Mountains in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. It flows 400 kilometres (249 mi) eastward before ending in the Gavkhouni swamp, a seasonal salt lake, southeast of Isfahan (Esfahan) city. The Zayandeh used to have significant flow all year long, unlike many of Iran's rivers which are seasonal, but today it runs dry due to water extraction before reaching the city of Esfahan. In the early 2010s, the lower reaches of the river dried out completely after several years of seasonal dry-outs.

The Zayandeh River basin has an area of 41,500 square kilometres (16,000 sq mi), an altitude from 3,974 metres (13,038 ft) to 1,466 metres (4,810 ft), an average rain fall of 130 millimetres (5 in) and a monthly average temperature of 3 °C (37 °F) to 29 °C (84 °F). There are 2,700 square kilometres (1,000 sq mi) of irrigated land in the Zayandeh River basin, with water derived from the nine main hydraulic units of the Zayandeh River, wells, qanat and springs in lateral valleys. Zayandeh River water gave life to the people of central Iran mainly in Isfahan and Yazd provinces. Before the drying-out, water diverted per person was 240 litres (63 US gallons/53 imp gallons) per day in urban areas and 150 litres (40 US gallons/33 imp gallons) per day in villages. In the 1970s, the flow of the river was estimated at 1.2 cubic kilometres (0.3 cu mi) per annum, or 38 cubic metres (1,340 cu ft) per second.

HISTORY

People have lived on the banks of the Zayandeh for thousands of years. An ancient prehistoric culture, the Zayandeh

River Civilization, flourished along the banks of the Zayandeh in the 6th Millennium BC. The Zayandeh crosses the city of Isfahan, Iran. In the 17th century, Shaikh Bahai (a scholar and adviser to the Safavid dynasty), designed and built a system of canals (maadi), to distribute Zayandeh water to Isfahan's suburbs. The Zayandeh riverbed is spanned by Safavid era bridges, and the river used to flow through parks.

American archaeologists and historians of Persian art, Arthur Upham Pope and his wife Phyllis Ackerman are buried in a small mausoleum on the river bank. Richard N. Frye (an American scholar of Iranian and Central Asian Studies) has also requested to be buried there.

WATER USE AND DIVISION

Until the 1960s in Isfahan Province the distribution of water followed the Tomar, a document claimed to date from the 16th Century. The Tomar divided the flow of the Zayandeh River into 33 parts which were then specifically allotted to the eight major districts within the region. At the district level the water flow was divided either on a time basis, or by the use of variable weirs, so that the proportion could be maintained regardless of the height of the flow.

For centuries Isfahan city had been an oasis settlement, noted for its surrounding fertile lands and prosperity. Until the 1960s industrial demand for water was minimal, which enabled the scarce water resources to be utilized primarily for agriculture. With a growing population within the basin, and rising standards of living particularly within the city, the pressure on water resources steadily increased until

the division of water Tomar was no longer feasible. The creation of large steel works and other new industries demanded water.

The Chadegan Reservoir dam project in 1972 was a major hydroelectric project to help with stabilizing water flow and generating electricity. The dam was initially named Shah Abbas Dam after Shah Abbas I, the most influential king of the Safavid dynasty, but it was changed to Zayandeh Dam after the Islamic revolution in 1979. Since 1972, the Chadegan Reservoir has helped prevent seasonal flooding of the Zayandeh River.

80% of the Zayandeh's extracted water is used for agriculture, 10% for human consumption (drinking and domestic needs of a population of 4.5 million), 7% for industry (like the Zobahan-e-Esfahan and Foolad Mobarekeh steel companies and Isfahan's petrochemical, refinery and power plants) and 3% for other uses.

There have been a number of tunnel projects (Koohrang) to redirect water from the Karun River (Iran's largest river that also starts in the Zagros Mountains), to the Zayandeh. These have helped provide water for the growing population and new industries in both Isfahan and Yazd provinces.

While the drying-out of the lower reaches of the Zayandeh River has been attributed to drought, the main reasons are man-made. Poor planning and populist politics have led to years of mismanagement and overuse which resulted in seasonal dry-outs and ultimately caused the river to dry out completely before reaching Isfahan.

DRYING UP OF ZAYANDEHROUD RIVER

Zayandehroud River lost its permanent flow since 2006 and the people and farmers of this city faced a water shortage crisis. In addition to the lack of water due to the lack of snow and rain, the main reasons for the drying up of Zayandehroud are related to human errors, which can be summarized in the following cases: Converting 180,000 hectares of natural resource pastures into gardens upstream of the Zayandehroud River in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province and Faridan region.

Creating structural dams and reservoirs for the development of agriculture in the mirage of the watershed. Establishment of large industries such as Isfahan Iron Smelter, Isfahan Oil Refinery, Isfahan Petrochemical, Chemical Industries,

Mobarakeh Steel Company, Sepahan Oil Company and many industries that use a lot of water, such as power plants, etc., on the banks of Zayandeh River.

The dryness of the river has caused hundreds of thousands of residents down the river to become unemployed and has led to their seasonal or complete migration to other provinces or the city of Isfahan. This has caused a lot of damage to the farmers, so that during these years the farmers of Isfahan have rioted and protested at different times.

CLOSING THE RIVER AND REROUTING

As of November 2023 a water supply tunnel Kohrang has been under development by Iranian government for more than 20 years.

The government Minister of Energy said the river would be opened five years from 2024. In 2015 the government promised to fully open the river in 2018 then in 2021 promised to do it in 2023. The government had reallocated the water from the river to other provinces cities and industries from 1980s. A database for water share allocating had been proposed.

BRIDGES

There are several new and old bridges (pol) over the Zayandeh River.

Bridges on Zayandeh River in City of Esfahan:

- Marnan Bridge Built in 1599 (pedestrian)
- Vahid Bridge Built in 1976
- Vahid Bridge II Built in 2007
- Felezi Bridge Built in the 1950s
- Azar Bridge Built in 1976
- Si-o-se Pol Built in 1632 (pedestrian)
- Ferdosi Bridge Built in the 1980s
 - Joui Bridge Built in the 17th century (pedestrian)
- Khaju Bridge Built in 1650 (pedestrian)
- Bozorgmehr Bridge Built in the 1970s
- Ghadir Bridge Built in 2000
- Shahrestan bridge Built in the 11th century (foundations back to the 5th century AD) (pedestrian)

RECREATION

In the section of the Zayandeh River crossing Esfahan, bridges, parks, paddle boats and traditional cafes and restaurants amongst the rest of Esfahan rich cultural heritage, are major tourist attractions for Iranian as well as international visitors.

KHALKHAL HOSTED WINTER SPORTS FESTIVAL

Tehran Times: January 29, 2024



Khalkhal, a mountainous county in Iran's Ardabil province, hosted a winter sports festival on February 2.

The event is designed to showcase the winter tourism potential of Khalkhal, drawing upon the extensive interest of sports and winter recreation enthusiasts in the region, Khalkhal's tourism chief said on Monday.

Ali Darvishi underlined Khalkhal's rich tourism potential during the wintertime and expressed optimism about welcoming participation in winter sports and leisure activities during the festival.

"We aim to introduce the winter tourism attractions of Khalkhal and foster social enthusiasm and joy."

Various activities have been planned for the event, including archery, snow sculpture competitions, the creation of handicraft and souvenir booths, and the performance of traditional ceremonies and music, the official said.

According to organizers, the festival to provided entertainment and recreational opportunities for locals and also served as an initiative to boost tourism in the region during the winter months. With a lineup of diverse activities, the festival created a vibrant and engaging atmosphere, contributing to the cultural and social well-being of the Khalkhal community.

Over the past couple of years, Ardabil's tourism department, in close partnership with other governmental bodies and private investors, has formulated extensive plans to draw more tourists during winter by launching three new ski resorts, among other efforts.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, whose altitude averages 3,000 meters above sea level, Ardebil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble.

The province is very cold in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year. The capital city of Ardabil is usually recorded as one of the coldest cities in the country in winter.

Iran has long been an international destination for avid powder chasers during winter, while - in total contrast - its arid and semi-arid climate reaches sweltering levels in summer. Maybe not the first that comes to mind, snow-capped mountains above Tehran are home to some of the world's best ski resorts where powder hounds can enjoy famous Iranian hospitality.

Three Iranians Who Made a Difference

part two

M. REZA VAGHEFI

PROFESSOR FAZLULLAH REZA:



Winter 2023 Issue of the Persian Heritage contains a comprehensive article by Dr. Mashaei, about Professor Reza's contributions to science, space technology and Persian literature which present the reader a summary of major accomplishment of a unique man in the history of our homeland. His trials and setbacks and revivals indicate an unflinching drive to achieve what seems unachievable. The above-mentioned research work indeed portends the man's determination to produce scientific and literary work that are unrivalled and enjoy a lasting effect in literary history of Iran and the world.

The author's acquaintance with the scholar began on the campus of Concordia University in Montreal, Canada where both of us enjoyed a visiting professorship in two different fields. He was engaged in electrical engineering, and I was in business-economics. He also taught at McGill university in the city. Shortly before that he had been Iranian ambassador in Canada, and I had a prestigious job in Iran before the regime change.

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Professor Reza was born in Rasht, province of Guilan on the shores of Caspian Sea. He was one of the first graduates of the College of Engineering in the newly created University of Tehran (1934). His ambitions pushed him for more advanced technical education. The United States loomed large in his mind. He travelled to New York and registered at the Polytechnic Institute. The hardship he had gone through paid off in a few years and he was awarded a Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering which landed him a job at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After a while a more appealing offer took him Syracuse University and an informal advisor to General Electric about some complex issues that this monumental enterprise was facing.

In 1960s Iran was advancing in many directions and vast array of social, economic and political issues had produced challenges that needed serious attention. One sector of society was grudgingly moving though not at the tempo that was required given the rest of society: the university system. Shah became aware of this acute issue and decided Iran was unobtrusively falling behind. The answer was Arya Mehr University of Technology, now Shariff University of Technology. Its early start was incongruent with the objectives set out for it, so they decided to look beyond borders and found a most distinguished scholar in the United States, by the name Fazlullah Reza. He was invited to assume chancellorship of the Arya Mehr University of Technology. Time was not on his side so the new leader embarked on revamping the programs and set in motion the most up-to-date curriculum beginning with electrical engineering. Other areas like mathematics, chemistry and physics were added as the University took off.

As mentioned, change was the order of the day in the country. The Chancellor of Tehran university retired at the time. Even

though Professor Reza had just begun to reorganize the only technology university he was immediately asked to assume the chancellorship of the oldest university in Iran. It was the biggest challenge for him but accepted the responsibility enthusiastically. It was a dream which seemed to fit Professor Reza's deep ambitions and desire to help the fatherland. Soon he found that a lengthy academic "menopause" had inflicted serious pain on this major academic institution. Programs in most departments were rusting and faculty and administrators were reluctant to touch the status quo. So, it was most opportune to implement some major structural and academic changes to revitalize the most important educational institution in the country. He initiated a two-front strategy. One: academic personnel and Two: academic courses.

The Tehran University was established in 1934 as part of Reza Shah's (the founder of Pahlavi dynasty) to train: doctors, civil servants, lawyers, schoolteachers etc. At the senior level the university was staffed by scholars that had been sent to Europe, mostly France and Germany, to receive advance education and upon returning formed the nucleus of professors in each area. Some of the returnees, in addition to teaching, produced literary works that enlightened thousands of minds. But others were not quite motivated to produce lasting works which could potentially enlighten many lives. The leadership of the university never thought of challenging the status quo therefore no change had occurred in many years. Therefore, the new chancellor, a product of latest science and technology, had the challenge of his life right in front of him. The only solution was a shakeup. After an intensive review he retired about hundred calcified faculty and began hiring brand new Ph.D. students coming from top European and American universities. This was a great shock to an established order which had deep political influence in society and government.

It had taken a few months to accomplish this monumental task, attacking the old programs and replacing them with new ways of doing and teaching. This courageous step created an undercurrent of intrigues and backstabbing to which the new chancellor was totally unfamiliar and was not accustomed to.

The University of Tehran had a special place in society. Respect for the institution and its independence from government changes was the cornerstone of an established order. But once the backbiting and unjust behavior of the old guard began even the ones that had encouraged change of leadership decided to join the chorus of people whose influenced had been threatened.

Government had few weapons in its arsenal against the new chancellor. No one could accuse him of the thrust in upgrading the rusted programs because he was hired to do just that. The drastic change could not be thwarted. He had been invited to revitalize the institution. No one could achieve any revitalization with exhausted hands. So, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education began to look at the University's budget in a way to hamstring the university. The Chancellor was terrified because such a move may torpedo his plan to update the system, in addition to undermining an established rule. The Ministry also used uncongenial methods to undermine the chancellor. But the man with an international reputation was not used to such dirty methods. The pressure was immense.

So, he resigned but that was not to terminate the enthusiastic

spirit with which he left a secure job in the United States. The government who pushed out of chancellorship offered to nominate him to work as Iran's Ambassador at the United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization, UNESCO in Paris. As is his nature, Professor Reza accepted the job with his usual enthusiasm. The author of *An Introduction to Information Technology*, the first of its kind which was translated into French, Russian, Japanese, Rumanian, Hungarian and Spanish provided a world-wide audience which by itself was very unusual. Numerous scientific papers were published before he travelled to Iran. His arrival in Paris was also welcomed by the most prestigious Sorbonne University's invitation to teach in area of his research, a God given opportunity for French students who enthusiastically welcomed his arrival in their homeland.

The Directorship at UNESCO was the beginning of a great period and most welcome opportunity to awaken the other half of his immense talent: the discovering, and putting it in print, the meaning of what has become an integral part of Persian civilization: *Epics of Kings* by Iranian hero Ferdowsi. Interpretation of masterpiece required a deep knowledge of Persian culture not commonly understood. He began to use his ambassadorship at UNESCO to write and awaken *The Epic of Kings*, something that many scholars before him had avoided primarily because in order to do so, it would require a deep understanding of the issues that had been avoided until now.

The philosophical and scientific achievements of late professor Reza are beyond the scope of this author. My purpose is primarily to see why the Iranian leadership did such a disservice to a man who had accomplished so much in scientific world where every scientist was looking up to him. He was called Father of Information Theory. Was it lacking understanding what his mission was? Wasn't he invited to reform? Was he too much to stomach? Was he too far ahead of the leadership that had invited him to upgrade the system? Was it that his presence was a threat to the vested interest of losers, and this was a purely and mis understandingly naïve way of looking at a jewel far beyond their comprehension? Or a combination of the factors mentioned above led to a tragedy? It is hard to comprehend.

My purpose is to look at his accomplishments after he left the chancellorship and the extent of his contributions to deeply review the Persian language, an ocean without border as he mentioned so many times. It is well established that his work follows the tradition of another well-known scholar Omar Khayyam who was a mathematician before he created historical literary work *Rubaiyat* which has been translated into English by Edward Fitzgerald. Some of his: "geometric solutions to mathematical problems... would not be found for another 400 years" (Sara Hart, NYT, April 9, 2023). As a matter of fact. Late Professor Reza's most valuable and inspiring companion was Hafez in whose work Professor Reza found many references to mathematical phenomena that would remain unresolved for centuries.

Professor Reza's poems appeared while he was in school of engineering. That talent may have been the fountain of so many high-quality mathematical solutions which were the foundation of *An Introduction to Information*, which may have contributed to Apollo Moon Landing in 1968-69. That masterpiece was followed by numerous scientific articles which enriched hundreds of engineering programs world-wide. It seems that his command of mathematical issue and Persian poetry and writings complemented each other in the 20th century Omar Khaya outcome of which have enriched many libraries of lovers of Persian and mathematics. He

was indeed a new Omar Khayyam.

CONCLUSION:

I have been troubled by the fact that a distinguished scholar, most famous in international circles, was invited to inject modern science and technology into a sleepy system in order to awaken the talent that was there to be trained yet his presence was not appreciated by the very system that desperately needed such a rare human asset to get out of declining situation and thrusting into a new century that the rest of the world had been ushered in long time ago? Could the regime not understand him? Was he too much evidence of the backwardness of the system? Was the major beneficiary, the student body, aware of delinquencies of the ruling university leadership? Or was the power of the old guard a deciding factor in the process that made an ideal situation unbearable and let the precious human asset give in and avoid class warfare? It is hard to understand the puzzle that was. But there is something in the work environment of the three distinguished Iranians who seems to have affected their decisions to give up and that is the toxicity which undermines objective decision making and analytical thinking required where only a pleasant goal-oriented atmosphere is a fundamental factor which seemed to be missing. Centuries ago, the religious community was frightened by presence of another distinguished scientist Avicenna and forced him to run away as a non-believer where he complained that if: "I am a non-believer, there's no one who believes in the religion tenets". It seems that historically the giants who unwittingly challenged the status quo without a solid support to back them up leave the scene heartbroken. The three Iranians who gave their homeland the best they could follow the Avicenna and others who faced the same thick wall of ignorance and lack of care for the outcome that could have been achieved for a larger good.

Furthermore, the three distinguished Iranians shared some fundamental qualities: They were proud of their achievements helping the fatherland. They were not mischievous. Such behavioral inadequacies were not part of their DNA. They believed in Iranian and Persia culture, and they resented chauvinism and self-aggrandizement which had become a common feature of some people around them. They were not pretentious and had deep feelings about human talent.

They were puritans of highest order, and nothing would shake their faith in people of Iran. Persian literature has made many references to the most important phase of a man's life which is summed up in: It is not what a man/woman earns in a material world, the most important feature of a man/woman life is what he or she leaves behind. The three distinguished people mentioned in this article left behind undeniable and immortal phenomena. They were not pretentious. Their works were self-evident. Ebtehaj built the most important *Dez Dam* which supplies electricity and water to millions in the southwest province of Khuzistan. It is one of many similar contributions to Iranian people. Dr. Bolourchi left behind a *Dietetic Handbook* in addition to many peers reviewing scientific work for students and thousands of dieticians and doctors to help their patients. Her book in *Nutrition* became a standard TEXT for hundreds of students in food as well as in medicine. Professor Reza left behind innovative scientific and technological works in addition to numerous unique Persian works that have enriched an ocean of remarkable and durable literature that have deepened mankind's knowledge beyond ordinary matters. And because of their altruistic nature they remain alive in the mind and heart of the people who knew them and continue to enjoy their work.

Norooz, commemorating the New Year, has been celebrated in **Iran**, formerly **Persia**, throughout nearly three millennia of its recorded history. Norooz begins at the **vernal equinox**, the first day of spring season, a day of rejuvenation and reconciliation, and, reinvigorations and rebirth. Norooz's arrival is symbolized in nature by the sprouting of greens and grains, flowers and trees. The Norooz holidays of today span from **Charshanbeh Suri** (jumping over the bonfire to absorb its reddish healthy strength, while getting rid of one's yellow unhealthy state of being), on the evening preceding the last Wednesday of the old year, climaxing at Norooz, and concluding with **Sizdeh Bedar**, the thirteenth day of the New Year. Iranians spend the last day of the holidays at a picnic in the orchards, on the prairies, by the seaside, or in the foothills where they eat and drink, dance and sing, and play and joke. On that day, the single women knot grass together in the hope of marriage before the next Norooz! Integral to Norooz are the visits exchanged and paying tribute to the elders, as well as receiving monetary and other gifts from them.

Norooz has its own culinary dishes and pastries, sweets and desserts that are quite distinct from the rest of the year. Enjoying street performances is commonplace throughout Iran. The Persian Prefix "**no-**", as in **NoRooz**, is the equivalent of "new" and "now" in English since both languages are rooted in Indo-European origins. Iran has, by and large, remained quite diverse since antiquity. Norooz, which celebrates the divine creation of **Zoroastrian** Lord of



NOROOZ,

the Iranian (Persian) New Year

David N. Rahni

Wisdom-**Ahura Mazda** who created the Universe, the Guardian Angels (Forouhars) and the holy fire-is the most cherished of all Iranian festivals. The ancient practice of observing the commencement of the spring season was not necessarily reserved to Iranians (Persians); many neighboring nations have and continue observing it. The indigenous tribes roaming the Persian Plateau during 6,000 years before the Persians arrived, along with the **Babylonians** of **Mesopotamia**, who had paid special attention to the role of the lengthening days warmed by Sun for their survival (**Sol Invictus**).

Today several hundred million people in the south, south central and southwest Asia observe Norooz, or a close variation of it. In fact, Zoroastrianism and, to a lesser extent, other Persian faiths such as **Mithraism**, **Mazdakism** and **Manichaeism** that were in part inspired by Buddhism, later influenced the shaping of the three Semitic **monothe-**

istic religions. The early Christians celebrated the birth of Jesus in early spring, and epiphany commemorated the arrival of the three Wise Men, the **Magi**, who were said to be **Zoroastrian** priests. The New Year in the west, that began in early March and was observed in Europe and North America until the late 18th Century, was called the **Common New Year**. Today's Christmas is due to **Pope Emperor Constantine's** moving the birth of Jesus to mask the birth of Indo-Iranian deity **Mithra** to the **winter solstice**! Furthermore, the concurrent celebration of **Purim**, **Passover** and **Easter** by the Jews and Christians in tandem with Norooz cannot be construed as coincidental, but rather a common heritage.

[1]Norooz was celebrated in an early Persian mythological dynasty, **the Kianis** heralded by Jamshid (Shah Jam). The **Kiani dynasty** is cited with national pride and nostalgic reverence

in **Shahnameh**, the 60,000 poetic verses of the Epic Book of [Persian] Kings, written by **Ferdowsi** (the **Paradisi**, the paradise) in the 11th century C.E. The oldest archaeological record of the Norooz celebration comes from the **Achaemenid** period of over 2,500 years ago, where pictorial illustrations and inscriptions on the grand inner Halls of Persepolis, the **Apadana**, depict King **Darius** receiving the ambassadors and emissaries presenting Norooz gifts from his vast empire. The Achaemenid Kings actually gave immunity to a commoner chosen to rule in the Palace for a day at Norooz for the king's self-reflection. This practice later led to wise and dancing artisans in the street who are **Haji Pirooz** (the victorious pilgrim!), as well the royal tolerance of **court jesters** in both Iranian and European **regal courts**.

A major part of the New Year ritual is setting up a special table with seven specific items present, **Haft Sin** (**Haft Chin**, hinting at the seven picked crops before Islam, and the seven days of creation). In ancient times each of the items corresponded to one of the seven, sacred living creations and the seven holy immortals protecting them.

Today some modifications are made, but a few of the original items have kept their symbolism. All seven items start with the letter "S"; this was not the requirement in ancient times. Zoroastrians today do not have the seven "S", but they do have a ritual of growing seven seeds. The ancient Iranians also grew seven seeds as a reminder that this is the seventh feast of the creation, and the new growth symbolized the festi-

val's other aspect, namely, a feast of resurrection and the eternal cycle of life.

Sabzeh, green shoots of wheat, barley, millet, or lentils are planted on flat plates a few days before the New Year arrives. Decorated with colorful red, white and green ribbons, *Sabzeh* along with hyacinth, tulips and daffodils are displayed with Haft-sin and then thrown into streams the last day of the Norooz holidays, on "**Sizdeh bedar**", the 13th day after Norooz (It coincides with April fool's day in the west!) A few live **gold fish** (presumably denoting the origin of life in water) are placed in a bowl. In the old days the fish would be taken to the riverbanks or *qanats* after the holidays; however, today most children, mesmerized by them, keep them as pets, either in the courtyard pond (**Howz**) or in an aquarium indoors.

Mirrors are placed on the Haft-Sin table, and candles are lit adjacent to it to aid the reflection of light and the scared fire if present, and to signify knowledge and wisdom. Mirrors and candelabra were significant artifacts in Zoroastrian symbolic art and architecture, and still are integral components of most Iranian celebrations, especially the wedding ceremony. Mirrors are also used extensively in Iranian mystical literature as well and represent introspection and retrospection. Most Iranian burial shrines and mausoleums are still extensively decorated with highly ordered, complex geometrical mirrors, a popular decorative style since ancient times. Again, light is regarded as sacred by the Zoroastrians, and the effective use of mirrors intensifies the reflection

of the light.

In ancient times, wine was always present at the Haft-Sin. Since the Muslim conquest, wine has been replaced by vinegar or at times with honey since alcohol is banned in Islam. The **Egg**, a universal symbol of fertility, corresponding to Mother Earth, **Sepanta Armaiti**, and hints at the concept of **Faravahar**, the highest achievement of human soul. Eggs are hard-boiled and traditionally colored red, green, magenta, scarlet, or yellow, colors favored by Zoroastrians. Recently following the Easter egg tradition, more colors are used and the eggs are elaborately decorated and offered to children as treats. Fresh garlic is used to ward off any bad omen.

This is said to be a modern innovation, as there is no evidence that garlic was used in this context in antiquity, but perhaps it may have been one of the seven herbs grown at Norooz. **Samanoo**, a thick, brownish, malted paste, is present on the table today. It makes for a nutritious meal and could have been part of the feast in ancient times. Coins (symbolizing wealth and prosperity), fruits, special sweets and baked pastries, and a holy book for the believers, are present as well.

The Achaemenians created the first superpower empire in the world, spanning from India to Central Asia, the Caucasus and Asia Minor, and extending deep into North Africa. Although they built four magnificent mega-palaces, a residence for each season, the **Persepolis** complex (Takhte Jamshid, still standing north of Shiraz in central Iran), was the Grand Palace where the Kings celebrated Norooz and spring. Among the

most notable Persian Kings were **Cyrus the Great** (revered in the Torah as the savior, who reconquered Jerusalem, invited the Jews to return and rebuild it). Cyrus is also credited as having decreed the first universal **Declaration of Human Rights**. He was followed by **Darius**, (who dug the first **Suez Canal** and further bolstered the federal system of many nations, *satrapies*, and the pony express.), and **Xerxes**, (whose **inscriptions** in Asia Minor boasting of his heroic bravery, as reluctantly recorded by the Greek nationalist historian, **Herodotus**).

The **first historical** evidence of human settlement in the Iranian plateau dates back to well over 10,000 years ago, as attested by the discoveries of a chess/backgammon set in Shahreh Sookhteh *a.a.* the **Burned City** (in the southeastern Zabol region), the two baked **fermentation pots** (from the northwestern Oroomieh region) currently deposited at the University of Pennsylvania, and **Teppe Sialk** mounds with seventeen layers of settlements.

As a result of the latter discovery, the time of the earliest organized agriculture and domestication of flora and fauna was moved back by nearly 2,000 years to 8,000 B.C.E. to the beginning of the human civilization! The diverse indigenous people in southwest Asia were absorbed into the three major incoming Iranian Aryan tribes of the **Medes**, **Parthians** and the **Persians**, who arrived from central Asia, east of the Caspian Sea, over 3,000 years ago.

In fact, the name, **Iran**, derives from the Indo-European roots of **Middle Pahlavi**, which means the land of

the Aryans; interestingly, the same root is also found in **Ireland** as a word.

Americans of Iranian/Persian heritage, recognized among the most educated and **affluent immigrant** communities with nearly one million celebrate Norooz through **parade processions**, musical **concerts**, **theatrical** and **movie** performances, **street fairs** and bazaars, and college and private parties throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Although the commemoration of Norooz may have been somewhat modified over time to reflect the changing socio-religious landscape and/or to accommodate the infusion of new rituals from other cultures, it has, nevertheless, remained close to every Iranian heart, and as a result will remain for millennia to come. Norooz further celebrates the inspirational and aspirational commonality of humanity as a whole, irrespective of race, creed, national origin, religion, and ethnicity.

No one has been more eloquent than **Sa'adi**, the 13th century Persian poet, whose major poem from his vast two-volume treatise "**Golestan**" and "**Boostan**", is immortalized on the entrance arch of the **United Nations** Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, as follows:

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

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