



Persian Heritage

www.persian-heritage.com

Persian Heritage, Inc.

110 Passaic Avenue
Passaic, NJ 07055

E-mail: Mirassiran@aol.com

Telephone: (973) 471-4283

Fax: 973 471 8534

EDITOR

SHAHROKH AHKAMI

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. Mehdi Abusaidi, Shirin Ahkami Raiszadeh, Dr. Mahvash Alavi Naini, Mohammad Bagher Alavi, Dr. Talat Bassari, Mohammad H. Hakami, Ardeshir Lotfalian, K. B. Navi, Dr. Kamshad Raiszadeh, Farhang A. Sadeghpour, Mohammad K. Sadigh, M. A. Dowlatshahi.

MANAGING EDITOR

HALLEH NIA

ADVERTISING

HALLEH NIA

* The contents of the articles and advertisements in this journal, with the exception of the editorial, are the sole works of each individual writers and contributors. This magazine does not have any confirmed knowledge as to the truth and veracity of these articles. All contributors agree to hold harmless and indemnify *Persian Heritage (Mirass-e Iran)*, Persian Heritage Inc., its editors, staff, board of directors, and all those individuals directly associated with the publishing of this magazine. The opinions expressed in these articles are the sole opinions of the writers and not the journal. No article or picture submitted will be returned to the writer or contributor. All articles submitted in English must be typed.

* The appearance of advertising in this magazine does not constitute a guarantee or endorsement of the products by *Persian Heritage*. In addition, articles and letters published do not reflect the views of this publication.

* Letters to the Editor should be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to the above addresses and numbers. The journal reserves the right to edit same for space and clarity or as deemed appropriate.

* All requests for permissions and reprints must be made in writing to the managing editor.

PUBLISHED BY

PERSIAN HERITAGE, INC.

A corporation organized for cultural and literary purposes

Cover Price: \$6.00

Subscriptions: \$24.00/year (domestic);
\$30.00 & 50.00/year (International)

Typesetting & Layout
TALIEH PUBLICATIONS

Persian Heritage

Vol. 22, No. 87

Fall 2017

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK	6
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	8
NEWS	
Jasmin Moghbeli, Astronaut Candidate	9
Rock Art from Ancient Civilization	11
COMMENTARY	
Trump Unites Iranian Americans	12
<i>(Leila Mansouri)</i>	
Stem Cells Edited to Fight Arthritis	13
THE ARTS & CULTURE	
Positioning of Iran and Iranians <i>(Sheda Vasseghi)</i>	14
REVIEWS	15
The Sakas <i>(Michael McClain)</i>	16
"The Best of Niaz"	16
A Bloody Sunday <i>(Jamshid Amouzgar)</i>	17
A Tribute to Maryam Mirzakhani	20
Ancient Iranian Beliefs in Death, Judgment,...	23
<i>(Mitra Ara)</i>	
Master Archers <i>(Kaveh Farrokh)</i>	25
Pourdavoud Center	26
Four Billion Jewish Believers!	27
Where Did the Cat Go Home?	28
Iranian Americans Receive Ellis Island Medal	29
Artist Traces Goats Place in History	29
An Interview with Joobin Bekhrad	30
<i>(Persian Heritage)</i>	

Important Notice

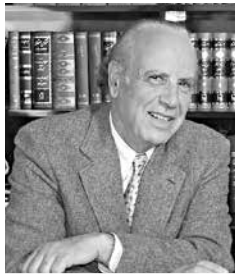
All written submissions to Persian Heritage with the expectation of publication in the magazine must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. When an article is submitted we assume the author has complete ownership of the article and the right to grant permission for publication.

Persian  Heritage

**Special
announcement:**

Contact our
California based Advertising
Agent for your ads.

(973) 471-4283



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The events of the last three months' threats, sanctions and a travel ban placed on several countries including Iran, have pre-occupied the minds of Iranians inside Iran, the Iranian Diaspora and non-Iranian supporters. An additional concern that plagues our minds is the recent release of classified information on the legacy of the 1953 Coup in Iran (the 62nd anniversary of the Coup upending Mohammad Mosaddegh). As a result of the declassification of this information books and articles, banned in and outside of Iran, have been published. Some of these articles have created "threatening" dialogue between those who supported or opposed the coup. This "threatening" dialogue has not been limited to one's individual political opinion or ideology, but has extended to the character assassinations of people on a personal level. These personal attacks have diluted the historical importance of the event; an event that took Iran in a different political direction, one that has impacted the lives of Iranian citizens then and now.

To me, it is disturbing and surprising to see individuals, who are valued and respected members of society, when confronted with an opposing political opinion, are unable to accept it. They become childlike, unable to reason. They walk away from discussions not realizing the impact it has on the younger generation; a generation who has limited knowledge of the coup and the significance of this historical event for Iran and the world. This younger generation accesses information through social media. Not knowing that these are commentaries, individual writer's interpretations, they repeat them as facts. Few of this younger generation have the patience or interest to investigate historical events that happened sixty-two years ago, just as we in our youth could not relate to the events of the Qajar Dynasty.

On any given day I receive hundreds of emails and information from various social media sites. This year during the month of August, when the celebrations of the Constitutional Monarchy (*Mashrotiat*) occurred, I received even more. Here and there I would come across articles, that I would describe as interesting and share them with friends. I do this because these individuals may not have the availability to read the article. On one occasion I received an article from a professional writer who I have known for many years and occasionally see. He had written an article of the classified information about the CIA and the Coup. This was one of the articles I shared with friends, who are also writers and intellectuals. One of the people I forwarded the article to is a contributor to *Persian Heritage* magazine and personally knows me. He responded to me saying, "Dear Shahrokh have you come to the point where you are distributing writings of someone who has a bad reputation!?"

I was taken aback by this response, that was coming from an articulate person I have known and respected for over 24 years. I was shocked. Later, I received a second email from another

person I respect. He was agreeing with the comment from my other friend. Apparently, my friend of 24 years distributed the email he sent me to others in an attempt to say that my ideology was in line with the article. My emotion changed from "shocked" to "sadness." It made me think about the limited perceptions we have as Iranians. How quickly we judge people, from stranger to close friend. How quick we are to put a label on them, without knowing all the facts. Their responses were truly upsetting.

After mauling over the situation I made the decision to call my friend who asked the first question. During the conversation I said, "Dear friend this email was sent to you and others because I knew you were not in contact with this particular writer. I wanted to show you a different view point on this situation." I further clarified my position, "I am not in line with this writer's political view nor am I in line with yours." This was a clear example how Iranians, even after 40 years as Diaspora, continue to disregard freedoms of speech and expression and lack respect for other's viewpoints. I ask, "have we progressed at all?"

Perhaps it is hard for many of my friends, holding a different political and religious view, left, moderate, right, liberal, monarch, Muslim, Christian, Jew, Bahai, Zoroastrian, non-believers etc. to understand my perspective. I am NOT so dependent on any religious or political party. I form my own opinions, but I always respect individuals even if I do not agree with their opinions. In fact, personally and as a journalist, I seek other opinions. This is the key ingredient to the success of *Persian Heritage* magazine. Whether one agrees with me or not I will always respect any Persian who respectively opines on the subject of Iran! I would help any Iranian, who shows pride for their heritage regardless of their religious or political position. After the voting is over and the prayers are said it is an individual's pride for Iran or their country, that I respect. Some however, take it upon themselves, when hearing someone's name they dislike, will attempt to assassinate their character, muddy their name, ruin their reputation, viciously label and destroy them and those they associate with, even if such association is remote.

TOLERANCE, PATIENCE and RESPECT for one another should be our goal and slogan! This is especially important at this time when our birth country is unfortunately (in my opinion) in the hands of leaders who appear to be corrupt, cruel and brutal. Leaders most of who are former *Pasdars*, such as the current Minister of Health and Mr. Rohani, who since the early years of the revolution was a participant of the National Security Council until he became president. Yet, despite the current Iranian leadership's position, Iranian men and women are withstanding oppression and standing up for their individual rights. I find it moving to see Iranians, outside of Iran, ignore the negative stigma that is attached to Iran (because of the present regime's activities) and

fight to uphold the greatness of their birth county in the world.

For the second time Persian Heritage has made Maryam Mirzakhani our cover story. She was the only woman in the world to win the Gold Medal in mathematics. This medal is comparable to the Nobel Prize. Despite her untimely death she has left an important legacy. Her name, when remembered, will be associated with the names of Einstein, Ibn Sina, Omar Khyyam and Farabi. I hope that her legacy will be as much of a symbol as Saadi's famous words, "*Bani adam azayeh yek peykarand....*" "The children of Adam are limbs of a whole, having been created of one essence, when the calamity of time afflicts one limb the other limbs cannot remain at rest. If you have no sympathy for the trouble of others you are not worthy to be called by the name of "man."

Saadi's words are memorialized on the United Nations building in New York and most recently Saadi's words were used on August 21, 2017 by President Trump. During a speech, he stated that all Americans, regardless of race, ethnicity or religion are part of the same family and just like any family deals with hardships, so will our American family come together.

We are living in difficult and dangerous times. At any moment a new war can be waged against Iran. Perhaps this war can be avoided, if all Iranians, Diaspora or not, learn to understand and be more compassionate, tolerant and respectful of each other's differences. Perhaps this is the healing ingredient to bring us together. This is a far more human way of seeing one another than considering, anyone not in line with our personal ideology, opinion or religion, as the enemy.

Unfortunately, the turmoil experienced by Iranians because

of the political differences can be compared to what is presently happening in the United States. This may lead to the possibility of a civil war. I believe and hope that President Trump, Republicans, Democrats, Moderates, Liberals, Congressmen, Senators and American citizens (made up of a variety of ethnicities, religions and political platforms) will apply the principals of Cyrus the Great and leaders that followed his wisdom, to the present conflict here. We are only divided if we allow ourselves to be. We need to turn from those who carry a flame intended to ignite a war over superficial differences, that a minority of individuals are turning into something more. No difference is worth the life of a fellow citizen this we learn from history. In a civil war, there is only one winner, peace is rarely, if ever generated from negotiations. We as citizens can respectfully and with dignity settle our differences. We must learn to develop our own opinions through legitimate research. We must learn from the commentaries we read and hear, but not consider them as truth. We must clearly analyze leadership at all levels. We must not base our lives on what we don't have but rather what we have and if we want more we must understand that gain comes from hard work. Success is not a birth right. We must always understand that control is best served by division. Cyrus the Great never divided, he respected and received respect in return. Again, division is the strongest weapon one has to divide and conquer and DIVISION is not what I hope for Iran, the United States and the world.

Shahrokh Alavi

A Bilingual, Cultural & Educational Publication

Persian  Heritage

To Support Your Persian Heritage

Subscribe Now!

Yes! I want to subscribe to Persian Heritage

- \$32 for one year (US) \$52 for two years (US)
- \$40 one year (Canada & Mexico - credit card only)
- \$52 one year (Europe & other - credit card only)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please send this clip with the payment to

Persian Heritage office.

Tel: 973 471 4283

Fax: 973 471 8534

www.persian-heritage.com

e-mail: mirassiran@gmail.com

ADDRESS:

Persian Heritage Inc.

110 Passaic Ave. Passaic, NJ 07055

YOUR TIRELESS EFFECTS

I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed reading your column about Iran and learning about the effect of the current situation on the Iranian people and not surprisingly the poor way in which it is all being handled by the head of our country of residence..... which I love just as much as I do my country of origin. And as always thank you for your tireless efforts over the years in making sure that Iranians do not forget their heritage and also for your continued concern about what is happening in this big world that so many are living in with fear.

You are a gentleman and scholar. Thanks again.

Golie

KEEPING OUR NAME AND CULTURE ALIVE

Persian Heritage is our pride. We must support and keep this die-hard effort to keep our name and culture alive.

For over two and a half decades we subscribed and distributed this golden opportunity in our small business.

Now retired and aged still love to receive these golden pages of *Persian Heritage* to our home.

Shahla and Mansour Fassihi

APPRECIATION

With much gratitude and appreciation for this heartfelt and beautifully written article. Fondest regards and affection.

Maryam Ansary

Iranian Woman Swims into Guinness Book of World Records

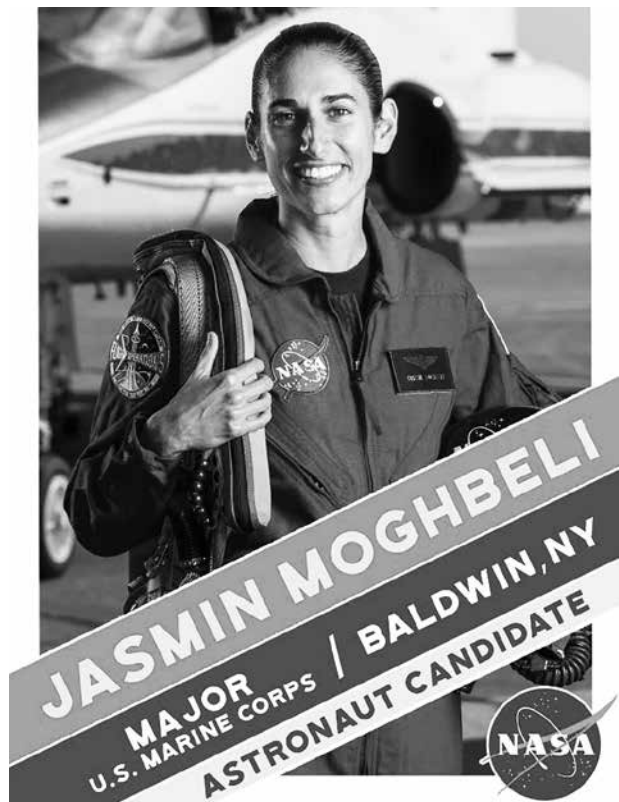
Source: Press TV



Iranian female swimmer Elham Sadat Asghari has managed to swim her way into the Guinness Book of World Records. The 36-year-old Iranian sportswoman recently completed the challenge of swimming handcuffed for more than three hours non-stop in the Persian Gulf waters off the coast of the southwestern port city of Bushehr, located 1,050 kilometers (652 miles) south of the capital Tehran. Asghari received her Guinness World Record Certificate during a ceremony in Tehran on July 23, 2017.

"I went through a great deal of trouble and difficulty to establish this record. Patriotism and my friends' unswerving support, however, encouraged me to be the first Iranian woman to secure a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records," Asghari told IRNA news agency. The Iranian female swimmer added that she is fully prepared to set five new records, but needs sponsors. The Iranian Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs recognized Asghari's 12-kilometer swim for her usage of the full-body swimming outfit in 2008. The ministry, however, refused to approve her alleged 20-kilometers swimming record in the Caspian Sea in northern Iran in June 2013.

"What she has done is a personal act without coordinating with the Iran Amateur Swimming Federation (IASF) and the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs," Reza Habibi, a member of the technical committee at IASF, said at the time. He added that the Federation Internationale de Natation (FINA) only acknowledges swims of 5, 10, 15 and 25 kilometers.



Jasmin Moghbeli has been selected by NASA to join the 2017 Astronaut Candidate Class. She will report for duty in August 2017. The New York native earned a Bachelor's degree in Aerospace Engineering with Information Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, followed by a Master's degree in Aerospace Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School. She is also a distinguished graduate of the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School and has accumulated more than 1,600 hours of flight time and 150 combat missions.

She was born in Bad Nauheim, Germany, but considers Baldwin, New York, her hometown. Her parents, Fereshteh and Kamy Moghbeli, live in Delray Beach, Florida and her older brother, Kaveh Moghbeli, currently resides in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Ms. Moghbeli graduated from Baldwin Senior High School in Baldwin, New York with a Bachelor's degree in Aerospace Engineering with Information Technology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She also earned a Master's degree in Aerospace Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California and graduated from the U.S. Navy Test Pilot School in Patuxent River, Maryland.

At the time of her selection in June 2017, Moghbeli was testing H-1 helicopters and serving as the quality assurance and avionics officer for Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron 1 of the U.S. Marine Corps in Yuma, Arizona. Moghbeli will report for duty in August 2017 to begin two years of training as an Astronaut Candidate. Upon completion, she will be assigned technical duties in the Astronaut Office while she awaits a flight assignment.

Her honors and awards include four Air Medals, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, three Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals and various unit commendations. Awarded the US Navy Test Pilot School Class 144 Outstanding Developmental Phase II Award and the Commander Willie McCool Outstanding Student Award as the Class 144 Honor Graduate.

TEHRAN'S GIANT BOOK GARDEN



This past July, Iranian officials opened the new Book Garden in Tehran, Iran. Though not the largest in the world (YET) the center is impressive in size taking up 700,000 square feet. The area includes several movie theaters, science halls, classrooms, a restaurant, a prayer room, a literary haven and a beautiful rooftop area for reading.

The project developers are hoping that this project will keep the already multitude fans of the city's annual International Book Fair, coming throughout the year. City officials also hope that the Book Garden will encourage Iranian children to be "active and creative through modern methods and equipment," Ali Larijani stated.

And Teherans' Mayor Mohammad Bager Qalibaf said, "The opening of the Book Garden is a big cultural event in the country, so that our children can make better use of this cultural and academic opportunity. The center makes a home for over 400,000 titles just for children and the books are reachable due to specifics of a child's reach.



'GHOLAM' FILM SCREENING



Gholam is the debut feature from award-winning Iranian artist and filmmaker Mitra Tabrizian, in collaboration with Cyrus Massoudi. The film brings together two of the most prominent Iranian actors from before and after the 1979 revolution, Behrouz Behnejad and Shahab Hosseini, who won the Best Actor award at Cannes in 2016.

Inspired by a real character, an enigmatic Iranian exile featured in Mitra's 2006 award-winning photographic series Border, on Iranians in exile, Gholam is the story of one man's search for a sense of purpose in an alien environment – a man with no expectations who has been through a revolution, a war and a change of landscape.

The film has been screened at World Fest, Houston, where Tabrizian won the Platinum Award for First Feature. It is also being screened at the Seattle International Film Festival, before coming to London for the East End Film Festival in June.

THE FREEDOM SCULPTURE



A gift from the Iranian American Community, the Freedom Sculpture is truly a reflection of the values of tolerance, freedom, and appreciation of diversity

The Freedom Sculpture, a historic monument to diversity and inclusiveness, will be gifted to the City of Los Angeles on July 4, 2017 as a symbol of freedom and humanity for all. The monument will be installed in the heart of the city on Santa Monica Blvd and Century Park East as a permanent reminder of the humanitarian ideals enshrined by the Founding Fathers of the Constitution of the United States and inspired by the ideals of Cyrus the Great and the Cyrus Cylinder.

**TEHRAN AUCTION:
71 WORKS OF ART SOLD AT A HIGH PRICE**
ISNA, 08-07-2017



The seventh auction was held in Tehran on July 16, 2017, a total of 71 paintings and sculptures of artists at the price of 26 billion and 113 million dollars were sold.

A painting by Sohrab Sepehri in the amount of three billion and 100 million USD was the most expensive work sold at auction. Additionally, photographs of the late Abbas Kiarostami photos which were set to sell for 150 to 200 million dollars sold for \$ 220 million USD.

ADVERTISE
your business in:
Persian Heritage
973 471 4283

**THE PASSING OF ROXANA SHEIKH
EDUCATOR**

Roxana Sheikh, 58, an educator, and resident of Bernardsville, N.J., passed away peacefully Friday, June 23, 2017, surrounded by caring family and friends.



She is survived by her three loving children, sons, Kayvan and Kamron, and daughter, Kimya Sharif, as well as her devoted mother, Azar Aryanpour, adoring brothers, Ray Sheikh and Dr. Babak Sheikh, sister-in-law, Dr. Kim Sheikh, and her sweet niece, Dakota Suri Sheikh.

She was predeceased by her father, Dr Shoja Sheikh. Roxana has touched the lives of many people by her kindness, courage, generosity, and her beautiful smile. She enjoyed reading, visiting friends, traveling, and pampering her dogs, Lolita and Kingston.

Above all, she loved spending time with her children. She also enjoyed writing poetry.

ODE TO MY DOGS

By: Roxana Sheikh

*Nostalgia overcomes me as I lie in bed late night
Bittersweet remembrance flashing before me,
eluding capture
As rapid succession of video montages replace them
There, is my playful, confidante-guarding secrets:
Silent tears, quiet prayers
'The vault is locked forever',
the knowing eyes relay back to me
How deep your forgiveness
as I may forget you tomorrow
What magnitude your wisdom
that I shall always need you
Everlasting tolerance of that garden fir
Resilient with nature's constant change of emotions
Vigilant nurse, timing the medicine
as you tend to your sick 'mommy'
Under the guise of play.
Fluttering memories like summer fireflies
- so plenty, so bright, so brief.
The soothing heat of recollections
Eternal reminders of your unrivaled friendship.*

February 24, 2011/ Bernardsville· New Jersey



(The article by Lea Surugue was first published in the *International Business Times*, May 30, 2017)

In Iran's remote north-east, the discovery of mysterious rock art is intriguing archaeologists. Strange symbols engraved on an outcrop of volcanic rock, on top of a mountain, appear particularly puzzling. The site, known as Pire Mazar Balandar (or PMB001), is situated near a small village and is well known to the locals. They in fact consider the engraved stone to be sacred. It is covered in 16 simple symbols, including U-shapes which the villagers believe are the hoof prints of the horse of the prophet Imam Reza, who is buried at a nearby shrine.

Pilgrims had for years left offerings by the volcanic stone and had started to build a small temple around it. But it was only recently, in 2015, that archaeologist Mahmoud Toghrae discovered the site and began documenting the rock art. The first results of these investigations are now published in the journal *Antiquity*.

AGE MYSTERY

In August 2016, Toghrae and two of his colleagues conducted fieldwork at the site, carefully describing the mysterious symbols marked in the stone. They also conducted a survey of the area and met with local people. This led them to discover a second nearby site with volcanic rocks covered with engravings representing animals and humans.

"We found this second rock art group after a local pilgrim invited us to have lunch at his home. There, we discovered rock outcrops with several engravings showing specific subjects – an-

IRAN: Rock Art from Unknown Ancient Civilization Discovered on Sacred Volcanic Stone at Top of Mountain



thropomorphic and zoomorphic figures. They are small in size, different from the ones documented on PMB001 but similar to other figures found in rock art all over Iran," co-author of the paper Dario Sigari, from the University of Ferrara in Italy told *IBTimes UK*.

At present, it is impossible to date the engravings or to associate them with any particular culture. This is a problem that archaeologists have always almost encountered when trying to date rock art in Iran. Because similar symbols and figures have been depicted repeatedly over the years, it is difficult to link them to a specific period – unless artifacts are found nearby, helping researchers come up with a more precise chronology.

Some of the symbols at PMB001 do give some clues. For instance, circular symbols on the stone are comparable to those found at another site and attributed to the Bronze Age. However, no precise dates can be put forward by the archaeologists without conducting more in-depth excavations in the area.

"There is a lot of debate when it comes to rock art in Iran to know whether we can attribute certain engravings to a period or another. We have a dating problem, because the same figures were represented, at different

points in time from the Neolithic to the Iron Age. Probably the PMB001 area was settled at different periods, and the rock art represents all these phases. But without more excavations conducted at the site, we can't say



for certain what the chronology of the two sites is," Sigari said.

The archaeologists also want to investigate what the location of the stones in the landscape can reveal about the significance of the rock art. The fact that PMB001 is located at the top of a mountain may prove important in interpreting the engravings.

It's possible that this position gave it a greater perceived sacred value, which was later adapted by modern population, in light of their new beliefs. "Such re-purposing of rock art for new beliefs and rituals will form another part of our ongoing research," the authors conclude.

TRUMP UNITES IRANIAN AMERICANS

LEILA MANSOURI
(source: LobeLog)

Generations of Iranians like my parents have admired the United States for almost everything. They wanted their children to attend American universities, promoted America as the land of great opportunities, and proudly sent invitations to friends for their U.S. citizenship ceremonies.

But many Iranian Americans today are confused and frightened by the wave of unjust immigration policies targeting Iranians. President Trump's executive orders ("travel bans") banning Iranians and imposing new restrictions have reduced America's allure for young Iranians inside Iran, as well as members of the Iranian American community. There are over one million Iranians in the United States. In fact, many Iranian Americans voted for Trump (and regretted that when the travel ban happened). Moreover, it is estimated that approximately 40% of Iranian Americans vote Republican (mainly for economic reasons).

The harm from the travel ban has been more profoundly hurtful to Iranian Americans than may be apparent. Yet, every cloud has a silver lining. Iranian Americans are discovering another important attribute of the United States: the strength of participatory citizenship and collectivism.

Over the last few decades, Iranian Americans have kept out of politics and kept their heads down, choosing to focus their efforts in the science, technology, medical, legal, and entrepreneurial sectors instead. This is probably due to witnessing what happened in our homeland, where political involvement often led to corruption, prison, torture, and death. Iranian Americans now realize that without common action, they cannot preserve their civil liberties. If they want their community to prosper, they must come together in the face of challenges.

Of all the minority groups in the United States, Iranian Americans are among the top for education, wealth, and culture assimilation. Although many of us

are doctors, lawyers, professors, and engineers, a number of us are also teachers, hairdressers, taxi drivers, and shop owners. Iranian Americans work everywhere, from the NFL, NASA, Google, and eBay, to President Trump's administration and every other major government agency.

Iran's inclusion in the travel ban list of countries clearly discriminates against Iranian Americans. Many Trump supporters blame the Obama administration for Iran's inclusion in the current travel ban, because Obama passed the HR158 Visa Waiver bill last year, which listed Iran as one of the targeted countries. However, President Obama was practically forced to pass HR158 to avoid another government shut down, because Congresswoman Candice Miller (MI) slid it into the Omnibus Appropriations bill shortly after the Iran nuclear deal was signed.

As the president of the Iranian American Bar Association's Washington DC chapter and a national board member, I am proud to call myself an Iranian American community organizer. Just days after the first travel ban launched our community into chaos-tearing families apart, leading to canceled consular interviews, and causing uncertainty and severe delays in the immigration system-I found myself in Iranian American Civil Rights attorney Cyrus Mehri's conference room in Washington DC (Mehri & Skalet). Also there were representatives of three other major Iranian American organizations (Pars Equality Center, PAAIA, NIAC), several distinguished lawyers, and partners from the law firm Arnold & Porter (APKS). All of our organizations have substantially drained our resources to help individuals harmed by the travel ban. In addition, we were all in Washington DC District Court last week as organizational plaintiffs fighting the travel ban (EndTheTravelBan).

Iranian Americans need to learn from the experiences of other minority groups in America. When Irish immigrants arrive in the United States today, they do not confront the racism and discrimination that their predecessors experienced. This is because the Irish American community secured their prosperity and social position by actively lobbying for equal status and fair treatment. I am encouraged to see more Iranian Americans seeking public offices. But as a community, we must become more politically engaged in selecting our representatives and then continue to advocate for our issues once they're in office.



For the past seven years, I have volunteered countless hours to organizing events and initiatives to connect and empower Washington DC area Iranians. This includes co-hosting events that introduce distinguished members of government to the Iranian American community. The former director of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, Leon Rodriguez, told me that he was surprised to see our invitation last year and delighted to accept it, because we are a community that no one ever hears from.

We must also increase our presence in the media. Image-building is crucial to our effectiveness, and involves voice, visibility, and validation. When the American public sees and hears a sophisticated and professional Iranian American speak on behalf of the community, this shapes the image of the community and increases our own impact on the media.

There are only a few Iranian American community organizers and groups in every major city, but there are over one million Iranians in the United States, and we need to use our numbers to be heard. Our strong, amazing women must be in the public eye more. We need to engage in local politics and invite our representatives over for tea. Now more than ever, the Iranian community has united. We must use this opportunity, inadvertently provided by the Trump administration, to translate our numbers into political power.

About the Author:

Leila Mansouri is the Washington DC Chapter president of the Iranian American Bar Association (IABA). Formed in the year 2000, the IABA is an all-volunteer, non-partisan organization with seven chapters nationwide, and a membership of prominent judges, attorneys, and law students. Leila currently runs her own immigration and general law practice in the Washington DC Metro area. She has given interviews to various media outlets about issues facing the Iranian American community (CNN Interview on the Travel Ban). She was born and raised in Virginia.

STEM CELLS EDITED TO FIGHT ARTHRITIS

Goal Is Vaccine That Targets Inflammation In Joints

JIM DRYDEN

Originally published by the School of Medicine April 27, 2017

Using CRISPR technology, a team of researchers led by Farshid Guilak at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, rewired stem cells' genetic circuits to produce an anti-inflammatory arthritis drug when the cells encounter inflammation. The technique eventually could act as a vaccine for arthritis and other chronic conditions.

Using new gene-editing technology, researchers have rewired mouse stem cells to fight inflammation caused by arthritis and other chronic conditions. Such stem cells, known as SMART cells (Stem cells Modified for Autonomous Regenerative Therapy), develop into cartilage cells that produce a biologic anti-inflammatory drug that, ideally, will replace arthritic cartilage and simultaneously protect joints and other tissues from damage that occurs with chronic inflammation.

The cells were developed at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis and Shriners Hospitals for Children St. Louis, in collaboration with investigators at Duke University and Cytex Therapeutics Inc., both in Durham, N.C. The researchers initially worked with skin cells taken from the tails of mice and converted those cells into stem cells. Then, using the gene-editing tool CRISPR in cells grown in culture, they removed a key gene in the inflammatory process and replaced it with a gene that releases a biologic drug that combats inflammation.

The research is available online April 27 in the journal *Stem Cell Reports*.

"Our goal is to package the rewired stem cells as a vaccine for arthritis, which would deliver an anti-inflammatory drug to an arthritic joint but only when it is needed," said Farshid Guilak, the paper's senior author and a professor of orthopedic surgery at Washington University School of Medicine. "To do this, we needed to create a 'smart' cell."

Many current drugs used to treat arthritis — including Enbrel, Humira and Remicade — attack an inflammation-promoting molecule called tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-alpha). But the problem with these drugs is that they are given systemically rather than targeted to joints. As

a result, they interfere with the immune system throughout the body and can make patients susceptible to side effects such as infections.

"We want to use our gene-editing technology as a way to deliver targeted therapy in response to localized inflammation in a joint, as opposed to current drug therapies that can interfere with the inflammatory response through the entire body," said Guilak, also a professor of developmental biology and of biomedical engineering and co-director of Washington University's Center of Regenerative Medicine. "If this strategy proves to be successful, the engineered cells only would block inflammation when inflammatory signals are released, such as during an arthritic flare in that joint." As part of the study, Guilak and his colleagues grew mouse stem cells in a test tube and then used CRISPR technology to replace a critical mediator of inflammation with a TNF-alpha inhibitor.

"Exploiting tools from synthetic biology, we found we could re-code the program that stem cells use to orchestrate their response to inflammation," said Jonathan Brunger, PhD, the paper's first author and a postdoctoral fellow in cellular and molecular pharmacology at the University of California, San Francisco.

Over the course of a few days, the team directed the modified stem cells to grow into cartilage cells and produce cartilage tissue. Further experiments by the team showed that the engineered cartilage was protected from inflammation.

"We hijacked an inflammatory pathway to create cells that produced a protective drug," Brunger said.

The researchers also encoded the stem/cartilage cells with genes that made the cells light up when responding to inflammation, so the scientists easily could determine when the cells were responding.

Recently, Guilak's team has begun testing the engineered stem cells in mouse models of rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory diseases. If the work can be replicated in animals and then developed into a clinical therapy, the engineered cells or cartilage grown from stem cells would respond to inflammation by releasing a

biologic drug — the TNF-alpha inhibitor — that would protect the synthetic cartilage cells that Guilak's team created and the natural cartilage cells in specific joints.

"When these cells see TNF-alpha, they rapidly activate a therapy that reduces inflammation," Guilak explained. "We believe this strategy also may work for other systems that depend on a feedback loop. In diabetes, for example, it's possible we could make stem cells that would sense glucose and turn on insulin in response. We are using pluripotent stem cells, so we can make them into any cell type, and with CRISPR, we can remove or insert genes that have the potential to treat many types of disorders."

With an eye toward further applications of this approach, Brunger added, "The ability to build living tissues from 'smart' stem cells that precisely respond to their environment opens up exciting possibilities for investigation in regenerative medicine."

Brunger JM, Zutshi A, Willard VP, Gersbach CA, Guilak F. Genome engineering of stem cells for autonomously regulated, closed-loop delivery of biologic drugs. Stem Cell Reports. April 27, 2017.

This work was supported by the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases and the National Institute on Aging of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), grant numbers AR061042, AR50245, AR46652, AR48182, AR067467, AR065956, AG15768, OD008586. Additional funding provided by the Nancy Taylor Foundation for Chronic Diseases; the Arthritis Foundation; the National Science Foundation (NSF), CAREER award number CBET-1151035; and the Collaborative Research Center of the AO Foundation, Davos, Switzerland.

Authors Farshid Guilak, and Vincent Willard have a financial interest in Cytex Therapeutics of Durham, N.C., which may choose to license this technology. Cytex is a startup founded by some of the investigators. They could realize financial gain if the technology eventually is approved for clinical use.

Washington University School of Medicine's 2,100 employed and volunteer faculty physicians also are the medical staff of Barnes-Jewish and St. Louis Children's hospitals. The School of Medicine is one of the leading medical research, teaching and patient-care institutions in the nation, currently ranked seventh in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. Through its affiliations with Barnes-Jewish and St. Louis Children's hospitals, the School of Medicine is linked to BJC HealthCare.

POSITIONING OF IRAN AND IRANIANS IN ORIGINS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Sheda Vasseghi

Vasseghi's PhD academic advising team were composed of the following members: Marylin Newell, Laura Bertonazzi and Kaveh Farrokh.

Her study explored a number of widely taught college-level history textbooks in order to examine how these positioned Iran and Iranian peoples in the origins of Western Civilization. As noted by Vasseghi in her abstract:

“Western Civilization history marginalizes, misrepresents, misappropriates, and/or omits Iran’s positioning. Further, the mainstream approach to teaching Western Civilization history includes the Judeo-Christian-Greco-Roman narrative.”

Vasseghi used a multifaceted theoretical approach—decolonization, critical pedagogy, and Western Civilization History dilemma—since her study transcended historical revisionism. This collective case study involved eleven Western Civilization history textbooks that, according to the College Board’s College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), are most popular among American college faculty. Vasseghi reviewed and collected expert opinion on the following five themes:

- 1) terminology and definition of Iran, Iranians, and Iranian languages
- 2) roots and origins of Iranian peoples
- 3) which Iranian peoples are noted in general
- 4) which Iranian peoples in ancient Europe are specifically noted
- 5) Iranians in connection with six unique Western Civilization attributes.

Vasseghi selected experts specializing in Iranian, Western Civilization, and Indo-European studies in formulating a consensus on each theme. She

then compared expert opinion to content in surveyed textbooks. *Vasseghi discovered that the surveyed textbooks in her study overwhelmingly omitted, ill-defined, misrepresented, or marginalized Iran and Iranians in the origins of Western Civilization.*

Here is one of the quotes from her study:

“The researcher recommends that textbook authors and publishers engage experts in the field of Iranian studies in formulating content. A caveat for engaging those in the field of Iranian studies when writing Western Civilization history textbooks involves making a distinction between a native Iran and post-Islamic invasion and colonization of Iran in early Middle Ages (7th century onwards). That is, in the Age of Antiquity, Iran was under an Iranian governance and ancestral beliefs such as Zoroastrianism and Mithraism.”

This is an important observation given Western Media and academic outlets using sweeping (if not simplistic) terms such as “Middle East”, “Muslims”, etc. without acknowledging the context of Iran’s unique background, ancient history and language(s). Put simply, terms such as “Middle East” are not scientific but geopolitical in origin. The term “Muslim Civilization” for example serves to dilute (or even blur) the critical role of Iranian and Indian scholars in the preservation and promotion of learning, sciences and medicine. Arab historians such as Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) who in his Muqaddimah (translated by

F. Rosenthal (III, pp. 311-15, 271-4 [Arabic]; R.N. Frye (p.91) has acknowledged the role of the Iranians in the promotion of scholarship:

“...It is a remarkable fact that, with few exceptions, most Muslim scholars...in the intellectual sciences have been non-Arabs...thus the founders of grammar were Sibawaih and after him, al-Farisi and Az-Zajaj. All of them were of Persian descent...they invented rules of (Arabic) grammar...great jurists were Persians... only the Persians engaged in the task of preserving knowledge and writing systematic scholarly works. Thus the truth of the statement of the prophet becomes apparent, ‘If learning were suspended in the highest parts of heaven the Persians would attain it’...The intellectual sciences were also the preserve of the Persians, left alone by the Arabs, who did not cultivate them...as was the case with all crafts...This situation continued in the cities as long as the Persians and Persian countries, Iraq, Khurasan and Transoxiana (modern Central Asia), retained their sedentary culture.”

Sources such as Ibn Khaldun are now rarely mentioned in many modern-day “Islamic Studies” in Western history textbooks which may explain part the numerous errors uncovered in Vasseghi’s study. She further avers:

“Critical pedagogy is important in transformational leadership in education. Educators are obligated to point out errors or problems in content and mainstream narratives. In regards to

teaching history of Western Civilization, one should recall the warnings of its looming demotion by Ricketts et al. (2011) because unfortunately teaching it “had come to be seen as a form of apologetics for racism, imperialism, sexism, and colonialism” (p. 14). It appears that in perceiving that something is missing from or fragmented in Western Civilization history content, educational institutions are now marginalizing and omitting it from their curriculum in America, a Western nation. Therefore, the significance of this study is the need for authors and educators to shift the currently flawed narrative on the history of the West. Iran’s positioning is a key component in the study of Western Civilization. The researcher argues that Iran and Iranians not only influenced the making of the West; they are part of the West. By placing Iran and Iranians where they belong, historians may also address concerns about teaching the history of the West (Ricketts et al., 2011).”

In her final PhD defense session with her research committee (Marylin Newell, Laura Bertonazzi and Kaveh Farrokh) on Monday, March 20, 2017, Vasseghi noted that she plans to author books tailored to Western audiences to help educate with respect to the role of Iranians in the formation of European civilization. Vasseghi’s books would also be geared towards a lay (non-academic) audience.

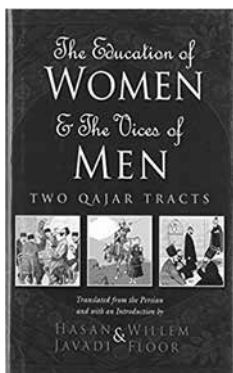
Sheda Vasseghi has completed her PhD Dissertation at the University of New England

REVIEWS

THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN AND THE VICES OF MEN:

Two Qajar Tracts (Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East)

Hasan Javadi



At the close of the nineteenth century, modern ideas of democracy and equality were slowly beginning to take hold in Iran. Exposed to European ideas about law, equality, and education, upper- and middle-class men and women increasingly questioned traditional ideas about the role of women and their place in society. In apparent response to this emerging independence of women, an anonymous author penned *The Education of Women*, a small booklet published in 1889. This guide, aimed at husbands as much as wives, instructed

women on how to behave toward their husbands, counseling them on proper dress, intimacy, and subservience.

One woman, Bibi Khanom Astarabadi, took up the author's challenge and wrote a refutation of his arguments. An outspoken mother of seven, Astarabadi established the first school for girls in Tehran and often advocated for the rights of women. In "The Vices of Men", she details the flaws of men, offering a scathing diatribe on the nature of men's behavior toward women.

Astarabadi mixes the traditional florid style of the time with street Persian, slang words, and bawdy language. This new edition faithfully preserves the style and irreverent tone of the essays. The two texts, together with an introduction and afterword situating both within the customs, language, and social life of Iran, offer a rare candid dialogue between men and women in late nineteenth-century Persia.

FAREWELL SHIRAZ: AN IRANIAN MEMOIR OF REVOLUTION AND EXILE

Cyrus Kadivar

(June 2017)

In October 1999 during a trip to Cairo, Cyrus Kadivar, an exiled Iranian living in London, visited the tomb of the last shah and opened a Pandora's box. Haunted by nostalgia for a bygone era, he recalled a protected and idyllic childhood in the fabled city of Shiraz and his coming of age during the 1979 Iranian revolution. Back in London, he reflected on what had happened to him and his family after their uprooting and decided to conduct his own investigation into why he lost his country. He spent the next ten years seeking out witnesses who would shed light on the last days of Pahlavi rule. Among those he met were a former empress, ex-courtiers, disaffected revolutionaries, and the bereaved relatives of those who perished in the cataclysm. In *Farewell Shiraz*, Kadivar tells the story of his family and childhood against the tumultuous backdrop of twentieth-century Iran, from the 1905-1907 Constitutional Revolution to the fall



of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, before presenting accounts of his meetings with key witnesses to the Shah's fall and the rise of Khomeini. Each of the people interviewed provides a richly detailed picture of the momentous events that took place and the human drama behind them. Combining exquisite vignettes with rare testimonials and first-hand interviews, *Farewell Shiraz* draws us into a sweeping yet often intimate account of a vanished world and offers a compelling investigation into a political earthquake whose reverberations still live with us today.

Cyrus Kadivar was born in Minnesota to Iranian-French parents. He grew up during the Shah's reign in the Persian city of Shiraz. At sixteen he and his family were uprooted by the 1979 revolution. He has since worked as a banker, freelance journalist, and a political risk consultant and lives in London.

SHAHNAMEH

(audiobook with introduction by Francis Ford Coppola)

An audio version of the *Shahnameh*, the epic masterpiece of Persian poet Ferdowsi, has been released in English with an introduction by U.S. filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola in the United States. American voice actor Marc Thompson has narrated the stories based on the latest translation by Ahmad Sadri published by Quantuck Lane Press in 2013, Kingorama, the U.S.-based publisher of "Shahnameh, the Epic of the Persian Kings", has announced.



In his introduction, Coppola, one of the greatest filmmakers of the 20th century who is mostly known for his classics such as "The Godfather" and "Apocalypse Now", says, "Creating this audiobook breathes new life into the *Shahnameh* stories."

"It is an immersive experience, making these ancient tales tangible for those who are new to these incredible heroic stories and a delight for those already familiar with the poem."

The sonic landscape designs have been created by the New York-based Iranian graphic artist Hamid Rahmani, and Melissa Hibbard was the editorial director of the project.

GATHAS THE MESSAGE OF ZARATHUSHTRA COMMENTS AND FREE TRANSLATION

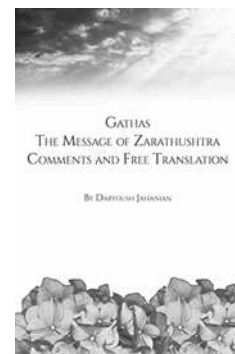
Daryoush Jahanian

(2017)

If one is looking for a book on the words of Zarathushtra this would be the "Go To" reference. The author begins his book describing the need to comprehend certain issues in order to understand and or comprehend the Gathas. If you were unaware as to what the Gathas is, it is described as the genuine words of Zarathushtra that survived time. During the history of Iran, despite the foreign invasions, one third of the original Avestan books remain, with the Gathas of Zarathushtra being complete and in tact.

The book is broken down into readable phrases with explanations that are easy to understand.

From the read you will be able to tell the commitment this author has to Zarathushtra and the words of the Gathas.



The Sakas

Part five

Michael McClain

In a taziye or passion play concerning the martyrdom of Imam Hussein at Karbala, translated from the original Persian by Sir Lewis Pelly occurs the following conversation between UmmKulsum, a sister of Imam Hussein, and Sakina, a daughter of Imam Hussein. Both are lamenting Imam Hussein 's death.

UmmKulsum, a Sister of Imam Hussein:

Imam the daughter of Ali (ibn Abi Talib), the Prince of Arabia, the glory of the world. I am UmmKulsum, at present in exile (in Syria), a woman well acquainted with grief. I live among gazing strangers, without any veil to cover my head. Woe is me! All my confidants are gone from me. Alas! Where is Hussein my brother? Where is Ali Akbar, my nephew? I have lost both my Solomon and his ring.

Sakina, the daughter of Hussein:

Dear aunt, "how long shall I be desolate - how long? For what length of time shall I suffer contempt, and wander about a miserable orphan?"

Till when must I coo like a dove, or moan sadly like a cuckoo? How long is this moaning bird to pour forth her melancholy notes?" There is an Indo-European root -kwo/kwe/kw-, one of whose meanings is "Where?", derived from the above-mentioned Indo-European pronomia; root is the classical Persian ku, Modern Persian ko, which "Where?"

Persian and Welsh are both Indo-European languages. Also, derived from the Indo-European -kwo/kwc/kw- is the Old Welsh cw, which, like the classical Persian ku, is pronounced like the English "coo". 'L'hus, in classical Persian and Old Welsh, the words for "Where?" are phonetically identical.

Omar Khayyam, contemplating the ruins of a royal palace of the Sassanian Period, is reminded of the kings and heroes of the ShahNameh:

Jamshid, Feridun, Kai Kobad, Bahram Gur, Kai Khusrau, Rustam, Isfandiyar, Bizhan, Siyavush, etcetera and in the follow on ruba'i (quatrain) translated

from the original Persian by Edward Fitzgerald say:

"The Palace that to Heaven his pillars threw

And Kings the forehead on his threshold drew,

I saw the solitary ringdove there,

And "coo, coo, coo" she cried, and "coo, coo, coo."

In classical Persian, the Eurasian Ringdove (scientific name: *Streptopelia Decaecto*) was saying: "Where, where? where?", where are the bygone kings and heroes?

The same image occurs in Medieval Welsh poetry. Below are two examples translated from the Old Welsh by Ifor Wi-aaiams. Here is an example from the 9th century Black Book of Llywarch Hen:

"At Aber Cuawg the cuckoos are singing. Sad, it is to my mind

That he who heard them will hear them no more."

Here is another example, this one from the 12th century Black Book of Carmarthen: *"Where cuckoos sing on the tops of fine trees, Greater grows my gloom.*

Smoke smarts, sorrow cannot be hidden For my kind men that have passed away."

The songs of both the Eurasian Ringdove (*Streptopelia Decaecto*) and the common Eurasian cuckoo (Scientific name: *Cuculus Canorus*) are in English phonetics "Coo, coo , coo". To Omar

Khayyam and other Classical Persian poets, the Eurasian Ringdove sang Ku, ku, ku? or "Where, where, where? In the selection from the taziye cited above, Sakina, daughter of Imam Hussein, says:

Till when must I coo like a dove, or moan like a cuckoo? How long is this moaning bird to pour forth her melancholy notes?

To Sakina, daughter of Imam Hussein, the dove and cuckoos are saying ku? ku? ku? or Where? Where? Where?

To the Medieval Welsh poets, the Common Eurasian Cuckoo (Scientific name: *ccuculus canorus*) sang cw?, cw?, cw?, "coo, coo, coo" in English phonetics), in Old Welsh, "Where? Where? Where?" Thus, to both classical Persian poets and Medieval Welsh poets, Eurasian Ringdoves and Common Eurasian Cuckoos sang "Where? Where? Where?" and were harbingers of melancholy.

Not all members of the cuckoo family have "coo, coo, coo" as their song. The song of the notorious: Brain Fever Bird "of India (Scientific name (*Cuculus Varius*) has a typical call which seems to say "brain fever".

Interestingly, the commonest member of the dove family in North America (Scientific name: *Zenaida Macronu*) also has as its song "coo, coo, coo", and is commonly called the "Mourning Dove". Was it a Welshman who gave the North American Mourning Dove its name?

NIYAZ – "THE BEST OF NIYAZ"

Six Degrees Records

Described by the Huffington Post as "an evolutionary force in contemporary Middle Eastern music", NIYAZ has created a 21st century global trance tradition by seamlessly blending medieval Sufi poetry and folk songs from their native Iran and its surrounding countries in the Persian Gulf, with rich acoustic instrumentation and state-of-the-art modern electronics.

Niyaz was founded in 2004 by captivating vocalist/ composer and two-time JUNO Award nominee Azam Ali, and multi-instrumentalist/ composer and JUNO Award nominee Loga Ramin Torkian. Today with four best-selling and critically acclaimed albums released on Six Degrees Records, all of which have debuted at #1 on iTunes and garnered the band an incredible amount of media attention including features on NPR and PRI, Niyaz continues to tour internationally and build on its impressive and loyal fan base worldwide.

Niyaz is committed to creating music with a deep social message aimed at uniting people from different cultural and religious backgrounds through our shared humanity. Guided by the mystical poetry of legendary Sufi poets and the ancient wisdom of traditional folk songs that impart the beauty of ethnic and religious minority groups in Iran and its surrounding regions in Middle East, Niyaz steps into a future that is ancient, inviting listeners to embark upon a philosophical quest into the human depths with a message of hope against injustice and oppression, a universal tribute to beauty, cultural and spiritual diversity, freedom and dignity for all.

Now, for the first time, the band themselves have compiled their favorite tracks from their acclaimed catalog and included one brand new song to create a "Best Of" collection that stands as a testament to their groundbreaking legacy and a harbinger of the exciting music yet to come from these amazing, influential musicians.

A BLOODY SUNDAY

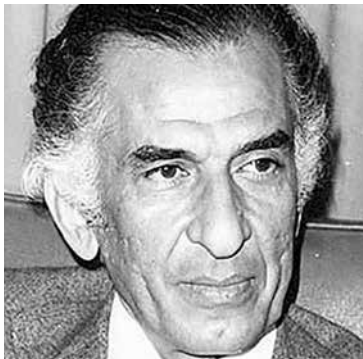
VIENNA, AUSTRIA

SUNDAY DECEMBER 21, 1975

part two

JAMSHID AMOUZGAR

The late Prime Minister of Iran from 7 August 1977 to 27 August 1978
and the Minister of Interior in 1974-1977



I decided it would be unwise to ask him what business did he, have as a Venezuelan, to get mixed up with the politics of Zhofar. After all, his machine gun was still menacingly pointed in my direction. Might was certainly right here.

He seemed to be aware of what was going through my mind. In a knowing tone he said “We know the Shah. He doesn’t heed easily to advice. The only way to stop his interference in Zhofar is to put our hand on his heir, or his twin sister. Nobody else matters to him”, he said with conviction.

protected somehow, as was rumored in certain quarters, in order to be available when the need arose?

I asked him about his political inclinations. Ever candid, he admitted that he had been “attracted” to communism at an early age. He had attended the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow for a year. Later, he said, he became “disenchanted” with communism.

The old cliché that “If you are twenty and not a communist, you have no heart. If you are forty and a communist, you have no mind.”, crossed my mind. But Carlos was not even thirty at that time.

Later however, I learned that he had spent quite some time in London.

I tried, albeit in vain, to find out the name of the group he was working with. I mentioned a few names. He knew them all, he said. Some intimately, and some with whom he had worked in the past, but not anymore. He said many of those politicians in high office were demagogues, and corrupt. He spoke bitterly of one of the presidents of Lebanon in particular. He said that while he was constantly haranguing about honesty in government, his son operated the most odious gambling joint around the corner from the Presidential Office. “How could you put your trust in these people? They wouldn’t lift a finger for the Palestinians”, he concluded.

By now, I sensed that he was becoming suspicious of my questions, and that any further probing about his associations would be futile. Once again I tried to change the subject. “How did a member of the Libyan delegation get killed?”, I asked.

“Oh” he replied. “Once we got to this floor I began checking every room to make sure no one was armed. He happened to be in the adjoining room, alone. The moment he saw me with a machine gun he pounced on me in an effort to get the gun off my shoulder - and he almost succeeded. But I pulled out the revolver that I always carry in my belt and shot him. After making sure that he was dead”, he added non-chalantly, as if recounting a hunting expedition, “I reached for his identity document and discovered to my dismay that I had killed a Libyan”.

The sorrow that he feigned was not so much directed to the man as to his nationality. My thoughts went out to the brave young Libyan who had died not knowing that his death had saved us all.

For had he succeeded in overpowering Carlos we all would undoubtedly have been blown up to pieces by those panicky “trainees”, who had been instructed exactly as to what should be done in such eventualities. I recalled a passage from the Koran, “And when the hour of death approaches there is neither delay nor rush”, and mused on the tragic reality that one man’s gain is usually at the expense of another’s loss.

To show how meticulously he carried out his assignments Carlos told me about his presence amongst the reporters outside the building where I was answering questions from reporters the day before. It was there that he had learned about the timing of the final session of the OPEC conference.

He had made himself familiar with the layout of the building and the points of access to the OPEC floor. His observations had convinced him that security arrangements were lax, or non-existent.

Encouraged by his willingness to talk I impatiently asked “And what are your plans now?”

Briefly he reiterated what Valentine Hernandez had already told me.

“Surely you are not going to fly us to Tehran or Riyadh? Where will you then release us?”

“I will take you to somewhere. You will find out”, he said.

“Why don’t you release us in Baghdad?” I asked.

“No!”, he said sharply. And with a sudden movement he got up and walked away.

I moved back to my seat more confused and distressed than before. The reference to Iran in the political manifesto, and the tenor of his conversation, had convinced me that I was one of the principal targets. But how and where the end was going to be I could not figure out. It may sound as fantasizing but I was earnestly thinking of the last words I would utter when the end came. The gloomy atmosphere of the room in the dark of the night was not very conducive to more comforting thoughts.

By now some were dozing and some were fitfully asleep. And some, like me, were wide awake.

The jittery kid standing watch over us was still nervous and restless. His careless toying with the hand grenade was hardly conducive to any relaxation on our part, after our ordeal. A colleague advised me to remember to duck for cover under the table should our unstable guard make any accidental or intentional move.

There was no sleep for most of us that night. My own mood alternated between frustration, anger and depression, but never to panic. The adaptability of the mind and body to new states became a cause for reflection. For some nineteen hours now I had sat on a small hard chair, wide awake. To keep my mind occupied I made mental notes of the events as they had unfolded right from the beginning.

From time to time I would converse and exchange views with members of my delegation. It was most gratifying to know that they were genuinely concerned for me.

Toward dawn it seemed that an amicable relationship - akin to a sort of camaraderie - had

developed between the gunmen and some of their hostages. This, however, was not the case with those of us in the "enemy" section of the room! Hernandez told me, quoting Carlos, that the two members of United Arab Emirates delegation, whose minister had left Vienna in the morning, had appealed to Carlos for their release, saying that they were innocent victims, that it was their minister who was the real culprit, and that their government was indeed corrupt. What an allegiance, I pondered.

Around seven o'clock in the morning there was the sound of footsteps in the corridor. It must be the time for our departure, I thought. But I was wrong. A new problem had cropped up: the Austrian officials were there to inform Carlos that his wounded comrade was in no condition to be moved, because he needed close medical supervision. Carlos would have to leave without him.

Carlos's reaction was characteristically swift, final and devoid of any considerations of sympathy for the suffering of others. He forcefully stated that his wounded comrade, "dead or alive", must accompany him on the plane, or else he would

act on his original threat. The message was passed on to the higher authorities. A deafening silence now pervaded the room. Yamani and I exchanged concerned glances. Was this the way it was going to end?

After what seemed like hours of waiting, the Austrian authorities' reply was delivered. A selfless Kurdish physician who had a practice in Vienna had volunteered to accompany the wounded man until the next port of call. There was a collective sigh of relief.

Carlos, now visibly elated by his success in having had his way, triumphantly roll-called the names of each delegation's members, who proceeded toward the waiting bus at the back entrance of the building. It was at this time that the staff of the Secretariat, as well as a number of members from the "friendly" and "neutral" delegations, were released. The farewell scene was an emotional one. The hostages and their captors warmly shook hands and embraced each other. Some even went so far as to kiss each other, as if they were leaving after a joyous party. The Minister from Gabon, who was the chief of his delegation, and who had a pronounced limp which made walking difficult for him, was offered his release by Carlos, but the gallant man refused to leave without the members of his delegation. Which reminded me that even in the me-generation of today, altruistic people with those admirable qualities that were so much admired in the past can still be found.

When the time came for the Iranian delegation to move along through the corridor to the entrance hall, I could not help staring at the blood stains on the floor, the bullet holes on the walls, the smashed switchboard, and the shattered glass strewn all around. The scene was a sad reminder that three innocent people had lost their lives, and that the hopes and expectations

of their loved ones had been so senselessly extinguished.

Outside in the distance in the chilly December morning air a platoon of reporters and photographers jostled for position to get the best shots. The “powerful OPEC ministers”, as the media was wont to label us to emphasize OPEC clout, were now reduced to a pathetically docile marching file, led by a slight, unimpressive youth - not unlike little scouting boys under the guidance of their scoutmaster.

Carlos personally assigned seats to each member of each delegation. He himself chose a front seat next to the door of the bus. He ordered all window curtains to be drawn, but kept his own open.

His men stood watch in the aisle.

As the bus, accompanied by official cars, and heavily escorted by the police, slowly moved on through the streets of Vienna, curiosity urged me to pull my curtain about an inch apart without attracting anyone’s notice. Curious morning crowds could be seen lining the street watching the unfamiliar motorcade. For a moment I thought Yamani and I could become eligible for the “Guinness Book of Records” as the two persons who took part in their own funeral procession. For his part, Carlos was energetically, and without any show of emotion, waving at the crowd with a grin rather like a politician on a campaign rally. Obviously the lonely man was highly image-conscious, and needed attention from others. He liked being watched, noted, and admired.

The long slow journey at last came to its destination, where a vehicle with a “Follow Me” sign led us to a remote part of the airport. A twin-engine Caravelle was waiting. As the bus came to a stop Carlos stood up and in a loud voice addressing his lieutenant said that he was going to check the plane, and that should he not be back within ten minutes all of them should get out of the bus and then blow it up, “with everybody else inside”, he emphasized. He then got out and approached the plane.

The atmosphere was now extremely tense. There was a deathly silence. Anxious eyes were fixed on wrist watches. During those ten minutes a feeling of gloom and despair descended upon the group. I was wondering how many more times I would have to suffer the intense anxiety of facing imminent death without knowing when it was coming. However, recalling Carlos’s boast on the previous evening that “they wouldn’t risk playing tricks with me”, I felt a little less uncomfortable. I piously hoped he was right.

With a collective sigh of relief Carlos appeared on the boarding steps. Minutes later each delegation began boarding the plane. As I entered I noticed the wounded man, looking pale and almost unconscious, was lying on a make-shift cot placed close to the door of the plane. The gallant Kurdish doctor was at his side seeing to his comfort and adjusting the plastic tube which was inserted in his veins. With a sympathetic smile, he silently nodded at me, a gesture which I really appreciated.

I was about to take off my raincoat when I felt a helping hand. Turning around I saw that it was Carlos.

“Oh, thank you. I can manage”, I said, surprised.

“You are a V.I.P.”, he said with a cold grin. “I have to take special care of you”.

His remark reminded me of the ritual used back home when a sheep is being sacrificed.

Traditionally a gulp of water has to be administered to the animal before applying the knife.

We were quite surprised to see the Austrian Minister of

the Interior offering his hand to Carlos in a warm hand shake before leaving. He must have been quite overcome with relief at our departure, and his consequent release from what undoubtedly was a most unenviable situation. Later I learned that, for a while, the incident had caused something of a scandal in Austrian political circles.

The plane taxied toward the runway and minutes later was air-borne. A two-member Austrian crew, pilot and flight engineer, had volunteered for the risky mission. As the plane gained altitude I learned that our first stop would be in Algiers.

We flew in a southerly direction over Austria toward the port of Trieste. A slight turn to the south-east put us on a course over the Adriatic Sea, avoiding flight over Italian air space. At some distance from us I noticed another plane which seemed to be following the same direction as ours. I learned later that it was a chartered plane full of reporters and photographers from most of the world’s major media organizations.

Outside, it looked clear and sunny. The sea was calm, almost glassy. Serenely floating on its surface under the morning sun were several ships and a couple of oil tankers, no doubt carrying OPEC oil to Trieste.

How lucky to be a member of the crew of one of those tankers, I reflected. At least they had their freedom. Freedom is like the air we breathe; it is appreciated only when one is deprived of it. It

surprised me to find how quickly and readily the human mind can adapt and become contented with reduced circumstances. Twenty-four hours ago, would I have considered living the life of a tanker crew member as “lucky”? Now my mind turned into fantasizing. I thought the tanker’s crew down below, watching the elegant plane flying gracefully overhead wished to be among these fortunates who were on their way to a beautiful vacation. How illusory perceptions could be? I pondered.

During the four hours’ flight to Algiers, Carlos’s comrades took turns in serving us refreshments and ready-to-eat luncheon fare. I tried to doze off a bit to make up for the loss of sleep during the previous night, but without success. The presence of the gunmen with their fingers on the trigger was a most potent deterrent to any sleep for me. The scenes of the events of the past twenty-two hours kept parading before my eyes. What could be in store for me during the next twenty-two hours, I wondered.

* * *

The plastered white houses of Algiers now shimmered under the blazing sun. Tall, graceful and romantic palm trees lined green fields hugging the rolling city. In the far distance the fierce glare of the sun was reflecting back from the sun-baked barren desert.

The plane circled once and smoothly landed in an almost deserted airport. The strict security measures that apparently were in force indicated that we had been expected. The Caravelle taxied to a far corner of the airport and came to a stop. Carlos put on his elegant Italian-made raincoat, and with his sub-machine gun firmly on his shoulder, left the door of the plane at the tail end.

After some uneasy minutes of anxious waiting we heard the sound of footsteps climbing up the metal boarding steps. I turned and quickly recognized Mr. Bouteflicka, a member of the Revolutionary Council and the then-Foreign Minister of Algeria, who was accompanied by two other persons. I had always entertained a liking for Mr. Bouteflicka, though more from a distance than at close contact. He warmly shook hands with us and tried to inject a spirit of reassurance in his conversation.

to be continued

**a tribute to a daughter, a mother, a wife
and, a mathematics genius**

MARYAM MIRZAKHANI



On July 15, 2017 the life of Mrs. Maryam Mirzakhani ended at age forty, after her fight with cancer. Maryam was an Iranian-born mathematician, a mathematical genius and was the first woman to win the Fields Medal. She is survived by her husband, Stanford mathematician Jan Vondrak, and her young daughter Anahita. Her passing was felt worldwide and was recognized by her birth home of Iran. President Hassan Rouhani said that Mirzakhani's "doleful passing" has caused "great sorrow". In Iran, Rouhani praised the "unprecedented brilliance of this creative scientist and modest human being, who made Iran's name resonate in the world's scientific forums, (and) was a turning point in showing the great will of Iranian women and young people on the path towards reaching the peaks of glory ... in various international arenas."

Firouz Naderi, a former director of Solar Systems Exploration at NASA, announced her death on Instagram. "A light was turned off today. It breaks my heart gone far too soon," he wrote, later adding: "A genius? Yes. But also, a daughter, a mother and a wife."

Born in 1977 and raised in Tehran, Mirzakhani fell in love with mathematics by the time she started high school. "It is fun – it's like solving a puzzle or connecting the dots in a detective case," she said when she won the Fields Medal. "I felt that this was something I could do, and I wanted to pursue this path."

Mirzakhani, was a professor at Stanford University in California since 2008. Stanford President Marc Tessier-Lavigne stated Ms. Mirzakhani's impact "will live on for the thousands of women she inspired to pursue math and science," said Stanford President Marc Tessier-Lavigne.

In the Fall 2014 edition of *Persian Heritage* we published an article after Maryam won the Field Award, we are proud and pleased to reprint this in celebration of her life and her accomplishments.

Stanford's

**MARYAM
MIRZAKHANI**

Wins Fields Medal

Maryam Mirzakhani is [the first Iranian and] the first woman in the world to ever win the Fields Medal – known as the "Nobel Prize of Mathematics" – in recognition of her contributions to the understanding of the symmetry of curved surfaces.

**By Bjorn Carey
Stanford Report,
August 12, 2014**

(Reprint of the Persian Heritage,
No.75, Fall 2014)

Maryam Mirzakhani, a professor of mathematics at Stanford, has been awarded the 2014 Fields Medal, the most prestigious honor in mathematics. Mirzakhani is the first woman to win the prize, widely regarded as the “Nobel Prize of mathematics,” since it was established in 1936.

“This is a great honor. I will be happy if it encourages young female scientists and mathematicians,” Mirzakhani said. “I am sure there will be many more women winning this kind of award in coming years.”

Officially known as the International Medal for Outstanding Discoveries in Mathematics, the Fields Medal will be presented by the International Mathematical Union on Aug. 13 at the International Congress of Mathematicians, held this year in Seoul, South Korea. Mirzakhani is the first Stanford recipient to win this honor since Paul Cohen in 1966.

The award recognizes Mirzakhani’s sophisticated and highly original contributions to the fields of geometry and dynamical systems, particularly in understanding the symmetry of curved surfaces, such as spheres, the surfaces of doughnuts and of hyperbolic objects. Although her work is considered “pure mathematics” and is mostly theoretical, it has implications for physics and quantum field theory.

“On behalf of the entire Stanford community, I congratulate Maryam on this incredible recognition, the highest honor in her discipline, the first ever granted to a woman,” said Stanford President John Hennessy. “We are proud of her achievements, and of the work taking place in our math department

and among our faculty. We hope it will serve as an inspiration to many aspiring mathematicians.”

‘Like Solving a Puzzle’

Mirzakhani was born and raised in Tehran, Iran. As a young girl she dreamed of becoming a writer. By high school, however, her affinity for solving mathematical problems and working on proofs had shifted her sights.

“It is fun – it’s like solving a puzzle or connecting the dots in a detective case,” she said. “I felt that this was something I could do, and I wanted to pursue this path.”

Mirzakhani became known to the international math scene as a teenager, winning gold medals at both the 1994 and 1995 International Math Olympiads – she finished with a perfect score in the latter competition. Mathematicians who would later be her mentors and colleagues followed the mathematical proofs she developed as an undergraduate.

After earning her bachelor’s degree from Sharif University of Technology in 1999, she began work on her doctorate at Harvard University under the guidance of Fields Medal recipient Curtis McMullen. She possesses a remarkable fluency in a diverse range of mathematical techniques and disparate mathematical cultures – including algebra, calculus, complex analysis and hyperbolic geometry. By borrowing principles from several fields, she has brought a new level of understanding to an area of mathematics called low-dimensional topology.

Mirzakhani’s earliest work involved solving the decades-old problem of



Mirzakhani: “... It is the reason why doing research is challenging as well as attractive. It is like being lost in a jungle and trying to use all the knowledge that you can gather to come up with some new tricks, and with some luck you might find a way out.”

calculating the volumes of moduli spaces of curves on objects known as Riemann surfaces. These are geometric objects whose points each represent a different hyperbolic surface. These objects are mostly theoretical, but real-world examples include amoebae and doughnuts. She solved this by drawing a series of loops across their surfaces and calculating their lengths.

“What’s so special about Maryam, the thing that really separates her, is the originality in how she puts together these disparate pieces,” said Steven Kerckhoff, a mathematics professor at Stanford and one of Mirzakhani’s collaborators. “That was the case starting with her thesis work, which generated several papers in all the top journals. The novelty of her approach made it a real tour de force.”

Pure Mathematics

From 2004 to 2008, she was a Clay Mathematics Institute Research Fellow and an assistant professor at Princeton University. In 2008, she became a professor of mathematics at Stan-

ford, where she lives with her husband and 3-year-old daughter.

Mirzakhani’s recent research further investigates the symmetry of surface geometry, particularly within theories regarding Teichmüller dynamics. In general, her work can best be described as pure mathematics – research that investigates entirely abstract concepts of nature that might not have an immediately obvious application.

“Oftentimes, research into these areas does have unexpected applications, but that isn’t what motivates mathematicians like Maryam to pursue it. Rather, the motivation is to understand, as deeply as possible, these basic mathematical structures,” said Ralph Cohen, a professor of mathematics and the senior associate dean for the natural sciences in Stanford’s School of Humanities and Sciences. “Maryam’s work really is an outstanding example of curiosity-driven research.”

The work, however, could have impacts concerning the theoretical physics of how the universe came to exist and, because it could

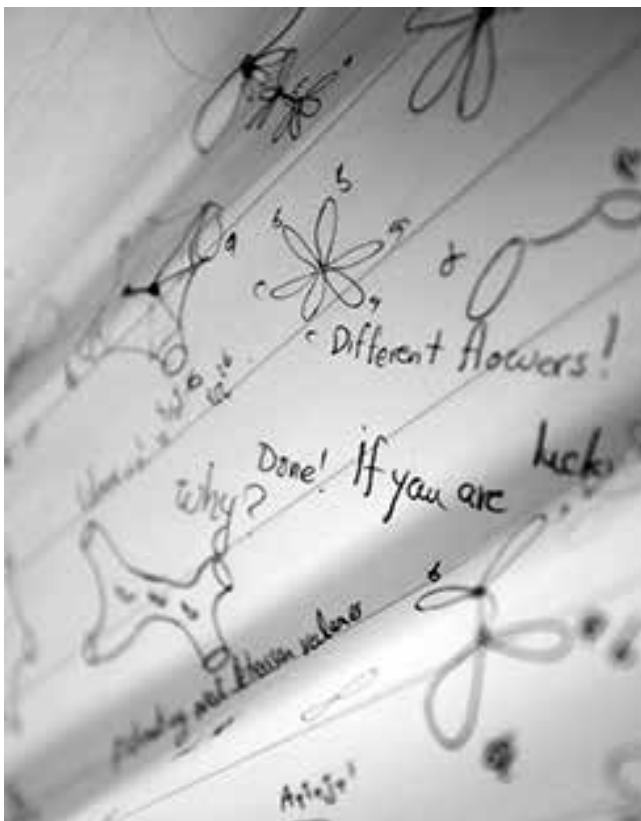
inform quantum field theory, secondary applications to engineering and material science.

Within mathematics, it has implications for the study of prime numbers and cryptography. Despite the breadth of applications of her work, Mirzakhani said she enjoys pure mathematics because of the elegance and longevity of the questions she studies.

“I don’t have any particular recipe,” Mirzakhani said of her approach to developing new proofs. “It is the reason why doing research is challenging as well as attractive. It is like being lost in a jungle and trying to use all the knowledge that you can gather to come up with some new tricks, and with some luck you might find a way out.”



Doodling is the way of her thinking and concentrating, about what her 3-old-daughter thinks she paints!



The Windmill and the Contribution of Persia

Kaveh Farrokh

The first water pumps and grain mills powered by wind-sails originated in modern northwest Iran in (circa) 6th -7th centuries CE during the late Sassanian era.



The origins of the first wind-powered machine concept is attributed to Heron (10-70 CE), a Greek inventor who first built this device in his workshop in Roman-ruled Egypt. Heron’s design of the shaft and rotating blades were placed at the horizontal position.

The Heron machine however never advanced beyond the prototype he had designed, as the Romans never exploited this for generating power or for agriculture. The Iranians however knew of this technology, thanks in part to the Sassanian Empire’s efforts to protect and preserve Greek scholarship and knowledge (see Jundishapur University)

By the late Sassanian era the first true windmill had appeared in the northeastern regions of the Sassanian Empire (modern Khorasan and west Afghanistan). Modern scholarship is in agreement that Iranian engineers had completely re-designed Heron’s original machine for applied purposes. They had achieved this by inverting the shaft that held the blades, toward an upright position. The re-designed shaft and rotating blades were installed inside a mud-brick encased tower. This structure in turn had “air ducts” allowing for the air to enter and rotate the blades housed inside of it. The “sails” or “blades” were built of a very strong fabric – there were up to twelve of these inside each of these “towers” or structures. This new technology had been initially designed as a corn-mill.

The Arabian conquests of the Sassanian Empire soon led the Caliphates to adopt the new windmill technology from the Iranians. By the 9th century CE, this technology had spread throughout the Caliphate’s realms and also eastwards into India, reaching China by the 13th century CE.

The Iranian windmill design appears to have reached Arab-ruled Spain as well, and later the British Isles by 1137 CE. It was the British (not the Dutch as is conventionally assumed), who effected significant changes to the original Iranian design. The British genius was in their combination of both the Greek (Heron) and Iranian (late Sassanian) technologies. The British post-mill had two axes of rotation:

- (1) A vertical shaft for horizontal rotation allowing for the entire structure to be now rotated for harnessing the wind
- (2) A horizontal shaft for vertical rotation of the sails (based on Heron’s original concept)

The British adaptation of the Iranian windmill soon spread across continental Europe all the way to Greece and the Aegean Sea. Europeans made other designs such as the smock mill and tower mill. The famous modern-day Dutch windmill can trace its ancestry to English, Iranian and Greek origins.

The historical process through which all the known religious belief systems of the world have evolved provides evidence that a gradual amalgamation and hybridization of ideologies is the result of cultural collisions.

What people believe to be divine revelation about the end of the world, with its accompanying rewards and punishments, includes an imminent end of existence involving God's final judgment on evil, and promises of a coming reward for the faithful, both in heaven and on earth. Traditionally, perceptions about the afterlife, and of expectations concerning some form of survival after death, involve creation, human nature, and reality.

In most of the world's known religions, death is not the absolute end to existence, and there are justifications for death, resurrection, and a form of life after death. Similarly, views about the presence of duality, and oppositions such as material and non-material existence, chaos and order, good and evil, along with light and dark forces, have been expressed.

As the opposition of chaos and order brings about the genesis of life, so the antagonism of death brings about an afterlife. Likewise, among the earliest components of the Iranian Zoroastrian religious tradition is an eschatological (end of the world) hope and faith in a future savior, which heavily influenced other religions outside of the Iranian world. These characteristics suggest earlier religions contribute to a better understanding of the development of such beliefs in later religions.

In the Iranian and Indian religious traditions, life after death beliefs are expressed as regeneration, resurrection, reincarnation, or transmigration, or life on another plane of existence, such as in heaven or in hell.

The earliest known Indian Vedic texts speak of a life after death similar to the beliefs of Judeo-Christianity and Islam, wherein the soul of an individual, according to his or her actions, either walks on the path to perdition in a hellish place, or to the blessed kingdom of heaven as immortals.

These texts describe heaven as a place of perpetual light where wishes and desires come true, where food and delight are found, where there is happiness, pleasure, joy and enjoyment, where one becomes eternal.

In the same texts, demons and the wicked are forewarned about the torments of the various hells, and the appalling and dreadful punishments both on earth and beneath the earth, in the bottomless dark abysses, in places where the evil spirit is sent by the wrathful mighty gods. Some of the more frequently mentioned torments wished upon enemies and evil doers are burning by fire, torture or death with weapons heated by fire, torture or death

by boiling heat, piercing, and total annihilation.

Although death, judgment, heaven, and hell are explained differently in the various Indian religious traditions, the same beliefs about what happens with the immediate fate of righteous and unrighteous souls following death in the afterlife, such as karma (one reaps what one sows), is common to all.

In Hinduism, heaven and hell are understood as another existence, either pleasant or unpleasant, and the afterlife is seen as an intricate scheme where the soul, trapped in the cycles of birth, death, and rebirth, receives retribution between death and future rebirth. However, the mortal concern is to free oneself from the cycle of birth and rebirth, and this occurs by remembering that only one's deeds determine one's destiny.

Buddhism, as an extension of Hinduism, also shares similar afterlife doctrines, with its belief in countless transmigrations as part of the retribution for one's actions, sinful or virtu-

Ancient Iranian Beliefs in Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell

MITRA ARA, PH.D.

ous. Among the many fiery hells described in Buddhism, there are eight great hells, portrayed with vivid and clear imagery. In Buddhism, the best existence, the final heavenly state, is referred to as nirvana, described as the ultimate state of absolute bliss.

Iranian Zoroastrian texts explain the fate of the individual after death, the universal fate of the world as a whole, an apocalyptic ending, and the final reconstitution of the heavenly world.

The eschatology, following the dual opposite forces of good and evil, and the ethical creed of one's 'orderly existence' (the chief formative factor of immediate afterlife existence) warns of individual judgment as well as the 'final renovation,' the last universal resurrection and judgment day, with the promise of the coming savior and an immortal life in the heavenly kingdom of God.

The tradition describes the present world as the corporeal world, *astavat*, and the after

death as the spiritual world, *manahya*. In the Zoroastrian tradition, death is described as the cessation of physical life caused by the separation of the soul, *urvan*, from the body. In death, the body, a temporary abode, is terminated, and the immortal soul journeys to another world of existence.

Death is seen as the completion and perfection of life, where individuality is not extinguished, but transfers from one state to another. The principal of evil who created darkness, destruction, death, and suffering, is the arch-demon *Angra Mainyu*. He is eager to harm good, created in accordance with the principle of truth and order, *asha*, by bringing it into falsehood, lies, and chaos, *druj*, and is against all that is in accordance with good, *asha*. His army--the great demons, *daevas*, as the supreme embodiment of the forces of chaos, *druj*--live and flourish in the darkness.

Hell is also referred to as endless darkness--the worst kind of existence--sharing comparable depictions as those described in the Indian Vedic texts.

At the core of Zoroastrian religion is the belief in the continuance of existence, the future state of the soul after death in a spiritual world, and judgment and retribution in the afterlife. The descriptions of the afterlife found in the Zoroastrian tradition are very similar to the Vedic heaven, which promises an everlasting life filled with brightness, happiness, health, pleasure, and delight.

Life in this world ends in death, and is necessary to awake in the afterworld. Besides heaven and hell, the final destinations of the soul, the Zoroastrians identify a third place, an intermediate area akin to the notion of Christianity's purgatory for those who deserve neither heaven nor hell because the total weight of their good thoughts, good words, and good deeds is equal to that of their bad thoughts, bad words, and bad deeds.

The Zoroastrian tradition describes the state of the soul after death as it separates from the physical body. During this state, the soul leaving the body remains on earth for three days, sitting at the head of the body before ascension, during which time the body is prepared for removal.

The soul is protected from the harassments inflicted by evil forces and guided by the divinities *Sraosha* and *Atar*. The body is also guided by *daena*, as its own self-image, one's conscience, in the form of a female. Whether the individual lived according to *asha* and was good, an *ashavan*, or lived according to *druj* and was bad, a *drujvan*, this woman leads the soul into heaven as a divine beauty, or into hell as an obnoxious wretch.

The soul stands in individual judgment,

where the individual's thoughts, humata, words, hukhta, and deeds, hvareshta, during their existence are weighed against one another on the scales. The final decision is made by three divine judges, Mithra, Sraosha, and Rashnu, based on the turn of the scales. One's deeds are weighed on two sides of the scale. If the good deeds weigh more, the soul is guided to heaven; if the evil deeds weigh more, the soul is taken to hell.

The judgment and balancing take place at the Bridge of Separation, Chinvat Bridge, connecting the two worlds, heaven and earth, separated by a deep chasm with a fiery hell at the bottom. Depending on the past thoughts, words, and deeds, the soul envisions the bridge as wide and easy to cross, or as narrow and impossible to walk upon.

The righteous soul is confident of attaining the 'best existence,' vahishta, in the 'house of the song,' the heaven attainable by ashavan, a righteousness that is the result of the merits it has accumulated while in the body. The unrighteous, drujvan, who has followed the path of deceit and lies, receives the 'worst existence' in the 'house of the deceit.'

As for universal judgment, the Zoroastrian tradition provides a distinctive afterlife scenario that includes the state of individuals after death as well as the state of the world after the end of time based on the individual's morality during life.

'As you sow, so shall you reap.' An apocalyptic collapse follows the resurrection and recreation of a new, pure, and regenerated world. The struggle between the forces of good and evil, light and dark, ends with the coming of the savior, saushyant, the victory of good, the resurrection of the dead, a general judgment, and the ultimate annihilation of evil forces, after which the world is renewed for the last time with the coming of the final savior, saoshyant, in the victory of good over evil.

The end of the progression of the life of the soul is the making of excellence, the freshokereti, the final renovation, and the inevitable end of the world. Once the blissful souls are endowed with physical bodies, they can experience the joys of the senses as well as those of the spirit. In this perfect environment, the surviving humans will live in ideal harmony with one another on heavenly earth, the 'best existence.'

According to Zoroastrian teaching, whether in the physical or in the spiritual world, humans exist in and with both forces in the universe, good and evil. Humans are also endowed with the power of free will, and, in life, choose to work for one or the other of these opposing forces, establishing his or her own reward or punishment, his or her own happi-

ness or misery, in heaven or in hell. Accordingly, in these paramount ethical teachings, reward and punishment for one's own actions in this world and the next permeate the entire religious corpus. This system provides hope of future reward for the performance of righteous acts and the rejection of wickedness in the face of retribution.

As in the Vedic tradition, people ask for the boons of long life, wealth, health, happiness, and immortality in the next world. The Zoroastrian expectation of the end of the world continues down through ages, first influencing the Jews, as seen in some of the past century's discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The discovery of these texts has shed more light on the Iranian influence on the Jewish communities in the territory of ancient Iran, reaching from India to Africa. Jews and Iranians built strong relations during the period of Babylonian captivity in the sixth century, BCE as the result of the liberation of the Jews by King Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian Achaemenid Empire (6th century B.C.E.).

Among Jews, as among the Zoroastrians, we see the concept of 'law' and keeping the 'covenant' with God is imperative. Therefore, transgressors were marked as those who broke the law and the covenant, and were subsequently subjected to God's wrath.

The Iranian religion not only influenced the Greeks and Jews, as especially demonstrated in the Jewish Book of Enoch. We also see the influence in the subsequent Millenarianism in the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions. The concept of resurrection in the Zoroastrian tradition, as described by Ezekiel in the Old Testament, not only influenced afterlife beliefs, but also views on earthly life, which in turn were influenced by deep belief in the opposition of good and evil, and the personification of the latter.

Other influential Iranian beliefs have impacted the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam). These beliefs espouse God created an ethical world as a stage upon which the constant battle between good and evil takes place, wherein the afterlife reckons time and the weighing of one's deeds, rewards and retributions, specific paths to heaven and to hell, the coming of the savior, and an expected end of the world as we know it, followed by a new world for the chosen who will live an immortal, heavenly life.

The described afterlife journey, similar to those found in the Zoroastrian tradition, is further alluded to in both the Old and New Testaments, in the Book of Psalms, Job, Daniel, Isaiah, Luke, John, and, most notably, the Book of Revelation. In the Islamic tradition, the same descriptions of the ethical world, the opposite

forces of good and evil, the bridge of judgment, the weighing of good and evil actions, the fiery tormenting hells for the unrighteous, and a heavenly existence for the righteous are also present.

The emergence of religious concerns with death, judgment, destiny of the soul, and the final state of existence among the major monotheistic religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, was most likely propelled by a fruitful encounter with Iranian religions, deeply concerned as these were with the struggle between good and evil, and the moral and ethical issues of right and wrong, sin and virtue, judgment, punishment, and divine promise.

Combining the prevalent Zoroastrian understanding of the afterlife with Judeo-Christian and pre-Islamic Arab beliefs, seventh century Islam describes a similar schema of individual eschatology, with the reckoning of deeds, the judgment of the soul, and subsequent retribution in heaven or hell. Similar to the Zoroastrian tradition, reckoning day in Islam is a combination of depictions found in the Zoroastrian texts, which refer to the weighing of the soul's deeds on a scale, and its subsequent retributions and rewards.

There are genetic and historical links in the afterlife beliefs about final judgment, reward, and retribution pointing to the essential roles played by the earliest Indian Vedic and Iranian Zoroastrian religious traditions, in the formation and development of major doctrines in Hinduism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Acknowledging and incorporating the earliest religious elements into the studies of other related traditions would not only further clarify some of the persisting ambiguities, but would expand our knowledge about how some of these more recent ideologies were produced. The imagery of afterlife events as recorded in the religious texts perhaps express human concerns that arise from fear and hope. However different the expectations of the afterlife in the various traditions, they all convey the same uncertainties and expectations, and evoke the same kinds of response.

**Advertise
Your Business in
Persian Heritage**
(973) 471-4283
persian-heritage.com



In the ancient Near East, archery became the predominant means of launching sharp projectiles, replacing spear-throwing. The history of archery, however, may have originated further down south during the Upper Paleolithic period. In South Africa, stone points thought to be arrow heads were discovered by archaeologists dating back 64,000 years old, and are believed to be the earliest evidence of the use of the bow and arrow. Apart from hunting animals for survival, human beings came to use the bow and arrow for a more destructive purpose – warfare. In the history of warfare, warriors of various cultures were renowned for their skill in using the bow and arrow. Of particular note were the soldiers of the Achaemenid Empire. Also known as the first Persian Empire (550 BC – 330 BC), the Achaemenid dynasty was known for its elite force of warriors named by Herodotus – ‘The Immortals’.

The Powerful Achaemenid Composite Bow

The bow used by the archers of the Achaemenid Empire is known as the composite bow. It is said that this weapon was developed by Central Asian nomads during the 2nd millennium BC. The body of this bow was constructed using horn and wood laminated together using animal resin.

When the resin dried, a bond would have been formed between the horn and the wood, thus giving the body of the bow enough strength to withstand the immense pressures placed on it when the bow was drawn.

To provide the bow with explosive power, sinews from animal tendons were then laminated to the outside face of the bow. It has been speculated that the construction of the composite bow might have taken up to 18 months to complete, and the end product was an immensely powerful weapon.

Master Archers of the Achaemenid Empire

KAVEH FARROKH

(Appeared first in *Ancient Origin*, September 18, 2015)

Early Training Makes a Strong Archer

In addition to such a deadly weapon, the Achaemenids were said to have been trained in archery from a very young age. Regarding the education of Persian boys, the Greek historian, Herodotus, has this to say:

“Their sons are educated from the time they are five years old until they are twenty, but they study only three things: horsemanship, archery, and honesty.”

From this statement, it may be said that archery was one of the skills most highly valued by the Persians of the Achaemenid Empire.

Master archers were used extensively by the Achaemenid armies. During battles fought by the Achaemenids, the archers were one of their first lines of attack. They would line up, take cover behind the shield bearers, and release volley upon volley of arrows against their enemies. An anecdote provided by Herodotus about the Battle of Thermopylae serves to illustrate this point:

“Before battle was joined, they say that someone from Trachis warned him [Dianeces] how many Persians there were by saying that when they fired their bows, they hid the sun with the mass of arrows. Dianeces, so the story goes, was so dismissive of the Persian numbers that he calmly replied, ‘All to the good, my friend from Trachis. If the Persians hide the sun, the battle will be in shade rather than sunlight.’”

This description suggests that the Achaemenid archers were firing from a long range with a high trajectory. Despite the volume of their projectiles, these archers seemed to have had little effect on the defending Spartans. This may be due to the fact that the Spartans were heavily armored. Although modern tests have shown that arrows released from a composite bow could pierce several layers of chain-mail at ranges up to 180 m (590.6 feet), the Achaemenids were using lightweight arrows. These may not have had the force required to penetrate the shields or cuirasses of the Spartans.

Additionally, the Spartans, who were highly trained and disciplined, were able

to maintain a tight stationary formation, thus allowing them to withstand the volleys of Achaemenid arrows at the Battle of Thermopylae. Furthermore, by firing their arrows from a long distance, the Achaemenids were reducing the effectiveness of their weapon. Nevertheless, the battle ended in defeat for the Greeks, who were vastly outnumbered by the invading Persians under King Xerxes.

It has been pointed out that when the Achaemenids formed up closer to the Spartan lines, their archers seemed to have been more effective. One such battle was the Battle of Plataea. According to Herodotus’ account,

“They [the Lacedaemonians (Spartans) and Tegeans] proceeded to perform sacrifices, since they were about to join battle with Mardonius and as much of his army as was there, but the omens were unfavorable, and many of their men fell, with many more wounded, while the sacrifices were taking place, because the Persians formed their wickerwork shields into a barricade and continuously rained arrows down on the Greeks.”

An illustration from the 1854 text “History of Greece and Rome, including Judea, Egypt, and Carthage” (John Russell, page 82) depicting the Battle of Plataea (479 BCE) (Image Source: Ancient Origins).

Despite their Talented Archers the Achaemenids Lost...

Despite the effectiveness of their archers, the Battle of Plataea was eventually won by the Greeks. Additionally, history has shown that in the end, the Achaemenids were unable to add the Greek mainland into their empire. Thus, the Greek playwright, Aeschylus, could have written in *The Persians*:

*Wo, wo is me! Then has the iron storm,
That darken'd from the realms of Asia,
pour'd
In vain its arrowy shower on sacred
Greece.*

Image Caption:

Statue of Arash Kamangir (Arash the Archer/Arash who grasps the bow) at Saadabad Palace in Tehran (Source: Drafsh Kaviani in Public Domain).

POURDAVOUD CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE IRANIAN WORLD ESTABLISHED AT UCLA

UCLA



Pourdavoud Center
for the Study of the Iranian World



Source: UCLA

UCLA has established the Pourdavoud Center for the Study of the Iranian World, the first center in the Western Hemisphere that aims to advance the knowledge of ancient Iranian languages, history and religions. The Pourdavoud Center was named for the late Professor Ebrahim Pourdavoud, a pioneering scholar of ancient Persia, and was made possible by a gift from his granddaughter, Dr. Anahita Naficy Lovelace, and her husband, James B. Lovelace.

"My grandfather devoted a lifetime to the study of the history, languages, religions and culture of ancient Iran. I am so grateful that Jim and I have the good fortune to be able to honor and extend the impact of his important contributions," Lovelace said. The mission of the Pourdavoud Center is to engage in transformative research on all aspects of Iranian antiquity, including its reception in the medieval and modern periods, by expanding on the traditional domains of Old Iranian studies and promoting cross-cultural and interdisciplinary scholarship. The center will complement UCLA's well-established doctoral program in Iranian Studies - founded more than half a century ago in 1963 - which attracts 1,000 students from all over campus to its courses each year.

"At UCLA, we recognize that the study of ancient cultures is more important today than ever," said David Schaberg, dean of humanities in the UCLA College. "It reveals the rich tapestry of human history and identity, and allows us to understand and uphold the highest values our forebears espoused."

Schaberg said he was confident that the Pourdavoud Center would inspire lively intellectual and cross-cultural discussions among students and scholars throughout campus, as well as members of the Los Angeles community.

"UCLA's location in the principal metropolitan center for the Iranian-American community is ideal for the Pourdavoud Center," he said. The Pourdavoud Center will host lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences. It will also provide grants to established and emerging visiting scholars to generate and disseminate innovative scholarship on ancient Iran.

The center will draw on a wealth of campus resources including: the departments of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Classics, History, Art History, and Asian Languages and Cultures; the Indo-European Studies program; the Cotsen Institute for Archaeology; the Asia Institute; the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies; and the UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies. Moreover, extensive collections of medieval Persian manuscripts and late antique Iranian inscriptions will be available to scholars working at the Pourdavoud Center.

UCLA's Iranian Studies program, led by Professor M. Ra-

him Shayegan, is home to the largest and most comprehensive doctoral program of its kind in the Americas and is the only one to cover the entire spectrum of Iranian Studies across disciplines, linguistic boundaries and periods. Its distinctive strengths are Old and Middle Iranian philology, ancient Iranian history and religions, archaeology, and the study of classical Persian literature.

"We are very grateful to the Lovelaces for providing us crucial resources to revive the study of Iranian antiquity," said Shayegan, holder of the Jahangir and Eleanor Amuzegar Chair of Iranian Studies. "A research institute of this magnitude can have a transformative impact on the fortunes of the whole discipline, decisively reversing its decline and reinforcing its foundation."

Shayegan, who will guide the Pourdavoud Center as it launches its inaugural year, said that the center would launch in the spring with a two-day international workshop focused on strategies to strengthen the field of ancient Iranian studies and to bolster institutional links among other centers of excellence.

Ebrahim Pourdavoud (1885-1968) was a dedicated scholar who pioneered the first Persian translation of the Avesta, the holy book of the ancient Zoroastrian religion. Over a span of 67 years, he conducted extensive research on ancient history and ancient Iranian languages, and trained many scholars and Iranists.

According to Shayegan, Pourdavoud profoundly affected Iranian society by resurrecting and identifying ancient Persia as a positive force for societal progress in contemporary Iran.

"The late Professor Pourdavoud greatly admired the ability of ancient Iranian universal empires to embrace diverse ethnicities, religions and languages, while allowing their individuality to thrive within a cohesive state structure," Shayegan said. "This innate tolerance was, and still is, of great appeal, and a research center named after Pourdavoud ought to pay heed to this spirit of openness to the world."

Lovelace, who spent the first 18 years of her life in Tehran, has fond memories of childhood visits to her grandparents' home.

"Our grandfather would typically receive us in his study, where he spent most of his time," she recalled. "He was surrounded by his beloved books on ancient Iran, in different languages, alongside encyclopedias, reference books, dictionaries and books on a variety of related subjects. Though a formal man, he was very warm and lighthearted at the same time. He had a wonderful sense of humor and always looked for ways to engage us, his grandchildren, during these visits."

"I am grateful to my grandfather and my parents for giving me such wonderful early exposure to the ethos of ancient Iran. I have found this immeasurably helpful both in my personal as well as my professional life," she said. As for the gift to UCLA, Lovelace said that she was impressed by the caliber of the program of Iranian Studies and faculty, and that she anticipated the field would thrive in such a vibrant setting. "With new tools for discovery and expanding opportunities for exchange of ideas, it behooves us all to work together to keep our ancient civilizations alive and relevant for future generations," she said.

Lovelace is a clinical psychologist practicing in Los Angeles. She holds a bachelor of arts in psychology from Princeton University and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from The University of Texas at Austin. A native Californian and graduate of Swarthmore College, James Lovelace is an equity portfolio manager at Capital Group, a global financial services company based in Los Angeles.

Judaism, the very original Arch of the Covenant for the three Abrahamic monotheistic religions of Jewish, Christianity and Islam, is now ubiquitously practiced, observed or the least affiliated in name with, by well over four billion inhabitants, i.e., more than two-third of the world population who identify themselves with any religion worldwide. One could, therefore, easily conclude that a new holy book in history is simply the next revised edition of an earlier one, the Bible and the Quran preceded by the Torah, is the case in point herein. Judaism is attributed to Moses born enslaved in Egypt which his ten commandments of 3,000 years ago, led to the subsequent writing of the Torah and Talmudic scriptures in the southwestern Persian Empire 2600 and 1000 years ago, respectively. The Torah was in turn, drawn from the ancient Mesopotamian (fifteen epic poems of Gilgamesh) and Elamite oral stories, and inspired by the Persian Zoroastrianism in existence from as far back as ten millennia ago. Abraham's birth back in early 9th BCE, happened in the village of UR west of the Iranian City of Susa where the mausoleums of Daniel and many other Jewish prophets, still revered by the locals, stand; Abraham (aka Ebrahim, Abram, Avram, Effrom) is said to have been the son of an Oracle Sumerian priest. When very old, he was blessed with two sons: Ishmael from Hajar, and later Isaac from the 90-year-old wife Sarah; all Arabs and the twelve Jewish tribes now mostly dissolved into the region ascribe decadency to Abraham. These include not only the 20 million self-identified as Jews worldwide, but also the 350 million Arabs, especially the 30 million of the peninsula of Najd and Hejaz south of the Persian Gulf that referred to as the Saudi Arabia since mid-20th century.

Historically speaking, the twelve Jewish tribes were orig-

inally in today's southeastern Iraq, before they moved to Judea and Palestine, to be joined by their emancipated people from Egypt. Jesus Christ if he truly existed, was a simple low-ranking Jewish Rabbi who revolted the poor living south-east of the Mediterranean Sea against the heavy taxation levied by the local Roman rulers of the time. Although he is said to have had loyal apostles-at least 12 plus Mary Magdalene-who followed him after his demise and added chapters to the Torah in essence transforming it into versions of Bible, it took almost four centuries before the Roman Emperors- entrenched in Paganism and Persian Mithraism (Sol Invictus)-converted and adopted Christianity as an integral part of their hegemony-a religion which later became

have had eleven wives in his life. The first is assumed to have been Khadijah, a Jewish merchant of affluence who had married twice before and bore three children before marrying Mohammad when she was 40. Mohammad, 15 years her junior remained loyal to her as the last husband.

The current Hashemite's ruling family of Jordan, who held tribal leaderships in Iraq, and in Hijaz and as the Kaaba custodians, are of the same at least half Jewish if not 100% pedigree. The Roman emissaries even persuaded the disgruntled Persians of Mazdakian faith as Salman Parsi to move to Mecca and later Medina in order to zest up Islam with more Zoroastrianism philosophies. After Mohammad's public migration proselytization of

with our common mitochondrial gene pool from whom we all in Asia and Europe have descended from, giving rise to the theories of Aryanism and Irano-European stocks and languages. Because most natural phenomena and the concept of postmortem were not understood back in ancient times, early humans resorted to superstitions and deities. A few smarter ones fabricated polytheism and served as the guardians of such gods and goddesses, in essence, religion and government were born. Then, the concept of seeking truth and knowledge called Faravahar, thereby attaining the highest monotheistic supreme inanimate being, i.e., the ultimate source so energy and knowledge called Ahura Mazda in the infinite universe, were conceived as the basis of Zoroastrianism and its Gatha and Yasna, still practiced by a few hundred thousand in Iran and India; the broader cultural rituals as the new year Nowruz is in fact commemorated by a few hundred million. The polytheism anchored on Veda and Hinduism has since persisted as Hinduism in India however.

With scientific discoveries developing our understanding of natural phenomena, religions that followed Zoroastrianism had to grudgingly adopt and embrace this fact-based insights, in essence coalescing into the original concept of Zoroastrianism. In fact, each of the monotheistic religions has over time undergone thorough progressive reformations or regression into their Puritan heritage (Leibovitch in Judaism, Mormonism and Moonies in Christianity, and Bahaism in Islam.) Hence, one could in retrospect rationalize the need and merit to take refuge with religiosity and in fact use it in the abuse of a strong central government and set of common laws, to ensure masses abide by a set of principles based on wrath of God, especially re-

THE BELIEVERS OF JEWISH RELIGION EXCEED FOUR BILLION WORLDWIDE!

Rachel Eliasi Kohan, (Brentwood, California)

the political ploy for multiple invasions of the Orient (East), by the Occident (western) crusaders of the Byzantium Empire, and in more recent centuries for colonists' ulterior motives everywhere. In retrospect, one could rationally surmise the Romans embraced Christianity as an indirect means of discrediting the older Judaism and later Islam, on their new interpretation of the same old book toward their own purpose.

Moving fast forward, it was in the seventh century that the Roman Empire emissaries once again resorted to overt confrontations when they orchestrated yet a new religion coming out of the Judaic bosom, called Islam. Mohammad was born in the Jewish Bani Hashem clan among the Quraysh tribes in Mecca. Mohammad was presumed to

Islam and his emigration from Mecca to Medina formerly called Yasreb, he waged his first holy wars (Ghazawat) against the four major Medina Jewish tribes exterminating them. He and his four succeeding caliphs then waged wars against Yemenites, Egyptians, and the Persian Sassanid dynasty before Umayyad caliphs moved across North Africa and into the Iberian Peninsula and southern Europe for the 800 years that followed. The Romans served their ulterior motives further through weakening and eliminating Jewish dissent clusters, while overthrowing the most major contender to their eastern border, that is, the Persian Sassanid Empire.

Tracing back our common ancestors to 40,000 years ago on the northern Iranian plateau, there must have existed a man

ward or punishment after life and on a day of judgment. Can anyone surmise how of much of the religiosity remain if the after death question were convincingly answered? None!

Thence, be it the Christian crusaders against innocent Muslims and Jews in the holy land, German supremacy of inflicting holocaust, Israeli apartheid and Jewish supremacy against their own Palestinian brethren, Saudi sponsored DAESH/ISIS criminal against humanity, the ethnic cleansing of Hindus by the Islamic republic of Pakistan, the export of Shiite doctrine by the IRI through Hezbollah or Islamic Jihad, should all be deplored and prevented at all cost. More urgently, the current terrorism ideologically propagated and financially sponsored by the Saudi Arabian regime will not stop, unless we go directly after their tyrannical Wahhabi government; that means holding the Saudi Arabia accountable while setting in motion the

managing Mecca and Medina by a coalition of 54 Islamic countries. By the same token, could we become more realistic by accepting for instance that there is no viable two-state solution of Israel and Palestine? Instead, should we not declare one secular state administered under the U.N. protectorate for a period of 25 years or until equal socio-economic and political empowerment is achieved, where one person will only have one vote? Simply put, sustaining blind justice and equality applied secularly would go far longer and deeper toward a lasting peace than the current overt and covert military confrontations and violence.

The above notwithstanding, and as brilliantly articulated by Saadi the 13th century Persian Poet, this is the golden rule for all humanity:

*All humans are members
of one frame,
Since all at first
from the same essence, came.*

*When by hard fortune
one limb is oppressed,
The other member
lose their desired rest.
If thou feel'st not
for others' misery,
A human is no name for thee.*

About the Author: Rachel Eliasi Kohan (rachelekohan@gmail.com) born in Iran in a diverse

and loving family comprised of the Shiite and Sunni Muslims, Jewish, Armenian Christian and Zoroastrian lineage, has, as a naturalized American, resided in the U.S. for forty years. As an independent thinker and scholar; she has in life come to believe in the universal spiritual humanism, equal justice and peace for whole Humanity and Mother Nature.

Where Did the CAT Go Home?

Helen Briggs (BBC)



The ancestors of domestic cats have been wild cats that humankind has spawned, once in the Near East and once in Egypt.

Based on the largest research conducted on the ancestors of domestic cats, the Near East farmers were probably the first to use cats about 9,000 years ago. A few thousand years later, domestic cats traveled from ancient Egypt through the sea or other commercial ways to the rest of the world and were scattered everywhere, and now there is only Antarctica where cats do not live.

Scientists think that cats are approaching human farms, because grains attract mice, so that catching a mouse with a cat can be a useful link. Eva Maria Gaigl, of the Jacques Mono Institute in Paris, who oversees the study, said "domestication has happened twice, first in the Near East, and one much later in Egypt."

"The cat was later scattered as the cat of the ship successfully throughout the ancient world, and the rejection of both groups can be found in modern cats." In this way, cats were busy working on rodents on ships and fields for thousands of years, and they were completely domesticated.

Geagle believes that the relationship between man and cat is a commonality and the cat has chosen to coexist with man.

For this study, the researchers studied the mitochondrial DNA (what was inherited from the mother's side) of two dozen cats. The remnants of these cats have been discovered in the graves of the Vikings, Egyptian mummies and archaeological sites of the Stone Age. The researchers concluded that the people of the Near East were the first to tame the cat and keep it home or travel with them, and then during the Roman Empire the cat's leg came to Europe.

The first cats appeared in the Middle Ages, and the study of the cat's DNA revealed that the genetic mutation in the cat in the fourteenth century catwalk in Turkey caused the cat's role.

In the following years, cats were scattered throughout the world, and gradually the cats lost their importance.

Dr. Gaigl says that until the nineteenth century, the appearance of cats did not change much in contrast to dogs, because humans did not manipulate the cats in breeding, but now there are a variety of cats grown from creepy cats without hair to cats like shaggy balls.

The Persian cat remains one of the most popular and famous cat breeds.

NINE IRANIAN AMERICAN RECEIVE ELLIS ISLAND MEDAL OF HONOR



On May 13th, 2017 nine highly accomplished Iranian Americans, including IA-100 member Mohammed Farzaneh, were awarded the 2017 Ellis Island Medal of Honor for outstanding achievement in their personal and professional lives, as well as their commitment to the preservation of their Iranian culture and heritage and noteworthy citizenship to the United States.

Established in 1986 by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations (NECO), the Ellis Island Medal of Honor ranks among the nation's most prestigious awards, paying annual tribute to the ancestry groups that comprise America's unique cultural mosaic. The Medals are presented on Ellis Island to American citizens of diverse origins for their outstanding contributions to their communities, their nation, and the world.

The U.S. Congress sanctions the Ellis Island Medals of Honor and recipients' names are listed in the Congressional Record. Six Presidents of the United States, Nobel Prize winners, athletes, leaders of industry, artists, and others are among the remarkable group of individuals to have received the award.

The 2017 Iranian American Honorees Are:

1. Hormoz Ameri heads the Naftex group of private companies engaged in the business of exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas in the United States.
2. Dr. Abbas Ardehali, Director of Heart and Lung transplant at UCLA for 15 years.
3. Dr. Hossein Eslambolchi, Chairman and CEO of 2020 Venture partners, providing technology and operations consulting to Private Equity Firms and Venture Capitalists.
4. Mohammad Farzaneh, a homebuilder and owner of Home Creations Company.
5. Andy Madadian, an international recording artist also known as "The Persian Bono" and one of the best Armenian artists globally.
6. Azita Raji, an American diplomat, banker and philanthropist. She was the first female U.S. ambassador to Sweden and the first Iranian-born American to serve as a U.S. ambassador.
7. Maggie Soleimani, the first Iranian-American woman appointed to two high-profile Commissions in Los Angeles County and an advocate for children and young adults with special needs.
8. Dr. Shaheen Tedjarati, the Associate Director of OB/GYN and Chief of Gynecologic Oncology & Robotic Surgery.
9. Cumrun Vafa, a string theorist and the Donner Professor of Science at Harvard University.

Source: Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA)



ARTIST TRACES GOATS' PLACE IN HISTORY OF IRANIAN CULTURE

The Paris-based Iranian painter Raheleh Roshandel intends to familiarize visitors to her new collection "Iranian Goats" with the place of the animal in the history of Iranian culture. Twenty works from the series that features goats in Iranian mythology, nomad life and some other fields were put on display in an exhibition at Tehran's Shokuh Gallery in mid-July.

In her research about goats in Persian culture and visits to the Louvre Museum, Roshandel has traced Iranians' interest in goat motifs created on ancient Iranian artifacts and architecture, she told the *Tehran Times* in a recent interview.

"I found out that people were superstitious in those days and that the goat was a symbol of protection and livelihood. They used to engrave goat motifs on the walls to keep their shelters safe from the devil. The goat was the symbol of an angel that helped them in difficulty and I wanted to reintroduce it again and cause people to remember this ancient tradition," she explained.

"What was important for me is to turn the goat into a world symbol and let others know the story behind it," she said with a bright smile. "As an artist, I want to show off the good things in our culture. I think any visitor with any type of taste should not pass by the goats on display in my exhibits. That is, I want any person of taste who cares to do so and wants to have one at home to stop by and look at the works," she said.

"The goats will be painted in various styles like real, surreal, cubism and many other styles."

On choosing Iran for her first exhibit, she said, "The culture is rooted in my country, so it was a great honor for me to showcase the collection first in my own country. The series will later go to France and other countries to let visitors know that it belongs to Iran."

She also pointed to her childhood memories and said that her first pet was a goat.

In her next collections, she plans to focus on girls and goats as well as Persian proverbs on goats.

The artist also explained that her paintings are totally abstract with no previous drawings.

"I simultaneously conceive the artworks and apply the colors. The paintings are my personal perception. That is, I deem myself a lady from the Achaemenid era who wants to keep the devil away from home and then I begin to paint that goat. I actually consider myself an artist from those years," she added.

Roshandel said, "There were those who have worked on goats and made paintings of them, but my emphasis on goats has been of greater significance."

She also noted that goat motifs will inspire all the collections she will create in the future. "I will preserve the ancient symbol of the goat with new elements in new and different situations."

A painting from Raheleh Roshandel's series "Iranian Goats"

Source: Tehran Times

**Let's start with the obvious
Where were you born and
raised?**

I'm proud to say I was born in Tehran. My family left when I was one, and after living in London for a year, my parents immigrated to Canada. I've been living in Toronto for most of my life, and was in the UK for a few years after completing my Masters there.

**How and where did you grow
up? What were your parents
like, what did they expect of
you professionally?**

I grew up in suburban Toronto. My father is an engineer and architect by profession, and my mother has a master in communications, but upon moving to Canada, they had to seek opportunities elsewhere as they had no 'Canadian experience'. They both worked very late hours as financial advisers, and between the ages of six and twelve, I was raised by my maternal grandparents, who moved from London for me.

My parents are incredibly open-minded people and, while they pushed me to excel in school, they never once imposed their beliefs and ideals on me, and there was never the pressure to choose a particular career path. They only provided their advice and counsel, and were always there to support me – on all levels – no matter what I chose to do.

**If applicable when did you
leave Iran or have you ever
visited Iran?**

I try to visit Iran as often as I can. As a student, I used to travel there every summer. The last time I was there, however, was in 2014. I'm planning on going to Tehran this October, and can't wait to see my beautiful city again.

**What was your relationship
to Iranian culture growing up
and what was it like for you
growing up in the diaspora?
Was travel to Iran part of
your history or did you always
experience Iran from afar?**

As a child the only exposure I had to my culture was through my grandparents, first and foremost, and other Iranians around me, such as friends and rela-

An Interview with

JOOBIN BEKHRAD

Editor and Publisher

BY SHAHROKH AHKAMI



tives. I was also sent to Persian classes on Friday nights. I was taught to love my Iranian heritage when I was growing up, but it wasn't something I really thought about or was as passionate about as I am now. I rediscovered my culture when I was around sixteen, which is when I first visited the country. But yes; my experience has largely been from afar, and will always be. Even in Iran, I look at things differently as a result of my upbringing and surroundings.

**What is your favorite memory
about Iran or what is it that
fascinates and inspires you
about Iran and Iranian people
AND what is it that upsets
you?**

There isn't one particular memory that stands out; everything about Iran is beautiful to me. When I think of Iran, though, my mind turns to the conversations I'd have with my friends over 'French coffee' in the cafes of the Sayeh complex in Tehran (opposite the Mellat Park), the sight of the mountains, the romantic Paykan taxicabs, the smell of burn-

ing *esfand* in traffic jams, the way even the most ordinary of back streets would turn into a thing of breathtaking beauty at sundown ... I could go on forever.

Iran – to me – is the most fascinating and magical place on earth. It really is the 'navel of the world', as my dear friend Hushidar has written in the introduction to my new book of essays and stories, *With My Head in the Clouds and Stars in My Eyes*. Iran's role in humanity and civilization is monumental, and I can't even begin to describe it; suffice it to say that the very name leaves me in awe.

Iranians are incredibly talented, refined, and cultured people. That being said, there are many I know outside the country who are ashamed of their Iranian identity, and resort to such measures as denying it, changing their names, and avoiding questions about their roots, amongst others. There are also, unfortunately, many pseudo-intellectuals I've encountered – not in Iran, but abroad, again – who deem Iranian pride to be passé and naïve, question the very things that make us Iranian and dismiss them as fairytales, and look at nationalism and the term 'Aryan' (the meaning of which many of them don't even under-

stand) as dirty words. On the same note, I know politicians of Iranian origin who routinely call for sanctions on, and armed aggression towards Iran, and look forward to the day when Americans and Israelis will bring ‘democracy’ to Iran. But then again, I don’t even consider such individuals to be worthy of being called Iranian.

What are your perceptions of art / music / culture being produced there?

Iranians always blow my mind. I sometimes think, sitting here in Toronto and reading my books, that I know a thing or two, but when I speak with Iranian artists, writers, and other creatives there, I soon realize I know nothing at all. What my Iranian compatriots are doing there, in all fields, is mind-blowing. Their talent, more than anything else, is what so many others see as a threat. We are not a mere nation of consumers and order-takers; we’ve shown the world that in spite of their sanctions, imposed wars, and ostracism, we can stand on our own two feet and thrive. How long can countries like the UK and France survive in such isolation? That’s some food for thought. In an enemy, our self-sufficiency and drive are indeed things to be feared.

Tell us about your educational background schooling

I received my BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) from the Schulich School of Business at York University in Toronto, and my MS. in Management from City University London’s Cass Business School. I consider my real education to be all the literature, films, and music I devoured on the side, though.

At what age did you find art/ music/literature --what were the early influences -- and what early impact did they have on you?

Music was my first love. I fell in love with rock and roll after my father bought me my first record, the Rolling Stones’ *Bridges to Babylon*. I’ve also been playing the guitar since I was thirteen. Literature came later, after discovering the poetry of the Persian Sufis. More than anything else, it was a love for Iran and the desire to learn everything I could that impelled me to read. Visual art was last, and again,

my passion for it was dictated by my love affair with Iran.

Tell us about Reorient: what is it, when and why did you start it?

Reorient is a non-political, non-religious, and non-ideological publication celebrating the contemporary arts and culture of Iran and the Middle East. I founded it in 2012 out of a desire to shine a light on the brilliance of not only Iran, but the other countries and cultures comprising – for lack of a better term – the ‘Middle East’. I serve as the Editor, and am supported by an amazing network of contributors based around the world. While our focus is on the contemporary, many of our pieces have historical elements to them, too. Visual art, film, music, and literature are the main subjects we deal with in the form of articles, essays, interviews, and podcasts.

Do you have the support of your family in your endeavors?

Oh, definitely. Without the support of my parents, I wouldn’t be where I am now. I owe them everything. I’d be lying through my teeth if I said I’d made it on my own.

Your most recent endeavor is The Robaiyat. Can you tell us about that?

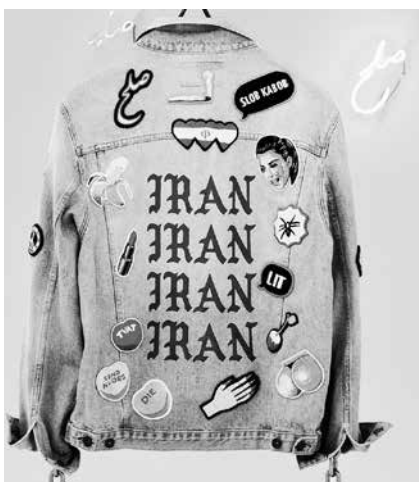
My translation of the *Robaiyat* of Omar Khayyam was the first book I published! I authored it in 2012, and only decided in 2016 to do something with it. My affinity for Khayyam and the kinship I feel with him aside, I thought it was essential to provide a new translation. Unfortunately, the most well known English version of the *Robaiyat* is Edward FitzGerald’s, which is at best a very loose translation; rather than try to translate the words *Robaiyat* as accurately as possible, FitzGerald strove to capture what he felt to be the ‘spirit’ of Khayyam. Many of the poems are actually his own compositions, and the author of his *Robaiyat* is often referred to as ‘FitzOmar’. On the other hand, there are wonderful scholarly translations that are incredibly accurate, but that lack the poetic qualities and sensibilities of the original Persian poems. I strove to combine both approaches – that is, to be as faithful as possible to each and



every word, while also remembering to retain the spirit and rhyme of the poems. Of course, no translation is every going to be 100% accurate, or flawlessly convey all the nuances of the work in its original language; translations are by definition flawed. But what other alternative do we have? I’d love for everyone to learn Persian and read the originals, but I don’t think that’s going to happen anytime soon!

In the Iran Inside out show in 2009 (which opened right during the 2009 protests and got a lot of attention) - there was a tendency to frame the Diaspora artists as being heavily influenced by Persian art whereas the artists working in Iran were perceived as more outward-looking and not “limited” by their Persian influences. In marveling at the sophistication of the Iranian artists, there was a kind of backhand dismissal of the Diaspora artists, as if Persian influences were limiting or else not authentic for those in the Diaspora.

What are your thoughts on Iranian artists i the Diaspora speaking to their Iranian influences, how do you contextualize that? Is it possible to characterize “Iranian contemporary art” in general, or is this all too simplistic an aim?



There's certainly a difference between the art produced by artists living and working in Iran, and those in the diaspora. I've actually found it to be the opposite; many Iranian artists in the diaspora I follow look to their Iranian heritage for inspiration, but haven't limited themselves to it whatsoever. Living and working outside the country, they've naturally been exposed to the oeuvre of a plethora of non-Iranian artists, and in many cases are just as German, French, English, etc. as they are Iranian.

It would be absolutely impossible not to have other influences! I'd say the difference lies in the ways in which Iran and Iranian culture impact their work. For instance, I, as someone who's lived in the West all my life, am going to write about Iran differently than a writer who was born and raised there. The works of all Iranian artists, whether at home or abroad, are valid and credible. The problem arises when baseless claims are made. I've never said or intimated that I represent Iranian youth, and don't go around calling for Iranians to take to the streets. Who am I to do such things?

Do you think the travel ban is having or going to have some big impact on Iranian artists, in Iran and in the Diaspora?

It's already been having a huge impact. As I said in my interview with PRI's Marco Werman, Trump might just be the best thing to have happened to Iranian culture in recent years. Earlier this year, the Guggenheim in New York replaced works by European masters with those by Iranian artists like Parviz Tanavoli, while

the Davis Museum at Wellesley College took down all works created or loaned by immigrant artists (including an Iranian one) in protest. And, while I love Asghar Farhadi (whose latest film London's mayor screened in Trafalgar Square), I think many would agree that there was a bit of politics involved in his second Oscar win. Celebrating Iranian culture in the States and abroad is now being seen as an act of defiance, and Trump, of course, is the person everyone loves to hate at the moment. In terms of arts and culture, he's only had a positive impact.

Do you think it is possible through journalism, writing, and art itself to change the impressions of those who hold on to stereotypical notions about Iran?

If I didn't I wouldn't be doing what I do. So many friends of mine have written to me expressing a burning desire to visit Iran, and not few of them have even gone all around the country! We're our own worst enemy. For every one Iranian patriot, there are five others waiting to sabotage all his or her efforts. We rarely receive any negative comments on our Iran-related Facebook posts from non-Iranians; the overwhelming majority come from our own 'compatriots', unfortunately. As I said earlier, putting Iran down is in vogue nowadays. To celebrate and champion Iranian culture is naive and delusional.

What are your future plans?

I'm about to release two new books:

With *My Head in the Clouds and Stars in My Eyes*, a collection of Iran-related essays and stories, and *Lovers of Light*, a poetry book with the ancient Iranian deity Mitra at its heart. As well, I've nearly finished the first draft of a new novel, which has to do with Toronto's Iranian community.

Do you have any words of wisdom and inspiration for the future generation of Iranian – Americans?

Say the beautiful name of Iran with pride – always. For God's sake, don't change your name from Pedram to Pete, and don't refer to yourself as 'Persian' out of shame and embarrassment. If people can't pronounce your lovely name, that's their problem. Never forget that you come from one of the most glorious cultures and civilisations the world has ever known, and that it is a *privilege* to have been born Iranian. Read about your illustrious history so that you'll never be anyone's fool, and when you've done that, read even more. There's more to being Iranian than *gahr-kardan* and *chelo kabab*. If you wear a *farvahar* and call yourself a Zoroastrian and child of Cyrus, do not do so in ignorance, but with full knowledge and appreciation of the glory of your heritage. Have respect for everyone, and never elevate Iranian culture at the expense of other ones, but be steadfast and defiant in your well-merited pride, and never sell yourselves to the many who despise and fear us for our greatness. Love your ancient homeland, your people, and your culture, with every bit of your being.

The Symbol of Isfahan fortune in the Iranian traditional astrology (located in the north side of The Naqsh-e Jahaan squire-Isfahan-Iran)



MEHR Photo: Abbas Poostindooz MEHR NEWS AGENCY