



Persian Heritage

www.persian-heritage.com

Persian Heritage, Inc.

110 Passaic Avenue
Passaic, NJ 07055

E-mail: Mirassiran@gmail.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. 20, No. 78

Summer 2015

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK	6
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	8
NEWS	9
The Man Who Became Buddha	10
"Pol-e-Tabiat" – Nature Bridge	12
COMMENTARY	
Freedom of Expression... Freedom of Thought	14
<i>(Hooshang Guilak)</i>	
THE ARTS & CULTURE	
REVIEWS	16
Desert Dancer	17
Meet Omid Nooshin	18
Persian Elements in Talmud <i>(Jacob Neusner)</i>	20
Isfahan, Half of World	21
In the Darkness <i>(Forough Farrokhzad)</i>	23
Interview with Nima Kiann <i>(Persian Heritage)</i>	24
An Overview of the Military Activities	28
<i>(Kaveh Farrokh)</i>	
Interview with Khosrow Semnani	30
<i>(Shahrokh Ahkami)</i>	

Important Notice

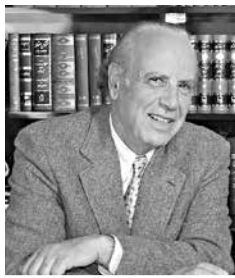
All written submissions to Persian Heritage with the expectation of publication in the magazine must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. When an article is submitted we assume the author has complete ownership of the article and the right to grant permission for publication.

Persian  Heritage

**Special
announcement:**

Contact our
California based Advertising
Agent for your ads.

(973) 471-4283



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

On May 23, 2015, Senator Lindsey Graham a well known United States Senator and possible candidate for the presidency of the United States, made an outrageous statement about Iranians which was broadcasted in Washington, D.C. and his words were "I grew up in Central, South Carolina near Clemson University. My family owned a restaurant, pool room and a liquor store and everything I know about Iranians, I learned at the pool room. I ran the pool room when I was a kid and I met a lot of liars and I know that the Iranians are liars."

Because of this statement influential Iranian American organizations have protested and demanded an apology from Senator Graham. These organizations requested that all Iranians not stand silent on this matter, but join the protest in protection of their integrity.

The question I have is what made Senator Graham make such an outlandish, unfair and bias statement. One could reason that he hoped to attract a vote and appease his listeners, showing them that he is an experienced, trustworthy leader and therefore qualified to run for the presidency.

His statement remains a puzzle to me. How is it that a promising 59 year old Senator, who claims he has worked hard his entire life and sacrificed for his country with military service was able to gather enough information and life experience from a pool room in rural South Carolina (a place he worked a few decades ago) to form such a harsh and nonfactual opinion of ALL Iranians? Those he calls liars include, men, women, children, teenagers, old and young. It puzzles me that he made these statements without any explanation on the how's and why's of his conclusion. Senator Graham can you justify this statement? If they lied why? If they lied, who? And how many lied? Did you meet all the Iranians in the world at that time. Since then how many of the now seventy five to seventy-six millions of Iranians have you met? I am simply flabbergasted by your uneducated remark and seriously question your integrity and leadership qualities. Do you or rather are you truly willing to call seventy-five to seventy-six million Iranians, hyphenated or not, crooks and liars?

What makes your statement, senator Graham, even more ridiculous and self serving is the fact that I am certain as a senator you have had the opportunity to meet distinguished and respected Iranian-Americans at the White House, in Congress and other venues. Have you met Faryar Shirzad who formerly served on the National Security Counsel at the White House from 2003 to 2006 and who served as Special Assistant to the President of Economic Affairs and then Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Internal and Economic Affairs? Have you Senator Graham met Ferial Gouashiri, personal secretary

of President Obama? Have you Senator Graham, had the good fortune to have met the first Iranian-American female and first American female to be given an ambassadorship to Sweden, Azita Raji? Have you Senator Graham had the distinguished honor to have met Dr. Cyrus Amir Mokri, former Assistant Secretary for Financial Institutions of the United States Treasury? Have you had the delightful opportunity to meet Ms. Goli Ameri who served as Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs? Or, have you met Susie Nemazee the wife of Sir Peter Westmacotts, the United Kingdom's Ambassador to the United States? Have you ever met the first private sector female to make a trip into space, Anoushen Ansari? These people, Senator Graham, are just a small starting point of individuals representing the pride of Iranian-Americans, who you have ungraciously called LIARS. If you have not met these individuals and the majority of other Iranians, I hope you will make it your mission to do so. Only then will you understand the gravity and miscalculation of your statement.

I am certain that as a potential candidate for the presidency of the United States and as a senator, that you were obligated to research and understand the demographics of the immigrants to the United States. I remember you as the champion of the Bi-partisan committee on comprehensive immigration. If you do not know the following let me share some statistics regarding the population of Iranian-Americans you easily call liars. According to extrapolated 2,000 and 2010 United States Census data, subsequent reports and other independent survey analyses carried out by think tanks, Iranians are the most educated, most contributing, most taxpaying and most law abiding immigrants that the United States has ever witnessed.

An estimated 1.5 million Iranian-Americans live in the United States (2012) with the largest concentration being in the greater the Los Angeles area. Twenty percent live in Beverly Hills. Other large communities of Iranians are found in Northern New Jersey, New York, Washington, D.C., Boston, MA, and Houston and Dallas, TX.

Iranian communities are religiously diverse and have representation in the following religions: Armenian-Assyrian Christians, Muslims, Jews, Zoroastrians, Baha'is, Mystics, Spiritualists and Humanists.

Fifty-nine point two percent of Iranian born, per the Census in 2000, have achieved a bachelor or higher degree in comparison to twenty-four per cent of the total of other foreign born. And, one in four have a masters or doctoral degree. This is the highest rate among sixty-seven groups ever studied.

Per the Small Business Bureau (SBA) Iranian immigrants are among the top twenty immigrant groups with the

highest rate of business ownership contributing substantially to the United States economy.

One of every two Iranian-Americans have household incomes that exceed \$100,000 dollars, compared to one in five for the overall United States population.

According to a study by MIT, Iranian scientists, engineers and businesses in the United States own or manage around one trillion dollars and are eminently present in every sector of society.

Presently there are ten thousand physicians of Iranian heritage working in the United States who own practices and/or work in medical institutions, universities and other institutions.

As mentioned earlier they are the most law abiding of all ethnic groups with the lowest rate of allegations or even convictions for major, misdemeanors or minor crimes in America and therefore ranks as the lowest ever for any community of immigrants in United States history.

It is also estimated the total number of professors with Iranian heritage teaching and researching in higher education venues, is approaching ten thousand. One would be hard pressed to find a single American university or college, where one or more Iranian professors is not serving. What is most striking is the majority (seventy-five percent) of these 10,000 professors serve in the top 200 of the 4,000 universities and colleges in the nation.

These Senator Graham are impressive statistics for a lying population. And if they are not enough, other liars of the Iranian and Iranian-American population work with pride in NASA and were instrumental in the Mars space mission. Do you not remember President Obama expressing his gratitude to Bobak Ferdowsi who contributed to the Mars Science Laboratory Curiosity mission. These liars are also found at high ranking positions of ownership and development positions at Google, Microsoft, Apple, YouTube, Drop Box and Oracle, etc.

Senator Graham since the first day I arrived with my family, as an immigrant to the United States in 1969, I have been a dedicated Republican party member. In spite of many mistakes, through the years, that some of the leadership of the Republican Party have made, I remain committed to its principals.

I would like to tell you about another Iranian-American who falls under your description of a liar and that is me. My family immediately assimilated into our new home. I am a practicing physician as an obstetrician and gynecologist. In addition I am the editor of Persian Heritage magazine, a bilingual magazine established to educate both Iranians (second and third generations) and non Iranians on the true Iranian culture, history and achievements. We also hope that this is a positive mechanism to counter the negative press against all Iranians, resulting from the rhetoric and decisions made by Iranian regime leaders.

I am proud to report that my wife (an interior designer) and I raised three daughters, one a dermatologist, one a Fordham Law School graduate and the other a well known artist and graduate of Georgetown Law School. Two of them are married to physicians, a dermatologist and a spinal surgeon and the third to a banker and graduate of Princeton University. They have children who are being raised with principals and respect. They have been taught, as my wife

and I have always felt, to give back to a country whose citizens are gracious, noble, generous and kind. I believe they are on the path of greatness. Could you possibly look my wife, my children, my son-in-laws and my grandchildren in the eyes and call them LIARS!?

Senator Graham after having read this editorial can you actually believe that seventy-five to seventy-six million Iranians, hyphenated or not are still all LIARS? Perhaps I should refresh your memory back to 9/11, a dreadful day. Iranians in Iran were the first group to hold a candlelight visual honoring the fallen. They showed the world their deep respect and admiration for Americans.

Senator Graham earlier I stated that your remarks were perhaps made to please the enemies of Iran. But understand that speaking non truths against an entire population, Iranian or other, will leave unnecessary scars on its youth. Acts and words must be carefully chosen and thought out, because they can never ever really be retracted. Senator Graham, as a political leader and candidate for the presidency of the United States, feel free to insult any foreign government leader you desire, but separate the people from the governments. They are not your enemies.

Senator Graham we as voting citizens of the United States are use to being promised, "lied to," during campaigns. When elected the percentage of promises kept is unfortunately low. Does that make you and your fellow politicians liars? And if so would it be right for me to call all Americans and politicians liars? I don't believe so. A liar is one of the gravest adjectives one can use to describe an individual. Unfortunately it is a term that is used far too generously amongst politicians, it should not be used as a Persian expression states, "in a conciliatory manner."

It takes a brave and honorable person to stand up and admit a mistake. It takes even a stronger, braver and honorable person to make a public apology. I hope you are the stronger, braver and honorable person and deliver to the Iranian-Americans and Iranians all over the world a true, NOT CONCILIATORY apology.

Shahrokh Alavi

Persian  Heritage

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:

**Contact our
CALIFORNIA BASED ADVERTISING AGENT
for your ads.**

973 471 4283

UNBELIEVABLE

I am always fascinated by the covers of *Persian Heritage* magazine. They always invite you to open the cover and explore the wonderful articles within. Your spring issue needs a special accommodation. The cover is simply magnificent and the designer should be praised.

In addition to the cover the interview of Dr. Mohammad Heydari- Malayeri, though technical was interesting and intriguing. I have asked my entire family to read it.

Thank you for sharing our rich modern heritage and accomplishments, some I would never have found without your magazine.

K. Dana

EXCELLENT JOURNAL

Ba Dorood va Sepas e Besyar.

As always I am so honored and humbled by your excellent journal and it is a joy for me to be able to humbly contribute to the culture and history of Iranzamin.

Kaveh Farrokh

THE CONTINUITY OF OUR EXISTENTIAL IDENTITY

So proud to have a friend (more than a friend) who is one of a kind!! No wonder *Persian Heritage* remains a unique contribution to the continuity of our existential identity.

Ba doroud,
Maboud Ansari

A PRECIOUS HERITAGE

Baa Doroud Va Sepaas-e Faraavan. "Dast Marizaad". As always a precious heritage for all Persians.

With kindest regards,
Jaleh Radmard

PERSEPOLIS RESTAURANT, NYC

Dear Editor:

I hope this email finds you well. I wanted to send along a sighting that took place at Persepolis Restaurant.

The former Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Barak, was spotted dining at Persepolis Restaurant with his wife and another couple. After dining for just over two hours, Mr. Barak told the owner that the food was the "best Persian food" he has ever had. Mr. Barak ordered various Persian dips and salads, white fish and finished the meal with the famous Persian dessert, baklava. Multiple customers approached him to say hello and pay their respects. Mr. Barak was extremely polite and engaging. Upon leaving he swore he would be back "very soon" - proving that regardless of what is going on politically between Israel and Iran, you can't beat a good meal.

On another note, Bill de Blasio was also spotted at Persepolis last week having a late night bite with his wife.

Tara Bayati

Subscribe Today!

Persian Heritage

973.471.4283

A GOAL REACHED

I am very humbled and touched that you would consider including my marathon experience in *Mirass Iran*. It is not newsworthy. I am embarrassed most of all in front of you, who has ran multiple marathons time and time again.

The real story, if there is one to be told, is about the very significant impact people make on one another. How, unbeknownst to you, your simple act of running in the local city parks touched the lives of the countless youth in the community and planted a seed inspiring and motivating them to follow your example. For some, this occurred right away. For others, like myself, this became an illusive dream. A goal that was carried over year after year, each year becoming seemingly further removed from the realm of possibility. It was only this year, on the cusp of an important milestone, celebrating my fiftieth birthday, did I realize that the window for achieving this 38 year goal was quickly closing forever. I knew that this was the year, my last chance to fulfill a promise to myself. If I did not push myself out of my comfort zone now, I would have to close the book on this dream forever.

I spent many nights reflecting on a still vivid memory I have of you, a memory from the time I was a 12 year old girl growing up in Northern NJ. I recall a young Dr. Ahkami sprinting along the cherry blossomed paths of Passaic Park, tall, lean, strong and athletic and yet always smiling and greeting the many, many, friends, neighbors, colleagues and patients who would see him and waive or say hello. He never complained that we were breaking his stride or disrupting his pace. Today, I understand and appreciate exactly how generous you actually were and how difficult those conversations with friends who interrupted you mid-run actually



were. Today, I see with greater clarity exactly how special a man you are to have had the discipline to get out there and run on good days and bad, on the coldest days of winter and the most humid days in July no matter how busy life was. I realize that no matter what was going on in your practice or at home, you made the personal choice to live your life with a healthy mind in a healthy body. You chose a sport that required nothing but your own perseverance and commitment.

Dr, Ahkami *besyar aziz*, I have many, many things to thank you for, the accounting of which is simply not possible, for the most valuable of life's lessons cannot be quantified. I thank you for the gift of running, for by gifting me this simple hobby, you have gifted me a strong mind. On Sunday March 15, 2015 my goal was to prove that my mind was stronger than my body and that I could cross the 26.2 miles gap from Dodger Stadium to the Santa Monica Pier successfully. I achieved two lifelong goals on that day, I finished a marathon and I proved that my mind could rule my body. I owe it all to you.

*Truly,
Yours, Neda Farid*

GHAZEL ENSEMBLE



On March 22, at Pace University, Iranian kamancheh virtuoso, Kayhan Kalhor and Indian sitar master Shujaat Husain Khan joined table player Sandeep Das to update groundbreaking musical dialogue. This Grammy-nominated Ghazel Ensemble is one of the most influential cross-cultural collaborations in global music. Their work was warmly received by the audiences making the evening a complete success.

AMERICAN MUSIC IN TEHRAN



On February 23, 2015 Bob Belden, a New York saxophonist, performed at the Azadi indoor stadium in Tehran, Iran. The audience was thrilled by his performance as noted in their standing ovation. Cell phones were used to record the event. When Mr. Belden and his trumpet player Mr. Clagget joined a group of Iranian violinists, singer and pianist on stage, the crowd roared. Mr. Belden was equally joyous and honored to have had the experience. This concert was the first by an American musician since the 1979 revolution. Not unlike most American visitors to Iran, Mr. Belden was captivated by Iranians and was humbled by the way they so warmly welcomed him and his band.

STAMP OF CYRUS THE GREAT

I just received the following Post by a prized friend. The following set of stamps, was designed and published in four languages, in commemoration of Cyrus The Great by the State of Israel on April 14, 2015.

Cyrus the Great freed the Jews from detention by the Babylonians nearly 2500 years ago. Cyrus is mentioned 23 times by name in the Jewish Bible. He is cited as the King of the Jews.

Iranian diplomats in Europe rescued thousands of Jews from

the Holocaust. Iranians aided the Iraqi Jews with a route to escape to Israel after the 1948 war for Israeli Independence.

Iranians have no animosity with Israelis. Yet, nearly all Iranians despise the racist Israeli government, particularly the current Prime Minister

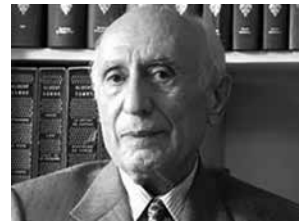
for cruelty against Palestinians and occupation of their land.

The largest Jewish populations in the Middle East reside in Iran, behind Israel. Jews are protected by the Iranian Constitution, and are guaranteed seats in the Iranian parliament.



A DESERVED HONOR

On Friday April 17, 2015, Professor Ehsan Yarshater, was honored at Columbia University on the occasion of his 95th birthday and to thank him for his dedication to the Persian culture throughout his life. Professor Yarshater is known as the doyen of Iranian studies. He enhanced the faculty at Columbia University for many years. The evening began with a reception, which was followed by a seminar dinner and a performance by Ardavan Mofid. Dr. Yarshater enhanced the evening with a delightful presentation on Encyclopedia Iranica, thanking all of those who supported this great Persian culture endeavor.



HYATT NAMES MARYAM BANIKARIM GLOBAL CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER



Hyatt Hotels on Wednesday named Maryam Banikarim its global chief marketing officer. She succeeds Hyatt veteran John Wallis, who will remain with the company and oversee strategic initiatives. She will be responsible for steering Hyatt brands online and offline, as well as fostering "innovation around the guest experience," the company said.

Persian  Heritage

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:

Contact our
CALIFORNIA BASED ADVERTISING AGENT
for your ads.
973 471 4283

ANCIENT PERSIAN INSCRIPTIONS LINK A BABYLONIAN KING TO THE MAN WHO BECAME BUDDHA

Harvey Kraft

<http://www.ancient-origins.net/opinion-guest-authors/ancient-persian-inscriptions-link-babylonian-king-man-who-became-buddha-003001>

Dramatic evidence has revealed the presence of Siddhartha Gautama, the man who became Buddha, as far west as Persia. Family seals and records found at Persepolis, the ancient capital of the fourth Persian Emperor, Darius the Great, have been identified and associated with the names of Siddhartha Gautama and his father, Suddhodana Gautama.

The Persepolis Seals identified royals and other important personages within the Persian ruling sphere. Guatama was the name of the royal family of the Saka kingdom.

Analysis of Seals PFS 79, PFS 796 and PF 250 found among the collection of important seals in Persepolis, the Persian capital of Emperor Darius I, are purported to be the Gautama family according to an interpretation by Dr. Ranajit Pal (The Dawn of Religions in Afghanistan-Seistan-Gandhara and the Personal Seals of Gotama Buddha and Zoroaster, published in Mithras Reader: An Academic and Religious Journal of Greek, Roman and Persian Studies. Vol. III, London, 2010, pg. 62).

The family crest bore the etching of a crown-headed king flanked by two totems, each a standing bird-headed winged lion. The Seal of Sedda depiction of a Sramana (Persepolis Seal PFS 79), a Lion-Sun shaman, is based on information gathered from a number of other seals the name refers to Sedda Arta (Siddhartha), i.e., Siddha (Liberator of) and Arta (Universal Truth).

The twin guardians each



Possibly a modification of his family seal designed to reflect his new teachings, once Siddhartha Gautama achieves enlightenment this Buddhist emblem comes to represent him seated on the lion-throne under the sacred cosmic tree flanked by two celestial Bodhisattva.

had the body of lion and the head and wings of a mythic sunbird (i.e., Egyptian Sun-bearing falcon). The lion and falcon-gryphon motifs represented a pair of Sramana shamans. Therefore, the family seal associated with Gautama, described a royal person of the Arya-Vedic tradition.

A similar image of Buddhist iconography shows a Buddha seated on a "lion-throne" under a bejeweled

tree with cosmic aides at his side. The Buddhist montage declares his enlightenment under the cosmic Sacred Tree of Illumination.

What would the family crest of the Gautama family be doing in Persia? Was Siddhartha Gautama connected to the Persian Empire?

The inscriptions of Darius the Great (Per. Darayavahsh), the Persian emperor for thirty-five years, boast that

the Zoroastrian God Assura Mazda (Per. Ahura Mazda) chose him to take the throne (in 522 BCE) from a usurper named "Gaumâta." Darius shrouds the short-lived reign of his predecessor in a power struggle involving deceit, conspiracy, murder, and the prize of the Persian throne. He characterizes "Gaumâta" as an opportunist who illegally grabbed the throne in Babylon while the sitting Persian Emperor Kambujiya was away in Egypt.

Written in Cuneiform Script on tablets at Mount Bisutun (aka Behistun) in three different languages: Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian (a form of Akkadian), the Bisutun Inscriptions may have echoed the name of Siddhartha Gautama, the man who became the Buddha, in the name of a little known King of Babylon.

The inscriptions refer to a religious figure named "Gaumâta," from whom the Achaemenid Persian Emperor, Darius the Great, seized the throne in Babylon. Darius painted "Gaumâta" an imposter and illegal ruler, although the description does not seem to fit the highly educated and beloved leader. Darius identified him as a Magi (practitioner of esoteric knowledge), and sardonically labeled him as a "stargazer." If the name "Gaumâta" referred to Siddhartha Gautama, this reference would mean that he held a key leadership position in the Magi Order. Moreover, as the headquarters of the Magi was in the temple complex of Esagila, home of the ziggurat tower dubbed "House of the Raised Head," the designation

of “stargazer” suggests that Gautama was involved with Babylon’s star observatory.

Could it be that Siddhartha Gautama was the mysterious King “Gaumâta”?

The name “Gaumâta” appears to be a variant of Gautama, the Buddha’s family name. In the ancient multilingual land of Babylonia, multiple names and titles with spelling variations referring to the same person were common.

Does evidence of the Babylonian Magi Order’s influences appear in Buddhist literature? Could we discover Mesopotamian references in the Buddhist scriptures?

The earliest mathematical systems, astronomical measurements, and mythological literature were initiated in the ziggurat tower-temples of the Fertile Crescent by the cultures of Sumer/Akkad and Amorite Babylo-

nia. Both Magi and Vedic seers furthered knowledge of a cosmic infrastructure, well known in the Buddha’s time from the Tigris to the Ganges. Discovering this connection in the Buddhist sutras would challenge the prevailing view that Buddhism was born and developed in isolation exclusively in India. Although the oral legacy of the sutras were assembled and recorded later in India, a Babylonian finding would have major implications regarding the origin, influences, and intentions of the Buddha.

Described as a compassionate philosopher-cosmologist “Gaumâta” decreed freedom for slaves, lowered oppressive taxes across the board, and inspired neighbors to respect one another in a city known for its diverse ethnic groups and many languages. His espousal of liberty, human rights, and generosity sup-

ports the thesis that “Gaumâta” and Gautama were one and the same person.

Darius, a military strongman, and a member of the Achaemenid family, prepared for his coup with a propaganda campaign designed to legitimize his overthrow of “Gaumâta.” In his public inscription he referred to his cohorts as witnesses who would confirm the killing of the usurper.

While his story appears to be full of cunning deceptions, the real behind the scenes story of this episode has remained elusive to history. Certainly as Darius had good reason to write history in his own self-interest, what happened has gone undetected for thousands of years because historians know little to nothing about “Gaumâta.”

Of course, if “Gaumâta” was really Siddhartha Gautama, this assassination had to

be a lie, because he did go on to become the Buddha. Either someone else was murdered in the name of “Gaumâta,” or Darius shrewdly produced a disinformation campaign designed to cover up what really happened. With the “death of the imposter” the new emperor wanted to send a message to supporters of “Gaumâta” that he would not tolerate rebellions and suppressed any hope for the return of this popular leader. But in the wake of the coup nineteen rebellions arose throughout the empire. It would take Darius more than a year of brutal military action to crush the liberation-minded communities inspired by “Gaumâta.”

The above article is an extract from ‘The Buddha from Babylon: The Lost History and Cosmic Vision of Siddhartha Gautama’ by Harvey Kraft and has been republished with permission.



The Award-Winning Bridge Connecting Iranians

“POL-E-TABIAT” – NATURE BRIDGE

Project dubbed as ‘the third symbol of Tehran’ earns international recognition for architect Leila Araghian.

As an architecture student, Leila Araghian, 31, recalls roaming the sycamore-lined boulevards of her hometown, Tehran, looking for the next adventure. Once, she and a friend were passing by a bridge along *Zafar* Street, when they spotted a brown leather sofa outside a building. So they got an idea, and dragged the sofa onto a small bridge, one of many that dot the creeks running through Tehran. As they sat there watching the water flow beneath them, they thought how much better it would be, if people could actually hang out on bridges, rather than just cross over them.

That friend, Alireza Behzadi, would become Araghian’s collaborator in her most important project so far, the *Pol-e-Tabiat*, or **Nature Bridge**, which opened in late 2014, and is now being called “the third symbol of Tehran”. The pedestrian bridge has won three awards in Iran.

And it also picked its first international recognition, winning a 2015 A Popular Choice prize in highways and bridges category, from a New York-based architectural organization, Architizer. A panel of international jurors also nominated it as one of the top five finalists in architecture



and engineering category.

Araghian recalled that late afternoon stroll with Behzadi many years ago, as she explained the inspiration behind her project, which she designed when she was only 26. “Usually, bridges are designed in a straight line. And that straight line will produce a one point perspective that will tell you to just go. But we want to keep

people on the bridge,” she told Al Jazeera.

“The bridge is not just a structure to connect from one point to another, but also a place to stay and enjoy.”

Soaring 270m across Modarres Highway, *Pol-e-Tabiat*, which connects two parks in the northern district of Iran’s capital, reflects her aspirations about Iranian architecture, Araghian said.

Mohammad Mohammadzadeh, an architect, author and critic, told Al Jazeera that projects like Araghian’s “reveal a huge capacity in the emerging generation of architects, who have been willing to form a progressive trend in Iran”.

To achieve her goal, Araghian designed *Pol-e-Tabiat* to have three layers, including one level for cafes, another for walking, running and biking, and a third platform for viewing the highway below, or the Alborz Mountains, which towers beyond the skyline of Tehran.

Entering from the west on *Ab-o-Atash* (Water and Fire) Park, the bridge opens with a 60m-wide entrance with flower gardens, making it appear like it is still part of the park. The multiple paths, sourced from



“100 percent recyclable composite wood”, lead visitors to the different levels of the bridge. Supported by three tree-like columns, *Pol-e-Tabiat* was built with a curved body, to give visitors different perspectives depending on what they are facing, Araghian said, explaining the merits of Iran’s largest pedestrian bridge. “So when you are walking on it, you don’t really see where you are heading, adding to the mystery, as if you are walking on a path.” To put up the bridge’s foundation, Araghian and her team also searched for a spot where there were a minimum number of trees.

It took a year for Araghian and her team at *Diba Tensile Architecture* to design *Pol-e-Tabiat*. They worked with the Italian engineering firm Massimo Maffies for the construction, which started in the fall of 2010. Behzadi, who oversaw the construction, said installing the 2,000 tones of steel hundreds of meters high above a major highway, was the most challenging part of their tasks. Engineers had to set up a platform to ensure the safety of workers. Temporary tunnels were also built to prevent construction materials and other objects from hitting the cars buzzing below.

Because of the trade sanctions imposed on Tehran, obtaining construction



where the people would go and where they would sit, they all functioned the way I imagined it. That really felt good because it’s my first project.”

Araghian, who was studying in Canada during the construction, said that Behzadi should share equal credit in the project, for pushing her to enter the bridge design competition, and for looking after the project through to the end. “He was the reason why I did the work and he was the one who stood [by my side] in the worst situation,” she said. “There’s no bridge

without him.”

Later, as Araghian and Behzadi observed visitors’ reactions to their project, they realized how *Pol-e-Tabiat* bears some resemblance to the stone bridges of ancient Persia. Until now, hundreds, if not thousands of people still hang out in the arches, passages and corners of the 400-plus-year-old *Khaju* Bridge and *Siosepol*, or the Bridge of 33 Arches, which traverses *Zayandeh* River in Esfahan, one of the capitals of the ancient Persian Empire.

Arash Mozafari, an architect who works in Canada and Iran, said: “I believe this project has a really wonderful design,” he said. “It is not just a bridge. It is a popular public space, an urban space for pedestrians.” He said that while *Pol-e-Tabiat* is being mentioned alongside *Azadi* and *Milad* Towers as symbols of Tehran, “these are not comparable” because the towers represent something more political, whereas *Pol-e-Tabiat* “is for the people and nature”. He also praised Araghian as a “talented young architect.”

“We will hear more from her. She knows the methods of design and engineering very well, and she is a very hard worker, qualities one can hardly find these days.”



materials from overseas was also a headache. Contractors had difficulty transporting materials and paying for them, which caused delay on the project. Four years, 10,000 cubic meters of concrete, and millions of labor hours later, the bridge was completed last October.

Walking around the bridge following the inauguration, and seeing for the first time the stream of people enjoying her work, Araghian said, “It felt good of course.”

“All the things I had in my mind,



Freedom of Expression... Freedom of Thought SLANDERS... DEFAMATION

Dr. Hooshang Guilak

“O Freedom, the Crimes are Committed in your Name!”

Mme. Marie Jeannette Roland, Nov. 8, 1793

Recently, the world was shaken with the news of the heinous crime committed by an Islamist group, in Paris. Their action was despicable and abhorrent (The strongest words that I could find to describe them). There is no conceivable reasoning to justify such behavior. The loud cry, almost universal, was that the groups of the cartoonists were exercising their rights. They were entitled to have “FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION”, “FREEDOM OF SPEECH”. A very noble idea and completely accepted and obeyed. However, I would like to direct the attention of all to a small point, “WHERE DO WE DRAW THE LINE, OR WHERE THE LINE SHOULD BE DRAWN BETWEEN FREEDOMS OF SPEECH, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, FREEDOM OF IDEAS, AND INSULTS, and OR SLANDERS AND ANARCHY? Does our right to free speech and free thinking justify our action to insult other people or disregard their feelings with impertinence? Aren't we abusing this right to satisfy our own ego or benefits that we feel we deserve and are entitled to? In decades past, I have studied a number of such misuses, if we can call it by that name, to achieve nothing but disaster for all concerned. Allow me to walk you through a few of such incidents:

On February 8, 1936, the journal of New York Daily Mirror in an article, wrote, “The Shah of Iran was a stable boy at the British Legation in Tehran.” Rationality of this newspaper in writing such article was and still is impossible to envisage. We have to bear in mind that it was 1936. Virtually, no one in this country knew about Iran, and I am certain that no one cared what the Shah's back ground was. Then why the newspaper went to such a length and published a lie of such magnitude? The Iranians were furious. The United States Department of State was bombarded with complaints from Iranian Government both through the U.S. Consulate in Tehran and the Iranian legation in Washington. The department of state took the position that: “There is nothing that they could legally do. *Press, under the US constitution, is allowed to exercise their rights to freedom of speech and expression.*” The State Department was correct, nothing they could do. Iranians could not believe and were insisting that the US government has to make the journal to retract its writing. Finally through third party mediation, a representative of Mr. Hearst, the Department was able to make the Daily Mirror, to withdraw its article and apologize to the Iranian Government.

A few months later, on June 13, 1936, another newspaper, The Brooklyn Eagle, printed a sketch of the Shah and declared, “The Shah of Persia descend of no line of nobility- he himself was a stable boy originally...” It was a false statement and absolutely of no consequence to anyone in the whole United States. Then why those two papers wrote the lies and insulted others under the protection of “Freedom of Press and Freedom of Expression.” The incidents caused a semi severance of diplomatic relation between Iran and the United States. The Iranian Government recalled its representatives but allowed the Americans to remain in Tehran.

Now let us examine those cases where the situation was

reversed. On May 7, 2010, the elderly White House correspondent, Helen Thomas, was asked by Rabbi David Nesenoff of her thoughts about Israel. Her response was, “Tell them to go out of Palestine.” This statement created uproar of unimaginable magnitude in the United States. How dare she utter such words? The White House Correspondents Associate called her remarks, “**Indefensible.**” Robert Gibbs, White House Spokesman said that her comment was “**offensive and reprehensible.**” In January 2011, The Society of Professional Journalists voted to retire Helen Thomas Award of Lifetime Achievement. The Anti-Defamation League demanded that all honors that she received should be rescinded, by stating that “Thomas had clearly, unequivocally revealed herself as vulgar and anti-Semite in the speech. She was persecuted to the fullest extent of the word. Now the question that comes up is “WHAT HAPPENED TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH?” No one cared or dared to bring up the subject.

What comes out of this incident is the influence and power of the foreign government which comes out shining as a gilded sword. The very fact that great statesmen have cautioned us against. Let us take a look at the farewell address of our first president, George Washington, warning the country against such danger:

“Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government.”

Bill Maher, another journalist and commentator, contradicted President George W. Bush's assessment of the terrorists after the 911 incident on the World Trade Center. He also lost his job and was vilified by many. Inappropriate and insensitive that his comments were, I am sure that he never meant to support or encourage the action of those criminals, but only to disagree with the words used by the president. Again, wasn't he entitled to his rights of speaking his mind, whether we agree or disagree with his assessments?

The French Revolution an incident hailed by some and detested by other, in many respects remains controversial, in the way that it was handled. In many respects, it mimics most revolution, which starts with good intention and becomes high jacked by a group of extremists and its course changes completely. May be most of us can remember what happened in 1978-1979 revolution in Iran that destroyed the country completely. Isn't there some similarity between these two? The frameworks are the same.

Madame Marie Jeanette Roland, a writer and philosopher and student of great French writers and philosophers such as: Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and Montesquieu with her husband joined the Girondists, the moderate faction of the revolutionaries in France during the reign of Louis the sixteenth. When the hardliners, the Jacobins, took over the revolution, they began a systematic purge of all other, including the Girondists. Madame Roland was arrested for treason and imprisoned at the infamous

prison of the Abbaye on June 1, 1793. Released for an hour and imprisoned again at Sainte-Pelage and then transferred to Conciergerie. On Nov. 8, 1793, she was conveyed to the guillotine. Before placing her head on the block, she bowed to the clay statue of liberty at the Place de la Revolution and murmured, “**O Liberté, que de crimes on commet en ton nom!** O freedom the crimes that are committed in your name. WE have a miniscule concept of what freedom is and what does it mean and what limitation it brings to our daily life, often committing an act of anarchy believing that it our rights. We use the word indiscriminately and whenever it serves our purpose. The French writer philosopher of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jean Aicard (1848-1921) in his poetry entitled, “**Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité;**” describes beautifully the freedom and its limitations:

I am free, you declare... So Am I, I Reply;
 Free Men Don't Have but one big Worry, to Say;
 To Maintain What is Right, in a Balance Perfect;
 “Your Freedom Halts, where Mine Biggins;”
 This is What the Honor of the Free man Dictates.

The Reversal Of Iran's Brain Drain

An article recently appeared in the Christian Science Monitor (March 26, 2015) written by Scott Peterson. It addressed the recent return of Iran's academic elite who are returning to Iran after completion of their foreign education. According to Mr. Peterson's research the reason for this reversal is the hopes that President Rouhani will turn Iran's economy around, which will mean good jobs. This election coupled with the hopeful and permanent resolution of the nuclear issues and lifting of sanctions may enhance the move..

On numerous occasions Rouhani has stated he favors an open-door policy for returnees. He believes that they are a tremendous asset to Iran. Of course he is met with opposition, those who think that a western influence like this might have an impact on the imposed social culture presently in place.

Will the lure of jobs be enough to lure Iranian Diaspora back, or will they just enjoy the ability travel back and forth with less or no restrictions?

According to the article, “ young talent leaving Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution has proven costly to Iran. Statistics from the Migration Policy Institute published by the IREconomy web site indicates that some 67,000 Iranians left the country in the 1970's and another 281,000 in the 1980's. That became a cascade in the 1990's, with another 2,100,000 leaving.

Emigration eased in the 2000's. But the International Monetary Fund often puts Iran near the top of countries losing their academic elite, at a cost, government officials estimated in 2006, of \$40 billion each year. World Bank figures show Iran's net migration to be 300,000 from 2010 to 2014.”

The decision may not be an easy one. Those who have been in other places have had families and their children more than likely have established their own roots. Additionally those who are of military age may be confronted with the prospect of the mandatory military service in place. In the end , at least for some time, the will to test the waters may be there, but the uncertainties that exist may not be enough for a permanent move.

REVIEWS

OFF THE RADAR
Cyrus M. Copeland

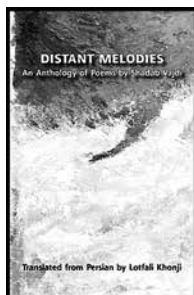
Blue Rider Press, 2015

A father, an American living in Iran and working for an American company, is suddenly arrested, the charge espionage. In a split second and without notice a family's life is changed, probably forever. This is the basis of this true story that happened during the 1979 hostage taking in Iran. A desperate family fought with all they had to keep Max Copeland from a firing squad. During the entire ordeal there remained one question, was Max Copeland guilty or not of the accusations claimed. Cyrus Copeland, his son, was just a boy at the time. Within these pages, however, he has brought a gut wrenching and emotional narration of his own personal quest to find the truth about his father. It is a past his mother longs to forget but finding the truth too important for a son to ignore.

Besides the interest you will have about his journey you will find the portrait he paints about Iran during this time and after the hostage situation enlightening, the turmoil he goes through regarding his father, heart breaking and the love for his family inspiring.



DISTANT MELODIES, AN ANTHOLOGY OF POEMS
Shadab Vajdi, (Translated from Persian by Lotfali Khonji)



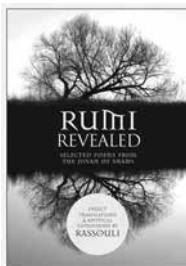
Ibex 2011

While beautiful, Persian poetry especially after translation can be difficult to understand. This anthology of poems is unlike others I have had the opportunity to read. Their meanings are easy to grasp and the read smooth. Perhaps the birth place of this poet, Shiraz has given her the ability to write with beauty, depth and clarity.

RUMI REVEALED, SELECTED POEMS FROM THE DIVAN OF SHAMS
Direct translations and mystical expressions by Rassouli

Blue Angel, 2014

One of the most beloved poets of Iran has yet been remembered in this collection of poems with the translation by Rassouli. Rassouli is a mystic artist who was raised as a Sufi. This allows him to find a unique beauty in translations. As noted in the book's foreword, the collection of poems and the words of Rumi allows our hi-tech society to become lost, for at least a moment, in a calmer and more civil world. Rumi who is considered the master of love poetry is one of the most popular of western readers, as his words and meaning are easy to understand as the reader is free to apply their own interpretation. To define one simple interpretation is opposite of what his poems command. This books takes the reader one more depth in getting closer to themselves



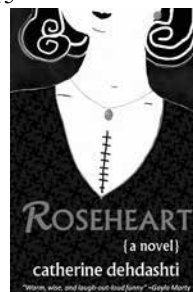
and the poet.

In speaking to the Divan of Shams, Rassouli says translations are more difficult since much of the terminology used in the Divan of Shams is delivered through metaphors and the metaphors are not defined in an ordinary dictionary, BUT it is still worth the read.

ROSEHEART
Catherine Dehdashti

Causy Taylor Literary Publishing; May 1, 2015

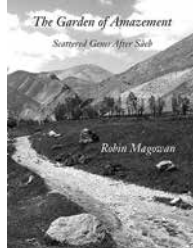
Roseheart, by Catherine Dehdashti is a story about family, set in the 1990s, and told through the sardonic voice of Valerie Kjos. She's a young Midwestern Gen X'er whose life is just barely coming together with her boyfriend when his Iranian mother, Goli, comes for a visit that seems to never end. Valerie will have to decide what's more important to her—doing everything her own way, or her beloved Naveed with his live-in mother, who might not approve if she knew everything about her. But as she's about to learn, Goli has secrets of her own.



THE GARDEN OF AMAZEMENT, SCATTER GEMS AFTER SAEB

Robin Magowan

Longhouse 2015

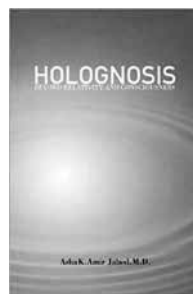


Another wonderful Persian poet has had the opportunity to be translated and published in English. Saeb was considered to be an outstanding Islamic poet during his lifetime (1590-1676). As you read the poems you will notice the intriguing forms of his couplets. Each poem is so deep with emotion that you are convinced that each represents a moment in his life. Ms. Magowan has brilliantly chosen the best of his poetry.

HOLOGNOSIS, BEYOND RELATIVITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS
Asha Amir-Jahed, M.D.

Xlibris.com2009

Very scientific! This book looks into the principles regulating physics and biology, as related to metaphysics, and points out to a 'must to be' principle of immortality that manifests its modalities in physics and biology with analogies in metaphysical meaning. Named bioforce, the principle serves all the manifestations of living organism, from paleognosis to neognosis, through the eventual exteriorization of the expressivity trait in languages.

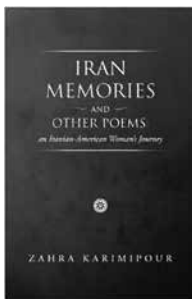


Advertise your business in:

Persian Heritage

973 471 4283

IRAN MEMORIES AND OTHER POEMS, AN IRANIAN-AMERICAN WOMAN'S JOURNEY



Zahra Karimipour

Trafford 2013

This little poetry book is very unique. Unique in that this collection is really an account of a woman's journey back to her hometown. The poems clearly describe a moment in her past and emits a tremendous amount of emotion. I truly found this interesting and perhaps a unique way will get our youth to become more interested in the beauty of poetry.

Desert Dancer

(Wikipedia)



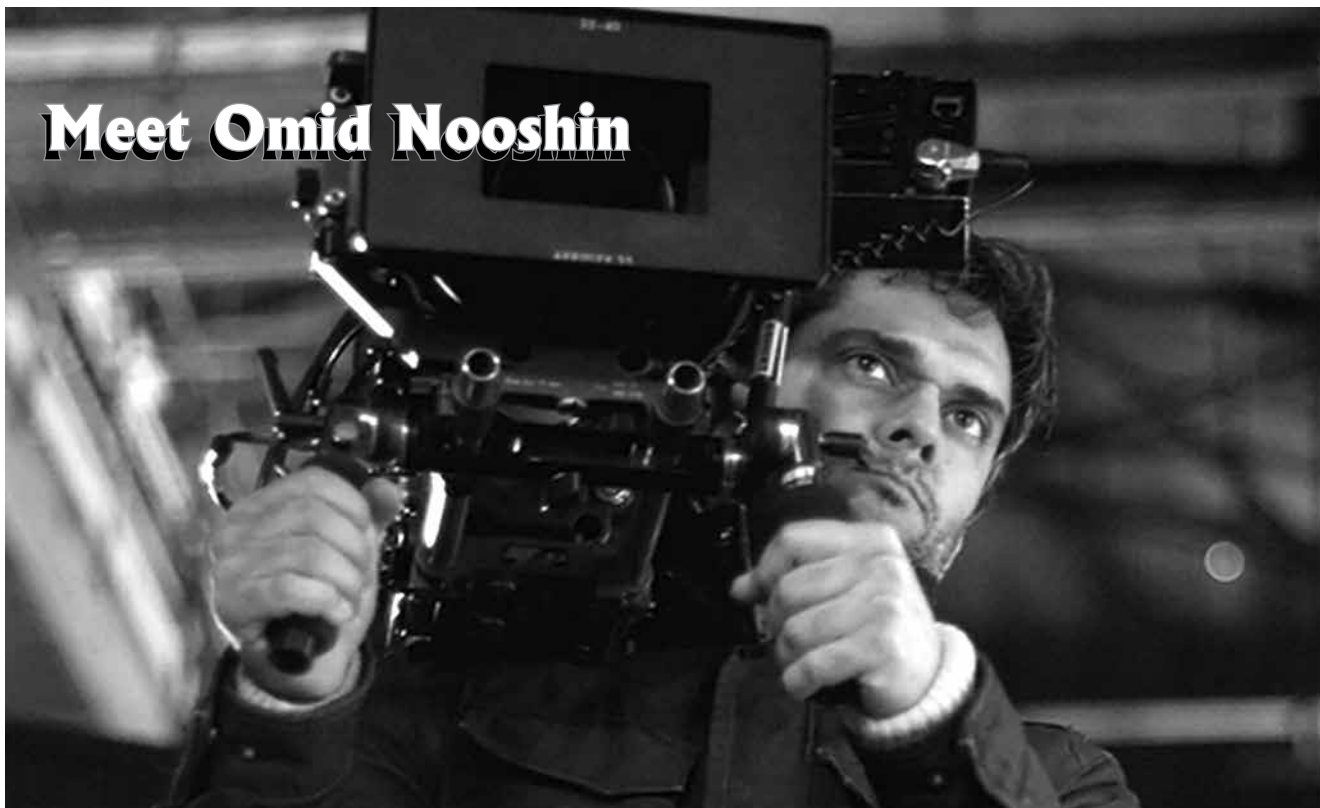
Desert Dancer is a 2014 biographical film directed by Richard Raymond. It tells a true story of a young, self-taught dancer in Iran, Afshin Ghaffarian, who risked his life for his dream to become a dancer despite a nationwide dancing ban.

Mr. Ghaffarian began his career at the Saba Art Center in 1999. He holds a high school diploma in Cinema and a BA in Theater, both received from the Tehran branch of the Islamic Azad University Central.

His first recognition in the industry came from his performance in "Strange But True" which was part of an Iranian cultural festival held in Germany, Mulheim an der Ruhr. After his performance he made an individual statement in support of the Green movement. After that he did not return to Iran but went to France as a refugee. He returned to Iran in 2014, after denouncing his refugee status in 2013. While in France he met with Moshkin Ghalam and attended the Centre National de la Danse from 2010 to 2011.

Desert Dancer is set in Iran. The story follows the ambition of Afshin Ghaffarian. During the volatile climate of the 2009 presidential election, Afshin and some friends (including Elaheh played by Freida Pinto) risk their lives and form an underground dance company. The group learned the dancing from videos of Michael Jackson, Gene Kelly and Rudolf Nureyev even though the online videos were banned. Afshin and Elaheh also learn much from each other and learned how to embrace their passion for dance and for one another.

Meet Omid Nooshin



Omid Nooshin, was born in Guildford, Surrey, in 1974. He is the son of Hoshiyar Nooshin, Emeritus Professor of Space Structures at Surrey University, and great nephew of Iranian theatre director, Abdul Hussein Noushin. His obsession with movies started at an early age, watching films before his school day. It was the movie “*Star Wars*” that inspired him to make his own short films. This all began at age 11. How did he finance its production? From money received as legal damages for a taxi crash in Los Angeles in 1985 (ironically, the crash had occurred while Nooshin’s vacationing family were on their way to Universal Studios).

At age 16, Nooshin became interested in acting, joining a youth drama group based at Guildford’s Yvonne Arnaud Theatre. During this time, inspired by acting classes at the theatre, he wrote and directed his first feature-length film, *A State of Mind*, a political drama depicting the brainwashing of rebellious youth by a shady government agency.

The following year, Nooshin was awarded an arts grant from a local architectural firm, which he used to finance *The Antipolitic*, a metaphoric meditation on the clash of capitalist and socialist ideology. Nooshin shot the film in Hannover, Germany, under the guidance of his uncle, Ebrahim Talayedar, an architect and artist. The short film reached the national final of the Panasonic

Young Videomakers competition in 1992, screening at London’s prestigious British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA).

While studying at Christ’s College School, Nooshin wrote his second feature-length film, *Goldfish*, a psychological thriller depicting a troubled teenager’s descent into delusional psychosis. The film was awarded Best International Film, Best Youth Film, Best Sound, and Best Acting, at the IAC’s International Film Festival in 1993.

Nooshin continued his education in film study at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham. His graduation film *The Patient* was financed by selling a Persian rug he had inherited from his grandparents.

After graduating he continued making more ambitious short films, which he was able to finance using salaries from directing local cinema commercials. In 1996 he wrote and directed *Rooftop*, a short drama, which went on to win international awards. Nooshin also landed work with prestigious London commercials production company Park Village, directing TV commercials in London, Prague, Amsterdam, and Miami for multinational corporations.

During this time Nooshin took every opportunity to get close to movie production, gate crashing the sets of Stanley Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut* and George Lucas’ *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*. He also traveled to New

York and spent much of his time at Lee Strasberg's famed 'Method' acting institute The Actor's Studio.

Nooshin's next short, *Panic*, followed in 1999. Based on a true story of a carjacking gone awry, and financed by the UK Arts Council, *Panic*. The film was screened in several international festivals including The Edinburgh Film Festival and the Los Angeles Short Film Festival. This exposure opened doors for Nooshin with the film industry executives in London and Hollywood. Soon after, Nooshin began writing feature scripts. In 2008 Nooshin's script for *Last Passenger*, a train thriller inspired by the writings of American anthropologist Ernest Becker (*The Denial of Death*), was voted onto the Brit List of favorite British screenplays.

Nooshin was soon signed by the top Hollywood talent agency CAA. In order to help secure finance for the movie, Nooshin directed and co-produced a £500 'fake trailer.'

The trailer was instrumental in attracting the backing of Pathé, the British Film Institute, and Pinewood Studios, and *Last Passenger* went on to strong pre-sales at the 2011 Cannes Film Market, the business counterpart of the Cannes Film Festival. It eventually became a \$2.5m production, filmed at Shepperton and Pinewood Studios.

Besides writing and directing, Nooshin shared camera operating duties, and was an uncredited co-editor. The film was distributed in 70 countries. In the US and UK, it became the #1 Indie Film on iTunes movie rentals. *Last Passenger* opened to strong reviews. Many reviewers noted Alfred Hitchcock's influence on Nooshin's debut film.

Nooshin went on to receive a nomination for the Douglas Hickox Award For Best Debut Director at The British Independent Film Awards in 2013.

After *Last Passenger*, Nooshin continues writing assignments, including penning the science fiction thriller *Redivider* for Hollywood producer Aaron Ryder (*Memento*, *Donnie Darko*), which is currently in post-production, and story consulting for the UK's Bristol based animation studio Aardman.

He is also developing his own writer-director projects, including an action thriller set on a hijacked oil rig for US producer Steve Bing, a supernatural thriller set in California, and a science fiction conspiracy movie set during the early days of Mars colonization.

He is currently represented by the WME talent agency in Los Angeles, and recently married his longtime partner at Pinewood Studios.

While the Jews of the Parthian and Sasanian empires spoke (eastern) Aramaic, not Middle Persian, Persian influence on Judaism through the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli) is by no means negligible. The Bavli is full of Iranian words and motifs, such as the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment, that are familiar in Zoroastrianism. The laws of purity set forth in the Pentateuch (Leviticus mainly) and in the Mishnah, the 2nd-century CE law code of Judaism, exhibit remarkable affinities with the Zoroastrian counterparts. The Mishnah and counterpart Zoroastrian law codes exhibit striking, formal correspondences, but there is no counterpart in Iranian law codes to the commentary of the Talmud to the Mishnah (Neusner, 1993). However, Iranian language, law, and culture made its impact on the Jews and on Judaism.

For nine centuries Babylonian Jews lived under Iranian rulers, Parthian, then Sasanian, from the middle of the 2nd century BCE to the 7th century CE. Other Jews lived in Mesopotamia (Dura Europos) and Nippur (whence the Jewish magical bowls), in Armenia, in Characene (see CHARACENE AND CHARAX), in Khuzestan, and in Iran proper. But the Bavli represents principally Babylonian conditions, though making reference to Khuzestan. Babylonia had a diverse population, not made up mainly of an Iranian majority and a Jewish minority. In Babylonia lived various sorts of Semites—Tai Arabs, Mandaean, Syrians, Babylonians—who spoke different dialects of Aramaic as well as Greek. There also were Armenians, Indians, Romans, and Chinese, in small numbers, in the commercial life of the Iranian-administered provinces, particularly in the imperial capital, Ctesiphon and its commercial neigh-

Professor Jacob Neusner:

Persian Elements in Talmud

The below article by Jacob Neusner was originally published in the Encyclopedia Iranica on July 2005, 20. As demonstrated by Professor Neusner, the Persian influence on Judaism through the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli) is by no means negligible. The Bavli, as seen in his article below, is full of Iranian words and motifs.



The tomb of Daniel in Khuzestan in southwest Iran

bors, Selecta and Vologasia. The Jews were mostly farmers and artisans living in villages. Thus, Babylonia was a mosaic of peoples and cultures.

Being a military aristocracy, the Parthians made slight effort to Iranize the low country of present-day Iraq. The Sasanians, however, made a systematic effort to settle the rich lowlands between the two rivers, improving the standing of Zoroastrianism. From time to time they made an effort to impose Zoroastrianism on the territories; in Armenia these efforts went on for centuries.

The Babylonian Talmud is full of Iranian words. Rabbis could understand spoken Persian, we do not know what dialect, but could not read the

written language.

An Arta the Scribe is known from the Dura synagogue graffiti as well, not to mention an Arsaces in addition to an Abraham. The reference to Jews wearing high hats (“as tall as themselves”) calls to mind the pointed cap or hood brought by the Iranians from the Siberian steppes. The Babylonian Talmud (BavliHorayot 13b) refers to a Jewish authority from Babylonia who wore the kamara, sash, which signified authority in the Kerdīr inscription. The context of the several stories suggests that Jews wore Iranian garments, which were outlandish in the eyes of the Palestinian counterparts. The Talmudic rabbis do not seem

to have known much about Iranian religion and culture, and the contrary was also the case. While one may locate in Rabbinic literature motifs and images familiar in Iranian religions, the resurrection of the dead and last judgment being a principal borrowing, one cannot support that the authorities who included them saw them as Iranian. On the contrary, they went to great efforts to prove that resurrection of the dead and last judgment derived from the ancient Israelite scriptures. So the rabbis of the Talmud knew those aspects of Iranian culture, law, and religion that impinged on the practical affairs of the Jewish community. The only matters of Iranian law that interested them had to do with taxes and real estate transactions, laws they had to enforce in their own courts. The Middle East was divided into three cultural units: (1) Hellenistic-Roman, (2) Iranian, and (3) the world of Semites, Armenians, and other smaller groups. It was to that complex third world, the Semitic, Aramaic-speaking part of it, that the rabbis of the Talmud belonged. ■

Words of Mother Teresa

- Life is an opportunity, benefit from it.*
- Life is beauty, admire it.*
- Life is a dream, realize it.*
- Life is a challenge, meet it.*
- Life is a duty, complete it.*
- Life is a game, play it.*
- Life is a promise, fulfill it.*
- Life is sorrow, overcome it.*
- Life is a song, sing it.*
- Life is a struggle, accept it.*
- Life is a tragedy, confront it.*
- Life is an adventure, dare it.*
- Life is luck, make it.*
- Life is too precious, do not destroy it.*
- Life is life, fight for it.*

Welcome Spring: Isfahan, Half of World



Fars News, Mar 29, 2014

Iran is known to many foreigners because of its Isfahan, a city with numerous tourist charms, including historical sites and monuments, only a few of which have, so far, been registered in the list of the World Cultural Heritage.

March 21, marks the start of Spring and the turn of the new Iranian year, and to celebrate the occasion we invite you to join us in an electronic tour of Iran with one province covered for you each day.

ISFAHAN PROVINCE

Isfahan province is one of the Thirty-one provinces of Iran. It is located in the Center of the country. Its capital is the city of Isfahan. The city of Isfahan is the provincial capital.

The province has 18 townships, 38 counties, 67 cities, and 2470 villages in all. The most important cities and countries of Isfahan

include Aran and Bidgol, Ardistan, Lanjan, Shahinshahr and Meymeh, Khomeini Shahr, Khansar, (The Upper) Semirom, Fereydan, Ferey-dunshahr, Falavarjan, Kashan, Golpayegan, Khomeini-shahr, Mobarakeh, Nain, NajafAbad, Lower Semirom (Dehaghan), Shahreza, Anarak and Natanz.

Isfahan has artifacts dating back to the Paleolithic period, and written history going back to ancient Aspadana. At one time Isfahan was among the largest cities in the world.

It has twice been the capital city of Persia -- during the Parthian Empire and again in the sixteenth century Safavid dynasty. It was here that the Safavids declared Shiite Islam to be the empire's official religion, one of the most important markers in Islamic history.

The art and architecture in Isfahan rival anything else in the world in terms of beauty and intricacy. People of Isfahan

are extremely hospitable. The city is 'Half the World', because of its unmatched beauty and historic ambiance. "Isfahan is Half the World" was dubbed for the first time by French poet Renier who visited this city in the 16th century.

HANDICRAFTS AND SOUVENIRS

The Province of Isfahan is reputed for its handicrafts and can be considered as an important sector in this regard. Besides its own local products, specialties from other provinces of Iran are also produced here. Since this province is highly favored by tourists, it is an obvious fact that handicrafts play a vital part in this area.

The most important of these are the following: Carpet weaving, brocade weaving, Gelim (or kilim, a coarse carpet), enamel work, khatam (inlaid work), engraving on metal, silver work, jewelry

making, ceramic and tiles and types of sweetmeats, such as 'gaz' and 'souhan'.

LOCAL MUSIC AND DANCES

Isfahan music teaching is one of the most famous Iranian schools of music, which has been blossomed in the Safavid era, being the capital of the monarch then. Due to the same fact one of the most famous Iranian musical divisions is known as "Bayat of Isfahan".

In addition to the same, in Christian locality of this province the Christian music is usually played in Jewish-Christian churches. Mention can also be made of other types of the music in Isfahan Province which belong to the vicinities of Isfahan, i.e., Bakhtiyari and Azarbayjanimusics.

TOURIST ATTRACTIVEIONS

This province has hun-

dreds of tourist attractions and historical monuments. The followings are just a few of these tourist charms which attract tens of thousands of people from Iran and across the world each year.

ZAYANDEH ROOD

The Zayandeh-Rood is one of the most important rivers of the central plateau of Iran. The same has come to be known by this name, due to the various gushing springs on its course, that is from its source to the mouth. The river takes its source in the north-eastern front of Zard Kooch -e-Bakhtiari in the vicinity of Cheshmeh Deymeh, and flows to the marshes of Gavkhoony.

The maximum length of the said river is 420 km and its width ranges from 10 to 20 meters in the valleys and varies up to 800 meters in the city of Isfahan. The Kooh Rang tunnel aids in adjoining a part of the waters of the Karoon river to the Zayandeh Rood. Throughout its course, the presence of lush green thickets adds to the beauty and the pleasant environment, which attributes to the recreational atmosphere.

ALI QAPOO EDIFICE

This palace was also called ‘Daulat Khaneh-e-Mobarakeh Nagsh-e-Jahan’ and the ‘Daulat Khaneh Palace’. Its unique archaic architecture is related to the Safavid era. This edifice was constructed

under the orders of Shah Abbas I. The monarch would receive special envoys in this palace and hold his audience here. Valuable miniature paintings, the works of the reputed artist of the times Reza Abbassi, and other traditional works of art can be noted here.

Plasterwork of the ‘sound room’ was modeled such that the acoustic affect produced natural and pleasant sounds. The sovereign and his guests would be spectators to polo, illuminations, fire-works and the dramatics that took place in the Nagsh-e-Jahan Square from the halls of this elegant palace

CHEHEL SOTUNE PALACE

The Chehel Sotune Palace and its garden cover an area of approximately 67,000 sq. m. This palace was constructed during the reign of Shah Abbas I. Shah Abbas II was also responsible for additions to this palace, such as the hall of mirrors, the hall of 18 pillars and two large chambers facing the north and south. The spectacular hall of mirrors with its decorative mirror work, tile work and paintings, along with its majestic porches and pool which faces this hall, all add to its splendor.

Interesting aspects of the Chehel Sotune Palace are:

The stone lions at the four corners of the central pool, the hall and marble and vaulted cornices around it. Paintings

of Chehel Sotune Palace

The gilded adornments, paintings and the portrait of the sovereign in the royal hall. Along with that of the chambers surrounding the hall of mirrors.

Several facades such as the ‘Qotbiyeh Mosque’, ‘Zaviyeh in Kushk’, and the imprints of the ‘Dar-e-Joubareh’ and ‘Aqasi Mosque’ are affixed in the western and southern walls of the garden. The hall and porches of this palace were constructed during the fifth year of the reign of Shah Abbas II. The reflection of the twenty pillars of the hall in the pool opposite the palace brings about a conception of forty pillars. Hence the name ChehelSotune.

KHAJOO BRIDGE

The above mentioned took its foundation in the late Teimooride period, and was constructed according to what is currently seen in the form restorations done in 1060 AH, at the order of Shah Abbas II. Its cubicles, adornments and tile work are interesting aspects of this constructions. There is a structure in the center of the bridge, known as the Beglarbegi construction. The same was used as a temporary residence for the royal family. The name of this bridge is a distorted version of the word ‘Khajeh’ which was a title for great personalities in the Safavid era. It was constructed on the Zayandeh Rood River.

MENAR JONBAN MINARET

This structure comprises a mausoleum and two minarets, constructed on the tomb of ‘Amoo Abdollah’ a reputed personality of the 8th century AH. The tombstone reveals the date 716 AH, coinciding with that of the reign of ‘Oljaito’ Ilkhan the Mongol. It is extremely interesting to note that on shaking one minaret, not only does the other move, but that the structure itself sways.

NAQSH-E-JAHAN SQUARE

This square is from the period of Shah Abbas I, and has a length of 500 m. from north to south, and its width being approximately 165 m. Surrounding this vicinity are the Abbasi Mosque and Sheikh Lotf Ol-lah Mosque, the Qaisarieh portal and the Ali Qapoo Edifice. During the reign of Shah Abbas I and his successors, this square was an area where festivities, polo, dramatics and military parades took place.

SI-O-SEH POL BRIDGE

This bridge is approximately 300 m in length and 14 m in width, and is one of the masterpieces in bridge construction in Iran and the world. The same was constructed in 1005 AH. under the supervision and expense of Allah Verdy Khan, one of the famous commanders of Shah Abbas Safavid I. The Armenians used



to hold special festivities near this bridge in the Safavid period. It was constructed on the Zayandeh Rood river.

ABBASI JAME' MOSQUE (IMAM MOSQUE)

The same is located to the south of the historical square of Isfahan, and was constructed at the orders of Shah Abbas I. Though its artistic works took place during the rule of his successor, and its epigraphs are the affects of a reputed calligrapher of the Safavid era. One of the interesting features of this mosque is the echo of sound in the center of the gigantic dome in the southern section.

The height of which is 52 m. and the minarets therein 48 m. Whereas, the minarets at its portal in the Naqsh-e-Jahan Square reach an elevation of 42 m. The huge one-piece marble and other slabs of stone, besides the intricate tile work and adornments prove extremely spectacular.

VANK CHURCH

The Vank Church is one of the most beautiful and largest churches in the Jolfa vicinity of Isfahan. Its gilded ceiling, interior section of the dome and fine historical paintings are matchless. Internally, the walls are adorned with oil paintings that are also gilded similar to that of Iranian art. Religious paintings revealing an Italian touch can be observed here. The founder of this structure was Shah Soltan Hossain Safavid.

SAFEH, SHAKOOH, DEZQALA AND OTHER MOUNTAINS

These are named as, the Safeh peak with an elevation of 2,232 m, the ShakooH peak rising to a height of 2,418 m, Kolah Qazi with an altitude of 2,534 m, DezQala at 3,251 m, Yakh Ab with an elevation of 2,288 m, DeezAb at 2,678 m

and Garm Abad rising to an elevation of 3,359 m amongst others.

FIN HISTORICAL GARDEN

This garden is located to the south of the city of Kashan and near the village of Fin. The same was constructed on the former structures of the Al-e-Booyeh era. Its general layout and aqua system has been rendered special attention. This vicinity gained fame due to the murder of Amir Kabir, the reputed nationalist and Prime Minister (Grand Chancellor) of Nasereddin Shah Qajar. Amir Kabir was assassinated in a small bath here in the year 1268 AH at the order of the Shah.

This garden is a relic from the Safavid period, and has remained such for centuries due to the capacity of water it gains from the Soleimaniyeh spring. Today, this water flows into the 'Lasegah' pool after meandering through this beautiful garden, and providing water for the surrounding areas. The structures of this garden are the entrance and its facade, tower and ramparts, the Safavid and Fathali Shah sections, chambers for the elite, the museum on the western side of the premises, the large and small bath and the library in the eastern sector of this garden.

The covered construction housing the Shah Abbasi section is in two floors, this being in the center of the garden and opposite the grand facade. The construction of the same was completed in the year 1226 AH. Here, there are beautiful paintings and an inscription worked with plaster in the 'nastaliq' script. In the vicinity of this garden, several monarchs such as Shah Safi, Shah Soleiman, Shah Tahmasb, Shah Abbas, Karim Khan Zand and Fath Ali Shah have all contributed to the repair or making addition to the structures on the premises.

**Forough Farrokhzad
*In the Darkness***

It was—
the heart of night,
the breeze and silence,
pulled the curtain away,
when I called your name.

Looking up, I saw,
the sadness of the sky;
and I saw a star sinking- in the lake of fire.
another, riding the wave of light, flee away!
And I saw, I saw a star, untimely, died.

And, I called, I called your name,
again and again!

Calling with no result,
I stepped out to trace and sight.
Holding my bidding, all of my being—
in my begging bowls, the palm of my hands,
I silently stand.

When the moist gaze of the moon—
bursts in the misty eyes- of the windows
from the steam and the smoke,
a song of sorrow rose.

All night long,
inside my chest, it seemed—
a captive sobbed, cried in despair.

It seemed, in my chest,
someone climbed up, soared,
seeking you, searching you!

But, every time,
a pair of cold hands,
as cold as marble hands,
stood to split and to keep apart.

Yet, my little tree,
though buried underneath, this thick, heavy air,
stood up and endured, stayed, stayed in love—
with the wandering, wind, the free wind.

Tell me!
Do you know,
Where is my waft's home?
Where is the place my waft is settled?
Where is the place to which my waft—
will surely, surely go back?

Translation: Maryam Dilmaghani,
December 2006, Montreal

An Interview with

NIMA KIANN

Founder and
Artistic Director of
Les Ballet Persans

part one

Persian Heritage

Where were you born and educated?

I was born in Tehran. My great interest for the arts started at an early age. My artistic activities started with calligraphy, drawing and painting. Winning the first award in a calligraphy competition for young artists within the municipality of Tehran at the age 13 was a great motivation for me to choose art as my future career. I started practicing drawing and painting at *Khaneh Aftab* gallery and eventually entered the School of Fine Arts in Tehran when I was fourteen. At the same time I had a growing interest for dance and specially ballet but dancing was totally banned at that time and equal to decadence when I was a teenager. The war between Iran and Iraq was going on. We already had problems to practice drawing and painting at school if it was not serving the state ideology. Already then I loved ballet, and dance was a repeated motif in my artworks.

The Fine Arts School was in *Pich-e Shemiran* and we were living on Kennedy Square (*Meydan-e Toheed*). I was growing up and looked more and more like a young man and a good candidate as a potential soldier for the war. During my last year in Iran, I was stopped regularly in *meydan-e Enghelab* by *gash-t-e komiteh* and asked about my age and why I didn't participate in the war to defend my country. So my stay in Iran during my last year there became unbearable. I was too young to be recruited as a soldier and could not practice my art as I wished. I left the country at the age of 17 by passing through mountains



photographer: Rahim Karimi

on the border of Iran and Turkey. After a two-year stay in Turkey, I went to Sweden. It did not take long until I decided to dedicate all my efforts to the art form for which I had a burning passion. I started my ballet and contemporary dance training at Gothenburg Ballet Academy (in Sweden) under the directorship of late Madame Lia Schubert. Three years later and before completing my education I had my first employment contract at the newly built Gothenburg Opera. After my graduation in 2005 I moved to France and got my training and higher education in classical ballet and choreography at *École supérieure de danse de Cannes Rosella Hightower* in south France. I also have participated in many master classes around Europe, in Hungary, Spain, France, etc.

Tell us about your parents and family.

My mother has been my greatest supporter and source of inspiration during my entire art education. I wouldn't be successful if it was not because of her belief in me. She was herself a talented handicraft maker. My father was also interested in arts but did not actively practice. He passed away shortly after my departure from Iran. My wife is a pharmacist and we have three children; one daughter (Tiba) and two twin boys (Artia and Artin).

At what age did you become interested in the arts... dancing... especially ballet?

I became seriously interested in the

arts at the age of nine or ten. As long as I can remember I was always interested in theatrical dance - ballet. I was eight when the revolution happened in Iran. But I still remember the broadcasting of ballet performances on the National Television. So my first introduction to ballet must have been a few years before the revolution. I particularly remember one performance which was shown on TV which made me fall in love with ballet and theatrical dance. It was the Iranian National Ballet Company's production of Bijan and Manijeh jointly choreographed by Haideh Ahmadzadeh and Robert Urazgildiev. Later I learned that the music was composed by Master Hossein Dehlavi and it was one the company's most successful classical ballet productions based on Iranian music and heritage. I dreamed many times after watching this ballet on TV about the wonderful world of ballet. I believed that performers entered a remote world when appearing on stage. To me, ballet appeared to be more ethereal than of this world and became equal to flying! It represented to me a wonderful sense of freedom! Ballet became my world of dreams!

Did your family support your interest?

I was fortunate to have my family's full support along the way even though my family had no background in dance. Dancing was of course far away from what my parents could imagine for me as profession. Although my mother is a believer and a pious Muslim, she never questioned my choice of education and profession. I

believe she always knew that I am very serious about my art and took me seriously for whatever I wanted to do. When I told her that I entered the Ballet Academy in Gothenburg, she just wanted me to explain what would this mean and what kind of profession I would have after my graduation. I explained to her over a telephone call (at the time she was residing in Iran) that ballet is a theatrical, story-telling and artistically expressing kind of dance and many years of hard physical work and intensive daily training (including risks for injury) is required to become a professional ballet dancer.

I also explained that I would practice it as a profession probably in an opera house and that I would presumably reach the top of this profession in about 15 years after my graduation. This is the expected period of progressing time in ballet hierarchy starting as a *corp de ballet* dancer and advancing first to soloist, then principal dancer, choreographer and finally ballet director.

She understood that this was a serious business and supported me wholeheartedly during my entire education. Everyone could see her satisfaction through her face when I had the world premiere of my own company in 2002 (which also meant recreation of a lost national heritage). At the age of thirty-two, I advanced to the top of my profession within only six years after my graduation.

In many cases, and from various compatriot dancers/choreographers, I have heard about their tremendous difficulties to convince their families about their choice of profession. They often complain about how disrespectful some people have behaved towards them when hearing about their profession or even practice of dance. When Sarkis Djanbazian, one of the ballet pioneers in Iran, met with the city council of Qazvin in 1940 to discuss his plan and obtain permission to establish a dance school, he was treated with disrespect and literally expelled from the office.

Fortunately I never had such experiences! In order to proceed my plans and projects I have met and discussed with royalties, ministers of culture, respected artists and international cultural personalities. I believe this creates prestige/displays seriousness and no one, even with the minimum level of knowledge about dance and ballet, has ever questioned my profession.

I am endlessly thankful to the support

that I received from my family specially my mother, relatives and Iranian compatriots.

How did you come up with the concept of an international ballet ensemble?

Everywhere in the world, National Ballets are part of an institution called Opera House that represent the culture of each country. An opera house is like a temple reflecting the spirit of a nation's achievements in arts, esthetics and culture. It's like a place where the spiritual treasure of a country is preserved and displayed. The best of architecture, music, singing, dance, painting, handicrafts, sculpture, interior design, scenery design, literature, poetry, etc. is to be found in an opera house. An opera or ballet production is not just about singing and dance. It's a combination of various art forms and a result of a close collaboration between artists of different fields of art. I always wanted to work in such a place.

When a dance company as part of an institution that I just explained is touring, it's in fact displaying in the best way possible the achievements of a culture it belongs to through the wordless language of dance. Good and meaningful dance is understandable to everyone. It can connect to people directly. An international ballet ensemble consists of people from different origins, all working towards one common goal seeing themselves as part of a complete puzzle.

When I was in Turkey as a refugee during late 80s and started dreaming about a ballet company, I may not have known to what extent a dance company can represent a culture or what it would mean in practice to establish a dance company. But I had this vision that I could create ballet performances based on Iranian tales and rich literature. I imagined that a touring dance company would reflect a different image of my native country, other than all negative images you got through the news. I simply wished to show the best sides of my culture through the art form of dance. This was the original vision behind the concept of Les Ballets Persans.

You revived the former Iranian National Ballet, how did you achieve this?

Achieving this goal was possible on three conditions; 1) to believe in what I

was doing and myself, 2) hard and untiring work and 3) to never, ever give up. To tell you about the obstacles that I had to deal with on the path to achieve the goal would be a "*masnavi haftād man*".

The recreation of the Iranian National Ballet was a project that took me five years to realize. I started working with this project in 1998, when I, for the first time, formulated a concept description and presented it to the Swedish and other European authorities. I turned to several cultural organizations and personalities all around the world in seek of support.

In the beginning it seemed to be an impossible task. Who would finance a national ballet company in exile? Who was this young 28 year old dreamer who had gigantic plans? Who would support him with his unrealistic project?

I am sure that my plans and project became a subject of amusement for at least some people! One of my own former ballet teachers from Switzerland replied to my support seeking letter and wrote frankly that this was an impossible project and he wouldn't be able to spend time on a project that "*was not in accordance with the current political situation of your country.*" Reading his reply was of course heartbreaking, but seven years later I had reason to feel satisfaction and pride when I found his application among others' applying for an announced ballet master position. He did not get the position, not because he once turned me down, but just because now so many ballet masters wanted to work with our repertoire and I could choose the best and the most competent, in terms of dance technique and pedagogy.

There is one experience that was very hard and never to be forgotten. This bitter experience did affect me most and made me determined in realizing my plans, at any price. Back in 2002, when I brought two master choreographers from the Azerbaijan Republic to Sweden for Les Ballets Persans' world premiere production and included two of their choreographies, members of an Iranian-Azeri separatist movement in Stockholm they did everything they could to harass the company. Apparently they had found a reason to get publicity for their own cause and take advantage of a pure artistic project for their own political agenda.

At that time, I was so naive to think that finally realizing such a huge project with the participation of more than 100 individuals from all around the world (which

later was referred by some Media as the most extensive Iranian artistic project ever realized in exile) would be a reason for pride and happiness for at least my own compatriots. I never could imagine that some unreasonable compatriots would be so rude to accuse me publicly for stealing artistic heritage of Azerbaijan by staging two (since long time ago forgotten) ballets from Azerbaijan. They did their best to make a circus and tried to interrupt our performances. Everywhere the company went for tour, they mobilized a disturbing demonstration in front of the venue. Culture ministries of Azerbaijan, Iran and Sweden got involved in a loud public dispute and the media of the three countries wrote intensively about this conflict. This wasn't exactly the kind of publicity I expected for my world premiere! Finally we had to cancel the rest of the tour which meant financial difficulties for the company. But shortly after, Les Ballets Persans was on its feet again and steadily became what it is today.

Now when I look back, I realize that this incident gave me in fact the strength that I needed to continue with my work.

So Les Ballets Persans which is now a recognized dance company, featured in reference books of dance like ballet dictionaries and dance encyclopedias had a rough and severe path.

Some former members of the Iranian National Ballet Company are very sceptical to the return of ballet to Iran and believe that the art form has completely disappeared from the cultural scene of Iran for ever. In a recent interview, a former ballerina stated that all achievements of the INBC was lost after the revolution. What is your opinion on that?

Well, it's a fact that no other art form was so forced to oblivion after the revolution like ballet and this had consequences both in a general context and also on a personal level for all those individuals who had somehow been involved in the Iranian ballet. For these people, the Islamic revolution and the disbanding of the company meant loss of life achievements and their artistic identity. Recognized ballet artists were suddenly erased from the cultural scene of Iran. Some were fortunate to migrate to the West and to be integrated into dance communities of



photographer: Rahim Karimi

Europe or North America and continue with their art. One example is the Iranian National Ballets Company's last artistic director, Mr. Ali Pourfarrokhi, who became a respected figure in the ballet world and successfully directed several well-established dance companies in North America. Others, whose dance careers came to an end, remained nostalgic about a bygone era of their lives. The loss of their artistic identity resulted sometimes in a personal tragedy, like in a case of a former ballerina whose career ended at the age of thirty-five or so and who left the country while falling into a deep depression and developed a personality disorder. Youngest members of the Iranian National Ballet Company, who were around during the heydays of the company, are now in their 60's and 70's. It is evident that some of them, particularly those who were not fortunate enough to continue with their careers are quite pessimistic, but the fact is that dancing and even ballet has returned to Iran since at least a decade ago! The underground ballet and dance courses are widespread in Tehran and other major cities like Isfahan, Tabriz, Shiraz and even in the religious city of Mash'had. These classes are usually run by aspirants who got their formal or informal dance training in neighboring countries, like Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. The professional level of these underground courses may not be comparable to those of the Western world, but what is important is that the flame of the art form is kept alive in spite of all difficulties.

When the time is mature to present a public ballet performance in Iran, Les Ballets Persans will be able to put up a ballet ensemble in Tehran consisting of both Iranian and foreign dancers

only within a period of six months. This might sound like an impossible task as much as recreating the Iranian National Ballet Company in exile seemed to be once. But it's fully possible. What is important to know and remember is that it's not the origin of performers that forms the character of a dance company. It's the repertoire of the company that creates an identity for the ensemble. Since its inception, Les Ballets Persans has not had even one single dancer with Iranian origin who performed its repertoire, but the company is nevertheless recognized and referred to as the only existing Iranian ballet company. Iranian National Ballet Company had only a few classical and contemporary ballet productions during its twenty-one year of existence which were entirely inspired by the Persian heritage, like Bijan and Manijeh, Simorgh, and a few others. Les Ballets Persans' repertoire on the other hand, created during the past thirteen years, is entirely based on Persian heritage. We have not produced any ballet that has not a direct connection to the Iranian culture. Even if folkloric dances were produced by Mahalli Dancers of Iran Troupe (under the Folklore Society of Iran directed by Robert de Warren) and other folk dance groups, were widely spread and heavily supported by the Iranian government before the revolution, no Persian character dance was ever developed during that period. The difference between folkloric and character dance is that folk dances are usually practiced by paysan people and countrymen with no formal dance education and can be prepared for stage performance with the same performers. But character dance uses the same movement language, is developed for stage performance by professional danc-

ers and is so technically advanced that no peasant can perform it. The genre of Iranian character dance was developed within Les Ballets Persans, in exile and during an era when all kind of dancing is prohibited in the country.

All these efforts have been done on the foundation of our former national ballet company's heritage. So I simply do not think that all achievements of the Iranian National Ballet Company are lost. I am glad and proud to have had the opportunity of making a contribution to preserve the Iranian ballet tradition through the establishment of Les Ballets Persans. One day, perhaps sooner than one can imagine, "professional ballet" will return to the public stage of Iran. The art form has the potential of, without any losing of artistic quality, to get adapted even to the current cultural and social conditions of the Iranian society. (I emphasize on "professional ballet" to make a clear difference between the conventional, artistic and professional dance as known in the West, and some movement based performances staged in Iran called "*harekat-e mouzoon*" [rhythmic movements] which

are not representable outside of the country as any professional stage productions.) It's a mistake if anyone thinks that ballet is an exclusive Western form of art unfitting to the society of for instance Muslim countries. The critically acclaimed Palestinian Ramallah Contemporary Dance Company is an example of how an internationally recognized dance company can make roots in a religious society and get governmental support. Since a few years ago, the company even organizes a professional dance festival in the Palestinian territories. So it's more a matter of decision by the current Iranian government if at any time promoting the "professional dance" in the cultural scene of the country will be on agenda rather than possibility of adaptation of the art form to the Iranian social and cultural norms.

In 2002 you founded Les Ballets Persans, how has this impacted the world?

I believe that at least to some extent, Les Ballets Persans has been successful in advocating for the Persian heritage abroad,

presenting a new image of our country. During the past thirteen years and since the establishment of the company, working with all these young dancers coming from different corners of the world has created a unique opportunity to introduce the Iranian culture to a generation whose knowledge about Iranian heritage is either very limited or negatively affected by the media.

Academic, informative and educational activities alongside producing dance performances has apparently impacted the Iranian community and their understanding of dance as well. All messages arriving to our office on a daily basis is testimony that our compatriots' attitude towards the art form of dance is slowly but steadily changing. Few people call a ballet dancer for "*raghās*" anymore. The word: "*Raghspardāzi*" that we started to use years ago is now an accepted term of expression to describe the profession of choreography in Farsi. We receive many enquiries from Iranian parents who encourage their children to get a dance education and ask for guidance and information.

to be continued

An Overview of the Military Activities of Russo-Soviet Aircraft Against Iran (1914-1988)

part one

Dr. Kaveh Farrokh

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This discussion provides a survey of the history of Russian aircraft in the Iranian military domain from 1916 to the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988. The role of Russian aircraft in the early formative years of the Iranian air force after the First World War are examined followed by the role of Russian aircraft in the invasion of Iran in 1941 during World War Two. The Second World War was followed by the Cold War during which numerous aerial Iranian-Soviet encounters took place. These included encounters between Soviet Mig-25s and US-built Iranian air force F-4s and F-14As as well as combat between Tu-22 supersonic bombers and Iranian anti-aircraft missiles. Finally the role of Russian flown Iraqi air force combat aircraft against Iranian air and ground assets are examined along with other facets of Russian aerial support for Iraq (i.e. fifty intrusions into Iranian airspace by Soviet combat aircraft on May 17, 1987) are also discussed.

WORLD WAR ONE TO THE END OF THE QAJAR ERA (1914-1926)

Ahmad Shah (the last Qajar king of Iran's dynasty 1794-1925) and members of the Iranian nobility made their first inspection of a Russian aircraft (type unknown) on April 1916 ("Friendly to the Allies: The Shah of Persia", *The Illustrated London News*, April 1 1916). There is however little information on the status of Russian com-

bat aircraft in Iran during the First World War (1914-1918). After the collapse of the Czarist monarchy in 1917 followed by the rise of the Bolsheviks, Ottoman forces in Iran made their greatest headway into the country, especially into western Iran and Azerbaijan in Iran's northwest (as opposed to those Transcaucasian khanates who declared the Independent Republic of Azerbaijan in May 18, 1918). Thanks to the absence of Russian forces, the Ottoman Turks and their German allies were able to establish an airbase at Tabriz (in Iran's Azerbaijan province in the northwest) and another at Kermanshah (in western Iran) in 1918 which led to frequent reports of Ottoman military aircraft flying over those cities (Nicolle, 1994, pp.4). There are no reports of Russian aircraft challenging their Ottoman counterparts over Iranian airspace. Ottoman forces departed from Iran after the World War One armistice of November 11, 1918, leading to the shutdown of their airbases in Iran and the withdrawal of their military aircraft to the Anatolian mainland. The second recorded Russian flight over Tehran occurred four years after the war in 1922. The Russian aircraft (type unknown) had been delivered to Tehran in crates and then reassembled on the Qajar palace grounds before engaging in its flight. This flew for a number of days over Tehran in full view of the city's spectators. After each flight the aircraft would land in Tehran's Meydan e Masgh district. The significance of the

Russian aircraft's flights was that Iranian spectators had, for the first time in history, gained their first-hand glimpse of modern aircraft in flight and at rest on the ground (Babaie, 2005b, pp.43)

THE RISE OF REZA SHAH AND THE INTER-WAR YEARS

The Iranian air force was formally established on June 1, 1924 when Reza Khan (later Reza Shah from December 12, 1925) issued a directive recognizing the Air Office of the IIAS (Imperial Iranian Air Service) as a distinct branch, independent of the Iranian armed services. The air service was then recognized as the Iranian Air Force on February 24, 1926, which operated a modest total of three Junkers F.13 aircraft. The service was expanded from that year, and from the outset, Russian built aircraft were prominent in the small and nascent force. In 1924, 2 of Iran's 10 aircraft were the Russian-produced versions of the British-designed De Havilland 9 (the other non-Russian built craft being the Avro (2), Spud 4 and 9 (2), Potez 8 (2) and Junkers F-13 (2) (Majd, 2001, pp.302; Ward, 2009, pp.154). Iranian pilots also received aerial military training in Russia from June 1924. By 1933 the Iranian air force was operating a total of 30 combat aircraft of which 10 were the Russian-manufactured Polikarpov R-5 aircraft that had been delivered by late July that year (Babaie, 2005b, pp. 57). The first of the R-5s had been flown from Moscow to Tehran by a Russian-trained Iranian

pilot – the aircraft landed in Tehran's Qaleh Morqhi airbase on May 30, 1933. The other nine aircraft arrived in crates by ship to the northern Iranian port city of Bandar Anzali. All of these aircraft were then assembled at Bandar Anzali and after trial flights, flown to Tehran by the end of July 1933.

SOVIET INVASION OF IRAN (AUGUST 25-27, 1941)

By the onset of World War Two Iran possessed 122 outdated Hawker series combat aircraft (Audax, Hind and Fury) with only forty of these fit for combat when the Anglo-Soviets invaded Iran in August 1941 (Setad e Bozorg e Arteshdaran, 1963, pp.89-96). Iran also had (approximately) another 160 aircraft (i.e. trainers, transport, etc.) (Yekrangian, 2005, pp.369). In practice only the P-38 Curtis aircraft based at Ahvaz were capable of challenging British and Russian aircraft, but only one of these had been assembled from its kits. Ward (2009, pp.154) notes that only ten had been delivered with one assembled from crates, however the British Central Office of Information (1948, pp.67) reports that Iran had received 200 "Cobra" (apparently an incorrect reference to the P-38) fighters but 199 of these were still in crates when the British and Soviets invaded Iran on August 25, 1941. Had the fighters been assembled and the pilots trained to fly them, Soviet aircraft would have had a more difficult task in wresting control of Iranian airspace in August 1941. The single op-

erational P-38 was flown out of Iran to British-occupied Iraq on August 25 by an American advisor of the Iranian air force.

SOVIET INVASION OF NORTHERN IRAN (AZERBAIJAN AND GILAN).

Iran's obsolescent aircraft were distributed to its four major airbases in Tehran, Ahvaz, Tabriz and Mashad. The airbases of Mashad, Ahvaz, and Tabriz had become operational by August 1934, March 1937, and June 1939 respectively. The latter three were decommissioned after the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in August 1941 but reconstituted after the Second World War. By 1940 the Tehran airbase had a bomber group based at Dushan Tappeh. The Iranian air force had a total complement of 1000 trained personnel at the eve of the Anglo-Soviet invasion (Ward, 2009, pp.154).

Moscow's plan was to invade Iran from routes used traditionally by Russian armies since Peter the Great: through the north and northwest by forces based in the Caucasus. Another invasion route would also be launched into Iran's northeastern Khorasan province from Soviet Central Asia. The Soviet buildup along the Iranian-Soviet borders went virtually undetected a considerable distance from the border (Kuznetsov, 1966, pp.45). Despite the assembly of hundreds of Soviet military aircraft, tanks and large bodies of troops, Iranian intelligence failed to realize that a Soviet invasion was imminent. Major Bertold Schulze, the German Military intelligence official in Tabriz (provincial capital of Iranian Azerbaijan), also failed to detect the Soviet military build-up along Iran's northern borders.

More research is required on the exact composition of Russian aircraft about to par-

take in the invasion of Iran, however these almost certainly had Polikarpov I-16 fighters as these types are reported in action against rogue elements of the Iranian air force a few weeks after Tehran's ceasefire orders on August 27 (see further below). The I-16s were far superior to any aircraft in Iranian service at the time (except the largely non-operational P-38s). These were more than capable of repelling any obsolete Iranian fighters that attempted to challenge Soviet bombers over Iranian cities and military installations. Other Soviet fighters that may have taken part in the invasion are the Mig-3 (generally inferior in performance to the I-16s; Gunston, 1995, pp.177) and the LaGG-3 (generally disliked by Soviet pilots; Miller, 1983, pp.88) which were far superior to Iran's few obsolete fighters.

Soviet bombers played a critical role during the invasion, however specific information on the types of bombers involved has yet to be researched. It is probable that a bomber type deployed by the Soviets at the time was the Yermolayev Yer-2 that first flew in 1940. The Yer-2 had a long range (4,100 kilometres) making it suitable for attacks from Soviet airbases in the Caucasus into northern Iran and even Tehran. The Yer-2 also had a heavy bomb load (up to 2000 kilograms) which (thanks to negligible Iranian air opposition and ground-based defenses) could inflict considerable damage against Iranian military and civilian targets. This aircraft was often entrusted with important missions, including bombing runs against Berlin from 1941 and was also capable of ground-attack missions (Cooper, 1974, pp.118). The first officially recorded mission of the Yer-2 is dated to August 10 when these bombers took

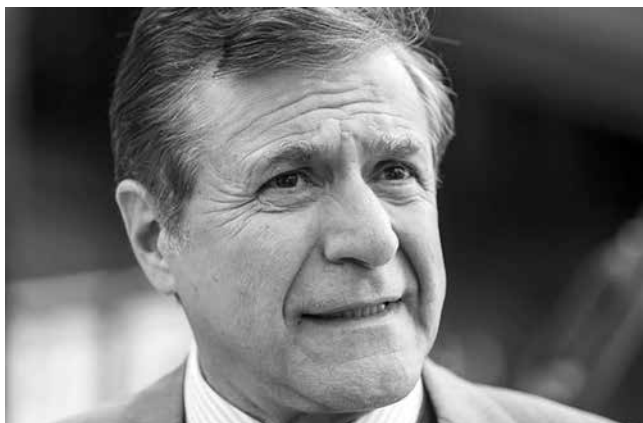
off from bases around Leninograd to bomb Berlin (Gordon, 2008, pp. 355) – it is possible that numbers of these were available for the invasion of Iran (August 25-27). Other possible Soviet bombers deployed during the invasion may have been the Pe-2 and Il-4. The presence of the Il-2 *Sturmovik* ground-attack is possible but as Iranian forces posed little threat to a Soviet land invasion, the deployment of this aircraft was not a major military necessity. There are also no reports of low-flying Soviet attack aircraft by Iranian sources (Babaie, 2005b; Yekrangian, 2005), however these may have used a day into the invasion against Bandar Anzali (August 26) (see further below).

The Soviet force of 40,000 troops was twice that of the under-equipped Iranian cavalry and infantry forces in Azarbaijan which stood at 20,000 men. Iran fielded less than 200 tanks in total (dispersed throughout Iran with most stationed in Tehran) against a concentrated Soviet force of 1000 Soviet tanks invading northern Iran. The greatest Soviet military advantage was in the air: the Transcaucasus Front was able to call upon a total of 409 combat aircraft, including heavy bombers (Jones & Idriess, 1952, pp.196) to support Novikov against a modest force of fourteen outdated Audax and Hind biplanes commanded by Colonel Sheibani's Second Iranian Air Regiment at Tabriz (Stewart, 1988, pp.135). The rest of the vintage Iranian combat aircraft were stationed at Tehran, Ahvaz, and Mashad. Iranian forces in northern Iran had a miniscule anti-aircraft capability of just eight anti-aircraft guns to defend against Novikov's entire air wing (Ward, 2009, pp.142). As noted by Cossa "*Soviet air forces supported the advanc-*

ing ground armies and also conducted a highly effective... air campaign of terror against virtually all major northern Iranian towns and cities" (1990, pp.5).

The first hostile Soviet action in the air on August 25 was the arrival of Soviet bombers over the Tabriz army base (3rd division). As the bombers flew over the base to engage in their bombing run, the garrison's anti-aircraft gunners shot down one of the Soviet bombers (it is not clear what type of Soviet aircraft were engaged in this mission). The rest of the bombers were forced by the intense fire of 3rd division to abandon their mission. These flew away and jettisoned their bombs at Tabriz's city limits. Soviet bombs that landed on the Tabriz base inflicted no significant damage. Another Soviet bomber force supporting the 44th Soviet army (commanded by General A.A. Khadeev) advancing towards Ardabil had bombed the city, aiming to target its local 15th Division supported by two regiments, but this resulted in minimal damage. Nevertheless Soviet bombers quickly returned to bomb Tabriz several times with incendiary bombs that resulted in the breakout of numerous fires throughout the city (Stewart, 1988, pp.149). At this juncture Iran's first military action in the air was initiated when Major-General Matbooi (commander of the Tabriz garrison) ordered Sheibani's air crews to engage in reconnaissance flights to obtain information on the strength and disposition of the Soviet invasion force (Ward, 2009, pp.165). Sheibani himself engaged in aerial reconnaissance to quickly discover a massive Soviet armoured spearhead composed of several hundred tanks thrusting south of Julfa into Iran (Stewart, 1988, pp.135).

to be continued



An Interview with

KHOSROW SEMNANI

Philanthropist and Industrialist

Dr. Shahrokh Ahkami

I have been following your accomplishments for some time and must say that we, as a community and I, are proud of you. Thank you for the time today and let's start the interview with your family background.

I want to thank you for this interview! My father was born and raised in Semnan as was my grandfather. My grandfather was the local blacksmith. Eventually my father moved to Tehran and became involved in different businesses including transportation. He had an import business of cars from the United States and France. Another business of his was manufacturing ice, this was in the late 50's. He was the first to bring it to Semnan and the desert portion of Iran. My mother is from Shahrood, but also lived in Tehran. I am married to a wonderful woman who was born in Iran and we have three boys.

Where did you receive your education?

I was born in Mashhad, Iran in 1947, then moved to Semnan. After a short stay there, we moved to Tehran when I was five. I began my education in Tehran and then continued schooling at Mehr, a school run by Christians. I do not know if it still exists. After high school, in 1966, I left for England and received my GCE General Certificate of Education. This was needed to attend university. Before I entered the university I moved to the U.S. to the state of Utah.

I received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Sciences from Westminster College in Salt Lake City in 1972, and a Masters of Engineering Adminis-

tration Degree from the University of Utah in 1975.

And your first employment?

Before graduating I worked for Kennecott Copper Corporation for two years. They offered me full time employment after I graduated as a research chemist. My expertise at that time was electro chemistry, working in the copper industry. I left Kennecott in 1976 and went to Thatcher Chemical Company as a plant engineer. I took this position because of my masters in engineering administration. This was not a common degree and it focuses on business and engineering.

I stayed at this position until 1978 and went to work for Sperry Univac [later called Unisys]. This company manufactured mainframes and circuit boards for computers. My position was chemical engineering manager for the production area. In 1981 I began to pursue my own business interests.

And that was?

I was aware of the great need for the disposal of toxic and hazardous materials. I knew this because of my position at Kennecott where I was in charge of electroplating and dealing with the impurities resulting from refining copper— such as arsenic and bismuth.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued regulations that went into effect by November of 1980. Knowing there were no viable locations in Utah and only a few in the country, that met the EPA requirements, I saw a business opportunity. After researching and exploring this idea, I got my Part A Hazardous Waste Permit from the EPA. By spring of 1981, I had many custom-

ers. Within nine months after starting the business I sold the location to the U.S. Pollution Control, a firm in Oklahoma. The deal allowed me to receive compensation as a consultant for twenty years. This gave me the freedom to go in other directions.

And what did you pursue?

I went in many directions, some of which panned out and others failed. What was successful was my land development project in 1987. I realized the need of privately-held disposal sites for radioactive waste. Disposal locations at the time were owned by Federal and State governments. In April 1988 I opened a facility and in a short time it was a target for many buyers. This time I didn't sell. I kept it for the next seventeen years — working hard and getting different permits for disposing of different waste products.

Seventy percent of my business was from the federal government, because of the EPA's regulations for nationwide cleanup of radioactive material. I did very well with this business and eventually sold it to a private equity firm, Lindsay Goldberg, in New York. They bought 75 percent and the remaining 25 percent was held out for local investors. This operation eventually became Energy Solutions.

Since 2004, I have invested in real estate and farming in the U.S. and also have made some investments in Africa. This brings my life up to date.

Could you tell us the difference between radioactive and nuclear disposal?

The first facility I created was for the disposal of hazardous waste chemicals. The other type of waste is radioactive

waste. This is a very simple explanation.

The reason I ask this is because on an earlier occasion we spoke about radioactive disposal when Iran was in the P5+1 negotiations. Iran was supposed to dispose of the radioactive material to Russia. How does the different waste impact transport and disposal?

I would need to preface my answer with a bit of background about radioactive waste material. These wastes basically encompass a universe of different radionuclides, which are present in waste material. Some of these radionuclides are in different isotopes. Most of the time, it is the level of their radioactivity that distinguishes one type of waste from another. This means there is a spectrum of waste and it runs from low radioactivity and moves along to high radioactivity that includes byproducts of nuclear power plants such as spent fuel rod waste. This waste usually remains with a very high radioactivity and thus is difficult to dispose of. In fact for the last 20 to 25 years the United States has been trying to find a solution for the disposal of this material. There were discussions about having a site to dispose of highly radioactive waste at the Yucca Mountains in Nevada, but this has not yet happened and continues to be a challenge. There are at least 111 locations in the U.S. that are sitting with spent fuel rod waste.

My operation was a home for some these materials, but only for a portion of the low level radiation material—a form of waste material that is called NORM (Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials). My facility started with the dis-

posal of NORM waste and then went up the spectrum and received other material, such as uranium mine byproducts that contain radioactive contaminants. Of course we did not just dispose of this waste, we processed it, based on the form and chemical nature of the waste. Some hazardous waste material must be encapsulated in areas where it can't infiltrate to ground and drinking water and expose people to radiation.

We were also licensed for another form of waste called Mixed Waste, which includes both radioactive and hazardous material. This waste is much more complicated to dispose of because of that mix.

So the disposal of these classifications is different?

Different, yes, and are regulated by different agencies.

Because of your seventeen years of your work in this field you were awarded an honorary Doctorate of Science from Southern Utah University. Can you discuss this?

During the seventeen year operation of this facility we did a number of interesting things. First, we looked at the many regulations and studied and analyzed them for possible commercial applications. No one else wanted to do this. Eventually we implemented some of the requirements that the government put together, but no one wanted to go to the next level of implementing them and providing an actual service. We took this step, and that was the reason for our recognition: providing this missing service to assist with cleaning up areas through-

out the country.

We also worked with government labs that already had completed pure research and developed some of the processes at a laboratory level. They were successfully coming up with the processes and solutions that could have resulted in safe containment and disposal. The problem was that no one wanted to commercialize these discoveries and solutions. So, we invested heavily in some of these processes. One of them came from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. We took something they did on a small scale in the laboratory and put it to actual commercial use in the real world.

You are active in cultural, social and humanitarian issues. One of your foundations is called Semnani Family Foundation, will you discuss this?

I, like many Iranians, including yourself, have a soft spot for the underdog—one who needs help regardless of race, religion, gender, etc. I was helping people my entire life. In 1993 I realized that I should formalize this support, so I formed my first foundation. Our work focuses on the needs of women and children all over the world.

My inspiration for this came from what was happening in Romania. After the fall of the Soviet Union there were many humanitarian problems. Children infected with HIV were placed in orphanages. Their government could not support their treatment or the facilities. International non-governmental organizations got involved and tried to give medical and social service assistance for the children (whose ages were six months through 10 years of age). We joined their efforts.



Since then we have expanded and work with many international aid agencies including the Red Cross. Again our main focus is helping with health, social and educational needs.

You named a free standing clinic Maliheh, was this after your grandmother?

Yes it is. You know Iranian men are the breadwinners of the family but the mothers and grandmothers are the ones who provided the moral, social and humanitarian education. My grandmother and my mother were my mentors and taught me so much. My grandmother died in 2001 and I felt the best way to honor her was to name the clinic after her.

Do you have any other free clinics or just in Salt Lake City?

Only in Salt Lake City, but we work with other agencies throughout the states and the world.

With so many projects on your plate you still remain dedicated to Iran through the sponsoring of conferences on the art, history and culture of Iran. You are also on the Board of Directors of Encyclopedia Iranica.

Thank you for saying such nice things. I think we all need to do our share in protecting what is good in Iran and its history and culture. I cannot say enough about Dr. Eshan Yarshater at *Encyclopedia Iranica*. For me and the Iranian community he is a candle that we have gathered around.

I also had the chance to meet work with Khosrow Eghbal and Mahmoud Khayami. We must be grateful that Dr. Yarshater and his team have given all of us a great opportunity to save and promote the Iranian people, their culture and national identity.

Do you ever get time to read Persian literature and if so who do you read?

I love to read Saadi Shirazi. He was a great teacher in his lifetime and, through his words, still remains a great teacher for all time. His teachings are charmingly

beautiful and his words and language simple with a universal application. He was a man of his time, but also a man relevant to our day.

Would you, talk about the importance of your roots?

When you speak of personal life and roots, in my experience of living outside of Iran and experience in business, social and humanitarian projects, one thing that is always clear is the following: like any tree you must have roots to be strong. Once you have roots you can do many things and apply yourself. The roots simply mean your beliefs and sense of belonging.

Once you have strong beliefs, they will lead you throughout your life. Beliefs and roots can come from so many things: culture, religion, ethnicity, parents, friends and family. Wherever they come from, you must commit yourself to them and, from them, allow your journey to continue. Always use your roots as a guiding principal. This will lead you to success in so many things.

To me, our principles and roots are like rudders on a ship. Without them the ship will not move in a specific direction. Instead it will float aimlessly without a destination and without commitment. One of the best places to commit yourself is to take pride in your family, background and nationality. I am sad to sometimes see Iranians deny their ethnicity, referring to themselves as something else because they are ashamed. I understand their concerns, but you cannot be ashamed of your roots because of the act of a government. Iranians have so much to be proud of—they are gifted with a wonderful culture and history. Throughout history, more times than not, a government does not represent the people. The government of Iran's bad actions do not make it a cultural problem of the people of Iran. Iran and Iranians have so much to be proud of.

Please tell us about Omid for Iran.

I did this in response to what was happening during the nuclear negotiations between Iran and other nations. Actually, at that time, there were no negotiations because of the belligerent and toxic words of then president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Because of his rhetoric,

there were serious discussions of bombing Iran's nuclear infrastructure. *Omid for Iran* published a report I wrote titled *The Ayatollah's Nuclear Gamble: The Human Cost of Military Strikes Against Iran's Nuclear Facilities*, which offers a detailed scientific discussion of the human and environmental consequences of a military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities. Before this paper, all that was discussed was political and business fallout with no discussion about the affect such an event would have on the people of Iran, the environment and neighboring areas for generations.

You see, you were not just talking about bombing a building, you were talking about buildings that contained radioactive and nuclear materials. I found this offensive and dangerous. It made me think about what Dr. Yarshater did. When he thought there was a concern regarding Iran or Iranian issues, and no one else was qualified and interested to address it, then he felt that he should step forward. I felt the same about the extent and horrific consequences of human casualties in the case of such a military attack.

Many Iranians feel the same way and take necessary steps, even if those steps are challenging and uncomfortable. So that is why *Omid for Iran* was created. Please note that it was organized not just for the nuclear issue but for the impact the regime was having on the Iranian people and against the policies that were being created by the rest of the world in response to the regime.

Mr. Semnani thank you for this interview. One of the purposes of such interviews is to introduce people to the younger generation with Iranian background or those who are connected to Iran, with the hopes that they are inspired to take pride in themselves and their culture. I am certain after reading this interview, they will be inspired.

Thank you for those kind words and I wish you continued success.

You can learn more about Mr. Semnani at KhosrowSemnani.com. Omid for Iran's website is omidforiran.org. To read the report on the consequences of bombing Iran, go to NuclearGamble.org.