



Persian Heritage

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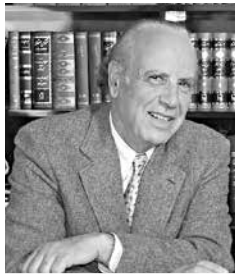
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

After years of negotiations, during the early days of this summer, the Iranian Government reached an agreement with the world's major powers, the 5+1, on the nuclear issue. Today, as I am writing this editorial I have found that the votes needed to pass the agreement have been reached. After years of unimaginable financial burdens, due to the nuclear program, sanctions, inflation and the impact on manufacturing, the Iranian people may have hope for a better future. Celebrations took place in and out of Iran over the agreement and the excitement of normalized relations with the West. The joy then dampened over the possibility that Congress would not approve this historical agreement. With today's news there will be new celebrations, hopefully not premature. If this agreement finally passes in September, the heavily funded propaganda campaigns against Iran and Iranians in the US media, were not successful in manipulating public opinion to vote against this deal and they were not successful in convincing the public that bombing Iran was the only way to rid Iran's nuclear capabilities. Can those who hold a special place in their hearts for Iran and its people, finally breathe a sigh of relief?

At the time of the Revolution in Iran, there was hope for reforms, democracy and freedom. The objective was to bring Iran to modernization and implement democracy into the political system. Unfortunately, hope slowly vanished especially among the youth. The tables turned on them and within a short period of time freedom of speech and women's rights vanished (this was odd considering that 50% of college graduates were women). They found themselves being further oppressed and thrown into prisons because of their lack of Islamic covering or wearing makeup.

The religious minority and political opponents were under additional pressure and eventually forced to flee the country, some even lost their lives. Many scholars, young and old, who had different political agendas or values than those in the newly theocratic government were executed. Thousands and thousands of young people, the assets of the future of Iran, lost their lives.

As time passed Iran was forced into war with Saddam Hussein. Three years into the war Saddam offered Iran 60 billion dollars in war damages, but the war lasted an additional five years. Over one million Iranians lost their lives, millions were injured and the country was left with billions in damages.

Today on the news we are overwhelmed by the images of refugees, from Syria, Afghanistan and Libya struggling to get to the shores of the Mediterranean. Some losing their lives during the dangerous journey, a journey made to escape the brutal governmental regimes of their homelands.

Presently 264,500 refugees have entered into the European continent. Yet others are being denied access into countries

such as Hungary, whose government has placed heavily barbed wire fences on the border. Despite the danger, including death, women, children and men continue to try to pass through. Such tactics make those who prevent their passage as horrific as the regimes from which they flee.

All these images and stories remind me of two individuals who are on the cover of this issue of *Persian Heritage*. On one side is Dr. Cyrus Amirmokri who has two doctorates, one from Harvard and the other from The University of Chicago two of the most prestigious universities in the United States. His hard work led him to the position as Assistant Secretary for the United States Treasury. After leaving this position with the government, he continues to be a successful American-Iranian.

On the other side is Dr. Kamshad Raiszadeh, a well-known orthopedic spinal surgeon in San Diego, CA. He is also a childhood friend and classmate of Dr. Amirmokri. They both attended Iranzamin Elementary School in Iran. His accomplishments to date include several patents. He continues to research and develop new procedures for less invasive spinal surgical procedures.

These two gentlemen are certainly the pride of the Iranian community and of their parents; parents who at the height of their successful professional careers in Iran, (Dr. Amirmokri's parents are successful physicians and Dr. Raiszadeh's mother is a physician and father was the president of a post graduate college in Iran) were forced to leave Iran because of the Revolution and war. They endured the trials and tribulations as immigrants to a new country. They gave up so much and now can revel in the results of their sacrifices. These young men, on the cover, are examples of the productivity that can be reached by and as an immigrant. They are also examples of the valuable minds their birth country has lost, because of politics.

Unfortunately over the 35 years, the 6 million Iranians,



who were forced to leave Iran and were scattered all around the world and other immigrants, have not all met the same destiny as the Raiszadehs and the Amirmokris. Some have ended up in refugee camps under horrible conditions with no relief in sight.

Should this agreement not pass it is horrifying to imagine what kind of conditions these people have endured and will endure if there is a civil war in Iran or, if Iran was bombed as a result of the negative rhetoric that constantly calls for the destruction of Iran. If these scenarios came to fruition one can only imagine the outcome of such violence and destruction and what would become of the people and the land.

Thousands of Syrians were successful in landing on the European continent land via the water ways. Iranians have no water route to escape. If they were to use the Persian Gulf as an escape route the Arab nations would not give them a safe-haven and would turn them over to the enemy. And, if they fled into Turkey, would they be treated fairly or continue to suffer and be disrespected by the Turks?

With all the negative possibilities that exist for the innocent people of Iran, for all their frustrations and difficulties they have had to endure, IT IS NOW time, after 40 years for the Iranian leadership to change its policy and take a new path in governing the country. The mistrust between Iran's leadership and the rest of the world must end.

In Iran internal pressures, lack of human rights, increasing executions and lack of travel allowances to the outside world (keeping Iranian families from visiting each other) are signs that this leadership is still not willing to make a truce with the rest of the world.

This war mongering attitude and rhetoric coming from Iran's Arab neighbors must cease. The nerve of one Iranian official to state that Iran should export their unemployed college graduates. Prior to this comment we heard the term "brain drain." Now the government itself, in an effort to get rid of a group of talented and highly educated young people, individuals who would be an asset in rebuilding Iran is treating them like products to be exported. This shameful statement by an incompetent official, the high rate of unemployment due to an empty treasury, closer of factories and limitations of social and intellectual activities must end some day. But I do not want it to end by the dropping of a bomb by a neighboring country or by interference by the large world powers to geographically divide Iran.

I hope with the news of today that there will be no bomb-

ing in Iran. I also hope that today's news will bring an end to the thoughts of a new world order, one where Iran is not geographically divided.

This leadership has to make reforms, sympathize with its people, regain the trust of the world powers and gain the respect in the world community. This is the only way all of these issues can be addressed, without needless destruction. Iranian Diaspora wealthy or not must use their resources and start campaigns that will help Iran gain respect from the international community, campaigns that educate the minds of the average individual on Iran and Iranians. As Iranians we must not forget our responsibility to the country whose soil we were born.

We must NOW take the necessary measures to make sure that the international community and the people of the United States understand that Iran and Iranians DO NOT want war. They DO NOT want to go to war with their neighbors. They are a peaceful people. It is important for people to know Iran's history. Over the last two hundred years, Iran has never started a war but has on occasion defended herself against aggressors and has united to preserve its independence and integrity. Iran's history shows that Iranians are empathic towards the needs of their fellow country men and women and other suppressed people in the world. I hope with all my heart that in September, when Congress votes on this agreement that it will pass with a larger number of votes than needed. I hope the fire of war rhetoric has diminished. I hope that Iranians both inside and outside will have peace of mind. I hope that the Iranian people's struggles begin to subside. I hope that they will have the ability to focus their energy on the betterment of their lives and their country.

Maybe all this war propaganda and the threats being made is a great lesson for all Iranians. Maybe it has taught us to be more united as a people; one with a united voice against threats. The more united we are the louder our voice can be heard when we tell the world that Iranians are a people of peace and harmony.

I wish all of you my fellow readers a peaceful and harmonious future full of pride for Iran and Iranians where ever you are.

Shahrokh Alavi



APPRECIATION

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your kind and informative article regarding my background. You have been more than complementary to me and I sincerely appreciate it. Your publication is much to be admired and recognized for the important service that it provides to educate many Iranians regarding our heritage and the critical issues facing the nation.

Thank you again.

Khosrow B. Semnani

BA SEPAS VA ERADAT,

I am truly humbled and honored to be cited in *Persian Heritage* – truly an excellent gift.

Kaveh Farrokh

ALWAYS PROUD

Dear Editor:

I must say that the cover of the summer issue is simply

exceptional, as are the stories that accompanied them.

It is amazing to see such a display of talent as in the Nature Bridge designed by a thirty-one year old, Leila Araghian. I only hope that our youth read this magazine and become inspired by the greatness of others.

Additionally, I was happy to be introduced to Mr. Khosrow Semnani. He is a talent and extraordinary. If it were not for this magazine I fear I would have never known he graced my heritage.

EM, NJ

INSPIRATIONAL

The letter to you from Neda Farid needs to be addressed. As a marathoner myself it is nice to see someone realizes the dedication you must have to complete 26.2 miles. What a tribute to you to have sparked an interest in a young lady and that she stayed

dedicated to her goal for so many years.

Persian Heritage and you continue to inspire your readers.

Thank you again

KI, Geneva, Switzerland

ISFAHAN

The article on Isfahan in the summer edition, brought back such wonderful memories of my beautiful Isfahan and Iran.

If only all of the world were able to see the beauty of Iran and its people they would understand the importance of the signing of this treaty. I fear if it is not signed many Americans will not have the golden opportunity to mingle in Iran's history and its modernization. This ignorance can lead up to the outside destruction of antiquities and more importantly of a people who are proud of who they are and desire to actively be part of society.

It is simple for those living outside of Iran's borders to lightly agree to bombing Iran, they are not a part. Isn't it ironic that every day we watch TV and see people be gunned down in western society. We, the people, the media and the politicians are appalled by the ease in which people take a life. YET!!!! the same groups can easily bomb a people, without any proof or facts.

I will hold onto this article of Isfahan and relish in its beauty.

AA, NJ



VANK CATHEDRAL IN ISFAHAN

IRANIAN SCIENTISTS UNVEIL DOMESTICALLY MADE SURGERY ROBOT



Iranian scientists have unveiled the first domestically made high precision remote surgery robot. Avicenna, specifically designed to carry out laparoscopic operations, was unveiled during Iran’s Second International Innovation and Technology Exhibition (INOTEX 2015).

“This robot is an advanced remote surgery system that operates with a monitor and two robotic arms,” said Farzam Farahmand, the director of the Avicenna project.

He added that the Iranian robot can also be used “for abdominal and prostate surgery” with a surgeon controlling the arms and viewing the operation via the monitor.

“Operations carried out with this device minimize the damaging effects on the healthy tissues, reduce bleeding during the operation, and accelerate the recovery process,” he noted.

The machine has passed the animal testing stage and now requires proper licenses to start tests on human subjects, he added.

The robot, which is named after Iranian scientist Avicenna, was designed and developed in a joint project by the Sharif University of Technology and Tehran University of Medical Sciences.

The Highest Academic Achievement for a Wonderful Iranian at a Very Early Age

The Chester Cassel Endowed Chair in Gastroenterology was presented to Baharak Moshiree on June 9, 2015, at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine Miami, Florida.

Baharak Moshiree, M.D, M.S. is an Associate Professor of medicine and Director of Motility in the Division of Gastroenterology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. She received her undergraduate and medical degree through an exclusive combined program with only 12 candidates chosen from a large undergraduate pool called the Junior Honors Program from the University of Florida (UF) in 2000, and later completed training in internal medicine at the Medical College of Virginia. She then successfully completed sub-specialty training in gastroenterology at University of Florida with a focus in functional and motility disorder during her fellowship training while on a National Institute of Health T 32 grant.

Dr. Moshiree has defined herself as an expert in these diseases by using innovative techniques such as high-resolution memory, new technologies to treat GERD such as Stretta and Linx, gastric stimulators to treat gastroparesis and biofeedback therapy to treat constipation. Furthermore, her motility program is one of only 10 motility program in the United States with grant support for validation of a new toll to diagnose gastroparesis called wireless motility capsule. Dr. Moshiree has received funding from NIH for a pilot grant demonstrating for the first

time that azithromycin can be used in patients with gastroparesis- debilitating stomach affecting many patients with diabetes. The main focus of her research has been the multidimensional pathophysiology of IBS with complex interactions between the sensitizing effects of inflammation, central nervous system dis inhibition, gut immunity, and genetic influences. Her publications have examined pain-processing mechanism and brain-gut interactions in patients wit IBS.



Dr. Moshiree further expanded her research efforts when she was awarded a K12 while at U.F. titled: ”Randomized, double blind crossover study continues of the efficacy of Mesalamine in diarrhea-predominant IBS (d-IBS) Her research to focus on the discovery of biomarkers for the diagnosis of IBS and on new treatments for gastroparesis and small bowel overgrowth. Dr. Moshiree has presented her research at several national meetings, has received he Presidential Poster Award from the American Motility Society. She has been invited to several meetings and institutions to present her research and continues to be at the forefront of her field. Dr. Moshiree also has a Master of Science in clinical investigation, obtained to further enhance her research efforts.

In addition to her clinical and research interest, Dr. Moshiree has a strong commitment to education. She mentored 25 fellows, residents and students with five fellows who have pursued academic careers in the field of motility disorders as a result of her direct teaching.

Iranian Scientists Create WORLD’S FIRST HYBRID HEART VALVE

Mehr News Agency:

Two Iranian scientists have successfully created the first hybrid tissue-engineered heart valve with the use of a metal alloy. Hamed Alavi, PhD, and Arash Kheradvar, MD, PhD, from the University of California in Irvine, developed the new valve, which can become a replacement for current valves thanks to its durability, the Mehr News Agency reported. The findings of their research were published in an article in the latest edition of the Annals of Thoracic Surgery. In the current technology used in valve replacement, the patient’s cells are used to create an artificial valve set on a scaffold that will eventually degrade, resulting in the failure of the valve.



The scientists believe

by using the new technology, patient’s life quality will be improved as the valve eventually incorporates itself into the patient’s heart structure. The valve is built on a “non-degradable scaffold that stays within the valve to provide the support it needs without interfering with its normal function,” said Kheradvar. “The valve we created uses an ultra-flexible scaffold made of an alloy of nickel and titanium (nitinol) that is enclosed within the patient’s own cultured tissue,” he added.



IRANIAN CHESS GRANDMASTER CRESTED AT DC INTERNATIONAL 2015

Iranian chess grandmaster Ehsan Ghaem Maghami stood on the top of the podium at DC International 2015.

In the last round of the blitz section of the 9 round Swiss competitions held in Washington DC, the 32-year-old Iranian national came first with the overall score of 7 out of 9.

Ghaem Maghami shared the first place with British GM Luke McShane, Indian GM Magesh Panchanathan and Bulgarian IM Andrey Gorovets. One hundred and twenty three chess players from 39 countries participated at this event, which took place from June 25 to 30. The Iranian grandmaster secured 16 units to his international rating. Ghaem Maghami is the first international grandmaster in Iranian chess history, and the best Iranian chess player with regards to his ranking and rating since the age of 14.

Tehran Hosts Luxury "Thousand-and-One-Nights" Train



The luxury tourist train "Hezar-o YekShab" (Thousand and One Nights) carrying about 80 tourists from some American and European countries arrived in Zanjan province in northwestern Iran from Turkish-Iranian border. The "Hezar-o YekShab" train started its journey from Istanbul, Turkey and before departure to Tehran, it traveled to Zanjan, Yazd, Shiraz and Isfahan cities in Iran. Many tourists from Germany, US, Turkey, Netherlands, Switzerland, and Austria were on the luxury train. This is the second time that "Hezar-o YekShab" train has traveled to Iran. Prior to this train, an Hungarian train called as Golden Eagle carrying many tourists from European countries visited Iran. The passengers of the train left Tehran to their own countries after visiting many historical and cultural places of the city. The Hezar-o YekShab, along with Golden Eagle, is a luxury train and part of a tour organized in cooperation with Turkish, Hungarian and Iranian travel agencies.

MEET ANAHITA SEDAGHTFAR



Anahita Sedaghatfar is an attorney and television legal analyst and commentator who regularly appears on FOX News's "The O'Reilly Factor" with Bill O'Reilly, "Studio B" with Shepard Smith, "America's Newsroom," "Happening Now," "Your World With Neil Cavuto," and "Cavuto" on FOX Business Network. In 2015, Anahita joined the prestigious Cochran Firm - California, founded by the legendary Johnnie L. Cochran, to serve as Of Counsel to the firm. Ms. Sedaghatfar received her B.A. with highest honors in Political Science and Sociology with an emphasis on law

in society from the University of California, Davis. She received her J.D., magna cum laude, from Southwestern University School of Law. Prior to starting her own law firm, Ms. Sedaghatfar was an associate in the Los Angeles office of Musick, Peeler & Garrett, LLP. Subsequently, Ms. Sedaghatfar established the Law Offices of Anahita Sedaghatfar and formed a partnership with famed O.J. Simpson prosecutor Christopher Darden. During this time, Ms. Sedaghatfar and Mr. Darden favorably litigated multiple sexual harassment and race, religion and age discrimination cases. Ms. Sedaghatfar has performed various pro bono services for indigent clients and for members of the California Lawyers for the Arts. In addition to maintaining her law practice, Ms. Sedaghatfar is an adjunct professor at Southwestern University School of Law and is a volunteer for Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters of Los Angeles.

CONGRATS TO A BALTIMORE RESTAURANT OWNER

Michael Tabrizi, owner of the restaurant Tabrizi, in Baltimore, participated in the annual restaurant week. But his participation was a bit different. Instead of opening it to the general public Michael closed the restaurant to the public and instead provided 1,000 meals to the city's homeless from July 20 to 25.

His decision to do this was sparked by the signs held by the homeless he would see on his way home from work. One sign in particular stated, "I am hungry, will work for food." When he saw that he gave the person his business card and invited him to come to eat at the restaurant. Then he thought, why not feed them all. He believes that giving hope and respect to someone who is destitute and homeless is priceless.

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ISSUES ABOUT THE ARTICLE “Persian Dance and its Forgotten History”

Dear Editorial Board,

I received your electronic quarterly of Spring 2015 through one of your readers. First of all I do really appreciate your efforts in presenting the Iranian culture and arts through your invaluable E-magazine. Such efforts in reflecting the socio-cultural highlights of our contemporary history, especially for post-revolution generation who has almost no direct and free access to the historical facts inside Iran is of high importance.

As a researcher who does her PhD in Dance Studies, I feel obliged to send you my comments and feedbacks regarding one of your articles on “Persian Dance and its Forgotten History” written by Nima Kiann. As we all know, dance has been always regarded as a taboo in Iran and the dancers were forced to leave the country or to change their profession after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Such a view to dance led to destruction or closure of many public archives about dance, including photos, articles, documents, interviews, and videos. However, such a miserable condition shall not result in a biased, unprofessional, and partly baseless documentation of the dance history.

I am specifically referring to Mrs. Haydeh Changizian and her representation in the article:

1. “Haydeh Changizian left the company after many disputes and disagreements” (P. 20). No one can claim that there is no dispute in the conceptualization, organization and realization of a piece of art, no matter if it is a piece of music, theater, opera or dance. It is a general phenomenon and overall around the world, disputes especially among artists are normal and even accepted, as arts cannot grow without such disputes! Keeping that in mind, mentioned that and trying to highlight it to convey a negative picture of a certain person is not appreciated in an historical article.

2. It is also mentioned in the article “...her project was never realized because of her lack of administrative and operational experience...”. (P. 20) The question is how the author of this article and based on which reference could make sure about the validity of such expression? Was he active in Iranian dance scene in that period of time? Did he witness such an event in person or it is just his interpretation of that certain period in the absence of any written reference?

3. He is also writing elsewhere “As a nostalgic retrospect to her short-lived career, she staged a self-produced performance” (P. 20). I do assume that the author has done at least a basic research about the dancer. If it is so, he could have seen her official website in which –according to historical documents, newspaper articles, TV interviews, photos, etc- it can be concluded that she was active for almost 30 years in Iran, Germany and the US. How 30 years of active participation in dance can be regarded as a short-lived career? (<http://www.haydehchangizian.com/#!/c1j2j>)

Accordingly, and based on the above mentioned the reader might think that the article is not a neutral, valid and fact-based one, but a collection of biased, baseless and one sided opinions against one of the most influential dancers of the recent history. Such articles result from one side in defamation of the respected artist and from the other side cannot help the next generation of researchers to have access to historical facts, as they are misleading and leave no space for an unbiased interpretation of dance history. What makes such suspicion more solid is the fact that the same article has been published years before in Mr. Kiann’s website with an other language and none of the above-mentioned allegations can be found there: (http://www.iranchamber.com/cinema/articles/persian_dance_history03.php)

Therefore, I personally find the article as a purposeful effort to defame Mrs. Changizian, which in my eyes shall not happen in an historical sphere such Persian Heritage.

I do appreciate if you could kindly discuss it in your team and inform me promptly about the above-mentioned points.

*Yours sincerely, Elaheh Hatami
PhD in Dance Studies, Berlin, Germany*

50th Anniversary of the Rediscovery of the Caspian Horse 4th International Conference of the Caspian Horse



The Caspian is an ancient breed of small horse, believed extinct for 1,000 years until rediscovered in 1965 by Louise Firouz on the southern shores of the Caspian sea, Northern Iran. Small numbers may still exist in a semi feral state in the rice paddies, cotton fields, forests and foothills of the Alborz Mountains of the Caspian plain.

The Equestrian Federation of Iran honored this important anniversary by organizing the 4th International Conference of the Caspian Horse in Rasht, Iran birthplace of the mythic Caspian Horse on September 7-9, 2015 together with the International Caspian Society.

Geneticists, rare breed specialists, breeders and delegates from Caspian registries all over the world came together in Gilan province to discuss the most important issues facing the Caspian horse today. A breed show was also held on the 9th of September with entries from all over Iran. There was a Caspian show jumping class as well as archery and carousel exhibitions.

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August 25, 1941, The Day of Infamy

WHY BRITISH ENGINEERED OCCUPATION OF IRAN?

part one

Dr. Hooshang Guilak

Many articles, books, and researches have been conducted on the subject. The conclusions derived were as different as the number of the writers and investigators. Each tried to justify his belief. Some blaming the Allies and calling the attack unjustified; some placing blames on the Iranian government and specifically the King, Reza Shah, for his dictatorial behavior and his affinity toward Axis,” the Nazi Germany.” Some justify the attack for preservation of Khuzestan oil fields and others felt the attack was necessary to supply Russians with the Americans arms in fighting the Germans in the Eastern Front.

None of the above would, intelligently explain or could be considered the sole reason for the attack and occupation of Iran, however, it should be accepted that they do present elements of truth. To have a clear view of what took place; one should analyze a number of events and their contributions to the final decision for the British and Russians to attack Iran. Elaboration on some he followings could be helpful in reaching a more acceptable rationality and reaching a plausible decision:

- Condition of Iran during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which encompasses the Ghajar and early Pahlavi dynasties;
- The continuous demands of the Russians and their methods in reaching their objectives;
- Behavior of the British and their dealings with Iranians;
- The Iranians elites, and role of the powerful clergy;
- Reza Khan, later Reza Shah; a study of his person, his achievements, and how did he dealt with the two Iranian’s greatest foes?
- The Americans, their contributions or rather lack of contributions toward the Iranians and their government;
- The years before WWII, Iranian attempts to get help from the United States; and
- What was behind the attack on Iran, and was it a sensible decision?

Let us analyze each subject briefly:

DURING THE GHAJAR DYNASTY

Iran was in one of its worst condition ever. The kings were incompetent and irresponsible. They have sold the country to the British and the Russians: Nasser-ul-Din Shah’s trip to Europe and his borrowing from foreigners in fulfilling his desires. His agreements with Reuter and literary giving him almost all the country’s commerce. Accepting the Russian offer for creation of the Cossack Brigade and thus placing the nation under the Russian armed force. . . .

Mozafar-ul-Din Shah followed his father’s footsteps and again borrowed money for his multiple trips to Europe, accomplishing nothing for the people of Iran. Refusing, for a longtime, to sign the constitution of the country, until was forced to, and did it reluctantly. . . . Mohammad Ali Shah refusal of accepting the constitution and bombarding the parliament, jailing and executing the nationalists, all under the auspices of the Russian Cossack brigade. . . . and the worse: Ahmad Shah, a naive and self-serving individual who had deprived himself of all human integrity and decency so he could serve his own wellbeing. To appoint Vossugh-ul-Dowleh, he shamelessly asked the British for a large bribe of, monthly stipend of 15,000 Tumans and a promise of the British assurance to protect the Ghajar dynasty.²



RUSSIAN:

The neighbor in the north retained its tremendous power over the kings and the country in the aftermath of the wars 1812 and 1824. They had the kings in their servitude, and interfered in every function of the country, which continued after the constitutional revolution and establishment of a constitutional government. Toward the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Iranian government decided to get help from United States to rectify the disastrous financial problem of the country. A contract was signed between the government and William Morgan Shuster. He was appointed as Treasurer General of Iran with full power. Majles approved the contract. Russian objected vehemently to this appointment. Russian Legation in Washington protested to the Department of States, objecting to Shuster’s appointment and stating, “It will be unwise and unkind to send an American advisor to Iran.”³ Shuster barely started his works that Russians under instigation of the British began a severe campaign against him, spreading rumors that Shuster and his group were Baha’is, and with the help of Moslem clergy they asked for his dismissal.⁴ Russians demanded Shuster’s expulsion and threatened to attack, if Iran did not comply. This is one of the characteristics of the Soviets, irrespective what kind of government runs the country. The only language they understand is the language of force and what they accomplish is only through using force. The incident ended with a sort of coup d’état. Mr. Vossugh-ul-Dowleh, the foreign minister, assured the Soviets that Majles would be asked to terminate Mr. Shuster’s contract. When, the article was presented to Majles, it did not work as the government expected. In a silence governing Majles, a deputy rose and declared; “It may be the will of Allah that our liberty and our sovereignty shall be taken away from us by force, but let us not give them away with our own hands.”⁵ Shuster wrote that 76 deputies, of all walks of life, one by one stood when their names were called and voted against the bill.⁶ That constituted a vote of no confidence and the cabinet was a non-existing entity. However, the government with the help of the army closed Majles. It ended with the resignation of Shuster.

THE BRITISH:

Let me start this portion with the opinion expressed by Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States about the British: *“Of the nation (English) who never admitted a chapter of morality into her political code! And is avowing that whatever power can make hers is hers of right.”* Thomas Jefferson

British, the self-proclaimed neighbor in the south, approached the colonized countries in a different way. They worked on a simple method: buy the leaders, and the clergy; and with their help rule the nation. This was a simple method that worked miracle for them. By virtue of their high intelligence and experience they realized that to rule the third world countries, the best way is through the help of the religious leaders. The first British envoy to Iran, Anthony Jenkinson, came to the court of Shah Tahmasb in 1561 with gift from Queen Elizabeth the First, for the King. He bypassed the Shi’a clergy; creating strong enemies. He was on the threshold to lose his head, if there were not for the help of Yerevan’s Governor, Abdullah Khan.

Thirty-seven years later, two brothers, Robert and Anthony Shirley, came to the court of Shah Abbas. This time the British came well prepared with gift for the clergy and through them found their way to the Shah. An alliance developed between the Shi'a clergy and the British, which continues to the present.⁸ As an example during the hurdle of Vossugh-ul-Dowleh's nomination, the British paid 25,000£ to the Ulema, in order to mobilize the mass of the people in his favor.⁹

During the evolution of the infamous 1919 Triumvirates Treaty, Lord Curzon, the British Foreign Secretary was asked how he would handle Iranians opposing the treaty. He responded, "... Simple... the case will be settled with cash... This policy will help in two ways, buying allies for England and with their help make the country into an informal part of British Empire."¹⁰

Another characteristic of the British Government is that they support, almost unconditionally, their servants and on the same token, they never forget nor forgive those that in their mind betrayed them. After signing the treaty the British government paid the sum of 131,000 £ to Vossugh-ul-Dowleh, equivalent to 400,000 Tumans. Of this amount Vossugh received 200,000, Nosrat-ul-Dowleh Firuz Farmanfarma, foreign secretary and Sarem-ul-Dowleh, minister of finance, each received 100,000 Tumans.¹¹ Also the British Minister in Tehran, Sir Percy Cox, wrote each one of them a letter stating: "Dear Highness: It (the British government) is prepared to extend to your Highness its good office and support in case of need, and further to offer your Highness asylum in the British Empire should necessity arise."¹²

REZA KHAN – REZA SHAH:

Born on March 11, 1878 in Elasht, SavadKuh of Mazandaran province. His grandfather and father were in the military. The grandfather was killed in the siege of Herat, Afghanistan in 1856. After the death of his father the family moved to Tehran. Reza was 7-8 years of age. As a teenager, he joined the Cossack Brigade. He progressed rapidly in the rank and showed his ability to move around, making decision, being ruthless toward achieving his goals, and also a patriot on his own right. He taught himself the essentials of reading and writing. Over time he transformed to a seasoned military officer and reached the level of Mir Panj (general).

With passing time, Reza Khan distanced himself from the Russians. His military achievement caught the eyes of two British Generals in Iran; General Edmund Ironside and General Henry Smyth. This created a new chapter in his life, paving the road to his future. The final victory was through the grand scheme of a coup d'état. Reza Khan with the blessing of the British, on February 2, 1921, moved from Ghazvin and captured Tehran without any difficulties. Martial law was established. The King appointed Sayed Zia-ul-Din Tabatabai, a well-known servant of the British, as the Prime Minister. Reza Khan was given the title of commander of Iranian Arm-forces. Shortly thereafter he was promoted to the level of Sardar-e Sepah and the secretary of war.

to be continued

1. Paul Julius Reuter, a Jewish German, moved to England. He changed to Christianity; Creator of Reuter News Agency. He made agreement with Nasser-ul-Din Shah and received one the most controlling treaty over the entire belonging of the country by bribing the government officials. 2. BagherAmeli; NakhostVaziran-e Iran 1906-1979, p. 257

3. W. M. Shuster, Strangling Persia (1912), p5. 4. H. Guilak; Fire Beneath the Ashes; US-Iran Relation; 2011, p14. 5. Ibid. p.16 6. W. M. Shuster, Strangling Persia; 1912, p.181 7. Thomas Jefferson on Democracy, Letter to Langdon March 5, 1810

8. H. Guilak; Fire Beneath the Ashes; US-Iran relation, 2011, p. xiii. 9. Cyrus Ghani; Iran and the Rise of Reza Shah, (1998),p.27 10. H. Sahabi ; British Policy I Persia (1918-1925), 1990, p.11 11. H. Guilak; Fire Beneath the Ashes; US-Iran Relation; p.78

12. Enclosure 7, No. 734. Letter of Cox to Lord Curzon- No. 143{141044/150/34} Aug. 22, 1919/Document policy 1919-1939 Vol. IV First Series, 1140-1142.

REVIEWS

**The Illustrated Story of Persian Polymath
IBN SINA
and How He Shaped the Course of Medicine**
Marla Popova



How a voraciously curious little boy became one of the world’s greatest healers.

Humanity’s millennia-old quest to understand the human body is strewn with medical history milestones, but few individual figures merit as much credit as Persian prodigy-turned- polymath Ibn Sina (c. 980 CE-1037 AD), commonly known in the West as Avicenna - one of the most influential thinkers in our civilization’s unfolding story.

He authored 450 known works spanning physics, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, logic, poetry, and medicine, including the seminal encyclopedia The Canon of Medicine, which forever changed our understanding of the human body and its inner workings.

This masterwork of science and philosophy - or metaphysics, as it was then called - remained in use as a centerpiece of medieval medical education until six hundred years after Ibn Sina’s death.

As a lover of children’s books that celebrate the life-stories of influential and inspiring luminaries - including those of Jane Goodall, Henri Matisse, Pablo Neruda, Henri Rousseau, Julia Child, Albert Einstein, and Maria Merian - I was delighted to come upon The Amazing Discoveries of Ibn Sina (public library) by Lebanese writer Fatima Sharafeddine and Iran-based Iraqi illustrator Intelraq Mohammed Ali, a fine addition to these favorite children’s books celebrating science.

**THE ROLY-POLY PUMPKIN,
The Untold Cinderella Story**
Sarak Ardestani

Ah what beauty lies in the Persian style fairytale. The Roly-Poly Pumpkin, is perfection. Its simplistic story and illustrations spark a thirst to read on. The foreard of the book explains the storyline so completely that it is included in this review.

The Roly-Poly Pumpkin is based on the classic Persian fairy tale *Kadou Ghel Gheleh Zan*.

Readers may notice similarities between this tale and the traditional tales of both Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood. *Kadou Ghel Gheleh Zan* was passed down orally in the Farsi language through the generations for at least 200 years, although its exact origins are not well-documented. This book retells the original Farsi story in English, while keeping true to the original story in most major aspects.

The modern version of this story commonly told in Iran only covers the second half of this book (pages 18-27). The first half of this book, which is monarchy-centric, is no longer being widely published (pages 2-17).

This omission is what makes The Roly-Poly Pumpkin the “Untold Cinderella Story.” The more complete fairy tale in this



book can therefore be considered the “older” edition of *Kadou Ghel Gheleh Zan*.

Another important difference is that in the modern version of *Kadou Ghe/ Gheleh Zan*, the second half is no longer the tale of the mother going to visit her daughter, the princess, and her husband, the prince, at the palace. It is now simply a story of a mother going to visit her daughter and son-in-law at their house.

**NOEROOZ & OTHER IRANIAN CELEBRATIONS
A Mythological and Historical Study**
Mahvash Amir-Mokri (2015)

This book is a wonderful source of information for those seeking to know, understand, appreciate and/or learn about Iranian (Persian) celebrations.

With the beautiful illustrations of Nasser Ovissi, the author and artist take you on a history lesson of just who and what Iranians are and how they evolved. More importantly you will learn how each of the celebrations began and survived the passage of time.

It is interesting to see how many of the celebrations have influenced the later non Persian holidays. She addresses the distinction of the Persian versus the Iranian holiday and how they transitioned over.

Unlike many orientation chapters, this author is extremely useful and exceptional as it educates the reader on the tools they will need for understanding the inner chapters. Equally important is her introduction, which gives you a brief, yet valuable, historical education on ancient and modern Persian festivities.

**JEWELS OF ALLAH: THE UNTOLD STORY OF
WOMEN IN IRAN**

Nina Ansary

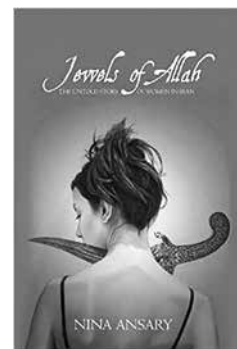
The popular narrative about women’s lives in Iran over the last forty years goes something like this: “During the Pahlavi Monarchy, women were on an upward trajectory. In a nation on the cusp of modernity, women actively participated. They were given the right to vote and were free to be in public without veils; they wore mini-skirts on university campuses.

Then came the Islamic Revolution in 1979, with Ayatollah Khomeini at the helm. The burgeoning freedoms for women were extinguished. The veil was required and institutions were segregated by gender. The Islamic Republic had thus achieved its goal of resurrecting the image of the traditional Muslim woman.”

The problem with popular narratives is that, despite their convenient half-truths, the real story is more complicated, unexpected, and less tidy.

Inspired by author Nina Ansary’s scholarly journey, *Jewels of Allah* is a provocative roller coaster ride that shatters the stereotypical assumptions and the often misunderstood story of women in Iran today

Highlighting many courageous female leaders and advocates throughout Iran’s history, the book illuminates the unanticipated consequences of the Islamic Revolution and the unexpected twists and turns leading to a full-blown feminist movement within a post-revolutionary patriarchal society.



AN INTERVIEW WITH Mohammad Mohanna

Brian H. Appleton

Mohammad Mohanna; self-made man and philanthropist who believes in returning to core American values and in giving back to society. Mr. Mohanna is the owner of Mohanna Development Company and founder of the Mohanna Foundation.

Mr. Mohanna, it is my great pleasure to see you again and to conduct this interview for the readers of Persian Heritage Magazine. Please tell us a little about your background.

I was born in Tehran, Iran on August 1, 1950. I was privileged to grow up in a wealthy family in Shemran with a lineage of land ownership spanning hundreds of years.

Was there anyone who had a great influence on you in your life?

My father was my greatest role model. I watched him operate with humility and confidence.

That is interesting that you say that because I understand that you voluntarily exiled yourself from him in your youth.

This is the story. Often people, including parents don't love you for who you are but they love their perception of you. My father had sent me to Oxford at the age of 17 to become British-educated, but that lifestyle was not for me. It was the most miserable time in my life. I hated the weather and the food and the stiffness of that society. I was very lonesome there. I was not scholarly enough and the only thing I excelled at was karate which I practiced with my one friend there who happened to be Italian. He invited me to go to Rome with him for the holidays. He was miserable at Oxford too so we just stayed on with his family in Rome having a great time for seven months without my family's knowledge. My mail was forwarded and they thought I was still at Oxford. But through the gossip mill, word got back to my father and he wrote and told me: "You

have failed us, come back home!" and he cut me off financially. But I could not go back home to Iran as a failure.

So what did you do?

I was 18, I had no money and no work experience so I decided to go to America. That was in 1969. My mother smuggled me the money for the plane fare. I went to Boston. You can imagine how I felt coming from a wealthy family suddenly living in Roxbury, one of the roughest neighborhoods in the nation where I worked as a janitor of a halfway house for the rehabilitation of alcoholics for the Volunteers of America and lived in the basement boiler room there. It was an African American neighborhood and they didn't know who I was and thought I was Puerto Rican. I used to help old ladies in the neighborhood carry their groceries home. One day while I was being beaten up by a gang, one of the old lady's saved me by coming over and hitting them with her cane until they ran away.

The halfway house had a 10 o'clock curfew at which time I had to lock the front door but I would bring the alcoholics in through the back door so they wouldn't freeze to death. I made sure the bathrooms were the cleanest in Boston and my bosses started to appreciate my work. I slowly earned enough money to buy my first property for \$18,000 when I was 22. From there I started my career as a real estate developer. I lived in the basement of that building and fixed up the two upper story apartments and rented them out. Now having a modest income stream I went back to school and eventually got a degree in civil engineering from Wentworth College in 1974.

What made you decide to come to California?

I had heard of the Golden State of California while I was in Boston and was



drawn to Sacramento which was the capitol and the "city of sacramento." I knew there was great potential in such a politically driven city on the West Coast. It was a more open environment socially and for business and being the capitol of the largest state I thought I would have more opportunities there than Boston. I'd always heard about the diversity in California.

How did you make your fortune?

I am just a lucky man. The harder I work, the luckier I get.

What made you decide to help homeless people?

My lonely and difficult life in Roxbury positioned me to learn that I can make a difference in overcoming poverty. My daily encounters with those who had even less than I did taught me the importance of compassion and kindness. A little help can go a long way. As the janitor of the alcoholic house in Roxbury, I witnessed the suffering of the down and out in the cold and snowy nights. Sometimes, I had to make the decision to leave the back door open to give those in the snow a place of refuge. Even though I risked losing my job and the little income stream that I had, I knew it was the right thing to do.

Tell us about your programs, how you got started and what it is like today?

In the early 80's, I began working with the homeless and dealing with the issue in downtown Sacramento. I started volunteering at Loaves and Fishes, a Catholic organization feeding the homeless across the street from some of my

buildings on North C Street. We started a continuum of care campus at North C Street in the late 1990s and over time it has grown exponentially through various programs that aid in the rehabilitation and transformation of our homeless guests.

Your model reminds me of the Kahrizak Foundation in Tehran which takes homeless elders, orphans and handicapped and gives them housing, education and job training as well as helping them find employment. How many homeless people has your program served?

Loaves and Fishes feeds lunch to more than 600 people a day and across the street in my building, we started Women's Empowerment which has resulted in over 1,000 homeless women graduating from the program, obtaining jobs and ending the cycle of homelessness. 15 years ago we started Clean and Sober, a program dealing with alcohol and substance abuse, which now has more than 3,000 graduates.

How many of your clients have become homeowners and employed?

Hundreds from Women's Empowerment alone, as well as several hundred from Clean and Sober.

Tell us about what your program does for single mothers?

Our Women's Empowerment program gives homeless, single mothers an opportunity to re-start their lives and get themselves back on track. We empower and mentor our single mothers so that they can gain the skills and confidence to get a job and get back custody of their children.

What is it you like so much about the United States?

The ability it offers an individual to rise to the occasion and become successful despite their background, to be able to question authority, to right the wrongs and to promote justice. Of course we can always improve the system and it is up to those who do make it to the top to give back to the community and ensure that the opportunities are available and in reach for the less fortunate. We must move forward and leave no one behind.

How can we, the average citizen help the poor and homeless in America?

A hug can go a long way. Tell them that they are beautiful and that they can do it. Empowerment and compassionate daily interactions are the simple things that can have a substantial impact. From a political standpoint, supporting the policies that are friendly to the homeless are crucial. Across various states including California, the Right to Rest Act is currently going through legislation. This act decriminalizes homelessness and allows our homeless individuals to be free from being arrested and fined. Forcefully evicting them from public lands and relocating them is not a solution. We must also advocate for solutions and insist on more rehabilitative programs and shelters.

What about the critics of your program to help the homeless of Sacramento and what are their objections?

Of course there is opposition from businesses in the region and local leaders. Business leaders do not want "them" in their neighborhoods. They call them vagrants and panhandlers. Their solution is to arrest the homeless and take them away from the city. But this is not sustainable. I have been advocating for an overnight homeless shelter in my facilities where they are already being fed and receiving job training. However, the city officials and business districts have been opposed to creating a shelter and argue that more homeless will come if we provide them a place to sleep. I even tried to buy up used First Inn Kyobashi capsule hotel rooms from Japan for the purpose of housing homeless but was blocked from getting permits.

I am amazed that these experiences did not make you bitter or cynical and I commend you for your positive approach. Regarding your program to help the homeless and jobless and undereducated could your program be franchised and started in other cities around the United States?

I believe it is a necessity for us to take the model of our continuum of care campus and duplicate it in every other city in the nation. I have always advocated that Sacramento can be a model for other cities. We want to show that taking care

of our less fortunate is the right thing to do and it works, even though it may not be popular.

Tell us about your peace efforts with Iran.

I have always been an advocate of improving relations between our two nations. My work with Iran started when I took the University of California Davis's chancellor Vanderhoef and a group of his professors to Iran in 2004. It was the first U.S. academic delegation to Iran since the Iranian revolution. Our delegation built bridges between the people of Iran and the people of America and we were able to engage in dialogue on many issues of common interest. The UC Davis delegation started a legacy in Iran, whereby Iranian students had the opportunity to come to America for studies and it led to several more academic delegations in the following years. I also invited and paid for Coleman Barks, translator of Rumi's poetry into English to go to Iran because he had never been.

You often talk about giving back to society. How does your program differ from state run programs and what should the roles of government and private industry be in alleviating poverty and is there a more effective way that the two sectors could collaborate in this effort?

I strongly believe in private-public partnerships. However, our non-profit programs have been run without the help of government and have mainly been led by interfaith groups. The government must step up and take action to help alleviate our growing issues with poverty.

Does the role of religion help the alleviation of poverty?

I believe there is too much religion and not enough faith. Interfaith action has been a crucial component in addressing the homeless issue in Sacramento. We led a series of interfaith events which brought together city leaders and business leaders from various religious backgrounds to sit at the table with the homeless and come up with a solution. The collective action in Sacramento from various faith groups towards accomplishing the same goal should

serve as a model for other regions in the United States and even the world.

Tell us about your family.

My wife, Nasrin is an architect who studied at the National University of Iran and she works with me, as do my two daughters. Lily studied law at McGeorge School of Law and is interested in the aspect of the law concerning social justice and Nikky studied at the London School of Economics. In fact I have turned over most aspects of our real estate development business to them to allow me to remain more focused on our charity work.

Mr. Mohanna I want to thank you for your time and participation in this interview. I wonder if there is any message you would like to leave for our readers about your foundation and philanthropy in general.

It was my pleasure talking with you and yes I have a message.

We believe that with sustainable philanthropy, impact and social investing our foundation and others will help to move the community forward. This strategy will help to create an environment where positive, sustainable ideas can be cultivated and flourish. Through our many endeavors we make a difference in the lives of many and in the community.

Our general principles are:

Promoting the well-being of humanity.

Addressing social and environmental challenges of the community.

Harnessing the power of humanitarianism and volunteerism for the common humanity of all mankind.

Sustainable philanthropy to make a difference in lives and in the community.

Providing access to opportunities for the less fortunate.

Smart growth through innovative, strategic thinking.

Impact and social investing.

Dialogue among nations to bring people with diverse perspectives together.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak to Persian Heritage readers.

Luxury Consumer Goods Thrive in Iran

By Amir Paivar and CameliaSadeghzadeh

BBC Persian

From the roadside billboards advertising Rolex and Louis Vuitton, to the glitzy shopping centres that have sprung up across Tehran, it's clear that big brands are becoming big business in Iran. After decades of austerity following the Islamic Revolution, middle-class Iranians have developed a taste for high-end designer goods, and for Tehran's young rich, shopping has become the new religion.

"Exposure to foreign trends through travelling, the internet and satellite television has created a desire for branded products," says Bahar, a 30-year-old fashion blogger. "Showing off is a big part of the story. By spending huge amounts of money on big brands, well-off Iranians want to show they've made it."

Living the high life

One group of super-rich young Tehranis have taken showing off to new levels with their own Instagram site - Rich Kids of Tehran, where without any perceptible sense of irony, they post pictures of their designer clothes and designer lifestyles.

When the site first appeared last year it prompted fury and resentment among poorer Iranians and the conservatives who dominate Iran's political and legal institutions. But the Rich Kids seem undeterred by the controversy.

Recent postings include pictures of Tehran Fashion Week and a question about where people are going on holiday this year - the responses range from Italy and Istanbul to Japan and Dubai. Because luxury brands are still the preserve of the rich, they don't yet show up in the Iranian Customs Authority's list of top 100 imports. But there is an indication of the potential for growth in the most recent figures for cosmetics imports. In the year to March 2015, cosmetics made up 0.1% of the country's \$52bn (£32.8bn) total imports - many of them big name brands snapped up by increasingly image-conscious consumers.

In big cities all across Iran, traditional bazaars now face fierce competition from American-style urban shopping centres where big name Western brands are on conspicuous display. But although these luxury shopping centres look exactly the same as retail outlets anywhere in the world, the designer goods on display have actually been brought in by third-party importers via Turkey and the Gulf States.

The outlets that sell them have no connection to the big brand manufacturers. Big Western fashion brands are not banned from doing business in Iran. But international banking sanctions in place against Iran over its nuclear programme make it very difficult for them to get their profits out.

To date Spanish clothing retailer Mango, Italian fashion boutique Benetton, and luxury women's designer Escada, are among the very few Western companies to open shops in Iran. The backdoor way in which foreign brands are imported into Iran means they are more expensive than they would be abroad, but so far this doesn't seem to be deterring the shoppers.

Mariam, an office worker who earns the equivalent of just \$17,000 a year, has just blown more than a month's salary on a new Burberry bag. She bought it online from an Iranian website that offers clothes and accessories from big brands and Western High Street retailers. The site takes payments via local credit cards, and offers a free home-delivery service.



A TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

on

“A Rose Garden of Persian Poetry: from the 10th century to the Present”

by Reza Saberi

ROBIN MAGOWAN

For the past several years, I have had the privilege of collaborating with Reza Saberi on *A Rose Garden of Persian Poetry: from the 10th century to the Present*. Together we present a little-known, but truly great, body of poetry that reflects a five thousand-year-old civilization. The following remarks, taken from an outsider's perspective, convey what I have gleaned from this unusual process of translation and adaptation.

Although I have traveled to Iran twice, for six weeks at a time in the nineteen sixties, and have written a lengthy essay on the historic cities of Central Asia, I know only a few words of Persian and do not read Persian script. But as a writer of poetry and literary non-fiction, with a lifelong interest in Iran and Central Asia, I have worked with Saberi's literal translations to convey their poetic essence to contemporary English-speaking audiences.

The concept for our anthology is Saberi's, as are the selections from the work of more than a hundred poets, a good third of whom have never been translated into any Western language. Though our selections are weighted towards the short lyric poem – four-line *rubaiyat*, *ghazal* – most of the major genres, other than narrative, are represented. For all the variety, one is left with a feeling of a remarkable unity: each poet contributes to what seems in effect the same poem, making up a tradition more than a sequence of individual works. This suppleness, the continuing fertility that sustains an ongoing convention system, is exactly what a large anthology can bring out.

“Poetry is what's gained in translation,” James Merrill once remarked, citing Fitzgerald's reinvention of Omar Khayyam, for him the greatest poem in the language. With a facing page, we can't aspire to such license. Still, we would like to think that our versions rise above a beleaguered accuracy; that, now and then, we do arrive at a translation, which comes across as that elusive thing, poetry. Nonetheless, this makes for a certain distortion. A poem in English is not the same as one in Persian. Though the two languages share some Indo-European roots, and even a cognate or two, they differ enormously in their effects.

In Persian, a poet cannot repeat a single rhyme, a *radif* or buried phrase, often enough; the more he repeats, the more convincing the poem becomes. In English, a language that boasts a vast word-trove, to harp on a single repetitive monorhyme can't help but grate. Even close rhyme, if it isn't varied enough, or insufficiently precise, can seem obtrusive. Ideally, rhymes need to be found in different parts of speech of different syllables, so arranged that their recurrence comes as a surprise. Play must seem something other than compulsive. We have forms and with them rules; but an unitary line, normally end-stopped, can be broken or enjambed, when needed.

What we feel about the need for variety, Persian poets feel about sameness. Play is always subject to a spiritual “oneness”

that alone keeps a series of couplets from wobbling out of control. But this governing scruple makes for a flexibility that a Westerner can only envy. American poems are always headed somewhere, towards a last line's ringing finality. They are driven by time and its rhythmic counterpart, every prosodic device pressed into the service of getting us to the proverbial finish line without so much as a wasted syllable.

Persian poetry operates to a different imperative; so much so that it can seem, perusing a Rose-Garden of our sort, that we are reading again the same images, the same meter, the same guiding insistence. Even the diction stays blessedly the same: a tenth-century poem of Rudaki remains one any Iranian can read. The same holds for imagery: the conventions expand, but those Rudaki employs remain current. The same timelessness helps to explain the crucial role poetry plays in Iran's cultural heritage and thus in its national identity. Farsi is not the first language every Iranian speaks; but everyone, Turkish, Kurdish-speaking, whatever, can recite classical poetry, and the various arts, from music to gardening, are predicated on its dominance.

It might be asked how a body of poetry can keep its vitality, century after century, dancing in the same set of chains? But before bemoaning what we won't find in work that beats to a static drum, we might consider what is gained. Imagine, for instance, an idiom liberated from the shackles of time, all that servitude that begins the moment we strap on a watch in the morning. When a poem doesn't have to get somewhere, what happens? Well, the poet can concentrate on achieving in a two-line unit something perfect, memorable, and jewel-like. A Persian bayt, or couplet, can be put together in various ways, but each is a mini-poem, inviolately end-stopped. Where a Hopkins, a Wallace Stevens, feels called upon to justify each and every departure from common usage, the “cats and dogs” Americanese of William Carlos Williams, the Persian feels no such qualms. A couplet can be as defiantly convoluted as he can make it. Or it can carry a witty pungency expressed in the freshest of idioms. But these mini-poems are never complete in the way that a haiku is. It requires, at least, a second couplet, to become the epigram that is a *rubaiyat*.

The other great Persian form, the *ghazal*, consists of a series of jewel-like couplets, as alike or unlike as the pearls composing the strands of a necklace. Just how randomly strung is open to question. But a *ghazal* feels improvised, guided by the spur of the moment, until the poet, running out of gas, bails out by referring in the third person to himself as the writer.

The structure of a *ghazal* can become deeply meditative as the poet probes ever inwards. The initial rhyme pronounced at the end of the first two lines or hemistichs, which recurs at the end of each succeeding couplet, keeps the meditation concentrated on a unifying presence: the love-object, the mystic “Sun,” or maybe that implied Beauty, one's patron-ruler.

To a long succession of poets, the mystical Sufi tradition brought a well sign-posted convention system. By interpreting the Divine as the Unknowable, the poet quenter placed himself on a fertile pathway; one that would conduct his readers, hopefully, to a single destination and a much sought self-realization. The dervish mode of life a Sufi espoused-4)n the road, open to the wind, living in the moment, and by no means ashamed of the wine sustaining him-put him at odds with the clerical establishment.

But that made poets useful allies in a secular ruler's struggle for legitimacy. For all its mystical advocacy, Persian poetry is, by and large, court poetry, full of wit to one audience, bestowing gnomic wisdom to another.

One can see why, faced with the charge of heresy, poets found working within a coded system expedient. By walking in a distinct set of shoes, sanctioned by tradition, a poet progressed along his tightrope from one highly visible utterance to the next.

Much of what Western poetry evokes lay out of bounds, forbidden to the Persian Sufi writer; this is why one encounters no nature poetry in the millennium between Manucehri and Sefehri. But poets could get around the restriction by yoking a natural image—the rose, the nightingale, a drop of dew—to a spiritual quality. The rose was not just a flower, but an emblem of paradise, a presence that even a translator can fit out with a capital R. But the constant hyphenation of image and abstraction can feel cumbersome. Do I really want to turn up the volume in this manner?

Translating a timeless idiom into our time-bound one can't help but distort. In

Persian, poems are nameless, untitled. To find them in a *divan*, or anthology, we need to know the rhyme word that binds a string of couplets. How do I justify putting a name to a poem? With a certain irony, tongue-in-cheek?

Much as we have learned to relish ambiguity and a multi-leveled discourse, we require certain things to be clear, such as the gender of the beloved being courted. A man or a woman? A man, the tradition assures us, but there are circumstances that clearly invoke the feminine. What, in turn, about the needed time-specifics, “when,” “where,” “while,” that keep a Western poem grounded? One proceeds, convinced they are there, subtly embedded in the timeless bedrock.

Poetry, in any language, often blurs syntactical clarity. We may feel the persuasiveness of a poem's music, its rhythmic tilt, but what we assume it to be saying may clarify only as we plumb its verbal depths. Even then, a poet may want to retain a necessary enigma; all the more if he is working within lines that dictate what can and can't be addressed, what's blasphemy and what isn't.

A coded convention system need not exclude a poetry that speaks to our urgency; witness the Cold War explosion of Polish poetry, which passed through censors with figurative meanings intact. Invention thrives when the poet knows the rules: what it takes to be outrageous and somehow or other get away with it. In our anthology we see that fragile borderline approached again and again, not always with happy results.

Out of this mutual need a system arose that, in some ways, endures to this day. The rulers were, as always, in need of the praise that poets provided. A patron could be flattered as little less than the Beloved, that androgynous Rose whose bounty flickered as arbitrarily as the glances of any beauty. Come too close to its luminous flame and one might, like a moth, be scorched. It was this tremulous region between the secular and the mystic that a poet explored, tears in his eyes, puddles ornamenting his every footstep. This ability to weep his way through life became nothing less than an index of a poet's openness, his humility.

A yearning for the unattainable is not easy to convey. Suffering is what most of us, in our comfortable lives, would rather avoid than embrace. But one has only to read Rumi's “Reed Pipe,” let alone listen to music based on the kind of poetry recorded in our anthology, to recognize how pervasively such heartfelt yearning has been embraced. In Saeb, half a millennium later than Rumi, we see the same note, only now the weeper is a Pierrot, bringing to the same mystical poetry a new comic exuberance.

To Iranians such recognitions can be taken for granted, synonymous with their heritage and the life they lead. But to a translator trying to render the sparks that set a poem alight, much remains unclear. How do I decode the aureate diction of Khaqani's great paean to the ruins of Ctesiphon, a poem every literate Iranian of a certain generation knows by heart? Or what about the barely translatable Hafez, never less than supremely opaque, who sums up a whole rose garden so definitively that, by most accounts, classical poetry ends with his death in 1390—where else is there for a “timeless” poetry to go?

Well, as our anthology shows, there is an answer: the Persian-speaking Mughal court of Shah Jahan and two poets, the witty Saeb and the enigmatic Bidel who, at their best, more than rival Hafez. The immensely influential “Indo-Persian” style that they helped launch could seem with its convoluted imagery and comic personae excessive, reason enough for it to be shunned in conservative Iran.

When a breakthrough of the “Indo-Persian” sort represents a necessary step in a tradition's evolution, you can't slam the door on it without calling into question all subsequent innovation. For the next several centuries Persian poetry lay moribund.

To what extent twentieth century modernism, coming mostly from France, effected a revival remains for readers to assess. It is hard to revive a timeless poetry when the court structure that nurtured it has been obliterated. As our selections make clear, the twentieth century has not been a propitious time. Nonetheless, unlikely as it may seem, Iran has witnessed the emergence of a group of world-class filmmakers. I can't help but believe that a love and knowledge so deeply embedded won't result in a reflowering of one of the world's great poetic traditions.

It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to interview you. Can we start by having you introduce yourself to our readers?

Let me start by saying that I am grateful for your request to interview me for Persian Heritage. My name is Kamshad Raiszadeh and I am a spinal surgeon. I was born in 1964 in Ahvaz, Iran. Both of my parents were born and raised in Iran but received most of their education in the States.

In order to do this they traveled back and forth from the US to Iran three times. My dad received his doctorate and post doctorate in chemistry and my mother completed her medical residency in Pathology in the States.

When was their last trip back to Iran?

The last trip back for our whole family was in 1977 and it was to be a return to Iran for good. However, six months after the revolution we returned to the US, specifically to Northern California.

What about your schooling?

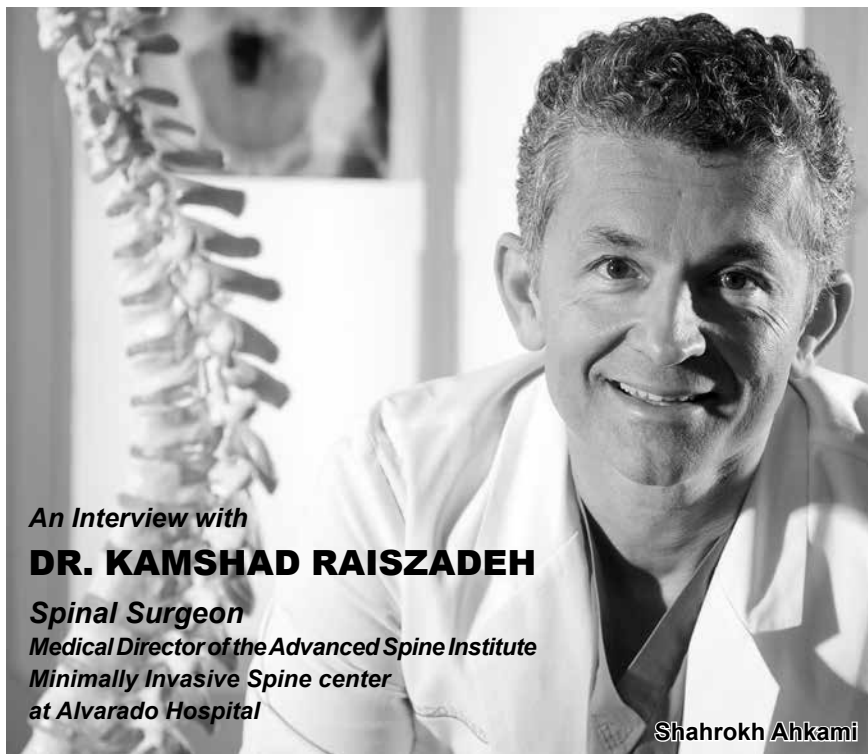
Most of my schooling was in the US. I spent, however, very formative years in Iran between grade 1-3 at Community School and 8th and 9th grade at Iranzamin, both in Tehran.

How were your experiences in the Iranian schools?

Excellent! At Community School, I have vivid memories of the strictness of the teachers but also the great camaraderie of the students.

There was a great dirt field that attracted us for boisterous, competitive soccer games. Even years later after returning to Iran for middle school, many of my classmates at Community would fondly remind me of our times, making me feel the bond of a greater community that I didn't feel in the US.

At Iranzamin, I remember how challenging the curriculum was compared to the States, yet how fascinated, engaged, and motivated I was in that environment. In fact I was far advanced when compared to my US classmates, which gave me a leg up for college. I was also impressed by the diversity of my classmates, many of



An Interview with
DR. KAMSHAD RAISZADEH
Spinal Surgeon
Medical Director of the Advanced Spine Institute
Minimally Invasive Spine center
at Alvarado Hospital

Shahrokh Ahkami

whom were children of ambassadors and other sophisticated families. This opened my eyes to the world.

And the curriculum?

The curriculum was very impressive, maybe because they were trying to prepare us for the baccalauréat examination, or maybe it was the infamous headmaster or exceptional highly trained teachers. There were many multi lingual courses, phenomenal electives, and they also offered a variety of sports; I played soccer and tennis. In fact I still remember the asphalt soccer field and sports bubble, which I played tennis in.

I understand that a number of your classmates from Iran also moved to the US and have become very prominent.

Yes you are correct, in fact one of them is Cyrus Amirmokri, who I have the pleasure of sharing the cover of this issue of *Persian Heritage*

It is still astonishing when I think about it, since there are 5 of us from that Iranzamin class who currently live in San Diego, all successful professionals including an ophthalmologist, plastic surgeon, and two high-tech entrepreneurs.

When you returned to the United States did you have any difficulties in adjusting?

No, not much difficulty. What made it easier for me is that I spoke fluent English with no trace of an accent. Additionally I was involved in sports and was a member of the high school tennis and soccer teams, providing me with a loyal clique of friends

On the other hand, I did have other Persian friends who had perceptible accents and did face harassment. Of course this was because of the rawness of the hostage crisis and Americans' lack of knowledge of Iran and Iranians.

Your family, brothers and parents are very educated. Can you tell us a bit about them?

Well as I stated earlier my father has a doctorate in Chemistry and was offered a position as a Dean of a college in Tehran.

That offer and my mother's position as a clinical pathologist were the reason we returned to Iran in 1977. I have two brothers, both orthopedic surgeons also, one subspecializing in spinal surgery and the other in sports injuries.

What made you choose medicine over chemistry?

As a kid, I was fascinated with the pathology slides my mother would bring home. The wealth of information contained in those slides and the gateway they opened into what was happening in the body astonished me. While I enjoyed chemistry immensely, the field of medicine drew me in.

I have been told that you were not only studious but also had a passion for art, painting and sculpture. Are you still involved?

As much as I love to paint and sculpt, at the present time I don't have the time to indulge in that passion. Having said that however, I believe my profession as a spinal surgeon often makes me feel like an artist. As part of deformity spine surgery, we cut and reshape the spine. We also piece together and realign the spine after fractures. There is a lot of immediate satisfaction not only with the anticipated patient improvement, but also with looking at the result, which is not unlike the feeling after completing a sculpture or painting.

Your profession as a spinal surgeon is very interesting as is your philanthropic work. I would like you to discuss both with our readers, but let's start with medicine.

I am an orthopedic spinal surgeon. My residency was in orthopedic surgery involving treatment of bone and joint diseases throughout the body. Then I sub specialized in spine and neck disorders. Spine surgery can help patients suffering from disc herniations, degeneration, nerve compression, tumors, deformities such as scoliosis, and fractures. It is a field that involves intricate work around nerves and muscles but also structural work. The spine is, after all, the core of the body and is the focus of much strain both physically and emotionally.

I know you are motivated by new techniques in spinal surgery, which are less invasive, what does this mean?

There is a new movement in spinal surgery to perform surgeries with less injury to the muscle. To take pressure off nerves or to put screws and rods in the

bones to realign the spine, we need to first get down to the spine. Traditionally this has involved stripping the muscles off of the spine, which itself can cause a lot of trauma and disability due to muscle scarring and decreased function.

The field of minimally invasive spine surgery involves fixing the spine problems, but doing so with minimal muscle disruption. We can now do surgeries through small incisions that would have been performed through large 6-8 inch incisions with a fraction of the blood loss and much decreased risk of infection.

Are you using laparoscopic techniques?

In some cases we use endoscopic techniques to remove discs through small pencil like tubes. Another very revolutionary method allows us to see the internal architecture of the spine without opening it up. With new intraoperative technology, our instruments can now be equipped with an internal map of the spine. This allows me to place an instrument on the skin, and project where it would land deep in the body. As you can imagine, such technology helps us operate through a very small opening, yet allows us to see the same if not more than if the whole spine were exposed with no muscle on it.

You are in the process of writing a book?

Yes, I am writing a book for the general public to educate them on back and spinal pain. Like I mentioned earlier, the spine is the core of our being, and so many of our stresses are centered there. It is no surprise that in this age of inactivity and increased demands, there is such an epidemic of back and neck pain with patients seeking invasive treatments such as injections and surgery to get relief. Through the book, I provide perspective and knowledge of the body's own great recuperative capacity. I want to empower patients to take control of their back condition by strengthening it and to only use invasive treatments as needed.

But this is not spine surgery. How are you involved in this?

I have been fortunate to have studied and learned from some of the leaders in non-operative treatment also. In fact this interest has prompted me to innovate in

this area where there is a lack of good options that integrate the best in non-operative care with the knowledge and expertise of surgeons. We have multiple clinics called SpineZone in San Diego where we have shown that with appropriate education and focused strengthening and postural treatment we can decrease the rate of injections and surgery and significantly improve the function and satisfaction of patients. We are in the process of fundraising to take this concept to a national level.

Do you have any patents of your own?

Currently I have two issued patents and I always have an interest to continue to look for new technology to improve people's lives.

I would now like to discuss your philanthropic and humanitarian work. What made you be interested in this at such a young age?

My family and I feel very blessed and have benefitted from the grace of others and believe that we have a responsibility to give back. Thus 10 years ago, we self-funded a philanthropic organization called SHaRE, Spine Humanitarian and Research and Education Foundation. Since then we have taken on a wide range of needy patients. These include providing loans and grants to patients who fall through the cracks of insurance and who cannot afford care. We have funded everything from paying patients' rent to prevent eviction to providing training in a new occupation. We have also funded educational programs to help prevent spinal disability, and funded research into the causes of chronic back pain. We even helped bring a very special girl from Brunei to the United States and diagnosed her very severe spinal deformity and associated heart abnormality. With the help of Children's and Shriners' Hospital, she underwent both heart and spine surgery, is functional with minimal pain, and earning straight A's in school.

You are also doing something with your family?

Yes my wife and children have started an informational campaign for kids on the importance of good posture. If you

remember, as children we were repeatedly told to sit up and stand straight. Today we are bending over computers, phones, video games, and other technology for countless hours. We have a tendency to tilt our heads down and round our backs in sustained, very poor postures. Proper posture is imperative to help prevent disabling spinal conditions in the future. An orthopedic surgeon coined the term “text neck” to describe the poor neck posture from extended technology usage. He calculated that the brain perceives the head’s weight as increasing by 10 lbs for every inch it migrates forward. That means that even if you hold your head only 3 inches forward, your muscles and tendons are forced to hold about 42 pounds instead of the typical 12 pound head.

How are your children involved?

The kids find that their peers are far more likely to listen and learn from other kids and their experiences, rather than a lecture from adults. The kids have started a program we call “Str8up Kid2Kid.” They are spreading awareness via school presentations and social media, teaching kids to perform stretches and exercises,

and describing the importance of sitting and working with straight and proper posture. They have recruited multiple kids of different ages to perform this awareness campaign at schools and events. So far they are listening.

You are a very busy man. How do you balance family and work?

I cannot deny that I spend a great deal of time at my profession and passions. Clearly my kids are observing everything I do and so I try to model balance with hard work in harmony with non-work passions and family connectedness. I believe that everyone must find their own right balance between work or passions and raising a family, and this is sometimes challenging. Quality time of course is important, but sometimes just being there is what kids need. I try to do my work efficiently and at times when the kids are asleep. As much as possible I try not to get interrupted by the phone or texts when with them. Quality time, love, respect and attention will help children go in a positive direction.

For a moment I would like to return to Iran, do you miss

it and would you like to go back?

Of course there are many aspects of Iran I miss. The people, culture, and the sites are still fresh in my memory from years ago. I did go back in 1999 for a medical conference and I have to tell you I was very impressed by what I saw. The hospitals, physicians, and medical care were excellent. Also you could see a real thirst for knowledge, research, and innovative solutions. I am scheduled to go back in a few months to Tehran for a conference and lecture on spinal surgery and am looking forward to the experience.

Do you have a closing message for our readers especially the younger generation?

It is probably a message that they have heard from their parents already but I believe it is an important one. I would tell them to find their life’s mission. We all have one; we just have to focus and take the time to discover it from within. Then pursue it with passion and hard work. This is the best advice I received and just want to pass it on. Thank you for this opportunity.

The Izadkhast Fortress at Fars Province

The Fortress of Izadkhast is located in the Fars Province of Iran, roughly 135 km south of Isfahan. This historical complex has been situated on a natural base along with unique characteristics. The complex contains the castle of Izadkhast, one caravanserai and the Safavid-period bridge. The works inside of the castle belong to different periods from Sassanids to Qajars. The most important section of the complex is the castle that has been built on singular bedrock in a sand construction and close to the valley of Izadkhast. A



bridge and a gate in the most accessible part of the complex made it possible to connect with the surrounding areas.

It is, in form of construction, unique but can be, from the-materials-used point of view, compared with Citadel of Bam, Rhine and many other citadels, castles built in provinces of Yazd and Kerman. The complex caravanserai can be compared with Safavid caravanserais especially the caravanserais in Isfahan-Shiraz Route.

Inside the walls of the fortress, there are alleyways and passages that criss-cross it. Right by the front gate that goes over a moat, there are many homes that are now fully deserted while some are completely destroyed. According to the locals, as recent as the turn of the millennium, people still lived in the old part of Izadkhast but due to floods in the past two years, the homes were destroyed and people were forced to move. Most of the homes in the interior were constructed from wood and mud. The smallness of the bedrock led to agglomeration of built rooms. Hence, the smallness of rooms resulted in increase of floors, some as many as five stories high which in itself and considering the circumstances of its time is a remarkable architectural feat.

The caravanserai at the castle dates back to the time of Safavid Dynasty (1502 – 1736). The front gate was burned down by Nader Shah’s soldiers camping there during a cold night as they were looking for firewood.

An Interview with

NIMA KIANN

Founder and
Artistic Director of
Les Ballet Persans

last part

Persian Heritage

Do you collaborate with other Persian choreographers and composers?

The genre of my dance is ballet and thereby all my choreographies or ballets that are produced by Les Ballets Persans is based on classical ballet technique. There are very few active ballet choreographers with Iranian origin at my age or younger, perhaps three-four that I know. Unfortunately there has not been any opportunity for collaboration until now, but we know each other and have been in contact. Hopefully new opportunities for collaboration will arise in the future.

As for collaborating with Persian composers, yes, very often. For each new dance production, one important requirement is to contact the composer whose music will be used for choreography. It's really heartwarming that so many great composers would like to provide me with their music; When I was preparing for the choreography of "Femme" (Zan in Farsi, title of the ballet) Master Hossein Alizadeh sent me some exclusive recordings which were not published yet. Peyman Soltani kindly rearranged his Iraneh-khanum orchestral music to adapt for ballet choreography which I used for creation of Vis and Ramin. Maestro Loris Tjeknavorian has provided me with lots of amazing music which are on queue for choreography. I have a close professional relationship and friendship with Maestro Alexander (Ali) Rahbari who has been Les Ballets Persans' artistic advisor since early days of the company. I created a contemporary choreography for Tajikistan's National Ballet based



photographer: Rahim Karimi

on his Noheh-Khan composition which is a piece of music master work. Many other Iranian composers contact the company and suggest their creation for new choreographies. I am so happy to have access to a musical treasure!

What type of ballets does the company perform within the Persian heritage as well as outside of the Persian heritage?

Les Ballets Persans' repertoire, in spite of its pure technical classical approach, does not include any of the international ballet repertoire's standard works like Swan Lake, Nutcracker, Sleeping Beauty, etc. This is for two reasons; the first is the lack of sufficient financial means. National Ballet Companies are governmental institutions. Les Ballets Persans is not and there is not any Iranian cultural organization/institution within the Iranian Diaspora (and in the entire universe!) that would have any visions of using a dance company and its productions to propagate for the Persian heritage. Unfortunately most of them cannot even make a difference between professional qualitative dance and entertainment. Perhaps it's not so strange; we have never been cultivated in dance in our country. The other reason is that there are so many other companies that can produce standard ballet productions from the international repertoire better than Les Ballets Persans. Reproduction of ballets from the international repertoire is not our mission.

In terms of technique, the types of ballets that Les Ballets Persans produces are

limited to neoclassical, contemporary, and character dance like in any other national ballet company. Character dance is a dance style similar to folk and ethnic dances but is based on classical ballet training with more professionalism and theatrics. We do not produce any pure folklore, traditional, or popular dance. All ballets that we produce must be directly connected to the Persian heritage in terms of music, movement, story, costume, scenery and more generally, atmosphere. Our mission is only to propagate for the Persian heritage through ballet.

Where are your ballet performances produced?

Les Ballets Persans is based in Sweden since its start in 2002. Most of our productions have been produced here during early years of the company. But a few years ago and especially after the introduction of the European Youth Dance Project, our performances have been mainly produced or staged in a vast geographical area, from Central Asia to North America, in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, various European countries, US and Canada to name a few.

Another one of your projects is the European Youth Dance Project. Can you tell us about this?

European Youth Dance Project was started in 2007 as an artistic, integration and piece project aiming to attract young dancers within the European Union. But dancers applied from all over the world and soon it

grew to an intercontinental project. It's unbelievable that until today participants from more than 30 nationalities have worked within different productions and projects of Les Ballets Persans. Within this project the company creates opportunity for young and newly educated dancers to enhance their technical ability at a professional level and also gather experience about how it is to work in a professional ballet company. You can say, that the project is their gateway to their professional career. The project gives space to integrate in a multicultural environment and most importantly to get to know a new, rich and ancient culture. It is also an advantage to dance a repertoire that has a specific characteristic and approach. Many of our former dancers are now engaged in National Ballet companies or other renown dance companies and institutions all around the world.

I know you are fluent in five languages, and are they?

I speak fluently English, Swedish, French, Turkish (language of Turkey) and Persian. I also have basic knowledge and can understand somewhat Italian, Spanish, Danish, Russian, Arabic and Azeri (spoken in the Republic of Azerbaijan). I can read and write in Cyrillic. This is a huge help when you travel and work in Central Asia like in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, etc. Language is a great interest of mine which was awoken in my adulthood. I am not very proud of my scores in English at school! They were quite embarrassing! Why? I believe because the educational system in Iran during my school years did not motivate me enough to learn foreign languages. I left Iran when I was 17 and spoke only my mother tongue. Soon and by traveling around the world I understood that knowledge in a new language is actually a wealth and the key to enter into a new culture.

Language has been one of my most important elements of creating contacts in my work with different people of various origin/country. I learned Turkish (which was my first foreign language) perfectly when I was in Turkey after my departure from Iran. When I left the country in 1989, I did not practice it actively any more since I did not believe that I would use this language any more. Eleven years later when I was making preparations for establishing Les Ballets Persans in Sweden, after much research and difficulties, I found the great Azeri choreographers Rafiga Akhundova

and Maksud Mamedov in Baku. My archived (!) knowledge in Turkish was a great help when I explained over a telephone call to them that I intended to revive their forgotten ballets, Babek and Seven Beauties for the world premiere of Les Ballets Persans. Also later on, I had a huge use of my knowledge in Turkish, when collaborating with artists and national ballet companies in other Central Asian countries who speak a branch of Turkish like Kyrgyzstan.

By telling you this I mean, you should never underestimate any language. When you think that you will probably never have use of any language, then your linguistic knowledge can come to your help when you least expect.

One of the highlights of your career must have been the invitation to perform in Tajikistan, can you tell us about this experience?

Actually, I was invited to Tajikistan to bring a new repertoire to the Tajik National Ballet, the same of Les Ballets Persans. So I went there after a total renovation of the opera house to help renew their ballet repertoire. In 2003 a performance was going on at the Opera and the President of the country, Mr. Emamali Rahman, the Culture Minister and other officials were attending. Just in the middle of the performance, the stage machinery collapsed. This was of course a great embarrassment to the Opera's general director. But no one could be blamed. The house was in desperate need of renovation after years of civil war in the country. It never saw a shadow of renovation for decades. However, the President got on stage and ordered the Culture Minister to set aside enough budget for "restoring the pride of Tajikistan." The house was closed down for years while going through a profound renovation and finally opened its doors to the audience in 2009.

After the opening of the new opera house, they decided to renew both orchestral, opera and ballet repertoire. As for my contribution, the General Director, Mr. Majidov, was interested in my choreographies which are based on classical ballet technique, but has a distinct approach to the Persian heritage which is in many cases identical to the Tajik heritage. When starting to work with the company I discovered that contemporary dance as it is known in the West, simply does not exist in Tajikistan. There is no training in con-

temporary dance and no modern dance instructor at the State College of Dance and Choreography in Dushanbe. It was evident that contemporary dance had to be introduced to the company. There are almost no national ballet companies in the Western world who do not practice and stage contemporary dance alongside the classical works. So I decided to make a new contemporary choreography for the company as an introduction to this genre of dance, both to the National Ballet of Tajikistan, dance community of the country and also to the audience. It turned to be easier said than done!

It was really one of my career's biggest challenges. Dancing in contemporary style requires years of training and education alongside the classical ballet. It was a huge task, during a limited period of time, to make dancers move in a way they never had experience. Everything I choreographed for them, simply looked unsatisfying and unprofessional when danced, because of the lack of the dancer's training in this style. The visit of the deputy culture minister of Tajikistan to see our general rehearsal did not make me less nervous, the day before the premiere! To make the story short; after a hard work, tremendous amount of rehearsals and adaptation of the choreography to the technical ability of dancers, the contemporary work was finally staged as a part of the world premiere performance in Dushanbe. The choreography that I created for the Tajik Ballet's debut in modern dance was "Symphony of Elegy" based on Alexander (Ali) Rahbari's orchestral work, Nohe-Khan. The performance was received with standing ovations and was praised by critics. The general director of the Opera House, Mr. Majidov, announced that this was a historical moment for Tajik dance.

After the world premier, I organized the first international tour of the company since the breakdown of the Soviet Union. Tajik ambassador to Germany, came to see the performance in Hamburg and showed a great deal of encouragement and appreciation.

My work with National Ballet companies in Central Asia intensified after this experience. Last year, I made a dance production for Marjan Television Network (Manotol TV) for their exclusive Nowruz program using Kyrgyz dancers. Les Ballets Persans started a collaboration with the National Ballet of Kyrgyzstan. This time the culture minister of the country, Mr. Sultan Rayev got involved and wanted

to meet me in order to discuss about the development of the art form in Kyrgyzstan. The day after our meeting, a press conference was organized on February 5th, at the ministry with me and the deputy culture minister Ms. Baktygul Belekova. The collaboration between Les Ballets Persans and the National Ballet of Kyrgyzstan was announced to the media. Now we are looking forward to new projects and more in-depth collaboration.

Was it this experience that motivated you to bring your ballet repertoire further into central Asia?

No. The reason was very simple; we share the same cultural heritage, more than what we know and imagine. When making preparations for founding Les Ballets Persans, I decided to include two full-evening ballets from Azerbaijan; Babek based on the story of Bābak Khorram-Din and the rebellion of Sorkh-Jāmegān, and also Haft-Peykar (Seven Beauties) based on Khamseh of Nezami Ganjavi. I invited the choreographers of these masterpieces to Sweden and we started the production

of the world premiere.

So my collaboration with ballet artists in Central Asia started long before visiting Tajikistan. Central Asian countries have a rich and long ballet tradition based on the Russian school of ballet. Ballet was regarded as a magnificent form of Art during the Soviet era. Unfortunately Iran and its northern neighbors did not have any in-depth cultural exchange during that period because of political circumstances. After the breakdown of the Soviet a new opportunity arose for cultural exchange and I was fortunate to discover that at an early stage of my work with Les Ballets Persans.

Now I am working with several National Ballet Companies in Central Asia. I have access to great artistic resources in these countries and am honored to be able to contribute with a new style of ballet repertoire based entirely on Eastern cultures and assist to renew and update the art form. An achievement in this way was the production of the contemporary dance of "Symphony of Elegy" which was Tajik Ballet's very first experience of contemporary choreography.

Iran and Central Asian countries

which share the same cultural heritage have so much in common. Our cultural ties should be much stronger than what they are today. To bring my contacts, including all the cultural institutions all around the world and help to construct an Opera House of the same standard of well-developed countries and present the best of the fabulous culture of my native country. And, finally to organize a profound cultural exchange between Iran and neighboring countries on the basis of our mutual cultural heritage.

Do you have any inspirational words for our readers especially for the younger generations with Persian roots?

If I would say anything to the younger generation of my compatriots, that would be; DREAM! BELIEVE in yourself, WORK very hard and NEVER, EVER give up until you reach the goal!

It's a blessing to be able to dream and have visions in life. Dreaming is the start point of every realized vision. Let your determination illuminate your path and guide you through the journey!

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

part two

Dr. Kaveh Farrokh

Soviet forces invading northwest Iran (Azerbaijan province) and northern Iran (Gilan province adjacent to Mazandaran province to its east – both situated along the southern shore of the Caspian Sea) were those of Lieutenant-General Dmitri T. Kozlov's Transcaucasus Front consisting of the 44th and 47th armies (Stewart, 1988, pp.83). Kozlov's army was composed of the 6th Tank Division, 63rd (Georgian) Mountain Infantry Division, 76th (Armenian) Mountain Infantry Division, the 24th Cavalry Division, the 54th Tank Division, the 236th Infantry Division and a squadron of the 7th Independent Armored Train Battalion. The Soviets first struck into Pol Dasht, Azerbaijan in northwest Iran on the morning of August 25th with the 47th Army (Ward, 2009, pp.162) led by Major-General Vasily V. Novikov. Novikov led his assault with an overwhelming force of tanks towards Tabriz planning then to move towards Qazvin (Stewart, 1988, pp.83). Novikov's second objective was to capture Rezaieh (modern Urumiah) which would be used as a springboard to invade Iranian Kurdistan. There was also a thrust by Novikov towards Maku that would then cut off Iran from the Turkish frontier.

By August 26, Sheibani in Tabriz had decided to prevent the capture of Iran's outdated fighters by the incoming Soviets. Sheibani had also given his pilots the option of fleeing by car, but they all volunteered to fly their aircraft out of Tabriz with Sheibani (Ward, 2009, pp.165). Sheibani and his air-

men flew their aircraft towards Zanjan to their west where they landed to refuel. They then resumed their flight towards Tehran. Two of the planes crashed en-route, but their pilots did survive and arrived safely in Tehran. Sheibani and his pilots had managed to fly their aircraft out of Tabriz just in time as the Russian 44th army was pushing towards Zanjan from Astara which had just fallen to Soviet troops. Astara had been quickly captured as it was a port city very close to the Soviet border.

Gilan province was targeted by land and sea. The seaborne invasion was led by Rear-Admiral Sedelnikov's Soviet Caspian Sea Flotilla that was to escort freighters and tankers transporting troops and military equipment. This sailed from Baku towards Iran's northern coastline. As soon as the invasion began on August 25th, Sedelnikov split his fleet in two with one heading towards Astara and the other towards Bandar Anzali. Sedelnikov's force of six gunboats (one at 1000, three at 750 and two at 700 tons), four auxiliary escort patrol boats, numbers of torpedo boats, submarine chasers and small patrol craft (Stewart, 1988, pp.82) dwarfed the miniscule Iranian Caspian navy of three 30-ton gunboats (Sefid-rood, Gorgan, and Babolsar) and two other vessels (Shahsavari and Nahang) (Babaie, 2005a, pp.294; Yekranigian, 2005, pp.415). Concerns over possible Iranian air attacks led Sedelnikov to deploy three floating anti-aircraft platforms (Stewart, 1988, pp.82). Yekranigian also reports of an unspeci-

fied type of Soviet aircraft carrier which launched "hydro aviation" planes (Yekranigian, 2005, pp.415).

Sedelnikov's troops landing at Astara were quickly joined by the 44th army's tanks and motorized infantry advancing from the north. Soviet bombers had worked hard to support the Soviet drive into Gilan and northern Iran along the Caspian Sea by attacking Anzali, Rasht (Gilan's provincial capital) and Gilan province's army barracks. Soviet bombing resulted in the deaths of 200 civilians. In contrast to the easy capture of Astara, initial Soviet efforts to storm Bandar Anzali ran into strong resistance. The local regimental commander, General Iranpour, had deployed his forces into the dense forests along the beaches exactly where Soviet forces intended to land their forces. Captain Daftari of the Iranian navy sank a platform in front of the beach which blocked Soviet ships attempting to sail into Bandar Anzali's harbour. As the Iranians lacked coastal guns, Iranpour placed a battery of four 75mm guns to repel the Soviets at sea (Stewart, 1988, pp.149). The second Soviet flotilla from Baku (the first having already arrived at Astara) soon reached Anzali. The Baku ships were fired upon by two volleys of Iranpour's cannon. The Soviets responded by firing three ineffective salvos and then withdrew.

The efforts of the Soviet fleet continued to be stymied in their later attempts to land troops at Anzali due to a combination of the blocked harbor and Iranpour's artillery.

Iranpour had also ordered his troops to cease firing at Soviet ships whenever Soviet aircraft flew overhead. It is possible that Il-2 Sturmoviks had appeared as these were highly effective against strong ground targets. The Iranian refusal to fire at low flying Soviet aircraft prevented the Soviets from locating Iranpour's cannon for aerial bombardment. Soviet planes were also kept at bay by the effective firing of the machine guns and 47 mm guns of three Iranian gunboats operating in the harbor. While Ward (2009, pp.165) only identifies these ships as having machine guns only, Yekranigian (2005; pp.415) notes that these craft were also equipped with 47mm cannon. The weapons had apparently been modified for anti-aircraft use before the invasion. The 47mm cannon would have been effective against low-flying Soviet aircraft, including the Il-2 Sturmovik.

Soviet aerial assaults however proved far more successful the next day (August 26). Large (but unspecified) numbers of bombers (type unknown) in groups of four were sent all over Gilan on bombing missions. Their most successful strike was against a well-placed machine gun position at Ghazian (near Rasht) (Yekranigian, 2005, pp.421). Soviet bombers returned to continue the bombardment of Gilan the next day (August 27). Gilan's naval stations, military barracks and a rehabilitation center at Anzali were intensely bombed by Soviet aircraft. Resistance at Bandar Anzali and Rasht was finally overcome

by Soviet forces advancing by land. The following day (August 28) Soviet vessels were approached by an Iranian motorboat bearing a white flag to signal ceasefire orders that had been issued to Iranian forces (Babaie, 2005a, pp.294).

Despite specific ceasefire orders from Tehran, resistance in Gilan failed to cease upon the arrival of Soviet troops into Bandar Anzali. Just as a (unidentified type of) Soviet aircraft flew over Rasht to drop propaganda leaflets, it came under fire by the anti-aircraft guns of the city's 11th Division. The Soviets rapidly responded by dispatching bombers over the 11th Division's barracks killing 100 soldiers (Stewart, 1988, pp.179). This failed to break the resistance of the 11th division before the arrival of Soviet troops in Rasht. The soldiers of the 11th division left Rasht to disperse into Gilan's forests (some went as far as

Ramsar in neighbouring Mazandaran province); these had taken weapons and supplies from Rasht's armoury to continue their resistance (ibid).

b) Soviet invasion into north-east Iran (Khorasan province).

Iran's north eastern provinces (Khorasan and Gorgan) were invaded on August 27, 1941 by the 53rd Soviet Independent Central Asia Army (led by Lieutenant Sergei G. Trofimenko) crossing the Atrak River from Central Asia. Opposing the Soviet forces were Major-General Mohtashemi in command of six regiments (two infantry and two cavalry regiments stationed in Mashad, Khorasan's provincial capital, with another two Cavalry regiments stationed outside Mashad) (Yekranigian, 2005, pp.377). The widely dispersed 10th Division at Gorgan (commanded by Colonel

Motazedi) was less prepared against a Soviet invasion. As in Azerbaijan, Soviet air attacks played a vital role in supporting the Soviet advance.

Mashad's airport (notably the main hangar and other aerodrome structures) was attacked by Soviet bombers (type unknown) but these were repelled by highly concentrated anti-aircraft fire. Soviet bombers quickly returned and despite heavy Iranian anti-aircraft fire, destroyed a hangar (killing a number of crews) and more importantly bombed six of twenty-two Iranian aircraft parked on the ground (Stewart, 1988, pp.163). Having quickly gained air superiority, Trofimenko's bombers began to bomb Mohtashemi's strike forces at Mazduran, inflicting heavy losses, obliging these to pull back to Mashad. Elements of the 9th and 10th divisions attempted their best at resistance, but soon retreated towards Tehran for their last stand at the capital. Ceasefire orders on that same day (August 27) put an end to all military hostilities.

c) Soviet air operations after the ceasefire.

Despite strict orders for all Iranian land, naval and air forces to cease combat, certain elements of the Iranian air force and some land units (e.g. 11rd division from Rasht) refused to adhere to the ceasefire. One notable case reported by Colonel Hedayat Behzadi (Personal interview on March 15, 1998), is that of elements of Tabriz's 3rd division having set up a single anti-aircraft nest that fired for weeks at passing Soviet aircraft after the ceasefire; until the position was finally taken out by Soviet troops.

Another case of resistance against Soviet aircraft occurred when elements within the Iranian air force refused to comply with the ceasefire orders on August 30. At issue

were orders to not resist the impending arrival of Soviet paratroops at Tehran's Qaleh Morqhi 1st air regiment airbase (Babaie, 2005b, pp.67). The rebel airmen then arrested the chief of the air force, Brigadier-General Khosrovani. As the situation deteriorated, Brigadier-General Bozorjemehri gave orders for all of Tehran's anti-aircraft units to fire upon any aircraft taking off from Qaleh Morqhi; armoured units were also entrusted with breaking into the base and clearing it of all rebels. Two air force pilots (captains Vassiq and Shushtari) at Qaleh Morqhi succeeded in taking off with two Hawker Fury aircraft towards northern Iran (Babaie, 2005b, pp.68). As the Hawker Furies flew out of Tehran's airspace they were fired upon by anti-aircraft guns which inflicted no damage. Before escaping Tehran's airspace, the two aircraft strafed Iranian armoured columns that were about to storm the base. The aircraft arrived safely into northern Iran where they may have linked up with the aforementioned elements of Rasht's 11rd division. Eighteen days later (September 17, 1941) the two furies in northern Iran scrambled to intercept a flight package of five Soviet Polikarpov I-16 fighters flying along northern Iran's Caspian Sea shoreline. The I-16s shot down Vassiq's Hawker Fury, which crashed into the waters of the Caspian; Shishtari's aircraft was not destroyed during the air to air engagement but it ran out of fuel and crashed into the northern Iranian forests (Cooper & Bishop, 2000, pp.12-13). None of the Soviet I-16s suffered any damage during the engagement. Tehran's Qaleh Morqhi airbase came under total Russian control by late May 1942 when its Iranian military aircraft were transferred to Isfahan (Babaie, 2005b, pp.445).

to be continued



An Interview with

DR. CYRUS AMIRMOKRI

Attorney and Former Assistant Secretary for Financial Institutions at the U.S. Treasury Department

Dr. Shahrokh Ahkami

Can you share memories of your childhood in Iran?

I have many happy memories of my childhood in Iran in the late 1960s to late 1970s. I have particularly fond memories of my two wonderful grandmothers, Nezhat Asbaghi and Aliyeh Saba, who gave me and my sister, Mina, everything we ever wanted. Mina and I spent a lot of time with them, doing things ranging from playing cards to watching television – *MoradBarghi*, *Talkh o Sheereen*, *Deleeran-e Tangestan*, and *Daeijan Napoleon* were favorites – to visiting various parts of Tehran, whether it was a walk in one of Tehran’s parks, a stroll on a summer evening on Elizabeth Boulevard, or accompanying them as they went to the markets or to conduct business in central Tehran, navigating the taxis, buses, and sidewalks in the process.

My grandmothers had frequent and regular visitors. Practically every evening, a neighbor, close friend or relative would come to visit. Without fail, it seemed, my grandmothers would ask them to stay for dinner. The informality and spontaneity of social life in Iran is something I remember dearly.

Our parents were very involved in our upbringing, making sure that we were on time for school in the morning, that we properly had done our homework, and that we were engaged in sports and cultural activities. They took us to all kind of events, from the opera, to the symphony, to theater, and to football matches. Classical music was an important part of our upbringing. My father played the violin. He was a student of his uncle, Abolhasan Saba, and was himself very accomplished; I will never forget his performances of *zarde malije*, the song from Gilan that Saba had arranged for violin. Of course, I liked all kinds of music, particularly traditional Persian music – from Saba, Banan,

Hossein Tehrani, and Jalil Shahnaz, to Badizadeh and others. Our parents also showed us the world, taking us with them on practically every trip they took abroad.

Persian culinary culture is magical, and it certainly forms a part of my childhood memories. Which Iranian doesn’t have a love for chelo kabab, loobiya polo, fesenjoon, or ghormehsabzi? Some of my fondest memories, though, were getting up early to go to the barbari or sangak store and to watch the master bakers work the dough into the special shapes and textures that would yield bread that I could not resist eating on the walk back. And then there was the fragrant fruit of Iran. I will never forget eating straight from the persimmon and white mulberry trees in my grandmothers’ homes. Who can forget oranges from Shahsavari, pears from Natanz, grapes from Quchan and Urumiyeh, sweet lemons from Shiraz? I have only rarely experienced the fragrance and taste of Iran’s fruits elsewhere.

Do you have memories of your schooling?

I do indeed, and they are very happy memories of our school, Iranzamin, with all the great, dedicated teachers from Iran and those who came from abroad to teach in Iran. Early on, the school was on Seemetree Street, but we later moved to a campus in Shahrak-e Gharb. Iranzamin was a world-class school that followed the International Baccalaureate curriculum. I am always grateful to Richard Irvine, the headmaster, Hykondokht Sahakian, and others who worked hard with him to create the school and to make it thrive. So many of the friendships I had at Iranzamin continue to this day. Of course, no statement about my education would be complete without mentioning my weekly piano lessons with the great composer, Emanuel Melik Aslanian. I am very grateful to have

had the opportunity to learn from him.

You spent time also in Tehran how did you feel about it?

I spent most of my formative childhood years in Tehran. I remember everyone in the older generations at that time complaining that Tehran had become noisy, crowded, and beset with traffic jams. They would recount the days when you could go hours without seeing a car in the streets. But I have fond memories of the cosmopolitan, crowded Tehran. I remember playing football, sometimes in the streets, with kids from the neighborhood. We often used bricks to delineate the goals. After hours of playing, we would go to local fruit juice and ice cream stores for *faloudeh* and *bastani* (Persian ice cream). There was so much else that was special about Tehran: the parks; the historic neighborhoods; institutions like Talar-e Roodaki and Bagh-e Ferdows, which would host classical music concerts featuring great Iranian artists like Farhad Meshkat, Heshmat and Farshad Sanjari, Loris Tcheknavorian, and Ali Forough; football matches at Amjadiyyeh, and the passion behind Team Melli and great players like Hejazi, Parvin, Gheleechkhani, Shirzadegan, Mustafa Arab, Ashtiyani, Kashani, Andranik, Jabbari, Karo, Iranpak, and Rowshan; buying football gear at Mahallati or Jeddikar; hanging out at the bookstores across the street from Tehran University; experiencing the carpet dealers of Ferdowsi street with my parents; or going to Shahreza confectionary for pastries, or to Andre or Moby Dick for a sandwich. You could find everything in Tehran.

Finally, I have fond memories of traveling in Iran. I was fortunate to see the great cities of Isfahan, Shiraz, Mashhad, Toos, and Rasht. Our most frequent destination was the spectacular green expanse



of Mazandaran and the Caspian coast. I still think the road from Karaj to Chaloo is one of the most beautiful roads I have seen. Iran is a beautiful country. Unfortunately, there is much of Iran that I haven't seen and long to see, from the valleys of Kurdistan and Luristan, to the ancient settlements of Shushtar, Dezful, Bishapur, and Firuzabad, to the waters of the Persian Gulf and up to the cities of Kerman and Yazd, to my grandparents' native lands of Ardebil, Na'in, Kashan, and Mahabad.

What impact did permanently leaving Iran have on you and did you face challenges as an immigrant?

I remember very well the day we left Tehran for the final time. We went to the bus station in northwest Tehran (just off of the autobahn that went to Karaj), boarded a bus, which drove through Qazvin, Zanjan, Tabriz, and Maku to finally arrive at Bazargan. From Bazargan, we drove to Erzurum. Turkey was under martial law in those days after a coup d'état. We stayed a few days in Erzurum and then went to Istanbul for another couple of days. Eventually, we went to Andalucia (to a small town near Malaga) to spend a school year in Spain. A number Iranzamin teachers and students came to the same school in Spain, and so although it was difficult to be away from our parents, we were lucky to be surrounded by many friends and acquaintances, and to have the support system created by that small and wonderful community.

Mina and I finally came to the United States in the summer of 1981, a few months after the end of the hostage crisis. We enrolled at a boarding school called Wayland Academy, in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. Again, we missed our parents very

much. But the Wayland community did everything it could to make us feel welcome, and so the adjustment became much easier to manage. Beaver Dam is an idyllic town in south central Wisconsin, and the serenity and quiet that it offered was an ideal setting for us to adjust to these major changes in our lives, particularly distance from our parents.

Tell our readers about your education in the US.

I studied at Wayland Academy for one year, and then went to Cambridge, Massachusetts for four years, where I attended Harvard College. At Harvard, I majored in biochemistry. But I was very interested in politics and history from the beginning. In addition to courses that we had to take outside of our major as part of the core curriculum, I took most all of my elective courses outside of my major, in areas such as government, history, international relations, and philosophy. During this time period, I also tried to continue to cultivate my interest in Iranian history and literature, both classical and contemporary. I was part of a small group of about five or six Iranian students who attended Harvard College, the Harvard Kennedy School, and MIT who became very friendly and would try to meet every week for a meal. We would typically talk about Iranian history and literature.

In my final year of college, I decided that I wanted to learn more about the history of the Middle East. So I applied to attend graduate school in history at the University of Chicago. In the meantime, while I was in college, my parents had settled in Chicago, so going to Chicago was also a chance to regain some of the lost years with them. In graduate school, my main fields of study were US diplomatic history, modern Middle Eastern history, and Islamic thought, though I would attend courses in other areas, particularly European intellectual history and philosophy. I ended up writing a dissertation on modern Iranian history, focusing on certain political and intellectual currents centered on the constitutional revolution (mashrutiyat). I had become very interested in the question of how, in the beginning of the 20th Century, Asian societies were trying to counter colonial power by building institutions designed around political and legal ideas borrowed from western constitutional traditions. For example, within a matter of a few years,

China, Russia, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire ended up constitutions, parliaments, and the ideas of limited government and rule of law. So, my focus was Iran in the late 19th century and the first few decades of the 20th century.

All in all, I have been very fortunate to receive a great education and to have been taught by great minds, and I am forever indebted to all of them. You can never thank your teachers enough. Their impact is far greater than what you read and discuss in class.

What made you decide to study law after a doctorate in history?

In graduate school, I had become interested in understanding the constitutional experiments of the 19th and early 20th centuries in Europe and Asia. I felt, however, that I was only appreciating these complex phenomena through the prism of a historian and that the view of a lawyer would add to my understanding. In addition, if you recall, the 'iron curtain' had just fallen and there was a lot of interesting activity taking place in the former communist countries, as those societies began putting together constitutions and new political systems. The University of Chicago Law School had established a center called the Center for the Study of Constitutionalism in Eastern Europe, and I was interested in getting involved in its activities, which consisted of studying the political, legal, and economic developments in Eastern Europe. It was a chance to witness constitutional debates and market reform as they were taking place. It was fascinating to spend time with political figures and delegates from Eastern Europe, and to witness in real time how they were grappling with significant challenges of transition from one political and economic system to another. Many years later, looking back, you see the very different journeys each of those societies has taken, so far with very different results.

Can you share your experiences as an attorney?

I started practicing law in Chicago at Skadden in 1995. I was assigned to the litigation department and starting working on cases involving both private and public law. For example, I was assigned to help with cases in which we had been

retained to defend companies in actions brought under the federal securities laws and in cases in which we defended public agencies in cases brought under the civil rights statutes. I was also assigned to help out on a couple of cases where we represented death row inmates on a pro bono basis. These cases all gave me invaluable experience and perspective.

In 1998, I left Skadden to work as a law clerk for Judge Bruce Selya of the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. The clerkship with Judge Selya lasted one year and is one of the most memorable years of my life. Although the Court of Appeals sat principally in Boston, Judge Selya's chambers are in Providence, Rhode Island, so I lived in Providence for the clerkship year. Judge Selya has not only been a major influence on my professional and intellectual career, but my wife and I asked that he be the officiant at our wedding, and he honored us by marrying us.

After the year with Judge Selya, I returned to Skadden, but to its New York office. I spent almost a decade there working on antitrust and securities cases, primarily representing clients in the financial services industry. Without question, my experience at Skadden helped tremendously to prepare me for performing my duties as a government official.

What role did you play in establishing the Iranian-American Bar Association?

I was an early supporter of the idea of forming the association. Around the year 2000, a number of friends, including Babak Hoghooghi, Shahrokh Babayi, Hourii Khalilian, and others had proposed the idea of putting together a bar association for Iranian-Americans. I thought it was a good idea because it was a vehicle to bring together Iranian-Americans in the field of law and to give them a forum in which to share experiences and ideas. It was also a platform to help them solve problems together, including issues of broad interest to the Iranian-American community. During those initial conversations around forming the organization, I thought about Alexis de Tocqueville's observations in his book *Democracy in America* about how private associations flourish in the United States and strengthen American democracy by encouraging civic action. So, one of the reasons I believed it was important to support the organization was not because it

was a vehicle toward achieving any particular goal, but because the existence of the institution, in itself, was the goal. The rule of law is essential to a well-ordered society, and it needs organizations that are dedicated to preserving it regardless of what the issue of the day happens to be.

What actions did this organization take to preserve the rights of Iranian-Americans?

The organization is now in its 15th year and has matured remarkably. I am very proud of what it has become, and the excellent work that has been done by talented young attorneys who have become involved after my tenure on the board of directors many years ago. Most of the organization's contributions have been educational, as the members of the organization have focused on making different stakeholders, including both individuals, businesses, and government officials, aware of their legal rights and obligations. The issues the organization works on change with time. So, for example, in the early days, particularly after the tragedy of September 11, the organization was very active in trying to make the Iranian-American community aware of their rights, particularly in the area of immigration law, which was rapidly changing. On one occasion, the Iranian-American Bar Association did an investigative report of allegedly illegal detentions of legal Iranian immigrants. The organization spent substantial resources trying to ascertain the facts and to submit a credible report to the public and to the authorities. The report was cited on a number of occasions, including by public officials, as a basis for making common sense changes to immigration detention practices and facilities. The organization was also asked to brief congressional staff on these immigration issues.

During the time I was directly involved with the Association, the most pressing matters were immigration issues. After my involvement, economic sanctions and their impact on Iranian-Americans became pressing. Therefore, more recently, the organization naturally has been active in its educational and legal programs on this and other issues.

How did you decide to leave your practice of law and join the government, and eventually the US Treasury?

Sometime in the late summer/early autumn of 2008, I was asked to help with the policy side of then-Senator Obama's presidential campaign. That time period coincided with the beginning of the acute phase of the financial crisis. My work centered on issues relating to the financial crisis. After the election victory, I was asked to join the transition team. My responsibilities on the transition team were twofold: to help with a review of one of the financial regulatory agencies and then to help work on financial regulatory reform. A couple of months after my transition duties ended, I got a call from the chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission to join as a senior advisor. It was a unique time in the history of the country. I was a private citizen who, particularly as a first generation immigrant, wanted to give back to my adopted country. So, after some deliberation with close friends and family, I decided to leave my law practice – where I had the good fortune of practicing with excellent lawyers and some of my very close friends – and to join the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

I spent about a year and a half at the Commission. It was a very memorable time, not just because it coincided with the passage of the Dodd-Frank legislation and the work we did on that and on regulatory issues, generally, but also because of the privilege of working with fantastic colleagues at the agency and because it was all in the service of the public. There is no privilege greater than working for the public and to try to make people's lives better.

Talk about your Treasury confirmation process, including the hearing, and what you were feeling.

I feel extremely privileged to have been nominated by President Obama to serve as Assistant Secretary for Financial Institutions at a sensitive time in the financial history of the United States. I will always be grateful to Secretary Geithner for recommending me to the President, giving me the opportunity to work with him and with a superb senior team and career professionals at Treasury. Looking back on the hearing, I think what I actually stated at the hearing captures exactly what I was feeling. I was, and remain, extremely grateful to my parents for their incredible sacrifices and making every-

thing possible. My parents were about my current age when they left Iran. I cannot imagine leaving my entire life behind today and immigrating to another country to build a life from scratch and to support two children. What they and other Iranian parents did is nothing short of exceptional. I was also grateful to live in the United States, where I had been blessed with opportunity after opportunity, and with the goodwill of friends and colleagues at university and in my professional career. It was very meaningful to me that an Iranian-American could be nominated for a position requiring Senate confirmation. I was not the first Iranian-American to be nominated or confirmed. But my situation showed once again that Iranian-Americans are both eager to help their adopted country and that the US is glad to receive their help and insight. It is a strong sign that we have done well in our collective quest to assimilate and to contribute to the country that has welcomed us.

Can you tell us about your work at the CFTC and Treasury?

My work at both agencies centered on designing financial reform and repairing the damage done by the financial crisis. At the CFTC, my focus was on the passage of the Dodd-Frank legislation and implementing the rules assigned to the CFTC. My role at Treasury included working with all of the financial regulatory agencies to help complete the process of financial reform. This work ranged from adopting measures to improve the safety and soundness of banks, to implementing consumer protection rules, to reforming practices in financial markets. I focused on a number of other things at Treasury, too. For example, I was responsible for an office dedicated to protecting critical infrastructure in the financial services sector, which included protecting from natural and man-made disasters. Cybersecurity, for example, fell into this category. I was also responsible for administering portfolios of investments, loans and grants designed to help small business and distressed neighborhoods. I remember visiting projects ranging from supermarkets to urban farms to schools to health clinics that our programs had made possible. No experience in government surpassed the feeling of seeing that government programs can actually help distressed communities begin to develop sustainable economic activity.

What made you decide to leave the Treasury?

I had served in government for over five years. I had enjoyed every moment of it and, in many ways, I could continue that forever. But I left for two basic reasons, one philosophical and one personal.

The philosophical reason begins with a very important principle in our government, and that is the separation of the individual from the office. Whereas the office stays, the individual must change. Individuals are only temporary custodians of the office. That was the lesson George Washington, America's greatest president, imparted to the American Republic when, rather than attempting to become king, he decided that after two terms as president he would return to a quiet life on his farm as a private citizen and that it was time for someone else to be president. That is the example we all should emulate. The principle that the custodianship of office ends applies to every senior officeholder in the United States government. So, it was only a question of precise timing.

In my case, the precise timing of leaving Treasury was guided largely by personal considerations, particularly the loss of my father. The essence of it was that I needed to spend more time with my family after a relatively long, intense period of public service and law practice.

In the early years of this magazine, you authored a number of articles about Iranian history and culture, please tell us about your past research in this area.

*Your body is away from me
but there is a window open
from my heart to yours.
From this window,
like the moon
I keep sending news secretly.*

Rumi

You are very kind to say that. Persian Heritage was very kind to publish my work. My academic interests were several. First, I was interested in how Iran, and other Asian countries, interpreted, imported and then implemented western-based concepts of government, such as parliamentary government, separation of powers, and individual rights. I tried to understand this phenomenon against the backdrop of existing political culture. Iran's political culture, for example, drew from many traditions, including philosophies of rule based on the "mirrors for princes" literature, written by the likes of Nizam al-Mulk and the letter of Malik-e Ashtar. There are other important works, of course, such as Akhlaq-e Nasserī by Nasir al-Din Tusi and Soluk al-Muluk by Fazlollah ibn Ruzbehān.

A second, related, area of interest has been the centuries-long debate around reconciling faith and reason, and the influence of Platonism and mysticism in Iranian and Islamic culture. These are particularly important areas of Islamic thought, where philosophers and theologians attempted a reconciliation of the Greek tradition with revelation, and where Greek/Hellenic thought, particularly that of Plotinus, has manifested itself in different ways in the mystic and poetic tradition of Iran. I spent some time studying these issues with Professor Fazlur Rahman, as we read together works such as Shafa by Avicenna (Shafa), Tahafot al-Falasefe by Ghazzali, and al-Asfar al-Arba'a by Mulla Sadra. The influence of some of these issues was reflected in the 19th and 20th centuries, as well, with the phenomenon of Islamic modernism.

A third area of interest was Persian poetry and letters, and understanding them both as social commentary and philosophical statement. On the philosophical side, related to some of the philosophical works I mentioned previously, I was interested in understanding the Platonic and mystical influences in the works of poets such as Attar and Mowlana. More generally, I studied both classical and contemporary works, ranging from the likes of Bayhaqi, Sana'i, Mas'ud Sa'd Salman, Khaqani, Ferdowsi, and Nizami to writers and poets of the post-Mongol era such as Khajeh Rashid al-Din, Juvayni, Hafez, and Sa'di, to poets of the sabk-e Hendi and after such as Sa'ib and Qa'ani, and finally to the likes of 20th century figures such as Jamalzadeh, Hedayat, Bahar, Iraj, Naderpur, Forough, Golshiri, and

Akhavan-e Sales. Of course, these are only a few representatives of the great Persian literary tradition.

What influence have your parents had on your life?

Words will undoubtedly fail me here. My parents have been a constant influence, both through their unequivocal, unconditional, and unfailing support, and through their judicious and constructive criticism. They have always taken a great interest in everything my sister and I have done. They have been involved without being overbearing, enlightening without being condescending, and they have given us enough latitude to experiment and to make mistakes. I can never thank them enough.

With your background in culture, history, and politics, do you have any thoughts or advice for young Iranian-Americans, or, more generally, young Iranians in the diaspora?

I think what I have to impart is probably what they have heard from their own parents, friends, and elders. You should take their studies seriously, but also appreciate the people and the world around you. School is a lot, but not everything. Also we should not take ourselves too seriously. We are humans and, therefore, highly imperfect. Others have a lot to offer and we should listen. You should also pursue what you are passionate about. You have a chance at excelling in an area where you have passion; but if you are not passionate about your work, it is unlikely that you will excel at it.

Another important thing is to find ways of giving back to the community. This can occur in many different ways, beginning with working with local charities, to civic organizations or local government, to national government. But you don't have to be the President of the United States to make a positive difference.

The point is to do something to make other people's lives better, and that is a responsibility that attaches to all of us who have been lucky enough to do well, and it can be done in many legitimate ways. Finally, make sure to find time to spend with loved ones and family. You will not get a second chance to do so.

Imperial Persian Tent in Cleveland Museum



The tent, a legacy of the 19th-century Qajar Dynasty, is inscribed with the name of Muhammad Shah, who ruled from 1834 to 1848 over a territory slightly larger than present-day Iran that stretched into portions of present-day Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Art handlers at the Cleveland Museum of Art rigged a temporary installation of the museum's newly acquired 19th-century Persian imperial tent in the museum's textiles storage area for study.

The circular tent measures roughly 12 feet high and 13 feet in diameter, and is made of wool embroidered with silk, flowers, vines and exotic birds.

When viewed from inside the tent, the embroidered panels create the effect of being enveloped in a warm and cozy paradise garden.

The tent's entire roof of faded red cloth is intact, and it has retained seven of the 14 side panels that once served as a circumferential wall. It features a flounced rim with characteristic diagonal stripes of color.

