

# Peyk



Persian Cultural Center's Bilingual Magazine  
P.O. Box 500914, San Diego CA 92150

# 171

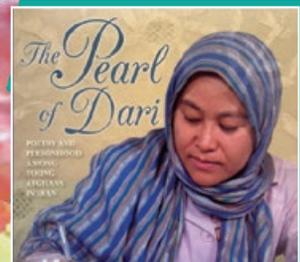
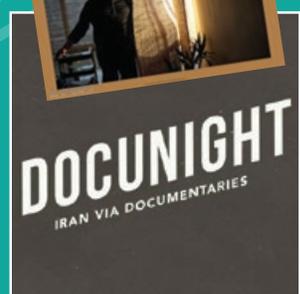
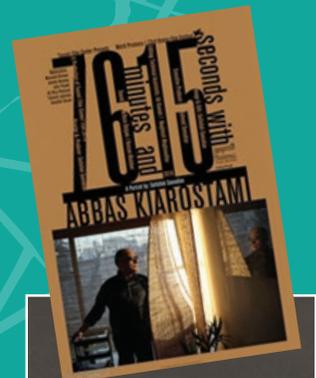
September- October 2017  
Vol. XXVI No. 171  
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## CELEBRATIONS OF ISSD'S 30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

# 30

30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

- **OMG Celebrate Success**
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- **The Pearl of Dari**
- **Diversity in the Courtroom:**  
The Honorable Tamila Ebrahimi Ipema
- **Vitamin E** and its antioxidant properties
- **Noosh-e- Jan**
- **How Serious is Pink Eye?**
- **Original Work**
- **How Did I Get Here?**



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By: Shahri Estakhry



## OMG Celebrate Success

OMG indeed! Thirty years has passed and because of what we did then, today, we are a strong and a capable community and globally second to none.

Thirty years ago we started a community school and called it the Iranian School of San Diego (ISSD). This school became the center of our community and grew from 70 students annually to what we have today – over 250 students. Around 2,000 of the young members of our community have attended this school on weekends and have learned the language and many cultural aspects of their heritage.

The school started on the whimsical thought that my daughter, Sarah, would learn how to read and write in order to be able to communicate with her grandparents. Little did I know there were so many within our community that had similar wishes and were willing to make this a priority... and hats off to the parents that did so! Thus began the journey to what we have today, a success story for our community. ISSD became and is the jewel upon which our community in San Diego grew.

Soon after ISSD was established, the Persian Cultural Center was created and registered as a non-profit organization and the school became an entity of the Center. Through ISSD and for the benefit of our children and community, we have proven that together we can accomplish great success with multiple generations. It was the responsibility of my generation to make certain that future generations in the US were aware of the rich and historical heritage from which they came.

Today, the school is recognized by the San Diego Office of Education and given accreditation for the language they teach so that students can receive school credit for their second language requirements.

To Mr. Sadr, ISSD faculty and staff, parents and students I have met over these past 30 years, each of you have had a share in the success of ISSD and our community. Profound gratitude and a special thank you from me personally. While there is always room for improvement, you all have succeeded beyond all my expectations. I would like to offer warm and sincere congratulations to all of you. The community looks forward to celebrations of ISSD's 30th Anniversary throughout the academic year ahead. Wishing you another successful year.

**CONGRATULATIONS ISSD AND THANK YOU ALL!**

### Persian Cultural Center's Bilingual Magazine

Is a bi - monthly publication organized for literary, cultural and information purposes

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#### Persian Cultural Center

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www.pccsd.org

#### September-October 2017

##### Vol. XXVI

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Persian Cultural Center

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## PCC NEWS



### Jong-e Farhangi Report

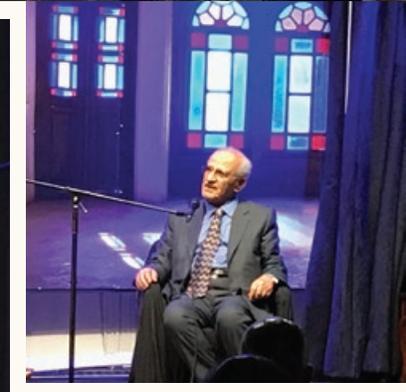
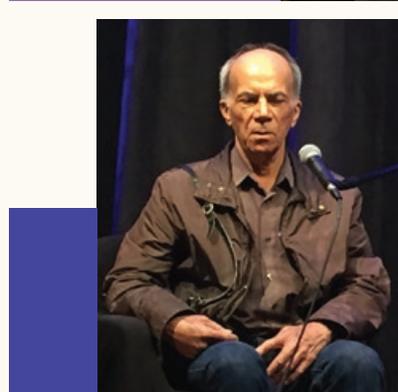
Jong-e Farhangi is a cultural variety show that has been a monthly program held at the Iranian American Center ("IAC") for almost three years. It took some time for Jong to find its own audience but it did so and now has a substantial following. Jong emphasizes arts and culture. The program's guests use Jong's platform to share their views on a variety of subjects in an interactional style with an always eager and participatory audience. Jong-e Farhangi is held on the second Friday night of each month.

### Jong-e Farhangi- July 14, 2017

The July program, hosted by Reza Khabazian, featured two guests: Dr. Hengameh Motaghd, psychologist, discussing marriage in Iran's cultures. The second guest was a young photographer, Kamelia Vahneshan, who talked about her photography experiences in Iran and her new book "Iran Extravaganza."

### Jong-e Farhangi- August 11, 2017

The August program, hosted by Ali Sadr, featured three guests. The first was Iranian poet and literary critic, Majid Nafisi, who discussed prison art, and specifically romantic literature and letters. The second guest was actor and director, San Diego's own Mahmoud Behrouzian. He talked about his education and experiences in theater and movie production and his decision to produce play readings. The last guest of the evening was guitarist Siavash Rahmani. He played his own compositions for the audience, accompanied at times with vocals.



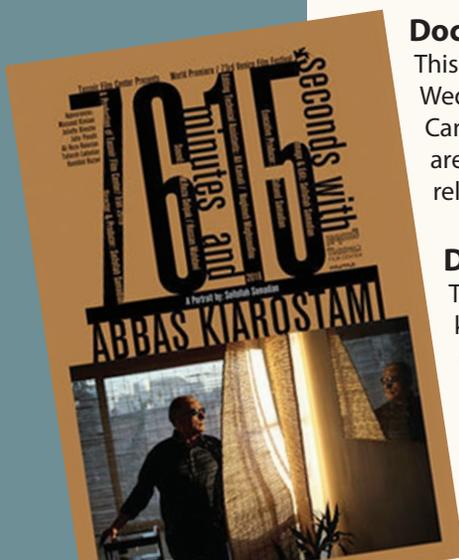
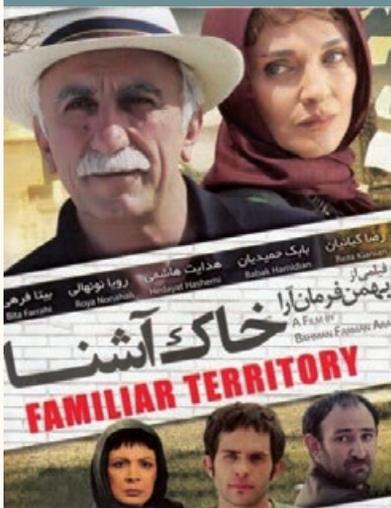


### Writing Workshop by Hossein Mortezaeian Abkenar- July 22- 23, 2017

Mr. Abkenar, in collaboration with PCC, held the second series of the Abkenar Writing Workshop at IAC.

### Movie and Discussion, August 4, 2017

The San Diego film club reviewed the movie by Bahman Farmanara called "Familiar Territory." This movie was made in 2007 but was not screened for 2 years and finally released in 2009. In the opening of the movie we have an introduction by Ali Pirouzian. The program was followed by discussions about the movie. This movie has achieved accolades for best director; best musical score; best sound mix and best editing.



### Docunight

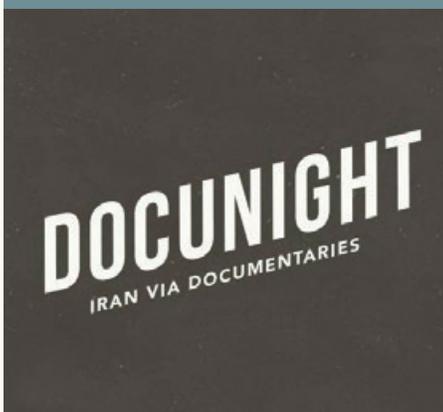
This is a national program, taking place on the first Wednesday of each month over 22 cities in the US and Canada, showing renowned documentaries. The films are either made by Iranian directors or have subjects related to Iran

### Docunight, July 5, 2017

The movie "76 minutes & 15 seconds with Abbas Kiarostami" directed by Seifolah Samadian, on the occasion of the anniversary of Kia Rostami's passing. Samadian, who was a long-time collaborator with Kiarostami has created this touching movie from behind the scenes footage of the director's works.

### Docunight, August 2, 2017

The documentary for the month of August was "Scenes from a Divorce" which was collaboration of Shireen BARGnoor and Mahmoud Reza Jahanpanah. This film was a winner of best documentary at the Afghanistan International Film Festival (2016).



### Scenes from a Divorce

Directed by Shirin Barghnavard & Mohammad Reza Jahanpanah

2016 / 73 min

Persian with English Subtitles

### PCC's Board Meetings

Persian Cultural Center's board of directors holds its meetings every second Wednesday of the month at IAC. The July meeting took place on July 12th and the August meeting on August 9th.



# *The Pearl of Dari:* Charting a New Terrain in Persian Literary History

Olszewska, Zuzanna. *The Pearl of Dari: Poetry and Personhood Among Young Afghans in Iran*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015, 264 pp., ISBN 978-0253017604.

Smile;  
the world is to your liking.  
Neither the anguish of tresses covered by a burka  
nor the kohl of sorrow darkening your moon,  
nor exile  
inside the territory of an unknown man's chest.  
You were created  
to be eternal  
by the great hands of a  
feverish and impassioned love,  
free from the sorrow of forgetting.  
Your smile  
is the rhythmic waves of which song  
that has crossed even the oceans,  
without a minute of change?  
Mona Lisa,  
when you smile,  
the world is overcome with a mist of forgetting

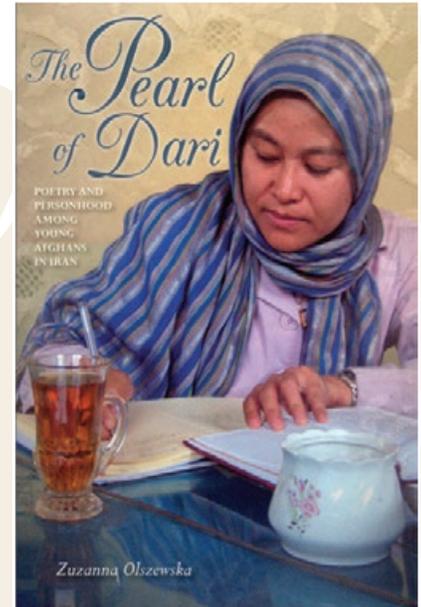
Rahimeh Mirza'i

Translated by Zuzanna Olszewska

*The Pearl of Dari* is about poetry and personhood, examining how people make themselves through the personal and social practice of poetry. It shows how the inner workings of personhood become legible within the formal and aesthetic norms and history of a particular literary tradition. In *The Pearl of Dari*, Zuzanna Olszewska, a professor in social anthropology and literary translator at Oxford, takes us into a community of Persian-speaking Afghan poets who reside in Mashhad, Iran. Most of these poets, or their families, escaped their homeland following the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Dr. Olszewska makes intelligent and timely contributions to such fields as sociology of literature, cultural refugee studies, ethnolinguistics, and literary translation. She successfully puts different fields of study into conversation with one another while remaining attentive to the historical and aesthetic nuances of Persian poetry. That is why *The Pearl of Dari* charts a new terrain in the writing of Persian literary history.

Before delving into the qualities that distinguish this book from most other Persian literary studies, let us better understand Olszewska's main case study: the *Dorr-e Dari Cultural Institute*. Its members mostly consist of Afghans—but also sometimes Iranians—who come from different ethnic (mostly Hazara), religious (mostly Shi'a), professional, and generational backgrounds. Olszewska's study revolves around the *Dorr-e Dari Cultural Institute* and the changing relations between its audiences, poets, and literary patrons. The Cultural Institute publishes a quality literary journal called *Khatt-e sevom (Third Script)* and regularly

لبخند بزن  
جهان به کام تو است  
نه پریشانی گیسویی که برقع ای بیوشاندش  
نه سرمه اندوهی که ماهت را بتاراند  
و نه غربتی  
در جغرافیای سینه مردی مجهول  
تو آفریده شدی  
جاودانه  
در دست های بزرگ عشقی  
تبدار و ملتهب  
بی غم فراموشی  
لبخند تو  
امواج موزون کدام ترانه است  
که از اقیانوس ها هم گذر کرده است  
بدون دقیقه ای تغییر  
مونالیزا  
لبخند که می زنی  
مهی از فراموشی جهان را فرا می گیری



organizes literary and social events in Mashhad. Such members as Mohammad Kazem Kazemi (*Peyk* 140) and Seyyed Abu Taleb Mozaffari are widely known among the Iranian literati while others are relatively unknown. That *The Pearl of Dari* deals with a particular community of poets within a well-defined historical context (primarily 1988 through present) allows it to speak more broadly about how practitioners of contemporary Persian poetry themselves define their place in its history, rethink the figure of the poet in relation to their changing society and, more importantly, use Persian poetry as a prominent form of cultural currency in Iran to secure a more stable social position in their new home.

In order to better understand how the book departs from most general histories of Persian poetry, we need to discuss what it is designed *not* to do. *The Pearl of Dari* is not concerned with what monarch holds the seat of power or the length of his reign. Of course, that does not mean there is no discussion of politics. We read about the impact of particular policies (primarily regarding public education) on Afghan residents in Iran, but only to the extent that they pertain to our community of poets. The author of *The Pearl of Dari* does not showcase a body of poems that accords to a constructed political narrative about the rise and fall of a certain dynasty. In this vein, the book is not concerned with periodizing Persian poetry in accordance with events of political import. Organizing the literary production of different time periods in clusters of oft-used themes, trends, and metaphors wrapped in a historical timeframe (e.g., *Persian Poetry from the Constitutional*

*Revolution to the Fall of the Qajar Dynasty*) has become the hallmark of the genre of *tarikh-e adabiyat* (literary history) in Iran. In this book, we can still identify major literary shifts, such as the disillusionment many Afghan intellectuals felt after their resistance against the Soviets led to a damaging “Civil War” (1992-1996). But what Dr. Olszewska opts not to do is present two literary episodes that neatly begin and end with the Soviet occupation. Instead, we learn that the ways in which Afghan poets have responded to such an event of transnational magnitude are too aesthetically and thematically varied to coalesce into a single time-stamped literary discourse.

In *The Pearl of Dari*, we witness literary history as it is imagined from within a community of Persian-language poets in the marginalized neighborhoods of Mashhad. In the chapter entitled “The Social Lives of Poets and Poetry,” we get a sense of how Afghan poets present and critique their poems at poetry workshops. They debate over whether or not a certain poetic image works in relation to the poem’s form, tone, and semantics. In such sessions, participants at times go on tangents. We see how the moderator tactfully attempts to rein in the participants in order to leave the poet with clear and constructive feedback. In this chapter, we do not encounter Persian poetry as a constructed “cultural treasure” claimed by this or that nation state. Here, Persian poetry is a living and breathing tradition in the hands of poets who practice it from day to day. And the millennial history of this poetic tradition ties Rudaki Samarqandi (d. 941) all the way to Seyyed Abu Taleb Mozaffari (b. 1965), the leading Afghan poet in Mashhad.

Throughout her study, Dr. Olszewska identifies and unpacks certain “dualities, tensions, and contradictions, both in the way personhood is conceived by cultural representation and analysis, and in the way it is experienced by Afghan refugees in Iran” (210). Persian poetry itself is perhaps as much the source of tension and as it is the source of social visibility. Being a refugee places the poets of *Dorr-e Dari* in a deeply melancholic and ambivalent position wherein they are neither entirely Afghan nor Iranian. “The shared literary heritage of Afghans and Iranians,” Olszewska writes, “is perhaps the sole refuge that allows such split selves to feel whole again, as well as providing a modicum of prestige and material comfort” (33). This prestige is afforded to Afghan poets in Iran largely on the erroneous premise that they are participating in the creation of an “Iranian art form” or, more mildly put, in an art form that *only* Iranians have mastered and safeguarded. It is against this backdrop that Afghan poets in Iran are participants in a literary enterprise that both affords them social opportunities (such as literary festivals and awards won by many Afghan writers) and marginalizes them at the same time.

In our past issues, we have treated the ongoing process through which Persian as a transnational literary tradition became identified as the cultural heritage of the nation-state of Iran (*Peyk* 162, 164, 165, 170). In many ways, exiled Afghan poets are quite at home. After all, Persian poetry never had a singular home in

this or that dynastic court or circle. It has been the cultural capital of many ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities. But as Dr. Olszewska shows us, to be a poet also requires navigating the politics and poetics of literary institutions, the gatekeepers of “good taste.” In *The Pearl of Dari*, we learn that many Afghan poets have become adept at delivering what will likely appeal to an Iranian audience or an Iranian literary institution. It is precisely at this juncture when the book conveys one of its most compelling and timely ideas: literary taste is tied to ideology and power even as it may pass as natural and automated within a certain community. Our aesthetic values are mediated by such powerful institutions as faculties of letters, literary journals, and publishing agencies. It is vital to critically study the history and ethos of such institutions and their literary authority.

Literary criticism in Iran is largely understood as an evaluative enterprise; critics deem it their task to tell readers who is a “master” poet, who is mediocre, and who composes contrived and unimaginative poetry. Unsurprisingly, Persian literary critics are understood to be arbiters of taste. In *The Pearl of Dari*, there is no authoritative yardstick for what is (and isn’t) good poetry, what is (and isn’t) love poetry. Dr. Olszewska asks a different set of questions, such as: how do the poets of *Dorr-e Dari* make their ideal of love, a loaded symbol in Persian poetry, legible in the context of Afghan refugee marriage practices. In the chapter entitled “Modern Love: Poetry, Companionate Marriage, and Recrafting the Self,” we see how poets negotiate the boundaries of what is an acceptable expression of love. With so many Afghan poets and writers active on social media, these debates no longer only take place in poetry workshops.

*The Pearl of Dari* succeeds in unpacking how a community of exiled Afghan intellectuals in Iran use Persian poetry as a vehicle to imagine and create their personhood in a new land that embraces and rejects them all at the same time. It succeeds in doing justice to its main subject of study—poetry—where many general histories of Persian poetry sorely fail in capturing our imagination by subjugating poetry to a political narrative. *The Pearl of Dari* also shows that Iran’s literary productivity may not be summed up only by Tehran, the country’s indisputable literary hub. And it does so by taking us to a community of Afghan poets who reside on the margins of Mashhad, a literary center of its own merit. As it concerns the writing of literary history in Iran—a new yet prolific genre—this is a crucial lesson to take away from *The Pearl of Dari*: if Iranian guardians of Persian poetry are to move along with the forces of this millennial tradition, they can no longer afford to remain blindsided by the unimaginative and exclusionary aspects of their literary institutes, for that is a marginality of an entirely different kind.



You may reach Aria via [ariafani@berkeley.edu](mailto:ariafani@berkeley.edu)



# Diversity in the Courtroom: The Honorable Tamila Ebrahimi Ipema

By Leily Rezvani



With a passion for protecting people's human rights, the Honorable Tamila Ebrahimi Ipema has dedicated her career to serving the underserved both inside and outside of the courtroom. At the age of 21, Judge Ipema moved to the United States after receiving a Bachelor of Arts in English from Damavand College in Tehran. Upon moving to the United States, Judge Ipema continued her studies at the University of Louisville and Georgetown University. She then began her career in the legal field by working for both nonprofit and for-profit organizations—as the owner of a private practice, a prosecutor for the United States Department of Justice, a judicial researcher and supervising attorney for the Los Angeles Superior Court, a superior court commissioner for both Los Angeles and San Diego Superior Courts, as well as a judge of the San Diego Superior Court. For twelve years, she has served on the bench as a judicial officer for the California Superior Court. Judge Ipema runs programs mentoring students and training incarcerated women to be reintegrated into society as contributing members. In 2013, Judge Ipema received the National Association of Women Judges' Mattie Belle Davis Award for helping the association's mission of "Access to Justice for All." In 2015, she received the Lawyers Club of San Diego's "International Woman of Color" award. Additionally, Judge Ipema received "The Outstanding Jurist Award" from the San Diego County Bar Association.

Judge Ipema's family has played an important role in her career in the legal field. Her father, whose mission as an attorney was to protect human rights, sparked her passion for a career in the legal field. She remembers, "He used to always talk about the sanctity of human rights and how each of us has a duty to stand up for what is just and right in our society." Her father's passion continues to influence her work to this day. From a young age, the positive influences of the strong women in her family have shaped her identity. In order to have an equally positive impact on other Iranian women, Judge Ipema has participated as a speaker in panels at multiple Iranian-American Women's Foundation conferences. "Historically, women have always had a very special place in our society and have helped shape our culture to a great extent."

Moreover, Judge Ipema's Iranian heritage has a positive impact on her life and career. She maintains a strong connection with her culture by following Iranian cinema and art as well as learning more about Iran's rich history and beautiful literature. "My identity is tied to my culture. I cannot separate myself from my culture and I would not want to. My culture is a big part of who I am and I am very proud of it." Since Judge Ipema has brought both Iranian values and American values together, she feels as if she has "adopted the best of two beautiful worlds, and I feel extremely privileged to have had the opportunity to do so."

For Judge Ipema, assimilating was not as painstaking as it is for some immigrants, owing largely to the fact that she overcame the language barrier by majoring in English at Damavand College. Additionally, her family promoted values, such as motivation and a strong work ethic, that would lead to her success as a highly-acclaimed judge. Judge Ipema also found the United States to be a country which greatly values human rights: "I love the rights granted to all citizens and the equal protection of laws for all

regardless of gender, social status, or education. I love the equal justice for all that is afforded under the U.S. Constitution. I love the fact that human rights are respected and protected in the U.S. to a greater degree than any other country in the world. I am extremely grateful for the opportunities I have had in the U.S. to reach my goals and fulfill my dreams. I strive every day to give back in the form of community service to the country that has given me and my family so much." Once Judge Ipema arrived in the United States, she found Americans to be open-minded and welcoming to people of different backgrounds.

Nevertheless, Judge Ipema still did face challenges because of her nationality upon immigrating to the United States. She explained, "There are unfortunately stereotypes associated with various cultures, races, and religions; and not just in this country but all over the world, and we are not immune from it. We all have biases, some are explicit and some are implicit." Judge Ipema's solution for alleviating the negative effects of stereotypes is to "educate ourselves, become aware, and self monitor our own implicit biases. Treat others with respect and never offend another person's dignity. We have to lead by example. Also, we should take it upon ourselves to educate others. The best way we can educate others about our culture is to be the best that we can be, live life with the utmost of integrity, and treat others well with respect, fairness, and equality." Achieving this will create a more just society that cultivates prosperity for all citizens, specifically immigrants in the process of assimilation.

This solution that Judge Ipema proposes is especially important for judges since they encounter people from all walks of life on a daily basis. For any judge, being sensitive to different cultures and traditions is vital to ensuring equality for all citizens. Due to Judge Ipema's diverse background, she believes her "background has helped me to understand and respect different cultures in the world. Understanding people from various cultures, who appear in my court every day, is extremely important in rendering justice. It is important for immigrants from various cultures to see one of their own sitting on the bench in a court of law rendering justice." Additionally, Judge Ipema believes diversity in the judiciary is essential to ensuring a fair trial for all citizens.

Judge Ipema strongly encourages those who are interested in the legal field to become involved in the community through service and studying law. Through her own education, she has found success to be a result of hard work and dedication: "Work hard, never take the easy way out, be disciplined, be honest, be a person of utmost integrity, and you will see that all doors of opportunity will open up for you. Believe that it is possible for you to become whoever you want to become." With a combination of grit and dedication to family, culture, and justice, Judge Ipema has successfully paved the path to preserving human rights.

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*Leily Rezvani is a senior in high school and the Youth Outreach Director of License to Freedom, a nonprofit that provides free legal services for refugee and immigrant victims of domestic violence.*

# Events in San Diego

## Persian Cultural Center

Tel: (858) 552-9355 Fax & Voice: (619) 374-7335  
www.pccus.org



**Saturday, September 16, 2017**

### Mohsen Namjoo Concert at Qualcomm Auditorium

6455 Lusk Blvd, San Diego, CA 92121  
Tickets and Info: 858-552-9355

**Sunday, October 1, 2017**

### Play "Death Enters" with Mansour Taaed & Abodollah Eskandari

At Avo Palyhouse at 7:00pm  
303 Main St, Vista, CA 92084  
Tickets and info: 858-552-9355



**Saturday October 7, 2017**

### Mehrgan Celebration with the Tritone Group Concert

at IAC at 7:00pm • Tickets: 858-552-9355

**Wednesday October 18, 2017**

OFAC Seminar at IAC 6-8pm

### Art Exhibition Open to Public

From 9:00 am to 3:00 pm (Monday to Friday)  
Iranian-American Center • 6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121  
Info: 858-552-9355

### Movie and Discussion,

First week of the month at the Center  
Iranian-American Center • 6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121  
Info: 858-552-9355

### DOCUNIGHT

First Wednesday of the month  
at the Iranian-American Center (IAC) at 7 pm  
Documentary films about Iran or by Iranians

### Jong-e Farhangi

Every Second Friday of the month at 7:30 pm  
Iranian-American Center • 6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121  
Info: 858-552-9355

### Setar Class by Kouros Taghavi

Registration and info: (858) 717-6389

### Tombak Class by Milad Jahadi

Registration and Info: (858) 735-9634

### Daf Workshop

Sundays 11am-12 at Iranian School of San Diego (ISSD)

### Piano Class by Farid Afshari

Registration and Info: (858) 349-1913

## Iranian School of San Diego

858-552-9355

### ISSD Registration

**Branch 1: Sunday August 27, 2017 10am-12 noon**

**Branch 2: Thursday August 31, 2017 6-8pm**

**Branch I, Sundays from 9:30am-1pm**

Mt. Carmel High School

**Branch II, Thursdays from 6-8pm**

Mt. Carmel High School

Mount Carmel High School

9550 Carmel Mountain Road • San Diego, CA 92129

## Persian Dance Academy of San Diego

(858) 552-9355 www.pccus.org



## Dollar a Month Fund

Tel: 858-552-9355 • www.dmfund.org  
www.facebook.com/DollaraMonthFund



## Association of Iranian-American Professionals (AIAP)

Tel: (858) 207 6232 • www.aiap.org  
Last Wednesday of each month at 6:30 PM  
at Sufi Mediterranean Cuisine  
5915 Balboa Ave, San Diego, CA 92111



## ISTA (Iranian Student Association at UC San Diego)

www.istaucsd.org



## House of Iran

House of Iran Balboa Park  
Balboa Park, Sundays 12:00-4:00pm  
www.thehouseofiran.com



## Mehrgan Persian Festival, Nov. 5, 2017, 11 am-5pm

at House of Iran Balboa Park

## Iranian-American Scholarship Fund

**Teste of Perisa October 14, 2017 at 6:30pm**

Tickets: 858-552-9355  
Tel: (858) 552-9355 • www.iasfund.org  
www.facebook.com/Iranian-AmericanScholarshipFund



## Mehrgan Foundation

www.Mehrganfoundation.org Tel (858) 673-7000

## PAAIA

Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian-Americans  
www.paaia.org



## NIAC

National Iranian-American Council  
www.niac.org



## Book Club Meeting

Last Saturday of each month  
Iranian-American Center (IAC)  
6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121  
Tel (858) 552-9355

## Iranian-American Life Science Network (IALSN)

www.ialsn.org

## for latest Events in San Diego visit:

www.chekhabar.com

## OLD TOWN SAN DIEGO FIESTAS PATRIAS

Sep 16, 2017 • 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM

## Fleet Week Sea & Air Parade

Oct 14, 2017 • 12:00 San Diego Bay  
San Diego, CA 92101 PM - 2:00 PM

## JULIAN APPLE DAYS FESTIVAL

Sep 23 - Sep 24, 2017 • 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM  
Menghini Winery, 1150 Julian Orchards Drive, Julian, CA 92036

## SAN DIEGO BEER WEEK

San Diego Brewers Guild, Nov 3 - Nov 12, 2017  
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## FLEET WEEK SAN DIEGO 2017

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# The Science of Nutrition

## Vitamin E and its antioxidant properties

By Mohammad Ahrar, Ph.D.

### Introduction

Among the thirteen known vitamins, four of them are considered fat soluble. They include Vitamins A, D, E, and K. Absorption of these vitamins in the digestive system requires the presence of some fat in the diet. Fat-free foods may hinder absorption of these vitamins. Information about vitamin A and vitamin D was discussed in *Peyk* 169 and 170. In this article, we review the health benefits of Vitamin E and its function as an antioxidant.

### Characteristics of Vitamin E

Vitamin E is not a single vitamin, but rather a group of fat-soluble vitamins that have different chemical compositions and properties. The most common forms of Vitamin E are tocopherols and tocotrienols, which each come in four different forms. Gamma-tocopherol has a role as an anti-inflammatory vitamin, and is the predominant form of Vitamin E in the American diet, used in some commercial foods. Alpha-tocopherol is the most biologically active form of Vitamin E, and is much more potent as an anti-oxidant than the gamma or delta forms of tocopherols. Only plants can synthesize Vitamin E; therefore, humans and animals must get their Vitamin E by eating food from plant sources, or by eating animals that have eaten plants.

Vitamin E was extracted from wheat germ in the early 1900s, and was used in laboratory animals to prevent miscarriages. The antioxidant property and other functions of the vitamin were discovered in recent years, and synthetic forms are used in commercial foods. The major function of vitamin E is as an antioxidant.

### What is an antioxidant?

To learn about antioxidants and their functions in the human body, we need to know what an oxidant is, and how it becomes useful. All elements are composed of atoms, such as oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon. Each atom contains electrons that move around the central nucleus with incredible speed. The chemical reactions in cells depend on interactions of electrons of different atoms. When an atom loses an electron, it becomes oxidized. The molecule that grabs an electron from other atoms is called an oxidant. Oxygen is a very strong oxidant agent. During normal processes that take place in the cells of the body (such as burning of sugars, fat, and proteins to produce energy), one electron may split from an atom or be stolen by other atoms or molecules. The atom that has lost an electron is now oxidized, and is referred to as a *free radical*. Free radicals are unstable in biological systems, and interfere with the ability of cells to do normal chemical reactions. Free radicals often pull electron off a neighboring molecule, causing the affected molecule to become a free radical itself. The new free radical can then pull an electron off the next molecule, and a chemical chain reaction of radical production occurs. Free radicals can be hazardous to all major components of cells, including DNA and proteins, and may play a role in the development of cancer, heart disease, and other health conditions. Some experts believe that cellular damage



caused by free radicals may be a factor in some age-related health conditions, and be linked to a range of disorders including cancer, arthritis, atherosclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, and diabetes (2).

### How do antioxidants work?

Antioxidants are molecules that can stabilize free radicals, by donating an electron to them and prevent them from damaging other cells. In other word, antioxidants block harmful chemical reactions caused by oxidation. Antioxidants can also bind with oxygen and prevent its spread through biological membranes. Vitamin E, as an antioxidant, accepts oxygen and prevents other essential molecules from being oxidized and become unstable.

### Natural antioxidants

Different forms of Vitamin E that are found in vegetables, grains, and seeds are excellent antioxidants. Besides Vitamin E, other compounds and vitamins such as beta-carotene, lycopene, and Vitamins A and C, that occur naturally in fruits and vegetables are also good antioxidants. The mineral element selenium is often thought to be a dietary antioxidant. The body makes some antioxidants it uses to neutralize free radicals. However, we rely on external sources, such as vegetables, to obtain enough antioxidants for good health.

### Role of Vitamin E in preventing heart disease

The major cause of atherosclerosis (buildup of fat and cholesterol in arteries) and incidences of coronary heart disease is oxidation of LDL-cholesterol. Tocopherol prevents oxidation of LDL cholesterol by binding with oxygen and preventing the LDL from being oxidized. Studies show that Vitamin E may help prevent formation of blood clots and delay heart problems. Besides, Vitamin E protects unsaturated fatty acids found in olive oil and vegetable oils from oxidation, and indirectly lowers the risk of coronary heart diseases (3).

### Macular degeneration and glaucoma

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of visual impairment and blindness in the elderly. Studies show that Vitamin E, especially when is combined with other antioxidants such as zinc, beta carotene, and Vitamin C, can help protect against the onset and progression of macular degeneration and can also delay retina damage (3).

### Alzheimer's disease

Results of studies about the effect of tocopherol for prevention of Alzheimer's disease is contradictory; some research suggests that high levels of Vitamin E in the diet may reduce the risk of Alzheimer's, while other studies found no such link (2).

### Cancer

Some studies reveal that intake of high doses of Vitamin E is associated with a decreased incidence of prostate cancer and breast cancer. Results of other studies indicate that Vitamin E can prevent growth of cancer cells, and additional supplementation of

selenium can complement Vitamin E to reduce prostate cancer, but the results are not always conclusive (2).

## Topical use

Different forms of Vitamin E are widely used as an inexpensive antioxidant in cosmetics. Tocotrienols are well-absorbed by the skin and are used in some skin creams, advertised by some companies as skin healing or anti-aging products. The use of Vitamin E creams may not always be helpful; research shows that some individuals may experience allergic reactions or develop a rash from the use of topical products containing alpha tocopheryl esters (4).

## Additional Health Benefits of Vitamin E

Research indicates that Vitamin E could help with reducing the complications of shingles, eye problems, menstrual migraines, muscular dystrophy, leg cramps, and the circulatory problems caused by diabetes. It has also been shown that Vitamin E supplements significantly boost immune response in the elderly. High intake of Vitamin E from foods, but not in supplemental form, was associated with reduced risk of Parkinson's disease (1, 5).

## Deficiency of Vitamin E

Vitamin E deficiency is rare, but can occur in people with certain genetic disorders and in premature infants. Usually, the maximum transfer of Vitamin E across the placenta occurs just before term delivery. For this reason, deficiency of Vitamin E can be seen in premature babies. Severe deficiency of Vitamin E in children may cause muscle weakness, slow growth, and lack of coordination due to neurological deficits (6). Deficiency of Vitamin E in adults may be one of the causes of dry hair or loss of hair, slow tissue healing, and disorders related to reproduction and infertility. Without sufficient Vitamin E, the membrane of red blood cells breaks down easily when exposed to air oxygen as we breathe, which may result in anemia.

## Recommended daily intake of vitamin E

According to the Food Nutrition Board (7), the average recommended amount of Vitamin E for adults, in the form of alfa tocopherol, is about 15 milligrams. The amount of Vitamin E required by each person, however, varies depending on age, health condition, and dietary habits. The average daily requirement for Vitamin E is summarized in the following table as a guide line:

Age	Males and Females
1-3 years	5 mg
4-8 years	6 mg
9-13 years	9 mg
14 – 18 years	12 mg
Adults	15 mg

## Points to be considered

- Low-fat diets can substantially decrease Vitamin E absorption.
- Vitamin E supplements are absorbed best when taken with meals.
- Because Vitamin E can act as an anticoagulant. Excessive intake of Vitamin E may increase the risk of bleeding problems, and taking supplements requires doctor's advice.
- The amount of Vitamin E required varies with the amount of polyunsaturated fats (such as olive oil and vegetable oils) in the diet, because they oxidize easily. Vitamin E protects these fats from oxidation. More Vitamin E may be needed when any refined oils, fried foods, or rancid oils are consumed.
- Supplemental estrogen or estrogen imbalance in women increases the need for vitamin E, and taking vitamin E

supplement should be under doctor's supervision.

- Taking high doses of iron supplements, especially inorganic iron such as ferrous sulfate, together with high doses of Vitamin E supplement is not recommended (1).
- Taking Vitamin C along with Vitamin E significantly improves the effectiveness of Vitamin E.
- Cigarette smokers are cautioned for taking alfa tocopherol, because alpha-tocopherol may react with nitrogen dioxide and forms a mutagenic compound. Gamma-tocopherol supplementation might be a better choice for smokers (5).

## Sources of Vitamin E

Vitamin E is a fat-soluble vitamin and is synthesized by plants and vegetables. Vegetable oils contain the highest concentrations of vitamin E, followed by nuts and seeds, including whole grains. Most natural Vitamin E supplements in the market, are derived from vegetable oils, mainly from soybean oil. The Vitamin E content of a number of selected foods is shown below:

Food	Milligrams (mg) per serving	% of Recommended Daily Value (RDV)*
Wheat germ oil, 1 tablespoon	20.3 1	00
Sunflower seeds, dry roasted, 1 ounce	7.4	37
Almonds, dry roasted, 1 ounce	6.8	34
Sunflower oil, 1 tablespoon	5.6	28
Safflower oil, 1 tablespoon	4.6	25
Hazelnuts, dry roasted, 1 ounce	4.3	22
Peanut butter, 2 tablespoons	2.9	15
Peanuts, dry roasted, 1 ounce	2.2	11
Spinach, boiled, ½ cup 1	.9 1	0
Broccoli, chopped, boiled, ½ cup 1	.2 6	
Kiwifruit, 1 medium	1.1	6
Mango, sliced, ½ cup 0	.7 4	
Tomato, raw, 1 medium	0.7	4

\* RDV is the percentage of the nutrients that is required by the body in 24 hours. For example, eating one ounce (28.5 grams) of dry roasted almonds provides 34% of your Vitamin E need per day, and the rest of your need for Vitamin E must be supplied by other foods.

## Risks and overdose of Vitamin E

- Excessive intake of Vitamin E may cause hypervitaminosis E, with an associated risk of vitamin K deficiency and increased vulnerability to bleeding and hemorrhage (2).
- If you have high blood pressure, you need to consult with our doctor before taking a Vitamin E supplement, because it may have adverse effects on blood pressure.
- Use of topical Vitamin E oil can irritate the skin and cause an allergic reaction in some people.
- Many Vitamin E products contain additional ingredients. It is important to read the label and consult with your doctor if you are uncertain about the product's safety.

## References

- 1- *Nutrition essentials for nursing practice*, 5th ed. Dudek, Susan, Lippincott Williams& Wilkins, New York. New Jersey, 2006.
- 2- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitamin\\_E](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitamin_E)
- 3- <http://www.webmd.com/hw-popup/free-radicals>
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Persian Cuisine

# Nush-e Jan

From: *The Joy of Persian Cooking*

By: *Pari Ardalan Malek*

## Baghala Polo

(Rice with fava Beans and dill)

Preparation time 45 minutes;  
Serves 7-9 persons

3 cups rice; 5 cups fava beans or 5 cups frozen baby lima beans; 3 cups chopped fresh dill; 3-4 tablespoons dried dill; 6 lamb shanks; 3 bay leaves; 1 medium chopped onion; ½ teaspoon salt; 3 teaspoons liquid saffron.

Wash meat and place in a pot with the onion, salt, pepper, bay leave and 2 cups of water. Bring to boil, remove foam from the top, and cook on medium heat for one hour. Drain meat, reserve juice and set aside separately.

Prepare rice per Peyk issue 107-Jan/Feb 2007 on line at [www.pccus.org/peyk](http://www.pccus.org/peyk)

Add the fava or lima beans (skin need not be removed, if of small variety) to the boiling rice, then drain together. To make rice crust follow recipe on Peyk 107

Spoon 1/3 of the rice mixture into your cooking pot.

Place the cooked lamb shanks in the center of the rice. Cover shanks with remaining rice, beans and dill.

If rice is not completely green, sprinkle some dried dill over the pot of rice.

Steam rice for 45 minutes on medium heat.

Gently remove 1 cup of the rice (from the top of the pot) onto a separate plate, add 1 teaspoon of liquid saffron to this plate, mix gently with the rice, and reserve for garnish.

Sprinkle remaining 2 teaspoons of liquid saffron over the rice in the pot and mix gently.

Remove pot from heat and dish with a spatula gently mixture onto your serving platter, placing the cooked shanks in the middle of the rice. Garnish with saffron rice (step 8) and serve.



## Cornish Game Hen Kabab:

Preparation time 35 minutes; serves 5-7 persons

This dish can be served with Baghala Polo (above) in place of lamb shanks.

4 Cornish game hens; 2 teaspoons thyme; 2 teaspoons rosemary; ½ cup fresh lemon juice; ¼ teaspoon salt; 2 teaspoons oregano; 4 minced garlic cloves; ¼ cup oil.

1. Except for hens, mix all ingredients for marinade.
2. Pour over hens, cover and marinate overnight in refrigerator.
3. Broil 4 inches from heat, for 20-25 minutes.
4. Turn hens once after 15 minutes for a golden color.



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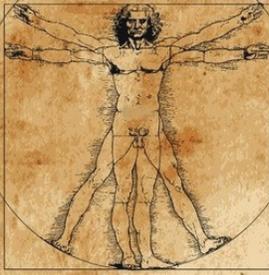
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By Sanaz Majd, MD



## How Serious is Pink Eye?

Those of you who know me may be aware that I have rambunctious 5-year-old twins who keep me on my toes. I had a rather unsettling experience at their preschool recently. And I know some of you with kids who attend ISSD (Iranian School of San Diego) can also relate to this.

What could have fired me up so? Well, that petrifying, ghastly illness called...pink eye. Yep, for some reason, pink eye sends shivers up and down the spines of all preschool teachers, akin to the plague.

Pink eye will not kill you (unlike let's say, the flu virus). Yet it is one of those medical myths that have taken on a mind of its own and spun out of control.

So one of my girls had been afflicted with a bout of pink eye for the previous week, and despite knowing the benign nature of it, I still kept her away from school only to save myself from experiencing the unnecessary raised eyebrows. The pink eye was nearly resolved when she returned to school on this particular day, albeit still visible. When I came to pick my girls up at the end of the school day, however, I was interrogated with the third degree.

How can I send my kid to school with such a contagious disease? And as a doctor-shame on me to have committed such a horrific preschool sin.

Unfortunately, I was accosted out in the open where another parent was in ear shot.

"It's Pink Eye. But it's unlikely to be contagious now," I pleaded for my case, as if on a trial for murder.

The nearby parent innocently asked, "Well, why don't you get antibiotic drops? Then she can come back to school the next day." It took all I could to keep my mouth shut, as my anti-antibiotic views grabbed ahold of me.

"Pink eye is viral," I simply responded. But the look I received in response clearly was one of astoundment.

"Antibiotics don't treat viruses," I went on, yet was still met with two perplexed sets of eyes glaring back. I think it was the first time that either one of them had heard this.

"That quack of a doctor," they must have been thinking as they watched me walk away.

But I still found myself walking away with my kids in tow, carrying a horrible gut feeling, as if I knowingly spread the plague or something. I must be a horrible parent, right?

At this point, I realized that I was fighting a non-winning battle that is more powerful than I can take on then and there – the power of medical myth. The truth is, I knew my child was unlikely to be contagious. And I know some of you may gasp at this -- but even if she was contagious...so what?! *It's just pink eye.*

### What is Pink Eye?

"Conjunctivitis" is the term that describes the tiny blood vessels in the white part of the eye that become more pronounced and inflamed. Allergies, chemicals, and (rarely) bacteria can cause conjunctivitis. But the pink eye that we are all familiar with in kids is actually viral, not bacterial, and by far the most common cause.

So why does pink eye create such controversy? I've asked myself this same question.

The visible color change is perhaps part of the reason—it's tangible evidence of an illness; whereas other cold and flu viruses may create non-

visible symptoms, such as a stuffy nose, sore throat, cough, etc.

Another reason for the craze may be that it's contagious. But yawning is also contagious. So does that mean that everything contagious is serious? Pink eye also doesn't cause eye pain or vision loss—two red flags of other more serious eye illnesses. Most people feel just fine and can go about their daily activities without any issues. The most annoying symptom is the awakening with goopy eyes. A quick face/eye wash with a splash of water can easily take care of that problem. It can sometimes cause other viral symptoms such as cough, runny/stuffy nose, etc., which are all self-resolving and benign just like the pink eyes.

To put it into perspective, in order of seriousness of common school viruses, from the most serious to the least, it goes like this:

Influenza (the Flu) --> Gastroenteritis (stomach virus) --> the Common Cold --> Pink Eye.

Physicians are aware that prescribing "antibiotic eye drops" is only to appease parents or a school that erroneously require it before children return to school—a disappointing practice habit and culture that needs to change. We don't need to throw antibiotics at every little thing. Pink eye is a virus...not a bacteria. Antibiotics only fight bacteria, not viruses. It will not diminish the contagiousness of pink eye in the least. Many viruses are passed off to others 1-2 days before the onset of any symptoms—that means before the patient even appears sick. My advice to a parent with a child who has "pink eye" is to tell them to send the kid to school as long as the kid feels well, most especially when it's at the end stages of the illness.

Do we really need more unnecessary missed school days and work days for benign and self-resolving illnesses like this? Kids this age group must and will get sick. This is how they build their immune system. It's a rite of passage of sorts. Do we really need to expend healthcare dollars and unnecessary time at the doctor's office in order to simply obtain a note to return to school?

### When to Keep Your Sick Child at Home

Cough, runny/stuffy nose, etc., are more vague symptoms that can occur any time during the illness, even weeks after the offending virus has cleared out of the system. So they aren't an accurate gauge of how contagious an illness is.

Here's when a child should stay home, in general, for any illness, not just pink eye:

1. An active fever—they are no longer contagious 24 hours after the fever breaks
2. Nausea/Vomiting/Diarrhea
3. An unknown systemic rash (all over, not just one localized spot)
4. If the child just doesn't feel well

That last one is likely the most important to keep in mind. If the child appears ill, has diminished energy, is not eating/drinking or acting like their energetic selves, by all means keep that child home. It's also more likely that they are most contagious at this stage, which is often the beginning days of an illness.

As a side note, my daughter's pink eye had completely resolved the very next morning.

*Dr. Sanaz Majd is a board-certified family medicine physician who podcasts and blogs at <http://housecalldoctor.quickanddirtytips.com>.*



# Original Work

By Marriam Zarabi



**M**y mother studied set design and was elated when Ladan, my sister, decided to pursue a formal education in illustration. While at school, Ladan would call our mother every once in a while to exchange ideas about her assignments, talk about techniques she was learning in her classes, and gain our mother's insight about her honors thesis. Ladan rarely shared her unfinished art with anyone in our family. After graduation, she quickly learned that our mother's persistent questions about her work would not diminish now that she had accomplished her BFA and she slowly started sharing more with our mother.

Mom, can I get your advice on something?

*Sure, absolutely!* Our mother made a slight show of enthusiasm as she put aside her photo editing project and met Ladan in the kitchen. Do the wings look symmetrical? What do you think of this sketch? *Vaay, Ladan! I love it! Movement-o cheghad ghashang hess mikoni!* The movement of the piece catches your eye so naturally! Thanks Mom! I was thinking about changing the dimensions slightly. *Bigger? The detail will be more visible if you make it a little bigger. Alee mishe, that would be perfect! Go Ladan, go Ladan,* she said as she waved her hands in the air. *Afarin! Nice work!*

*I am so relieved Ladan is starting her art again,* she said to me privately. *She has been in her room for two days sketching and drafting ideas for her next project! Kheyaalam raahat shod, I feel so at peace! Her work is so original; it really is original work. See, she is getting more tools now!*

Ladan grabbed some watercolors from our mother's studio and ran back upstairs to continue working. She was in the zone. She worked on her piece for almost a week, revealing each iteration to the family and seeking our mother's guidance on the slightest details. Ladan was drawing a bee, but the way they discussed her sketch made it sound as if Ladan was mapping out urban planning for a new city. They discussed lines, shading, and angles over tea. Our mother hung Ladan's sketch on a blank wall where they spent many afternoons studying what my mother called *kara-e honari-e Ladan*, or "Ladan's art piece." Every few days, our mother would move the sketch and hang it next to Ladan's framed pieces—a silent, motherly reminder that she should continue her passion.

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Mom, I'm running late and don't have time to go to the bank. Would it be alright if I borrowed some cash?

*Absolutely! How much do you need?*

Is \$60 okay?

*Definitely, why don't you take \$80 if you want dessert after lunch.*

Thanks Mom! I will go to the bank on my way back home!

*Have fun, khosh bezgare!*

Our mother spent the afternoon humming around the house as she worked on her own art projects, taking breaks to admire Ladan's art that she rehung on her studio wall.

Ladan came home later that evening, and her good mood matched our mother's. Upon hearing her arrival, our mother came downstairs to greet her. Noticing that Ladan was on the phone, she busied herself with brewing tea while waiting to discuss more art. She would glance eagerly mid-action to catch Ladan's eye. Instead of catching her eye, however, she noticed Ladan making strange movements with her arm, as if examining something. Placing the tea on the stove, she walked toward her. Ladan was moving her arm up and down, pulling and running her fingers across the skin on the inside of her elbow. *Yeah, I really like it! I wasn't sure how it would turn out but it looks just like my drawing,* she said, right before hanging up the phone.

*Ladan, in chiye? What is that? By your elbow? Tattoo-e?! Is that a tattoo?* Oh, this is the bee I was drawing! Remember, you helped me make the wings look symmetrical?

(Words cannot describe the blank stare on our mother's face.)

*The same sketch that I suggested making bigger? You made it a tattoo?* Exactly, and that was such a great suggestion because the details are much more visible!

*Uh-huh, baleh, it is more visible...on your arm. You know, when I gave you extra money, I thought it was because you were treating your friends to lunch. I thought maybe you would want dessert.* Haha, Mom! Nope, it was for this, pointing to her arm. This is my original work!

*Original work keh tattoo nemishe—original work is not for tattoos! You didn't work so hard in school to turn original work into tattoos! That is not what original work means! And to think I suggested you make it bigger, only so you could put a big thing like that on your arm?!*

Mom, original work takes many forms.

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*Marriam is a young professional exploring her dual identity through narrative and written prose, often writing about her personal experiences as a second-generation Iranian growing up in Kansas City.*



## How Did I Get Here?

Dear readers,

*We think it is important as the first generation of Iranian-Americans, we gather our stories of how we got here.*

*These would be a part of our collective history, for us and for future generations. We sincerely ask you to send us your stories. Regardless of how long or short your stories are, in English or Persian, we will print them in Peyk and archive them. Here is the second story of this series. The first one was by Mr. Afshin Mehrasa that was published several months ago. Please send us your stories.*

## Trinidad

By Ali Sadr

“Trinidad!” “Trinidad!” The bus driver was tapping on my shoulder. “Didn’t you want to get off in Trinidad?” He was yelling at me. I couldn’t remember where I was. It took me a few seconds to get myself together. I jumped out of my seat. “Oh man, what a deep sleep!” the driver exclaimed.

I looked at my watch but couldn’t see a thing. The clock at the front of the bus showed 11 o’clock. It was pitch dark outside. A dim light inside the bus showed the other passengers were mostly asleep. I followed the driver out of the bus. He asked if I had any luggage. I said yes. He then opened the baggage compartment and I showed him my suitcase. He pulled it out, mumbled good-night, jumped onto the bus, and took off. Two couples got off with me, too. There were two taxi cabs waiting in front of the bus station. The couples each took one and left.

The bus station consisted of a small shack with a couple of benches and a counter. An older gentleman, apparently the manager, was standing in front of the shack. He suddenly turned around, turned off the light, locked the door and disappeared behind the building in the dark. A light was dangling from a wire above the door, swinging in the wind and playing with the shadows. I looked around. I was the only one standing. There was not a soul around. A cold breeze was blowing. I was standing in front of the shack not knowing where to go. Apparently, I’d slept for a five hours on the bus.

When I initially boarded in Denver, the bus was half full. It was going to El Paso, Texas, but it would stop at Trinidad, the most southern town in Colorado. No one was sitting next to me on the bus, so I had the whole seat to myself. I thought to myself, “Great, maybe now I can get some sleep.” I couldn’t remember the last time I was able to get some decent sleep. Was it three or four nights ago? It was two nights before my departure from Tehran that I got some sleep. The night before I left was total chaos. Everyone was there at my parents’ house. My brothers, sisters, uncles with their families, they were all there. Kids were running around. I hadn’t even packed

my suitcase. It was after midnight when they left and promised to be at the airport in the morning to send me away. I was really anxious and somewhat scared. But I was fine with that. How bad could it be? I was supposed to go to Trinidad, Colorado, for four months to attend English classes before going to Syracuse University for graduate school. You may well ask why Trinidad? Simple, it was the only ESL school that responded to my application quickly enough to enable me to get my passport and visa on time and get out of Iran. And now, here I was in Trinidad, at a deserted intersection with a single set of traffic lights dangling in the middle of it, changing colors for no one; no cars, no pedestrians, nobody...nothing, just a cold breeze! It was pretty cold for late April. The town was ghost-like. After what had happened to me in New York and Denver, I started panicking again! I wish I had asked the station manager for directions. I knew I had to find the college dormitory. Standing there was useless. I turned onto the street to my left carrying my large red suitcase.

As soon as I turned I saw a big sign for a 7-Eleven. Yes! Something familiar, I knew what this was. I had seen it in the movies. I walked faster, dragging my red suitcase behind me, holding on tight to my briefcase. My money was still in my boots. It was safer there. I rushed across the street, not having to worry about getting hit by any cars. There were two cars parked in front of the 7-Eleven store.



I had arrived at JFK airport after a lengthy flight. Everything was interesting to me; men and women with cowboy hats and boots, black people, very large uniformed workers walking around. I followed the crowd to the luggage area. Ahmad—my coworker in Tehran who had gone to school in Detroit, Michigan, and returned to Iran about a year before—had walked me through this part a few times before I left. Now I had to change my terminal and go to TWA to catch my flight to Denver. Ahmad had advised me to walk out of the terminal and take one of the shuttle buses to the other terminal. Pretty straightforward, right?

Ahmad had also warned me not get a ride from strangers. He emphasized “beware of blacks.” He himself had his suitcase stolen at JFK Airport. He had explained: “I had two suitcases and a bag hanging from my neck. One of the suitcases wasn’t even mine! My aunt had asked me to take it to my cousin who lived in Detroit.” It was full of “soghati” stuff (presents)—noon barbari, pistachios, sohan, gaz, and some artifacts. He recalled the suitcases were heavy. As soon as he walked out of customs, he came face to face with a nice black gentleman with a nice afro. “He asked me if he could help. I thought he had noticed how beleaguered I was, having to carry two huge suitcases and sporting a third, hanging off my neck,

and felt sorry for me. I said no thank you, I would handle it myself. He said fine. I noticed that he had a small bag too. I thought to myself, he is probably a passenger himself, just trying to help. He gave me another look and smiled. I told him ok and handed him one of my suitcases, the one with my personal stuff. He said not to worry, that he would just follow me. I said I was going to the other terminal to catch a flight to Detroit. He said he was going the same way. He then started asking questions about my flight and where I was going and stuff. I was excited to practice my English. He said he was from Detroit; at least that's what I thought he said. We came out of terminal to the bus stops. He said something and started walking faster. I asked him to slow down and wait for me. He kept going. Then... he disappeared! Totally! I looked around for a while and then went to the other terminal, hoping that he was waiting there for me. I had missed my flight and there was no sign of the guy. I sat on my only suitcase full of gaz and pistachios and cried like a baby. No one even bothered to ask me why. They probably thought I was homesick or something." He warned, "Don't trust anyone, especially blacks, and only take one suitcase!" He was still obviously bitter about the experience after so many years. I had taken his advice and only brought one suitcase with me.

Now, stranded in the middle of nowhere, I felt so depressed. I missed everyone, even Ahmad. I had believed I would be able to handle the separation. It was only going to be for a few years, to get my masters or perhaps a Ph.D. Besides, I had always wanted to come to America. This was the adventure of a lifetime. On the one hand, I was excited; on the other, I was scared. I'd landed in a world of unknowns. Would I be able to handle it? Would I be able to survive with \$5,000 in America? That was all my savings, I had no other resources! Everyone was giving me advice: "Not to worry, in America you can work. America is very different from Europe. In America there is always work for students." And they would give examples of the people they knew that had started working right away as a waiter, parking attendant, or ice cream vendor while they were going to school.

None of these musings and worries really mattered though. I had to get out of Iran. After I graduated from Tehran University, I had six months to either continue my education somewhere or submit to mandatory military service for two years. I spent the entire six months trying to get an acceptance from a university. Two weeks before the deadline, I succeeded. I got my passport and visa within one week, and just a few days before the deadline I was on an Iran Air jumbo jet going to New York, via London.

Most of my classmates had already been serving for those six months and were getting ready to be sent to Oman to fight and save the Kingdom against a popular rebellion in "*Dhofar Province*". This was one of the proxy wars that the Shah, the best ally of the United States, was conducting on behalf of the U.S. Since I was a year younger than most of my classmates, I had time to do something. For most of the time, it had been a discouraging process. I received several rejection letters and most schools I liked hadn't even bothered to respond. So it was like a miracle when I finally got a letter from Syracuse University, accepting me for the fall semester. It felt great! But I had to leave before May 1, only a couple of weeks away. I managed to get into an ESL, a language school in Trinidad, Colorado, to first improve my English for four months. Until then, I thought Trinidad was a country in the Caribbean!

This was my first trip abroad. So much excitement and so many unknowns. I knew no one in the United States. What an adventure for a twenty-one year old! Was I able to handle it? What if? What if I couldn't? I would then have to go back! What a disaster!

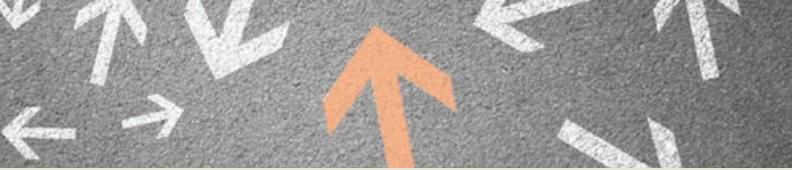
I had gone to see my boss just one week before my departure. He wanted to see me. He didn't know I was leaving the country.

Before I said anything, he started in again advising me, telling me I needed to cool off my head. He said when he was my age he was hotheaded, too, but he had soon found out that it was just childish stuff and that if you cared about society you should work through the system. He continued, "You have to join The Party, otherwise, I have to fire you." He said "There is only you and Mahmoudi who haven't joined the 'Rastakhiz Party.' Everyone else has joined." I knew he was right. To get paid everyone had to sign up. This was the Shah's newly founded political party and he had decreed that all Iranians were to join The Party, or leave the country! My boss continued, "They will find out. I can no longer protect you. You remind me of myself when I was younger. It's no use. You can't fight the system." I calmly said I knew and I didn't want to cause him any trouble, so I was quitting. He jumped out of his chair and asked me, whispering, "Tell me you are going abroad! Right?" I said I might be and would see what happens. He was obviously excited and relieved that I wasn't his problem anymore. He called accounting to cut me a check - with a little bonus. Now I had all that money and my savings left after paying for my flight. I had almost five thousand dollars with me.

I entered the 7-Eleven. With the sound of the bell the clerk turned towards me. It was nice and warm inside. I could smell the food. Suddenly I felt hungry. The clerk was talking to two customers, I think in Spanish. I waited in front of the electric rollers, rolling greasy hot dogs up and down. After a minute or so he turned toward me and asked if he could help me. I think that's what he said. The other customers stared at me. I said I wanted to go to the college. He completely understood me, smiled. He asked me if I was hungry and wanted to eat anything. I said no, I just wanted to go to the college. While he was walking toward the door he asked me to follow him. He said, "Everything is closed until tomorrow." We walked out. He pointed toward the opposite street and said, "Go up that road, you will see the college on both sides of the road, good night," and went back in. I started walking into the dark street, pulling my suitcase behind me.

At JFK, after I got my passport and papers stamped, I retrieved my suitcase and briefcase, and walked out into the U.S. The first thing that grabbed my attention was the size of the people. I felt so small. A big lady at the desk looked at my ticket and told me I had to go to the TWA terminal to catch my connection to Denver. I had over two hours. I felt a little relieved- "so far not bad!" As soon as I walked out of the customs, I came face to face with hundreds of people holding signs with names in different languages or perhaps just waiting to see their friends or relatives. I didn't expect anyone, so I just waded through and out of that crowd. I put my suitcase down to catch a breath and figure out where to go. Suddenly, a nice looking gentleman with a nice dark blue suit came to me and asked to see my papers. Yes, he was white and clean cut. I thought he must be somebody from the airport. I gave him my ticket- not the passport, I was smarter than that! He started explaining slowly but loudly that I had to go to the TWA terminal. I said I knew and had to take a bus in front of the terminal. He said I might miss my flight. He continued that he was going there and could give me a ride to get there on time. He didn't grab my suitcase, just asked me to follow him. He had a huge black car. I didn't know at the time that this car is called a "Limousine." He opened the trunk and helped me put the suitcase in. Then he asked me to sit in the front. He was very polite. He sat behind the wheel and drove between the cars and buses. He was quiet. I wanted to talk to him but my English was worn out and I already didn't have a good feeling about this.

*Continued on Page 18*



Continue from page 17

## How Did I Get Here?

We drove through the terminal loop, then he exited the airport and entered a freeway. I could see the TWA sign behind us. “We passed it; there it was!” I exclaimed. He ignored me. Then he sped up onto the freeway. I realized what was going on, but played dumb. I reminded him that my flight to Denver was only an hour away. He suddenly turned toward me and said “shut up!” Soon he slowed down and parked on the shoulder, and angrily asked me how much money I had. I asked him how much the fare was. I was trying hard to be calm and dumb using my best English. He turned toward me in a way that ensured I could see the pistol in the holster under his jacket. “Give me your Goddamn money!” he screamed. I jumped back and pulled my wallet out and opened it towards him. There was only \$45 in it. I thought of jumping out of the car, but what about my suitcase in the trunk? He grabbed my wallet, pulled the money out and demanded “the rest Goddamnit!” (When we were still a couple of hours from New York I had gone to the airplane bathroom to freshen up, like everyone else. I also put all of my money, except \$45, into my boots. Just in case!) He yelled again. “The rest!” I calmly explained that was all I had. He was furious. “You fucking Arab, you come to America with \$45?” Of course he was using many other expressions, which I knew were not nice, even though I didn’t understand them all. I just stared at him and tried to keep calm. “My cousin is in Denver and my parents wired him my money. They said it was not safe to carry the money on me!” I explained. I think my story was convincing because he stopped yelling. He then got quiet. Did I say that I was really scared? Would he buy it? What if he asked me to take off my shoes or open my suitcase? Or just push me out of the car, in the middle of nowhere? For about a minute no one said anything. He was holding the wheel with both hands and staring forward. My heart had come up to my throat. But I knew I had to continue my act. I finally said if I missed my flight I had nowhere to go in New York. Without looking at me he took the money and threw the wallet back to me with a couple of nasty words. I took the wallet and told him that I hadn’t eaten for a while and that was all the money I had. He stared at me, and then he shook his head. He probably couldn’t believe that I was that dumb! He threw me a \$5 bill and stuffed the rest into his pocket.

Suddenly he stepped on the gas pedal and entered the freeway, exited at the first exit, made a u-turn over a bridge ending up in the opposite direction, towards the airport. Neither one of us talked. He banged on the steering wheel a few times out of frustration. He slowly came to stop in front of the TWA terminal. I got out. He opened the trunk. I grabbed my suitcase and thanked him. He didn’t say a thing, just took off. I was going to throw up. I grabbed my suitcase and started running towards the entrance. Suddenly I came face to face with a huge black cop. I got excited and started to explain to him what just happened to me. I even pointed out the limo to him which was still stuck in the bottleneck of the terminal. I said “that guy, black car, gun, my money...” He calmly listened and shook his head. He kept looking at me and looking at the car. I was sure he could see it better, since he was at least one foot taller than me. Then he looked at me and said, “You better hurry up; you’ll miss your flight.” He continued with a very calm voice, “You’re lucky he didn’t kill you!” He said something about my suitcase and walked away. I felt sick to my stomach. The next thing I remember I was on the plane trying to eat something. There were a number of very loud cowboys smoking cigars behind

me. I was trying to make sense of what had just happened to me. I already hated America. I wanted to go back so badly. I was going to cry or throw up or something. I was so lonely!

A cold breeze swept through the street. There were hardly any street lights. I was already out of breath, climbing uphill with my luggage in the direction that supposedly would take me to the college. I stopped to take a breath. “What is going on? What kind of college is this? Are they all sleeping at 11 o’clock?”

I’d spent the night before in Denver to take the Greyhound bus to Trinidad the next day. My friend Ahmad had told me that in all airports there is a panel with pictures of the local hotels, and a phone. “Just pick up the phone and punch the number next to each hotel picture; they will come and pick you up,” he explained. It took me a few tries until I hooked up with a hotel whose rate I understood. A nice lady on the other end of the line asked me to wait for fifteen minutes, exit from door number three, and meet her in a gray van. I didn’t wait and just walked out. It was so refreshing, a light rain! I stood in the rain thinking I would go back the next day and head back to New York and home. That was it! I already had my dose of America and didn’t like it. No, I didn’t at all. I was so depressed and wanted to cry so badly. But crying? No, not me! I was deep in thought when I heard a young lady, with big eye glasses and long blond hair, talking to me. She said my name, of course the best way she could. I acknowledged. She helped me to put the suitcase in the back of the van. I was the only passenger. As soon as I got in, I heard the radio playing a very familiar song; “Rocky Mountain High, Colorado” by John Denver. This was the only familiar thing I had felt in a long time. I suddenly calmed down and felt safe. The lady with big glasses kept smiling and asking me routine questions about the flight and how long I was planning to stay. I told her I planned to go to Trinidad. She showed me the hotel restaurant and got me registered. She was so kind and helpful. I thanked her and went to my room. I locked the door and sat on the floor. “What do I do?” That was all I could think about. I finally convinced myself that if I got some rest I would be able to think more clearly. I was hungry but I didn’t want to leave my room. I was so scared. I got my money out and counted. I remembered that guy’s face when I told him I only had \$45 and when he gave me back \$5. I started laughing. Wow! What an experience! I couldn’t wait to write to Ahmad and tell him the guy who robbed me was white, clean-cut, and good looking!

I couldn’t sleep. My mind was going in a million different directions. I opened the suitcase and pulled one of the pistachio bags and ate almost the whole thing. I tried so hard to get some sleep. No way! I didn’t know about jetlag at the time. I watched TV all night. Finally, as soon as I heard some noise outside, I took a shower and dressed up and went to the hotel restaurant. A waitress gave me a menu and poured me some coffee. I looked at the menu. I didn’t recognize any item, except scrambled eggs. I pointed to that on the menu. She said scrambled eggs and asked me whole bunch of questions. I did not understand a word. I just repeated with a broken voice “scrambled eggs please!” Before she left, she poured me more coffee. I hadn’t asked for it. I drank some more. She came back and poured some more. I said “No thanks.” She ignored me or didn’t hear me. She brought me my eggs and toast and poured more coffee. I thought I was probably going to pay at least \$10 just for coffee! The next time she came with the coffee pot I almost yelled “No coffee!” She jumped back and said “Ok, gee what a ...” and left. Other customers were looking at me with surprise. Finally, she brought me the check and kept her distance. She looked upset. I checked my bill. The total for coffee was 25 cents and written in large letters were the words “Refills Are Free!” I was so embarrassed!

*Due to lack of space*

*The story will be continued in the next issue of Peyk*

Mehregan  
The Autumn Festival of Harvest  
**HAFEZ** Day  
*in San Diego*

**October 12th**  
at San Diego Central Library



700 years after his death, Hafez remains Iran's most celebrated bard and one of the most revered writers all across the world. Hafez is the only writer & poet to have his own holiday, based on the strength of his achievement and his verse that reflects the best aspirations of a people. Join a diverse slate of featured writers and musicians on October 12th at San Diego Central Library as we celebrate Hafez Day in San Diego and use verse as an avenue for love, peacemaking, and reconciliation. Co-sponsored with the Persian Cultural Center and presented in conjunction with the 2017 One Book One San Diego reading campaign.



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Commissioner for  
Arts and Culture

Financial support is provided by the City of San Diego  
Commissioner for Arts and Culture

One Book  
One San Diego

## Why I want to be a teacher's assistant

By Lilia Djavanmard

All my life I have grown up around Iranian culture. My parents are both Iranian and my whole family is too. I travel to Iran every summer, and each time I go back, I learn more about our culture and our language. My family and I travel to different cities in Iran and aim to learn more about the culture each time. I love learning new things about Iran. Last summer, I went to Kashan and I learned that ancient Persians were some of the smartest mathematicians during their time and created many parabolas we use today. I also learned that ancient Persians were the first people in the world to create a proper civilization. They made living spaces underground and were the first civilization to create utensils, instruments, and more.

I also went to school in Iran for four years and although I attended an international school, it was the basis for learning the Farsi language. My school taught me about Iran's culture, history, and life. I learned about the language and dynamic too. The information I received could not be replaced. I can say I have a good amount of exposure to Iran. Whenever I tell people I can speak Farsi, they are amazed. It makes me happy to know so much about our country and culture. I would not want to lose that touch and connection I have with Iran. I believe being a teacher's assistant will help me become more enlightened and experienced. Becoming a teacher's assistant will give me a new perspective because it allows me to experience teaching.

I will always know that I have Farsi and Iranian culture when I need it. When I came to the school this year, I noticed that many of the kids had never been to Iran or had much exposure to Iranian life. I want to help the kids and benefit them with what I know. I love helping children and it gives me joy to teach them about Iran.