

# Peyk



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The Language I Forgot



By: Shahri Estakhry



## Awakening of Our Moral Conscience

For some time now I have been writing about the decline of many aspects of what made this nation once stand out as the leader of the free world. I grieve that the cause of this is a great rupture in our society... one that seems to be encouraged by our political leaders, parties, and the current tone of political discourse. The loss of moral conscience within our leadership is appalling. Just recently I was talking with some friends and told them I was seriously thinking of moving to a peaceful island to recharge my thoughts, energy, and attitude. I love living in San Diego and would normally never have such thoughts of leaving, but...!

On February 14, 2018, a mass shooting was committed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Seventeen people were killed and seventeen more were wounded, making it one of the world's deadliest school massacres. I simply cannot imagine if it had been one of my own loved ones who was shot so savagely, and I would not wish this on even my worst enemy. Many of the survivors of this horrid massacre united and formed the "Never Again" campaign.

According to Wikipedia, "March for Our Lives was a student-led demonstration in support of tighter gun control that took place on March 24, 2018, in Washington, D.C., with over 800 sibling events throughout the United States and around the world. Student organizers from Never Again MSD planned the march in collaboration with the nonprofit organization Everytown for Gun Safety".

On Saturday, March 24th I was at the Waterfront Park at the County Building, and watched groups come by the tens and hundreds to raise their voices against gun violence and for tighter gun control. Organized under the leadership of young high school students, it was one of the most empowering solidarity movements I have ever seen.

All in all, millions participated, so much so that it became both an awakening and a nightmare for lawmakers opposed to real and lasting change. The awakened students will be the newest voters stepping up to vote come this November. The young adults who have electrified and energized the country with their passion, conviction, and hard-work will make their voices heard by those self-serving representatives in congress. These young people will be the reforming conscience of America. Thank God for each of them. By 2020 their voting power will have grown to nearly 5 million and they will shake up every state of the union!

Thousands of signs and banners were carried by young and old, from 4 year-olds up to grandparents. The adults represented every profession you could imagine, including many, many teachers who are passionate about protecting their students. I stood there and watched these young people protest and ask everyone to protect their future. Every day as they leave for school they do not know what will happen. It is the same for parents when they say goodbye to their children for a day of school and education – parting is with great anxiety. This is the world that we allowed to be created and the burden is on us to bring back safety to their schools, malls, concerts, places of worship... We as adults cannot fail them anymore. Enough is enough!

These young people have given me a newfound energy and hope. This movement is something different. One that brings much hope for the future of this nation.

### Persian Cultural Center's Bilingual Magazine

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### Persian Cultural Center

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PCC (Persian Cultural Center):

## PCC NEWS



### Jong-e Farhangi

Jong-e Farhangi is an arts and culture program that presents interviews with authors and other artists, literary readings and musical performances, and lively discussions with audience participation. Jong is held on the stage of the Iranian-American Center (IAC). Hosting the program rotates between Ali Sadr and Reza Khabazian. The program guests are typically interviewed by the host on a variety of subjects with an eager audience. Jong-e Farhangi is held on the second Friday night of the month.

### San Diego Jong-e Farhangi- March, 2018

This program was cancelled to accommodate for Nowruz Celebrations and related events.

### San Diego Jong-e Farhangi- April 14, 2018

The April program, hosted by Reza Khabazian, featured three guests. The first guest was fellow San Diegan, Ms. Shahri Estakhry. The conversation was about community service, cultural identity, pride of identity, and Ms. Estakhry's passions, charity for children and youth, nutrition, and education. The second group of guests, Mr. Mahmoud Behrouzian, Dr. Rana Salimi, and Mr. Ali Pirouzian performed Shahnameh-khani, the narration of Iran's epic, The Tale of Kings. Musicologist and musician, Mr. Arash Kamalian talked about teaching Persian classical music and Pish-Radif in specific and followed with his recent experience of traveling to Iran to hold music workshops. Mr. Kamalian ended the program by performing Persian classical music on Tar for the audience.

### Mina's Revolution Stage reading - February 24, 2018

The playreading was directed by Paul David Halem and based on the novel by the same name, by the local author Mehrnoosh Mazarei.

### Dornob Collective in Concert- March 3, 2018

Dornob music group took to the stage at AIC for an evening of exceptional "collective" music.

### Iranian School of San Diego Nowruz preparation and Dollar-a-Month Fund's Annual Nowruz Charity Bazaar- March 4, 2018

ISSD students took part in the egg coloring and wheat sprouting ceremony in preparation for Nowruz celebrations. Students, their families, and community members shopped at the DMF annual Nowruz bazaar to support the foundation's programs.

### Iranian School of San Diego Nowruz Celebration March 11, 2018

Students, families, teachers, and staff celebrated Nowruz at ISSD with songs, music, plays, and awards at the Mount Carmel High School Amphitheater.





### **Cheharshanbeh Soori- March 13, 2018**

Several thousand Iranian-Americans and friends celebrated Cheharshanbeh Soori on the last Tuesday evening of the winter at NTC Park in Point Loma, with music, dance, and plenty of food.

### **Persian Cultural Center Annual Nowruz Celebration- March 17, 2018**

PCC celebrated Nowruz at the La Jolla Marriott, with ISSD's Dance Academy performance and a night of music, dance, food, friends, and family. The performers Kamran and Hooman, DJ AI, and MC Shally Zomorodi made a memorable evening for the Nowruz guests.

### **Eid Didani- March 23, 2018**

PCC hosted an Eid Didani, the Nowruz old tradition of visiting family and friends, at AIC for the first time. A wonderful evening in the company of family and friends; guests enjoyed music, dance, and refreshments.

### **Sizdeh Bedar- April 1, 2018**

The Iranian American community celebrated Sizdeh Bedar at NTC Park in Point Loma, with music, dance, and plenty of food. This year several thousand people attended the park for a picnic and enjoyed music DJ Julius and delicious food.

### **Movie and Discussion, March 16, 2018**

"I Feel Sleepy" by Reza Attaran (2012) was screened in March. Reza Attaran, director, and Akbar Abdi, supporting actor, both won the Crystal Simorgh of the International Fajr Festival for this movie. The screening was followed by a discussion by the audience.

### **Movie and Discussion, April 20, 2018**

"Don't be Tired" by Afshin Hashemi and Mohsen Gharaie (2013) was screened in April. Mohsen Gharaie's, directorial debut won the directors the Khaneh Cinema Festival prize for the directors as well as the announcement prize for Rambod Javan. The screening was followed by a discussion by the audience.

### **PCC's Board Meetings**

Persian Cultural Center's board of directors holds its meetings every second Wednesday of the month at IAC. The last two meetings took place on March 14 and April 18, 2018.





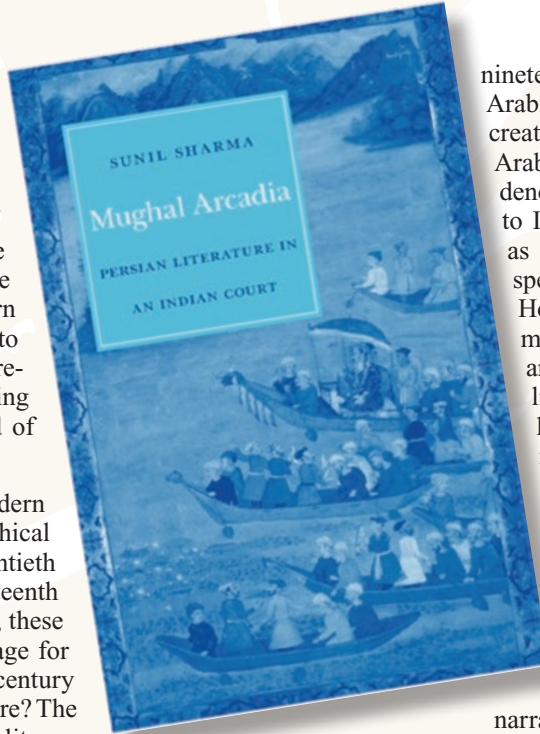
# A Review of *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court*

Sunil Sharma's recent book, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court* (Harvard University Press, 2017), is a scholarly and accessible account of Persian literary culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in South Asia. *Mughal Arcadia* participates in re-evaluating the literary production of what is often — for the lack of a better term — called the premodern world of Persian literature. Before I delve into the book, it is important to explain why it re-evaluates the common Iranian understanding of premodern Persian literature as a period of literary “decline.”

Our understanding of the premodern period has been shaped by ahistorical and mythical narratives created in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In spite of scholarly interventions, these narratives persist today. So, what set the stage for the invention of nineteenth- and twentieth-century myths about premodern Persian literary culture? The attitudes of South Asians toward their Persian literary heritage dramatically changed in the nineteenth century, primarily as a result of colonialism. The British colonial institution viewed India's multilingual society as a civilizational problem and berated Indians for not having a standard language, one that would transcend all ethnic and linguistic communities. For centuries, Persian had served as a lingua franca of political administration, but British colonial agents identified it as a “foreign” language in India, tied to the culture of “Muslim” rulers in a “Hindu” land. The British had very clear ideas about who was a Muslim and who was a Hindu and the separate cultural domains to which each had to belong (thus, “Muslim” and “Hindu” placed in quotation marks).

The colonial experience in South Asia gave rise to a shift in attitude exemplified by Muhammad Husain Azad's history of Urdu poetry called *Ab-i Hayat* (Water of Life), composed in 1880. Azad created a narrative in which the genesis of Urdu poetry is marked by its “simplicity” and nourishment by Persian. But as Urdu borrowed “too much” from Persian, the misguided influence of the latter made Urdu decadent. Half a century later in Iran, Mohammad Taqi Bahar invented a similar history of Persian literature in his *Sabk-shenasi* (Stylistics). In it, he argued that “simplicity” marked the genesis of Persian prose which was later corrupted by Arabic's misguided influence. In fact, the amount of Arabic words and grammar in Persian informed the way Bahar periodized the history of Persian prose. Arabic functioned in *Sabk-shenasi* similar to the way Persian functioned in Azad's *Ab-i Hayat*: an imagined deviation from a lost simplicity. Both writers, I argue, used “simplicity” as a narrative device in order to effectively invent an account of Persian and Urdu literary histories aligned with their cultural ideology and political ideals.

Similar examples may be found elsewhere in the region during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the end of the



nineteenth century, Jurji Zaydan, the influential Arabic-language modernizer, strived to create a national literary history whereby the Arabic language was the proposed common denominator for all peoples from Algeria to Iraq. Zaydan flagged what he identified as the influence of Turkish and Persian-speaking literary cultures as misguided. How does this historical background matter for our understanding of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Persian literature? Azad, Zaydan, and Bahar may have been working to nationalize their respective literary traditions, but they all subscribed to a shared set of tools and idioms developed and circulated on a multilingual global stage. When studied side by side, the shared literary idiom of Azad, Zaydan, and Bahar in which “simplicity” and “decline” are cultivated as devices to invent a certain type of national literary narrative becomes particularly crystallized.

In the case of Bahar, one part of his *Sabk-shenasi* is the idea of a Persian literary “simplicity” lost to the “aesthetic decadence” of what he called *Sabk-e hendi* or the Indian Style. Bahar is one of the major voices who framed the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Persian as a period of literary decline.

Azad and Bahar came to conclusions that have for years been uncritically accepted and perpetuated. In the past two decades, “simplicity” and “decline,” as vague and problematic categories of analysis, have been critiqued. Scholars have scrutinized these long-standing categories by asking questions like this: How does Bahar's *Sabk-shenasi* fit into the early twentieth-century national discourse of history writing in Iran? While scholars of the modern period have shown the ways in which Azad and Bahar were responding to political questions and anxieties alien to the previous centuries, scholars have produced more critical accounts of premodern Persian literary culture. *Mughal Arcadia* is one such example. It broadly addresses the following questions: How did Persian poetry function in Mughal India? In what ways did Persian literary culture differ in India compared to that of West and Central Asia?

There are four periods that broadly mark Persian's literary career in Mughal India. During the first period, the Mughals (r. 1526-1857) came into power in the early sixteenth century and encountered a pre-existing Persian literary heritage established by the Delhi Sultanate. Culturally and politically, they embodied the Persian literary heritage and strengthened its position as a language of cultural important, literary production, and bureaucracy. In this period, the Mughals heavily relied on a class of Persian-speaking poets, scholars, and tutors to participate in their cultural enterprise. They attracted a large number of Iranian and Central Asian émigrés. During this period, it was the Iranian émigrés who controlled cultural and literary conversations at the court, and many Indian-born poets struggled to set linguistic and aesthetic standards. The second period is marked by Indian-born poets being favored over

Iranian poets, in no small part due to the rise of South Asian literary vernaculars such as Deccani and Rekhta (later named Urdu). In the colonial period (1858-1947), Indians gradually lost confidence in their Persian skills and identified Iran as the source of Persian literary authority. In spite of this shift in attitude, Persian literary production continued in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century India, as exemplified by the volume of Persian-language texts published by the Naval Kishore Press alone (established in 1858)

*Mughal Arcadia* primarily tells the story of the first period of Persian's literary career in South Asia in which Iranian émigrés enjoyed the upper hand compared to Indian-born poets. The first chapter provides a general sketch of Mughal literary culture in which we learn that Persian was central to the way the Mughals projected their imperial image both locally and transregionally. The Mughals were merely heirs to a pre-existing tradition of Persian poetry, as illustrated by the figure of Amir Khusraw of Delhi (d. 1325) whose work was a significant model of literary inspiration for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets. Sharma captures the cultural openness in premodern South Asia that accommodated a variety of outsiders with different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds; as such, India became widely regarded as *dar al-aman* or the “abode of peace.” In this environment of relative tolerance and cultural civility, Persian poetry flourished as a result of wide ranging networks of patronage and its interplay with Sanskrit, Arabic, Turkish, Braj, and other literary traditions that were present in north India during different periods. Persian poetry as a cultural enterprise also created fierce rivalries among poets. The divergent views of Indian-born poets and Iranian émigrés on place served as one of the defining tensions that informed Persian poetic production in this period.

The second chapter traces how India became a home for the Mughals. Or variably put, how did India accommodate a group of outsiders—Turkic, Persian-speaking and Muslim—who harked back their lineage to Timur (d. 1405)? Within two generations upon their arrival from Central Asia to South Asia, Sharma shows, the Mughals became Indian and Persian remained the locus through which they articulated their cultural heritage. Persian poetry brought to South Asia a stock set of metaphors and images that dovetailed well with South Asian aesthetic norms and took Indic characteristics over the years. In short, South Asian literary cultures changed the way Persian poets perceived their aesthetic possibilities. “One consequence of this,” Sharma writes, “was that Mughal poets no longer felt constrained in describing idealized gardens and assemblages that were frozen in time, for not every garden in the Persianate world was the proverbial rose garden inhabited by nightingales.” As the Mughals traveled and explored India's natural wonders, Persian poets turned to places like Kashmir to cultivate their poetic paradise.

One of the ways in which the Mughals came to call India home was by celebrating South Asian cities, a practice reflected in Persian poetry. The Mughal celebration of cities was also a way of projecting their imperial growth and wealth to regional empires, primarily the Safavids. Chapter three deals with how Mughal poets appropriated existing poetic forms and genres to write about place. This literary practice was not limited to north India, the seat of Mughal power, but was extended to the provinces and local

courts where poets exercised more freedom in experimenting with linguistic registers and themes. One important figure is ‘Abdur-Rahim Khan-i Khanan who was a generous patron of Persian and Braj poetry. Mixing Persian and Indic sensibilities, he composed Braj poetry on the beauty of Indian cities. Kalim is another figure who continued the practice of poetry about place as a senior poet at Shah Jahan's court. The poetic awareness of place, Sharma argues, marks a major feature of Persian poetry in Mughal India.

The trend of using cities as a locus for urban energy, enjoyment and aesthetic pleasure existed way before the Mughals in different literary cultures. What *Mughal Arcadia* focuses on is how this poetic brand was reformulated in an Indian court during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Mughal poets referenced a number of South Asian cities, and among these references, Sharma argues that Kashmir was central to the construction of the Mughal “Arcadia,” an idealized place that offers peace and harmony. Poets such as Kalim, Shah Jahan's poet laureate, composed many verses on Kashmir's climate, mountains, rivers, and gardens. Qudsi was another poet at the court of Shah Jahan who composed poems on Kashmir and also eulogized his patron. Mughal Arcadia, designed to boast of how well South Asian cities were doing under the Mughal rule, was part of a web of literary inventions directed at their imperial rivals. In his conclusion, Sharma argues that the Mughal Arcadia, and by extension the metaphor of Kashmir as a paradise, became ossified during the reign of Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707) as the last Mughal Emperor showed little interest in Persian poetry. It is an unsatisfying conclusion to an outstanding study — did Aurangzeb abandon the cultivation of Persian poetry altogether as a Mughal cultural enterprise? Or variably, did Persian poetry drastically decline because Aurangzeb refused to provide poets with patronage?

While the book has to end somewhere, the story continued as Indian-born poets gained control of the cultural conversations and began to outshine Iranian émigrés. Sharma's accessible and erudite study tells the story of Persian poetry and its social domain in Mughal India. His book examines a period in which Persian poetry is highly inflected by the literary contributions of Iranian émigrés who were largely unchallenged by their Indian rivals. Overall, *Mughal Arcadia* succeeds in painting a nuanced picture of this period in which Persian poetry functioned as a valued currency of the Mughal cultural enterprise. It enabled the Mughals to bring local and transregional poets to participate in their imperial project. At this bazaar for poetry, poets displayed their linguistic skills and sought different types of patronage that extended well beyond the Mughal court. Based on these characteristics, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries mark one of the most dynamic and exciting periods of Persian literary culture. Bahar's characterization of this period as one of “decline” is ahistorical and cartoonish; it satisfies a set of modern political and cultural anxieties that did not exist in the age of Kalim, Abdur-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, and a constellation of other Persian poets and patrons active in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Sharma not only commemorates these poets, but he also critiques the cultural mechanism by which we've built our ‘modern’ world by remembering to forget them.

I wrote this piece in conversation with Munis Faruqui, Arthur Dudley, Anurag Advani, and Mariam Sabri to whom I am grateful.



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# Never Again: Youth and Political Change

By Leily Rezvani



On a bright spring day in May 2000, 750,000 people gathered in Washington, D.C., to protest gun violence after the Columbine High School mass shooting. As they marched, they chanted “Never Again,” believing they would kick-start a movement. However, eighteen years later, those words still echo across the world as outraged parents, teachers, students, and everyone in between demand respect and safety and wonder when the last time they chant “Never Again” will come.

Almost two decades later, in the wake of the February 2018 gun massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas (MSD) High School in Florida, the March 2018 student-led March for Our Lives re-emphasized the importance of youth involvement and systemic change. This march was different in the way that it collected supporters with intricate narratives about gun violence and from across party lines. Ivanka Trump’s brother-in-law and brother of White House advisor Jared Kushner—Josh Kushner—attended after donating \$50,000 to the March. At the New York City protest, Paul McCartney told CNN, “One of my best friends [John Lennon] was killed in gun violence right around here so it’s important to me.” The students organizing the rally called themselves “The Revolution” and claimed the government was corrupt and broken, allegedly allowing the National Rifle Association (NRA) to control Congress.

In addition to physically marching, some marchers took more direct action against their Congressional representatives. Sarah Chadwick—a survivor of the MSD High School shooting, and an organizer of the March for Our Lives—took action against the junior United States Florida Senator, Marco Rubio, a fierce Second Amendment advocate and recipient of millions of dollars of political donations from the National Rifle Association (NRA). Chadwick said in a statement: “We should change the names of AR-15s to ‘Marco Rubio’ since they are so easy to buy.” In a video addressed to an NRA representative, Chadwick said: “We’ve had enough of the lies, the sanctimony, the ignorance, the hatred, the pettiness, the NRA. We are done with your agenda to undermine the safety of our nation’s youth, and the individual voices of the American people.”

Before the rally, Chadwick and her peers organized walkouts around the world during which—on March 14th—students left their respective school campuses to walk out in solidarity with the MSD students. While some high schoolers protested on school grounds, others spent seventeen minutes in silence—one minute for each of the victims. Students from around the world marched. They walked out. They honored the victims of the MSD massacre. They showed lawmakers that they have a voice. They proved that, when it comes to the life of a fellow human being, gun control is a bipartisan issue. They ignited change. They hoped that, for the last time, they would say “Never Again.”

Alice Rickless is a San Diego native and rising freshman

at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, hoping to major in English. Despite Rickless’s concentration of study, she believes that activism will play a large role in her daily life. As a senior at High Tech High School in Point Loma, she organized a student walkout at her school and took to the streets to protest guns in schools. Additionally, she “attended and spoke at a city council meeting [one day before the walkout] about opposing the concealed carry gun reciprocity bills that are in House and Senate right now.” A couple of weeks later, Rickless attended the Los Angeles March for Our Lives and is now planning voter registration events at her high school to increase youth involvement in politics. She is driven by her belief that: “We ourselves are the future. Eventually we will run for political positions instead of just voting for them. Eventually we will be directly making changes.” In November 2016, during the presidential elections, Rickless felt powerless. However, after the massacre, her mindset shifted: “#enoughisenough. This has happened one too many times. I think that our generation is fed up with how things are. When I see these amazing students stand up and actually pressure the people in power to change things around is inspiring. It shows teenagers all over the world that they too can make a change. That’s why this movement is different—teenagers are believing in their own power and what they can achieve.” Looking forward, Rickless is certain that everyone involved in the movement will continue the spirit of activism. After her involvement in the walkout and protests, she is convinced that “[w]e are not backing down and we are not staying silent. This is not a moment, this is a movement. Certain people in power believe that this will blow over, but we will not let it. Also, to all of the teenagers who feel that they don’t have a voice, they do, and it is huge.”

The authenticity and spirit of the March for Our Lives rally after the MSD shooting demonstrate its youth-led origins. There were no corporate sponsors or political representatives. The speakers, who were mainly youth, disassociated themselves from political parties, clarifying that the issue of gun violence is a bipartisan one. Instead, they encouraged everyone to vote in November 2018. If change is not commenced, they vow to march again.

*Leily Rezvani is a rising freshman at Stanford University where she hopes to pursue a career in journalism and public radio. She is also very passionate about helping refugees and the disabled community through journalism and advocacy.*

# Events in San Diego

## Persian Cultural Center

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

### Melodic Rhythms Concert

Saturday May 5, 2018 at 7:30 pm  
at IAC  
Tickets and information: 858-552-9355

### PCC Annual Meeting and Election

Sunday May 20, 2018 10am - 12pm  
at Mt. Carmel High School Room C-1

### 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

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

### DOCUNIGHT

Wednesday May 9, and June 6, 2018  
at the Iranian-American Center (IAC) at 7 pm  
Documentary films about Iran or by Iranians

### Jong-e Farhangi

Iranian-American Center • 6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121  
Info: 858-552-9355

### Setar Class by Kourosh Taghavi

Registration and info: (858) 717-6389

### Tar & Guitar Class by Farhad Bahrami

Registration and info: (619) 318 1286

### Tombak Class by Milad Jahadi

Registration and Info: (858) 735-9634

## Iranian School of San Diego

858-552-9355

### ISSD End of the Year Program

Sunday June 10, 2018  
10:00 am - 12:00pm at Mt. Carmel High School

### 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.pccsd.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  
www.thehouseofiran.com

## Iranian-American Scholarship Fund

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

## IABA

Iranian-American Bar Association  
www.iaba.us/chapters/san-diego

## 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

**Honoring Our Heroes** - Memorial Day Weekend: The USS Midway Museum is the heart and soul of Memorial Day celebration in San Diego.

CINCO DE MAYO FIESTA!!

### THE AMIGO SPOT IS CELEBRATING CINCO DE MAYO

Kings Inn  
(619) 297-2231 May 5, 2018

### JULIAN WOMAN'S CLUB WILDFLOWER SHOW

FREE May 4 - May 6, 2018

### MT. SOLEDAD'S MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY

Mt Soledad National Veterans Memorial  
877-204-7661 May 28, 2018

2018 SAN DIEGO COUNTY FAIR

### HOW SWEET IT IS

Del Mar Fairgrounds 22nd 858-755-1161  
Jun 1 - Jul 4, 2018

BIG BAY BOOM!

### THE LARGEST FIREWORKS SHOW IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

FREE Jul 4, 2018

Fireworks will be discharged simultaneously from barges placed strategically around the Bay off Shelter Island, Harbor Island, Embarcadero North, Seaport Village, Embarcadero South Marina Park and Coronado Ferry Landing. The impeccably choreographed display will last approximately 17 minutes.



Visit Our web site at [www.pccsd.org](http://www.pccsd.org)



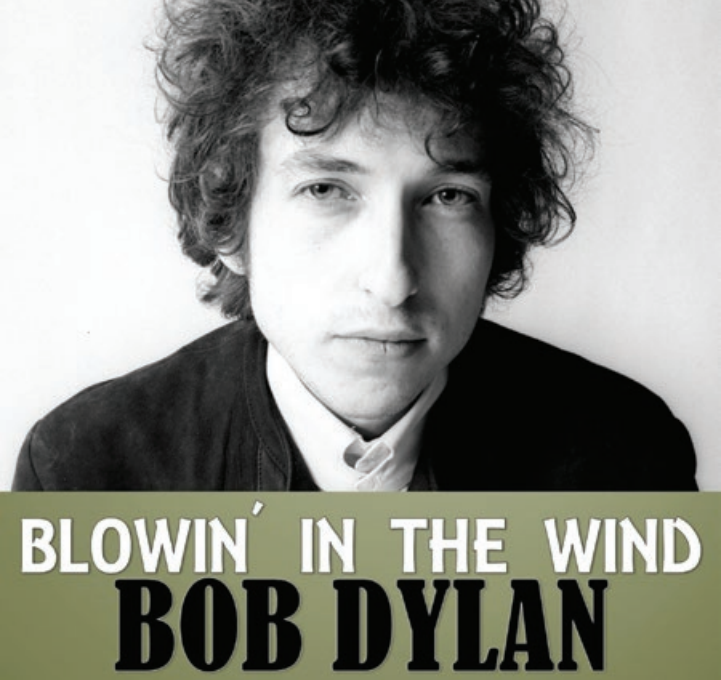
# KPBS Nowruz Celebration

## March 12, 2018

“People in Our Neighborhood” is a quarterly event designed by KPBS to share the stories of diverse ethnicities in San Diego in order to further familiarize their staff and audience with the community. Through this series of presentations and cultural performances, San Diegans learn more about other cultures, and gain a better understanding of their neighbors and how they contribute to our society and how their presence impacts our region.

KPBS has already held two such events, one involving India, and the other regarding the people of U.S./Mexico Border. As a third presentation, the Persian Community was invited. We were honored to help them to bring about a better understanding of our community. A luncheon was scheduled for Tuesday March 13<sup>th</sup> at KPBS from 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. The audience was comprised of KPBS staff, community leaders, some SDSU faculty and few students. Persian Cultural Center, Iranian School of San Diego, Association of Iranian American Professionals, House of Iran, Iranian-American Scholarship Fund and Dollar a Month Fund were the sponsors of this warm and wonderful gathering. A beautiful and colorful Haftseen was presented by Dr. Zohreh Ghahramani, while a traditional Nowruz luncheon was served.

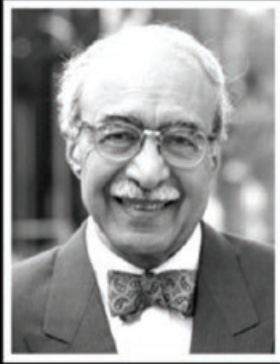
After a warm welcome from Tom Karlo, the General Manager of KPBS, Mrs. Shahri Estakhry introduced to the audience each of our sponsoring organizations and their representatives who told the audience about their organization and their role within our community. Ayla Darfshandar performed a heart warming dance. Roya Flowers sponsored the gift of flowers. Kia Talaei and Repromagic prepared a detailed 16 page brochure on the history of Iran. All in all, we are very proud to have represented our community with great pride at such prestigious event. Special thanks to all participants in particular, our wonderful friends the KPBS team who helped us for creating a warm and an exceptional event for better understanding.



How many roads must a man walk down  
Before you call him a man  
How many seas must a white dove sail  
Before she sleeps in the sand  
Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannon balls fly  
Before they're forever banned  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind  
Yes, 'n' how many years can a mountain exist  
Before it's washed to the sea  
Yes, 'n' how many years can some people exist  
Before they're allowed to be free  
Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head  
And pretend that he just doesn't see  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind  
Yes, 'n' how many times must a man look up  
Before he can see the sky  
Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have  
Before he can hear people cry  
Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows  
That too many people have died  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind

Bob Dylan, the controversial winner of 2016 Noble Prize in Literature, was born in Seattle in 1940. He was a musician all his life. That is why awarding him a prize in Literature seemed odd and subject to criticism in the world of Literature. He was described by Noble Prize Committee as “the Voice of Generations” in a span of 50 years, 1966-2016. His response to his critics was: “If a song moves you, tell the story.” And he quotes Homer who says, Sing in me, o Muse, and through me tell the story.”

Reporter/Commentator: Ahmad Fattahipour



**Prof. Farhang Mehr**  
(1923-2018)

## Dr. Farhang Mehr, an scholar and a public servant

We were saddened by the passing away, on March 3, 2018, of a distinguished and beloved member of our San Diego community, Dr. Farhang Mehr. Dr. Mehr and his wife, Parichehr, moved to Carlsbad in 2005. The Iranian-American Scholarship Fund had the great honor of having him on their Advisory Board for the past fifteen years.

Dr. Farhang Mehr was an educator, economist, lawyer, scholar and author with an impressive record of governmental and public service. His services to different divisions of his country were enormous and by a google search the list can be reviewed. His last position in Iran, prior to the Islamic Revolution of 1979, was presidency of Shiraz (Pahlavi) University. During his presidency, the university became internationally known for its academic excellence and for instituting innovative policies that were later adopted by other developing countries. It went from an institution that had \$10 million debt to one with approximately \$30 million in reserve. In 1973, the International Health Organization (WHO) chose the University as the center for giving on-the-job training courses to the faculties of the medical schools of the South Mediterranean countries.

In 1981, two years after the revolution in Iran, he emigrated to the United States. There he joined Boston University as Professor of International Relations. He retired in 1997 as Professor Emeritus.

Dr. Mehr authored 12 books on law, economics, international relations and Zoroastrianism in both Persian and English and published over 90 articles on his professional subjects. He traveled widely and gave lectures in America, Europe, Australia, the former Soviet Union and China. In addition to his publications he had numerous television and radio interviews.

Despite his impressive accomplishments, Dr. Mehr was well known for his humility and his open-mindedness. Many who knew him admired his wisdom and intellect, his honesty, his kindness and his commitment to helping others. He truly lived by the principles of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. We hope that his legacy will inspire future generations to work towards the growth and development of our communities.



**Public Announcement**

### **April 2018 Residential Messaging from SDG&E®**

#### **Article 4: You may qualify for a discount on your SDG&E bill**

SDG&E offers several Assistance Programs to help lower your monthly energy bill while making your home comfortable.

1. California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) Program ([sdge.com/CARE](http://sdge.com/CARE)): Save 30% or more every month on your bill. Eligibility is based on participation in certain public assistance programs, or household income and how many people live in your home.
2. Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) Program ([sdge.com/FERA](http://sdge.com/FERA)): If you don't qualify for CARE, you may for FERA. You could receive a 12% discount on your energy bill. FERA is only open to households with three or more people.
3. Medical Baseline ([sdge.com/MedicalBaseline](http://sdge.com/MedicalBaseline)): This Program has helped over 30,000 people, who have a qualifying medical need or medical device, to lower their energy costs.
4. Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) Program ([sdge.com/ESAP](http://sdge.com/ESAP)): You may receive free energy-saving improvements to your apartment, condo, house or mobile home; such as lighting, furnace repair, weather-stripping, attic insulation and select appliances like a refrigerator.

For details on any of these Assistance Programs visit [sdge.com/assistance](http://sdge.com/assistance), call 1-800-411-7343 or email [billdiscount@sdge.com](mailto:billdiscount@sdge.com).



# The Science of Nutrition

## CALCIUM AND YOUR HEALTH



**By: Mohammad Ahrar, PhD**

### Introduction

Calcium is a chemical element with the symbol Ca. It is the fifth most abundant element in Earth's crust, and the most abundant mineral in the body. Like many other minerals, calcium cannot be synthesized by living organisms and must be obtained from food. The body of an average adult person contains about 3 pounds of calcium. Ninety-nine percent of this amount is in the bones and teeth. The remaining 1 percent of the calcium circulates in the blood and body fluids.

In previous articles in the *Peyk*, we briefly discussed the importance of major nutrients, including fats, carbohydrates, proteins, and vitamins. In this article, we review the functions and health benefits of calcium.

### Metabolic functions of calcium

Most people are aware that calcium is essential for building strong bones and teeth, but calcium is also essential for muscle contraction, nerve impulses, releasing hormones, blood clotting, and maintaining a normal heart beat. Calcium also helps lower blood pressure and may even reduce the risk of developing colon cancer, kidney stones, and obesity.

### Calcium helps build strong bones and teeth

Calcium is the primary mineral in the bones. Calcium, with phosphorus, form the hard substance (hydroxyapatite crystals) of the bones and enamel of the teeth. It is worth mentioning that ample calcium and phosphorus alone will not guarantee strong bones and teeth. Several hormones work together to accomplish bone formation. Vitamin D is one of these hormones (discussed in *Peyk* 170). Another important factor for strong bones includes exercise, particularly weight-bearing exercise. For strong teeth the story is different because very little calcium is deposited in fully formed teeth. Consequently, if calcium is lost from the teeth, or the enamel is damaged or lost in fully formed teeth, it cannot be replaced. This is the reason dental cavities or caries need restoration.

**Bone formation and bone loss:** Maximum accumulation of calcium in the bones occurs during pubertal growth spurt, at which time bone mass increases 7 to 8 percent per year. The body's peak bone mass is achieved shortly after adult height is reached (about 18 years in female and 21 years in males). Total body bone mass remains fairly constant through the reproductive years and slows down as we age. The age-related bone loss is most marked in postmenopausal women because the estrogen level subsides during that period. Although females are at higher risk of bone loss after menopause, some factors can delay the process of bone loss by activating the bone forming cells and limiting the activities of bone destroying cells. Exercise and stress on bones during

walking, joking, games, and physical activities stimulates bone forming cells (osteoblasts) to build more bone tissue and help with stronger bone matrix. A bone grows or remodels in response to the forces or demands placed upon it. You may have noticed that the arm and hand that you use most for different games is slightly bigger and stronger than the other hand that you use less. For more information about the benefits of exercise, please refer to *Peyk* 168 (March-April 2017).

**Other factors:** a balanced diet, availability of vitamin D, and other minerals, including phosphorus and magnesium, plus thyroid hormones are essential for healthy bones. Leptin, a hormone released by adipose tissue, inhibits bone forming cells (osteoblasts) in animals. It is therefore conceivable that the more fat we accumulate in the body will negatively affect bone mass production. This becomes more important for over-weight children which may affect their normal growth rate.

### Role of calcium in muscle contraction

To use our muscles for grabbing an object, or any physical activity, or for the muscles of the heart and internal organs to function, calcium must be present in the cells, as well as surrounding the cells in adequate amounts. Without calcium, you cannot even move, walk, or hold a glass. When a muscle is stimulated by nerve impulses, calcium ions flow into the cell through a calcium channel and bind to special proteins inside muscle cells. This binding initiates a series of steps that lead muscle cells to shorten (contract); hence muscle contraction allows us to grab things, to walk, to talk, to eat, and do any physical activity. *The normal range of blood calcium level is 8.8–10.7 mg/dl.*

### Role of calcium in Nervous system

Calcium assists in manufacturing a neurotransmitter called acetylcholine, a chemical that enhances transmission of nerve impulses. For this reason, low blood calcium levels can cause numbness or a tingling sensation in some parts of the body. Additionally, calcium plays a key role in the releasing of neurotransmission between the neurons and the junction of neuron terminals and the muscle cells.

### Abnormalities of calcium level in blood

**Hypercalcemia** refers to a high blood calcium level.

*Symptoms* of high blood calcium level include; an abnormally high blood calcium level, or hypercalcemia, may cause anorexia, nausea, vomiting, memory loss, confusion, muscle weakness, increased urination, and dehydration.

**Hypocalcemia** refers to low calcium levels in the blood serum.

*Symptoms* of low blood calcium: convulsions, arrhythmias, tetany, and a numbness or tingling - 'pins and needles' sensation - in



# CALCIUM & YOUR HEALTH

and around the mouth and lips, and in the hands and feet. Muscle irritability, muscle cramps in the back and the legs, and twitching of facial muscles may also occur in hypocalcemia.

## How blood calcium levels stay normal

Blood calcium must be maintained at a constant level for the body to function properly.

The amount of calcium circulating in the blood is so vital that two hormones (parathyroid hormone and calcitonin) respond to the varying levels of blood calcium to maintain equilibrium.

*When plasma calcium concentration falls*, the parathyroid gland releases *Para Thyroid Hormone (PTH)*. This hormone helps the reabsorption of calcium from the kidney tubules, activates vitamin D to enhance intestinal calcium absorption, and activates some bone cells (osteoclasts) to dissolve bone calcium and release it into the blood to maintain plasma calcium concentration within normal level..

*When plasma calcium concentration rises*, some special cells in the thyroid gland release a hormone called *calcitonin*. This hormone is very effective, especially in children, to help deposit extra calcium into the bones and maintain blood calcium levels in a normal range.

## Factors affecting calcium absorption

Calcium is absorbed throughout the small intestine. Growing children absorb up to 75 percent of dietary calcium, compared to 30 percent absorbed by adults.

The bioavailability of calcium in various foods can be influenced by other nutrients in the diet. For example, the presence of vitamin D and lactose in fortified milk increases the absorption of calcium. In general, the percentage of available calcium absorbed from vegetables is considerably less than that absorbed from milk. For example, only 5 percent of the total calcium found in spinach is absorbed.

Several factors can also interfere with the absorption and retention of calcium; for example, oxalates, phytic acid, excessive protein intake, dietary fiber, and magnesium reduce absorption of calcium from the small intestine.

**Oxalic acid:** Some plants, such as spinach and rhubarb, contain oxalic acid (oxalate) that bind with the calcium present in the vegetable and produce calcium oxalate complex, an insoluble substance that is not absorbed much and most of the calcium will be excreted in the feces. The calcium from other sources, such as dairy products, do interfere with the absorption of calcium in the small intestine. The Iranian food of yogurt-spinach provides a good combination of available calcium, vitamins, and minerals.

**Oxalic acid poisoning:** It is possible to be poisoned by ingesting too much of foods that contain oxalic acid. Cranberries, gooseberries, chard, spinach, beet leaves and rhubarb are high in oxalic acid. Rhubarb leaves contain three to four times as much as the amount of oxalic acid in the stalks. Ingesting a fairly small amount of rhubarb leaf can poison a child. One way to minimize the

chance of oxalic acid poisoning is to consume foods that contain calcium with foods high in oxalic acid. The calcium combines with the oxalate which then passes through the intestine harmlessly. The Iranian food, yogurt-spinach, provides a good combination of calcium, vitamins, and minerals.

**Phytic acid:** cereals contain a substance called phytic acid that forms an insoluble complex with calcium. Foods that contain high level of phytic acid, such as legumes (beans, peas, chickpeas, lentils), nuts, whole-wheat bread and cereals, reduce calcium absorption. Phytic acid can bind with calcium and reduces calcium absorption and bioavailability of calcium to the body. When dairy products are consumed with vegetables that contain oxalic acid or phytic acid, the availability of calcium is not affected greatly.

Ovovegetarian and vegan individuals, can benefit from fortified orange juice.

**Low calcium in diet:** A person deficient in calcium will absorb most of the calcium from foods than someone who has an adequate or excessive amount.

**Protein in the diet:** Adequate protein intake facilitates calcium absorption through the production of an insulin-like growth factor that promotes bone forming cells (osteoblasts), to produce bone tissue. However, excess intake of protein increases urinary loss of calcium.

**Dietary fiber:** humans do not have the enzyme to digest cellulose or lignin.

Calcium absorption is hindered by excessive intake of insoluble dietary fiber. It passes through the small intestine rather quickly, thus decreasing the time available for calcium absorption.

**Influence of other minerals:** excessive intake of magnesium and zinc impair the absorption of calcium. Excess sodium in the diet can also increase elimination of calcium by the kidneys, and in the long run, may cause bone loss.

**Caffeine:** Intake of caffeine in caffeinated drinks has a clear but small depressant effect on intestinal absorption of calcium. However, excess caffeine intake can result in calcium loss in the urine and feces. This becomes of major concern when some individuals replace milk in the diet with caffeinated beverages.

**Calcium supplements:** high doses of calcium supplements may not be as efficiently absorbed compared to low dose intake. Calcium taken with a meal is better absorbed than when taken without food.

**Smoking:** research has shown that smokers absorb less calcium than nonsmokers and have lower bone mineral density in hips and total body (2). The effects are more severe in individuals who smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day.

**Alcohol consumption:** it has been reported that alcohol consumption has varying effects on bone health. Generally, alcohol reduce bone formation, decrease bone formation rate, and increase fracture incidents in individuals who abuse alcohol. Light to moderate drinking has been associated with neural and positive effect on women's bone health, possibly caused by changes in calcitonin and estrogen balance.





Dear Neighbors:

# Reflections on March for Our Lives

By Marriam Zarabi

A youth movement created in response to a tragedy.

A youth movement that embodies action-oriented goals, collective needs and collective grievances, a shift from the focus on the individual. A youth movement that acknowledges racial and socioeconomic disparities, and the privileges of working from the up-side of power. A youth movement that supports collaboration and championing student-run organizations with a common cause, including the Dream Defenders, a civil rights group founded after the death of Trayvon Martin, and Peace Warriors, a Chicago-based youth group fighting gun violence.

March for Our Lives is a youth movement that is working actively to dismantle an uneven power dynamic between Congress and its citizens, youth and adults, addressing stereotypes around youth as inadequate or incapable of inspiring change; and perhaps most prominent: raising attention and awareness for major gun legislation in Congress.

Participants of the youth movement are using advocacy and organizing as a coping mechanism, as Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School student activist Emma González stated: “this is the way I have to grieve.” I am continuously impressed by the ways the students of March for Our Lives, and students across the nation in similar youth movements and organizations, practice an awareness of the intersection of race, religion, socioeconomic power, privilege and accessibility, and the ways in which these intersections are addressed in their work, their ability to organize, their ability to communicate, and their ability to ask thoughtful and challenging questions for change. What is most inspiring is their fearlessness and drive, and their ability to change the world with their voice.

As a psychology graduate student, the combination of activism and grief makes me more curious about trauma response and advocacy as a coping mechanism. I studied social movements including the Green Movement in Iran, and the Arab Spring in Tunisia as an undergraduate and I am particularly interested in social media as a tool for citizen journalism, activism and organizing. As I keep up with the news on March for Our Lives, Black Lives Matter, and other social movements, social media is always the common thread of community building, community organizing, and a space for reactionary comments and oppositional perspectives. As I aim to keep up with news and events around March for Our Lives, I realize how little I know about gun laws and what many are describing as “gun culture.” I have also found a common theme of silence: the idea of “we will not stay silent;” the way in which Emma Gonzalez used silence in her moving speech during the march, and the way in which some believe “silence is easier” to avoid further argument, or as a means of self-preservation.

In a New York Times op-ed piece called “Gun Culture Is My Culture. And I Fear for What It Has Become,” novelist David Joy expresses that sometimes “silence is easier” after getting into a disagreement friend, who is pro-gun and pro-gun law. What is most interesting about Joy’s article is the personal anecdotes around the context of gun use and gun ownership from his childhood to his present-day life.

Guns provided a sense of livelihood for Joy and his family. Gun use allowed Joy’s family to hunt game and also provided a means for bonding. Additionally, the geographic area that Joy was raised celebrated gun use as a multigenerational tradition. Joy shares stories of a grandfather passing down his shooting rifle to his son, whom eventually passed the gun to his son. The gun became a symbol of family within a broader multicultural context. Later on in life, Joy survived an armed robbery in which the weapon of choice was a gun. Joy survived the robbery, but lives with ongoing trauma and fear, respectfully. As a current gun owner, he speaks of his gun as a tool that provides a sense of safety and perhaps agency. As a survivor of childhood trauma, perhaps his gun also alleviates the fear accompanied with the risk of “someone suddenly open[ing] fire.”

I empathize with Joy and appreciate his thoughtful exploration and the ways in which he differentiates the complexities of gun ownership and gun culture: “Unlike a lot of those who carry, I don’t buy into that only-way-to-stop-a-bad-guy-with-a-gun-is-a-good-guy-with-a-gun bravado. I have no visions of being a hero. Instead, I find myself looking for where I’d run, asking myself what I would get behind. The gun is the last resort. It’s the final option when all else is exhausted.” I immediately think of the activists of Stoneman Douglas High School. I also immediately think of the recent instances in school settings in which a gun sounded like, and seemed like, the first resort given the ridiculously easy accessibility and purchase of guns. Additionally, what is perhaps most striking about Joy’s account is that he is not a gun owner with the hope of being a hero; he is a gun-owner because he is scared. As a trauma survivor, this emotion and feeling of constantly being scared is all-consuming and ever-lasting. As a clinical trainee in psychology, my work with trauma survivors echos similar anecdotes. When fear-based trauma is paired with gun ownership as a means of protection and as a comfort, the culture in which gun ownership and accessibility becomes the greatest point of concern, and perhaps, the multigenerational lineage and culture around gun ownership and how and why that has evolved present-day.

Emma Gonzalez  
Jaclyn Corin  
Arieyanna Williams  
Naomi Wadler

May youth voices continue changing the world.

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*Marriam is a graduate student studying psychology. She explores her dual identity through narrative and written prose, often writing about her personal experiences as a second-generation Iranian growing up in Kansas City.*

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# Noush-e Jan

## A Vegetarian's Delight

From: Silk Road Cooking By: Najmieh Batmanglij

### Caspian Butternut Squash, Bulgur & Wild Orange Soup

Serving: 6

Prep time: 15 min.

Cooking time: 1 hr.

2 tbspoons vegetable oil, or butter; 1 onion peeled & thinly sliced; 1 fresh hot green chili chopped or ¼ teaspoon cayenne; 4 cups butternut squash peeled & cut into 1-inch; 1 cup ground walnut; 2 cups vegetable stock or water; ½ cup rice flour\* diluted in 2 cups water; 1 cup bulgur rinsed in a fine-mesh colander and soaked in 1 cup of milk for 40 minutes; 2 teaspoons salt; 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper; 1 teaspoon cinnamon; ½ teaspoon ground cumin; ½ teaspoon cooking rose water (optional); 1 cup parsley leaves or 6 sage leaves; 1 cup Seville orange juice\* or 1 cup of orange juice mixed with ¼ cup lime juice.



This soup, very popular in the Caspian Sea region, is also popular in Italy, where sage is used to replace the parsley, and Parmesan cheese is used in lieu of bulgur.

1. Heat the oil in a medium-sized pot, over medium heat. Add the onion and stir-fry for 10 minutes until translucent. Add the chili, butternut squash and walnuts and stir-fry for 1 minute.
2. Add 4 cups vegetable stock. Bring to a boil. Partially cover and simmer over medium heat for 30 minutes until the squash is tender.
3. Add the diluted rice flour, bulgur soaked in milk, salt, pepper, sugar, cinnamon, cumin, and rose water and bring to boil, stirring constantly. Cover and simmer over low heat for another 20 minutes. If the soup is too thick, add some warm water and bring back to a boil. Add the parsley and Seville orange juice, and adjust seasoning to taste. Noush e jan (enjoy in good health)

### Persian Cauliflower Kuku (Quiche)

Serving: 6

Prep time: 5 mins

Cooking time:  
25 mins

6 eggs; ½ tspoon baking powder; 1 tbspoon flour or bread crumbs; ½ cup milk or soy milk; ½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated, or fresh mozzarella, shredded; ¼ cup vegetable oil, or butter; 1 small onion, peeled & thinly sliced; 2 cloves garlic, peeled & crushed; 1 small head cauliflower or 1 lbs. frozen florets, coarsely chopped; 2 tspoons salt, ½ tspoon freshly ground black pepper; 1 t spoon ground cumin; ¼ tspoon ground paprika; ¼ tspoon turmeric; 1/8 tspoon cayenne; ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley or basil.



*Note: You may replace the cauliflower with a combination of 1 lb. mushrooms and 1 lb. spinach. Or use 1 lb. leeks (thinly sliced, white part only), asparagus, zucchini, or eggplant.*

Because the cauliflower was called choux de Chypre (Cyprus cabbage) in French, some have thought it came from Cyprus. It is more likely, however, that it came from India or southern Iran and later introduced into Europe.

1. Break the eggs into a mixing bowl, add the baking powder, flour, milk and cheese, and whisk lightly.
2. Heat the oil in a medium-sized nonstick skillet over low heat. Add the onion and stir-fry for 5 minutes until translucent. Add the garlic, cauliflower, salt, pepper, cumin, paprika, turmeric, chili and parsley, and stir-fry for 5 to 10 minutes until the cauliflower is soft.
3. Pour the egg mixture over the cauliflower in the skillet. Cook over low heat for 6 to 10 minutes until set.
4. Place the skillet under a preheated broiler for 1 minute to brown the top.
5. Serve warm or cold with yogurt and flat bread. Garnish with herbs.

**Noush e jan (enjoy in good health)**





By Sanaz Majd, MD

# Hypertension

You may have heard the whispers in the news about updated hypertension guidelines. More stringent blood pressure ranges have been recently proposed by the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association (ACC/AHA). Currently, about a third of Americans are estimated to have high blood pressure, which reflects to about 50 million people. As a result of these suggested changes, more people will be diagnosed with high blood pressure than ever before. It is estimated that in those younger than age 45, the diagnosis will now double for women and triple for men. For those of you escaping treatment for what may be considered as “borderline” blood pressures up to now, you may soon be forced to face the diagnosis head on.

## What is Blood Pressure?

Before we review the nitty gritty of the new proposed guidelines, let’s tackle what blood pressure even really is.

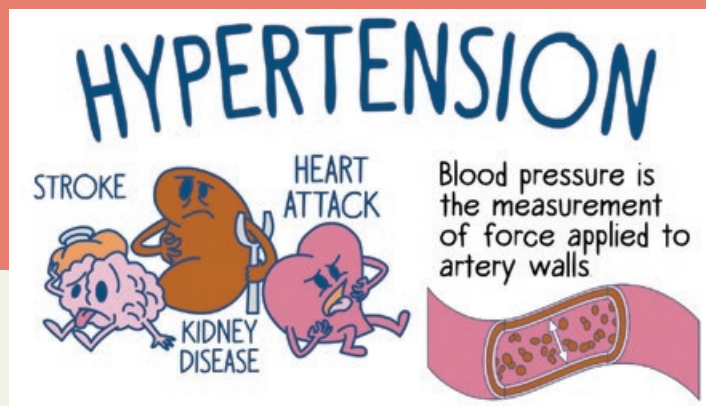
Think of your blood vessels as small little hoses. Your blood pressure contains two numbers with a “top” and a “bottom” number. The top, “higher” number (referred to as the systolic), is a reflection of the pressure in these lumens when the heart is contracting. And the bottom number, or “lower” (diastolic), displays the pressure within these hoses when the heart is relaxed. For instance, a blood pressure of 120/70 signifies a systolic of 120 and a diastolic of 70.

Up to now, blood pressure treatment goal has remained at *less* than 140/90 for most people. It’s important to note that even if one of the two numbers hits the cut-off (140 for the top and/or 90 for the bottom), it meets diagnostic criteria. Both the systolic and the diastolic pressures are essential, yet systolic is the one that most people have trouble with, especially through age. Our blood vessels “stiffen” with plaque buildup with aging, and hence increase the pressure of the blood traveling within the lumen.

## Complications of Hypertension

Higher pressures within the blood vessels will gradually cause wear and tear on the lining of these “hoses.” As a result, our immune system attempts to patch it up by building plaque over these damaged points. Eventually, the plaque can grow large enough to diminish oxygen flow to the heart or brain, hence causing a heart attack or stroke, respectively.

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in both women and men in the U.S. and the world. And hypertension is one of the *preventable* risk factors that may lead to heart disease (along with diabetes, cigarette smoking, and elevated cholesterol). You may not be able to do anything to modify your genetics, sex, and age, which are other contributing risk factors, but you can certainly control your blood pressure.



One of the most ominous features of hypertension is that most people are asymptomatic -- they don’t feel any different when their blood pressure is elevated. Why be forced to take a pill every day when you feel “fine,” you may be wondering? This is why heart disease is sadly called the “silent killer” – most people may feel fine until it’s too late.

## New Proposed BP Guidelines

The earlier and more aggressively we control our blood pressure, the less time it will spend damaging our blood vessels. Hence, the more lives we will save. In order to help achieve this, the ACC/AHA recommends a much lower blood pressure threshold of 130/80, especially for those with a higher risk of heart disease. What does “higher risk” mean—how much risk exactly? They propose that those with a 10% or greater risk of developing heart disease in the next 10 years should consider taking medication. The American Heart Association created a calculator to help you calculate your own risk at <https://ccccalculator.ccctracker.com>. Those with a 10-year risk of less than 10% may possibly escape taking a medication to treat it early on, but should at minimum implement lifestyle changes.

## Blood Pressure Categories

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

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[heart.org/bplevels](http://heart.org/bplevels)

In a nutshell:

- 130/80 is the new 140/90
- Normal is less than 120/80
- Systolic between 120-129 is simply considered “elevated” (the term “prehypertension” is no longer used)

## How to Treat High Blood Pressure

Medication management of hypertension may now be recommended for more people than ever before. Thankfully, there are numerous generic options with low cost and high efficacy.

Talk to your doctor about medication that may be best for you. Almost everyone with hypertension can stand to benefit from some lifestyle changes, however. For some lower risk patients with mildly elevated pressures, a trial of these changes may be all that's needed to reduce their numbers. Here are a few modifications that can help lower your blood pressure:

- Weight loss reduces BP by 5-20mmHg. Even losing 10% of your body weight may be sufficient to make a great difference.
- Aerobic exercise reduces systolic pressures by 4-9 mm Hg and diastolic by 2-3 mm Hg. Shoot for at least 30 minutes of continuous cardiovascular exercise for most days of the week.
- Limiting sodium intake reduces BP by 2-8 mmHg. A daily salt intake of less than 2400 mg/day is often advised.
- For those over age 60: weight loss and reduced salt intake are especially beneficial

DASH diet (stands for Dietary Approaches to Stopping Hypertension) is a well-studied plan that can reduce systolic BP by 8-14 mmHg. Highlights include 8-10 servings of fiber, 2-3 servings of low/non-fat dairy, no saturated fats and instead opting for healthier fats like nuts and seeds, cholesterol intake of 150g or less, lean protein choices such as fish or lean poultry, and whole grains. Learn more at: [https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/heart/hbp\\_low.pdf](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/heart/hbp_low.pdf).

- Limit alcohol to no more than 1 glass of red wine for women and 2 glasses for men with evening meals. Anything more can actually increase blood pressures.

There's really no better time than the present to start implementing these changes. And if you tend to have elevated numbers, investing in a blood pressure monitor for home use may be wise. Bring it to your doctor's office once a year to verify its accuracy.

*Sanaz Majd, MD is a board-certified family medicine physician*  
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## Persian Cultural Center Annual Meeting and Election Sunday May 20, 2018

The Persian Cultural Center will hold its annual meeting and election for members of the Board of Directors on Sunday, May 20, 2018 at the Mt. Carmel High School, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Mt. Carmel High School is located at 9550 Carmel Mtn. Rd, San Diego, CA 92129.

The agenda for the meeting will be as follows:

- Welcome by PCC president
- Annual Board of Directors' report
- Introducing the new candidates
- Election process and results

If you have been a member for the last year and are interested in running for the board, please contact us immediately. If your membership has lapsed or you would like to become a member, this is the best time to do so and join us in our annual meeting. You can find the membership form on our website at [www.pccsd.org](http://www.pccsd.org).

In a few days a list of candidate and instructions will be sent to all PCC members. Thank you for your support. If you are a current member and did not receive the voting package in mail, please contact us immediately.

Thank you,  
Board of Directors of Persian Cultural Center

BALBOA PARK  
THE SAN DIEGO  
MUSEUM OF ART

**May**  
**18**  
**Friday**  
10:00am

## The Intersection of Past and Present in Iranian Art: Behind the Scenes of an Exhibition

**Speaker:** Linda Komaroff, Ph.D, Curator and  
Department Head, Art of the Middle East,  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Tickets: \$13 members  
\$16 nonmembers  
\$8 seniors and military  
\$5 students

James S. Copley Auditorium  
1450 El Prado  
San Diego, CA 92101





# I MOVED TO IRAN TO LEARN THE LANGUAGE I FORGOT



Niki Afsar

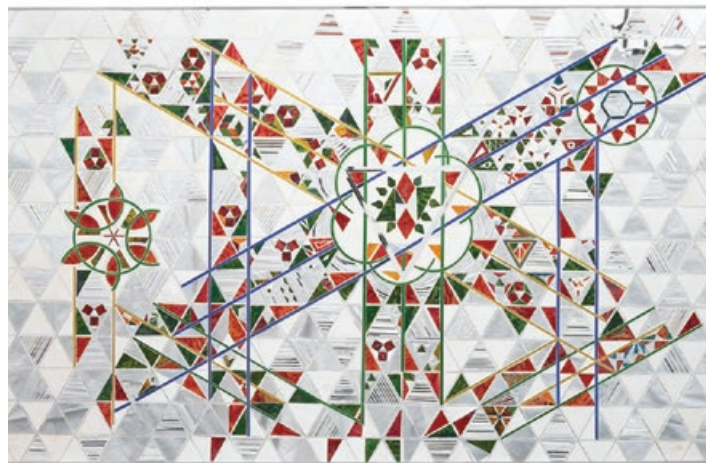
Last July, I boarded a plane to Tehran, Iran, the city where my parents were born. I walked down the aisle to my seat and tried to avoid staring openly at row after row of familiar-looking faces. Nearly everyone else on the flight was Iranian, and I quickly realized that I was not only avoiding staring at them; I was also trying not to notice them staring at me. My dark, curly hair and green eyes have always granted me an air of racial ambiguity that tends to confuse people, so that even other Iranians and Iranian Americans have trouble placing me as one of their own. And as I boarded the flight, I couldn't help thinking that everyone was trying to determine if I was one of them. My trip had barely begun and already I felt wrong and out of place.

I'd put on a long shirt that would be appropriate both for the government's dress code and for the hot climate I was going to, and even though I had liked the shirt when I bought it, I now felt like I was wearing a costume. (This feeling would stay with me for the next five months or so.) I wanted to be excited, but I could only feel a nauseous, gnawing ache in my stomach that wouldn't leave me alone.

As the plane approached Tehran, I looked out the window and watched green mountains transform into sloping tan ones that I recognized from the few summer trips to Iran I'd taken with my parents. My scarf waited patiently in my bag during the flight, and when we landed, I dutifully put it on, glancing furtively around at the other women to see how they were wearing theirs, and doing my best to look unbothered by the fabric resting awkwardly on my curls. I walked off the plane and broke into a sweat — from the heat, and from the built-up anticipation of stepping into the country that, after years of being the familiar-but-distant place of my parents' childhood, might now become a kind of home. Many of us become trapped by the idea that we don't have a choice when it comes to who we are.

I was born in Los Angeles (also known as Tehrangeles, thanks to its large population of Iranian Americans) and grew up in the Washington, DC, area. From the time I started preschool, I spoke little to no Farsi at home — nothing beyond the standard greetings and farewells, terms of endearment, and a few curse words thrown out by my parents in bad traffic. And that never bothered me until I was a teenager, when I began to notice other Iranian American, second-generation kids who could speak Farsi, who had relationships with their grandparents beyond half-formed sentences and long-distance phone calls.

bout a year ago, I decided that now was the right time to commit myself to learning my parents' first language. I was 24, working part-time jobs that paid just enough for me to afford rent in New York City, with no concrete or even tentative plans for a career or further education. I figured I'd use this freedom to take advantage of my Iranian passport, granted to me thanks to my father's Iranian nationality (my mother's apparently being irrelevant). I



Monir Farmanfarmaian, «Gabbeh,» 2009 (mirror, reverse-glass painting, and plaster on wood).

planned to spend three months living in Tehran, where I had family, taking Farsi classes and then traveling around to explore the country I had always loved but never truly known.

Eight months after I arrived, I am still in Tehran, still taking Farsi classes. And although I have traveled to many cities and regions across Iran, some of which even my parents have not seen, I'm not sure how much closer I feel to truly knowing the place that is rooted so deeply inside of me.

We spend most of our lives not having a choice. We don't choose to be born, or where we're born, or who our families will be — and then many of us become trapped by the idea that we don't have a choice when it comes to who we are. How long does it take to undo that thinking, and begin recreating yourself into the person you want to be?

On the day I arrived, my cousin T came to get me from the airport. She's about 10 years older than me, and although our relationship up until then hadn't consisted of much more than the occasional social media like, I had always been a little in awe of her for her bold, unapologetic way of speaking. She didn't wear



Looking out over the salt formations on Hormuz Island in the Persian Gulf.

much makeup, didn't have a nose job ("I started the trend in our family of not getting nose jobs!" she'd brag later on), would argue with anyone who tried to tell her something she didn't like, and would let her scarf slip off her hair and wait a few minutes before casually sweeping it back up.

We greeted each other excitedly, but politely, and I realized I was shaking. She spoke to me in Farsi, but I could only respond with a few words before having to revert back to English. Suddenly, I was crying. I kept laughing and smiling, apologizing for the tears, not quite sure what to make of the feelings rattling inside me. I could hardly believe that I'd brought myself here, that I was here without my parents to speak for me.

The afternoon sun beat down on us as we walked out into the dusty parking lot. We drove for an hour between the airport and the city, and I found myself blinking dumbly as the familiar landscape stretched out around us: the mountains hazy in the distance, the wide freeways with grassy parks between them where you would inevitably find families picnicking — Iranians will take any stretch of grass as an opportunity for a picnic — and the hodgepodge of pale, mismatched buildings rising up as we entered the city.

We arrived at T's cozy apartment in the northern part of the city, and as I looked out the window, the thing that jarred me the most was that I had done it: I had come to Iran, like I said I would. I was struck by how easy it had all been, and maybe I was also struck by the fact that Iran had changed so much in the six years since I had been here. Iran had not been waiting patiently for me. Everyone in my family was six years older; the buildings seemed bigger and newer; I strangely felt as if I had jumped six years into the future. It was the strangeness of returning to find that the place that exists constantly in your imagination at home, the country that you always refer to whenever talking about yourself or your family, has been evolving and changing and living on its own all these years.

The jet lag left me loopy for at least two weeks. In addition to the shift in hours, time is organized differently here. Iran uses a solar calendar, with its own months, and the new year begins at the spring equinox. I had to learn 12 new names for the months and their order. The week is organized differently as well, with the weekend falling on Thursday and Friday, the holy day in Islam, and workdays beginning on Saturday. While I've gotten the hang of the months by now, I still have trouble remembering exactly which day of the week it is. The result is that I constantly feel like I'm a few days off from reality, just another way in which I feel like I am close-but-not-quite-like other Iranians.

We tend to think of time in an Aristotelian fashion, as a linear series of moments with a beginning, middle, and end. I can't

explain my experience in Iran this way, as a line with a clear direction. Rather, I see moments cut together like a fast-moving montage, images jumbled together and flickering like a collage of television screens.

Time feels compressed, the past constantly in tandem with the present. Every city I visit is full of architectural reminders of a distant, sometimes ancient past: stone citadels; glass windows stained green yellow red and blue; towering cypress trees; intricate blue and yellow tiles spelling out the names of Allah and Ali and Mohammed in mosques; the domed roofs of bazaars and caravanserais; crumbling yellow-brick homes in Tehran with broken windows, on land that miraculously has not been sold, standing in the shade of giant, lavish high-rise apartments.

This same feeling of time being compressed follows me when I visit my amehs' homes (I have seven aunts on my father's side, four of them still in Tehran), where side tables, bookshelves, and wall space serve as surfaces for displaying vast collections of photographs, small museum exhibits of our sprawling family. I sit and drink tea with my aunts next to images of their younger selves, mixed in with the other mementos of my parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins — people who have either passed or gone on to live in different parts of the world.

I myself also feel compressed, or rather, reversed. I have reverted to being a child. In the mornings I hear turtle doves outside of my room warbling and think of my cousin telling me confidently, "after two months, you will speak mesl-e bolbol!" When I give her a blank look she translates: "like a nightingale!" But over the next few months, I speak more like a child who is just learning their first words, haltingly and brokenly, with simple phrases and sometimes monosyllables.

I find myself acting like a child as well, and being treated as one in return — people realize just how bad my Farsi is and suddenly take on a look of concern, speaking slowly and carefully to me, asking only simple questions, making simple, silly jokes, explaining simple vocabulary to me. My sister and I are the youngest of 22 cousins on my father's side, and I sense that I am still considered the baby of the family. I visit my Ameh H for dinner and her ta'arof is so strong, she refuses to let me do anything, so I sit and make broken conversation while she brings me tea and food. I find myself becoming quiet in groups, as people around me eventually shift the conversation to talk over or around me, the way you do when you've grown tired of the kid in the room. I become reacquainted with that constant feeling from childhood of not knowing what exactly is going on.

The first few months I was here, in the sweltering heat of a Tehran summer, I felt the inescapable urge to blend in. I could not bear to be seen as a tourist, to be spoken to in English as soon as my poor Farsi was made clear, to be caught trying to take pictures on the street or looking with too much wonderment at the street sellers hawking wares on the sidewalk, the wide-eyed cats that prowl every corner of the streets, the beautifully arranged displays of fruits and nuts in stands by the bazaar, the loud chaos of honking cars in a traffic circle, the murals painted on the open sides of apartment buildings, the stream of sellers in the metro walking across the cars carrying heavy loads of socks, jewelry, makeup, bras, shirts, pajamas, underwear, lavashak, fresh olives, powdered saffron, window cleaners, hair extensions, toys, books, notebooks, pens, screwdrivers, flashlights, lanterns, sleeping bags, picnic blankets, regular blankets, towels, headphones, chargers, headscarves — anything you could possibly need — loudly and elegantly proclaiming the benefits and quality of their products.

As I walked to my classes or to the metro to try to explore the city on my own, I felt eyes on me everywhere I went, the way I did walking down the aisle of the plane. Perhaps out of a mere



A mural depicting Ayatollah Khomeini overlooking an Armenian church in central Tehran.





The Alborz Mountains seen behind an overpass in northern Tehran.

tendency toward defensiveness, I wanted to prove myself as “full” Iranian. But, of course, I wasn’t.

All my life I had been asked that perennial question: “Where are you from?” The fantasy is that if we were to return to the motherland, if we were to “go back to where we came from,” so to speak, this question would cease and we would seamlessly blend back into our homeland’s welcoming arms. But if anything, my dismal lack of Farsi has made the question an even more constant refrain, now that I’m here.

I hear it from Snapp drivers (Snapp is a popular ridesharing app in Iran) who can’t hold back their curiosity as we sit in traffic, and shopkeepers who have watched me struggle to make a purchase, and from my cousins’ relaxed, well-dressed friends at parties in dimly lit apartments that turn hazy with cigarette smoke while we drink black-market whiskey or homemade araq mixed with juice. I hear it from train conductors checking my ticket and wondering why I speak “good Farsi for a foreigner,” from people on the street who see me talking to my obviously khareji (foreign) friends as we leave our Farsi classes and walk toward the metro, from a vendor selling me a rotisserie chicken that I then handed

Sometimes people are impressed and supportive of my project. Most of the time, they laugh and say, “You know everyone’s trying to go there, right? And you come here?” I give a weak, somewhat ashamed smile when they say this. Not because I feel guilty or wrong, but because they have pointed out the privilege I am currently indulging in by being able to return to my parents’ country alone. I have a passport here, and a large, loving network of relatives who can host me and support me, and American dollars saved up that can buy me most things at a shamefully cheap price, thanks to the continually plummeting value of Iranian currency. I have the privilege to be sheltered in the richer northern part of the city, almost completely segregated from the protests that flared up over the winter. None of this escapes my notice. The only privilege I lack is the ability to express myself precisely in Farsi, the language I’ve spent my whole life hearing and not speaking.

I wanted to believe that the language was already inside of me, like a sleeping djinn just waiting to be awoken. I was so convinced that learning this language would be like unlocking a hidden puzzle buried down my throat, waiting patiently in the fleshy space between my heart and my stomach. But learning Farsi, which I thought would be so simple to pick up, has only served to stress the great distances that still exist between me and Iran, between my knowledge of this place and the vast history, culture, literature, and vocabulary that remain far beyond my grasp.

It’s as if I had forgotten how languages work, that they are worlds in themselves. Despite the fact that I studied comparative literature, I found myself stupidly surprised to discover so many synonyms, each with their own nuance; as soon as I felt I had gotten a grasp of one word, 10 others would appear. There are thousands of idioms and proverbs woven beautifully into Farsi, and so these also blossom out, waiting to be explored. As I traveled to cities from the far north to the far south, I discovered different dialects and accents that then confounded the sounds I had been learning, so that in the end I am left with the same feeling I had looking up at the stars from the Kaluts in the Lut desert: that there is so much to learn, so much I will never know.



Sitting on one the dunes of the Rig-e Jenn desert in central Iran.



The Alborz Mountains in the summer.

Over the past eight months, I’ve learned to ignore the stares on the street, to meet people’s curious questions with a patient smile; and yet the deep desire to blend in, to be seen as a natural member of this society, has never left. I tried to walk with the same determination I saw in my cousin. I learned to wade bravely through the chaotic traffic, crossing streets while staring down oncoming drivers.

to two small children selling Hafez poems as fortunes near the crowded Enghelab Square. I hear it from the museum ticket sellers who can’t believe I’m asking for an Iranian-priced ticket, from cafe baristas watching me painstakingly write out my Farsi letters in chic student cafes that remind me of New York, save for the portraits of the ayatollahs looking over the cash register.

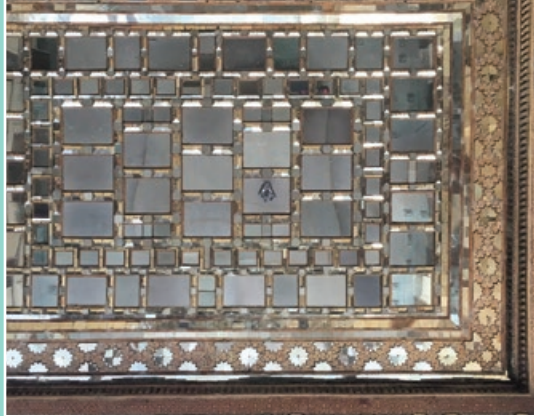
My time here could be organized by a series of questions and the many times they’ve been posed to me. “Are you here as a tourist?” No, I’m a student. “What do you study?” Farsi. “Why are you studying Farsi?” I have family here. “So you’re Iranian?” Yes. “Is your mother Iranian or your father?” Both. “Both? Then why don’t you speak Farsi? They didn’t speak Farsi with you at home?”

I learned not to try standing in a line, a useless concept here, and shove my way up to a counter with the rest of the crowd. I practiced shopping, confidently demanding what I needed and even succeeding a few times at haggling the prices down. I memorized how to say “It’s my natural hair,” for all the times women asked me about my curls. One day, my cousin heard me talking on the phone and said, “Cheghadr khub harf mizani, I couldn’t even hear your accent!”

Slowly, the language begins to fill itself in. I now walk through Tajrish bazaar and can understand most of the bits of conversation and shouts flying through the air; I can watch a movie and get the general storyline; I can carry on a very simple conversation with my younger second cousins; I can actually give people directions when they ask. But it’s as if I am trying to paint a



Chehel Sotoun in the city of Esfahan.



The mirrored ceiling in Chehel Sotoun.

I was so convinced that learning this 1 language would be like unlocking a hidden puzzle buried down my throat.

giant canvas and have only succeeded in sketching out a small corner of it.

There are days when it is enough to see the snow melting on the Alborz mountains in the distance, the woman selling jewelry on the sidewalk by my school who always says hello, the vendors selling fresh walnuts in the summertime, fresh pistachios in the fall, steaming beets and lima beans in the winter, and salted green almonds in the spring; to have a brief, stumbling conversation with my aunt, to whom I'd never spoken more than a few words before.

And then there are days when I feel that all I have succeeded in doing is seeing how far this bridge I'm trying to build will actually need to go, the end hidden in mist. On those days, I feel distant from everything: from home, from my friends, from my goals and dreams, from the person I once was, from the people around me, from my own relatives here who I'm only just beginning to know, from — and this hurts the most — the person I want to be. To learn a new language is to be constantly misunderstood, and there are so many days when it feels as though no one, not even the friends I've made here, knows who I really am.

"Do you like it here?" "Which one do you like better, America or Iran?" "Are you happy here?" "Is it easy to learn Farsi?" These are the questions I get from taxi drivers, from women on the metro or on the bus who compliment my curls and then try to make conversation, from my aunts and cousins and second cousins. "Do you want to stay here?" is the question my family poses to me, unable to hide a ripple of confusion in their eyes.

Yes, yes, for now, I like it here. I like having all the familiar foods of home, having my family nearby, watching my cousins' little children grow up, slowly understanding a few more words of Farsi each day. Yes, the scarf is annoying, yes, the pollution is bad, yes, politics is politics, yes, people stare. But then a kind of film reel flashes through my mind, like the city rapidly moving past the car window: the tall chinar trees and their wide green leaves that shade Valiasr, the striking murals and mosaics that appear magically and suddenly on expressway underpasses, the blue tiles lining the *hoz* that runs down the center of gardens and parks, the street performers strumming a *sitar* or drumming a *tombak*, the mountains looking down on me wherever I go.

Recently, I found myself crying in front of my cousin again. Having lived with each other for eight months, we've become something between cousins, friends, and sisters. "Why do you want to stay here, really?" she asked me. And as I tried to piece together my answer, the tears came, just as suddenly as on the day I arrived at the airport. "Why are you crying?" she said, a look of panic on her face. "I don't know!" I said. And I realized I still didn't have answers to so many questions.

I understood very early on that whatever plan I had coming here had been a very naive one, that learning a language is actually a lifelong process and any sense of fulfillment I had imagined gaining from this experience had to come from me. What exactly was the plan — to connect with my family and my culture? To

validate myself as an Iranian? To shed some of the embarrassing mundanity of my suburban, upper-middle-class American upbringing and replace it with what I thought of as a more beautiful, deeper cultural heritage?

All of these reasons point to the same hope: that I would remake myself by coming here. By delving into my history, I thought I could reforge myself for the future. I would go back in time, I would learn to read and write from right to left, I would set everything in reverse and thus open up the possibility of moving forward. But what I had to accept is that I cannot hold two worlds inside of me at once — that, at best, one will always be shaped by the winds of the other, like a continuously shifting pattern in the sands. I have to learn to let them both move through me, just as we all learn to balance and play with and grow from the many facets of ourselves.

A common artistic practice in Iran is mirror work, *ayeneh-kari*, taking small mirrored pieces and constructing intricate geometric patterns out of them to decorate walls, doorways, and ceilings. The result is that when you walk into a room covered in tiny mirrors, you see yourself split apart and reflected back in countless ways. It is not a proper or even useful reflection: The art is there for decoration, you are simply moving opposite it, and the fragmentation of yourself is just a consequence.

Sometimes I think that split reflection, beautiful in itself, is what this trip has been for me. In Shiraz, the city where my mother's father was born, I went into the famous shrine Shah-e-Cheragh, and although my grandfather was not a religious man, I thought of him and felt a calm as I walked through the splendid, illuminated interior, covered with thousands if not millions of tiny mirrors. In Esfahan, where my father's father was born, I went to the famous palace Chehel Sotoun, and looked up to find myself reflected on the beautifully decorated ceiling there. In both places, I thought of how desperately I wish to see myself — how, like a child, I seek out my image in all these old and beautiful places.

As the fractured mirrors show, I will never see myself as a whole here, as much as I try. But even if it is not clear, the reflection is still beautiful, still full of light — and anyway, isn't it closer to the truth? Not to see things as a whole, but as a myriad? To see the many small and varied ways we can find ourselves reflected in a thing of beauty, in a language we barely understand, in a place we love?

I didn't choose to be raised in the United States, just as I didn't choose to forget Farsi. I love my home in America, and I miss my family and friends there. But it wasn't until recently that I even considered this trip a possibility, that I could even imagine being able to learn Farsi, to make up for lost time, to learn about Iran by experiencing it, to begin creating the person I want to be. How many years will it take? How many years does it take to learn a language, even one you've heard your whole life?

This article was first published by BuzzFeed on March 30, 2018.