Peyk

A Special Exhibition
Lyric Visions from the Khamseh of Nezami

Émigré from Iran becomes U.S. mayor

Journey
IRANIAN HANDICRAFTS

LIPSTICK JIHAD

Interview with Parvin Heydari Nassab

Reflections of a Displaced Persian

Summer Camp
Iranian-American Style

Nowruz in San Diego

Nush Jan
I Am Happy To Report...

Nearly two years ago, I was approached by the San Diego Museum of Art (SDMA) to help raise funds among members of our community for the restoration of the “Persian Tiles” that had been kept in museum storage. After the tiles were restored, they would go on permanent display in the Museum’s Asian galleries (Peyk issue #99-Sept/Oct 2005). In agreeing to take this task on, on behalf of our community and as an advisor to the Board of Directors of the Persian Cultural Center, I requested that the Museum consider maintaining a section, on a permanent basis, devoted to the Arts of Persia. Upon their agreement, there began a partnership between the San Diego Museum of Art, the Persian Cultural Center (PCC), our community, and the Asian Arts Council of the Museum.

Although the restoration task was difficult and time consuming, with the funds raised, it was completed in a timely manner and became a permanent display in the Asian Court section of the Museum, announced in Peyk issue #105. This was followed by the Museum allocating a large wall for showcasing the Arts of Persia. Meanwhile, the Museum began another major task, the proper translation by Dr. Mohsen Ashtiany of Columbia University of forty pages from various manuscripts of the Khamseh of Nezami and the Shahnameh of Firdowsi, which had been given to the Museum by the Edwin Binney 3rd collection and Catherine Glynn Benkaim.

As you will read in this issue, for the first time, from June 16 to November 2007, two exhibitions on the Arts of Persia will be on view at SDMA simultaneously. One is in the Asian Court, and the other is on the second floor of the Museum, titled Lyric Visions from the “Quintet” of Nezami. During this period, the Museum plans to have speakers and various events and programs that will give the public a better understanding of the important aspects of Persian art and culture, which are highlighted by these two exhibitions. However, many other items are in grave need of restoration and conservation, and fundraising events to help this major task are also planned.

San Diego is one of the major tourist centers in our nation. Nearly 15,000,000 visitors pass through it's incomparable Balboa Park annually, and at least 300,000 to 500,000 people visit the Museum’s displays and exhibitions each year. We now have a rare and unique opportunity to help the Museum to continue on a permanent basis this kinds of exhibitions that educate the great masses of visitors. Your membership and your donation to the Museum with mention of the Arts of Persia will ensure this.

I’m also happy to report that three different individuals have made item gifts toward the Museum’s Arts of Persia collections, with the hope that many more will follow. The first steps are completed. The Museum in good faith has opened its doors to possibilities, and fundraising events to help this major task are also planned.

This is a major accomplishment for the Persian Cultural Center and those who have supported the project from the start. At a recent meeting at the Museum, it was mentioned that they were so amazingly and delightfully surprised at the support they have received so far from our community. Cheers to all who are involved and here is an invitation for support to the rest of our community; no matter where you are you can help with this important and major project. It is our heritage, it is our pride, and it is up to us to support and promote it the best we can.
The Persian Cultural Center (PCC) was established in 1989 with the help and financial support of many volunteers. Because of the selfless effort, time, and financial support of these volunteers as well as the valuable support of the community, we are celebrating the 19th year of the election of its Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is elected through a general election conducted by its members annually during the month of May. This year, the election will take place on Sunday May 20 at 1:30 P.M. at Standley Middle School (Iranian School Branch 1). Nominees for the Board of Directors must possess the following qualifications:

1. Current member of the Persian Cultural Center.
2. Legal United States residency.
3. Good reputation in the community.

Each elected member of the Board of Directors serves for a period of three years. This year, a few individuals have reached the final year of their community service as a board member. The Persian Cultural Center invites you to nominate yourself or someone you know, on their behalf. By joining us as a board member, together we can accomplish our mission of introducing, collaborating, and celebrating our rich Persian traditions, customs, and culture.

We are inviting those interested in being nominated to contact the PCC office at 858-653-0336.

With Many Thanks,

Mohammad Ayari
President

The Asian Arts Council extends a warm welcome to the members of the Persian Cultural Center and the Persian community of San Diego. Founded in 1948, the Council provides an important focal point for the exploration of Asian art. Encompassing all of Asia and its vast array of art, customs and archaeological treasures, the Council’s broad scope provides unlimited opportunities for learning.

The Council’s monthly meetings are open to anyone who wishes to know more about Chinese ceramics, Pre-Islamic Iranian dynasties, Indian paintings, Japanese screens, Jordanian archaeological treasures or Thai textiles, to name only a few topics that have been presented by renowned experts in the arts of Asia. In addition, council members may participate in special-interest study groups and seminars, as well as enjoy unique travel opportunities. Our highly informative monthly newsletter keeps members up to date on council events.

Our meetings are held at the San Diego Museum of Art board room at 1PM on the last Thursday of every month, from January through October. Our guest lecture fee is $10 ($5 for students). Annual membership dues are $40. Membership in the Museum of Art is a prerequisite to joining the Asian Arts Council.

We welcome the Persian community to our meetings. We think you will find our programs entertaining as well as informative. If you decide to join us as a member, you will have the added satisfaction of knowing that you are supporting the museum’s Persian art collection as well as the entire Asian art collection at the museum.
The five epic poems begin with The Treasury of Mysteries, which consists of moral treatises developed through several short stories. Khosrow and Shirin follows to relate how the Sassanian king of Iran won the hand of the Armenian princess. The third poem about the romance of two star-crossed lovers, Leyli and Majnun, held particular resonance for South Asian artists, such as Nihal Chand of Kishangarh. Compelling images of the mad, emaciated Majnun in a poignant encounter with his beloved Leyli or communing with animals in the forest are some of the most memorable passages in Indian painting of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Seven Portraits offers the biography of the legendary fifth-century Sassanian ruler, Bahram Gur, and the fantastic tales he heard from his seven brides. The last work, The Adventures of Alexander (Eskandar-Nameh), recounts the virtues and fantastical travels of the Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great, who was regarded during the time of Nezami as a great philosopher king.

Some of the works inspired by Nezami’s Khamseh were created as emblems of their socially elite status by patrons who wished to show their sophistication through familiarity with some of the most highly regarded works of classical Persian literature. Others depict isolated vignettes lifted from the Khamseh that feature artistic prowess. Ranging in date from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, these twenty paintings drawn from SDMA’s Edwin Binney 3rd Collection and recent acquisitions of Persian paintings from the Ralph and Catherine Benkaim Collection reveal the intriguing manners in which Nezami’s Khamseh was interpreted in diverse styles by artists from Turkey, Iran, and India.

Over the last thirty years of his life, the celebrated Persian poet Nezami (ca. 1141–1209), composed the five narrative poems that came to form his most esteemed work, the Khamseh (“Quintet”). One of the greatest romantic lyricists of the Persian language and a master of rhyming couplets, Nezami told these stories filled with passionate episodes and heroic exploits in a uniquely elegant style that mesmerized Persian, Turkish, and Indian audiences alike. This upcoming exhibition at the San Diego Museum of Art, Lyric Visions from Nezami’s “Quintet”, demonstrates how these inspirational lyric poems affected artists and patrons from diverse cultures during different time periods.
Nush-e Jan

From: The Joy of Persian Cooking
By: Pari Ardalan Malek

Mirza Ghassemi:

A well known eggplant dish/recipe from the northern province of Rasht, preparation time 30 minutes, serves 4-5 persons.

3 large eggplants
6 eggs
1 clove chopped garlic
3 teaspoons liquid saffron
3 tablespoons oil
3/4 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoons pepper

1. Broil whole eggplants with skin on a cookie sheet for 10 minutes, reduce heat to 450 degrees.
2. Turn eggplants and continue cooking another 13 minutes.
3. Watch eggplants closely to prevent them from burning.
4. Remove from oven.
5. Eggplants should be soft.
6. Peel eggplants while still warm.

Fry garlic in oil, add eggplants and saute. Eggplants, consistency should be pasty. Mix eggs, saffron, salt, pepper and eggplants in the skillet and stir over low heat for 10 minutes.

Taste mixture. Beware of over cooking eggs (they should be soft). Serve with white rice.

Nane Taaftoon
(Thin Flat Bread):

Preparation time 30 minutes, makes 6 small taaftoons.

1 dry yeast cake
1 cup lukewarm water
1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon salt
1/4 cup oil
1 egg
2 cups whole wheat flour
2 cups all-purpose flour

1. Mix yeast and water, then add sugar, salt, oil and egg.
2. Stir in flour gradually, then knead dough for 3 minutes.
3. Place dough in a bowl, then cover with a dish towel and set aside until it rises to double its original size.
4. Use your hands to spread dough thinly onto greased tray.
5. With your fingers, make several dents in the dough.
6. Broil 6 to 8 inches away from element for 3-4 minutes or until brown.

Coming Soon:
Chelokabob by Emeril
Émigré from Iran becomes US mayor

The highest-ranking Iranian-American in the US expresses his patriotism and outlines his priorities for Beverly Hills.

By Daniel B. Wood Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Outside the opulent city hall chambers where he now presides as America’s highest-ranking Iranian-American, Jimmy Jamshid Delshad, the incoming mayor of Beverly Hills, Calif., is getting grilled by the media. “Should Americans believe Iran is enriching uranium only for electricity?” asks a local TV reporter. “What about the British sailors who are now being held by Iranian authorities?” asks another. “How will you keep American-Iranian tensions low and keep your heritage from making this city an international terror target?” asks a third. One by one, Mr. Delshad deflects the verbal arrows, answering calmly, articulately. “I am in politics simply to make my local community better,” he says, staring into glaring lights and protruding microphones. Saying his role is not to be a spokesman on international relations for Iranian-Americans, he is nonetheless unafraid to criticize the Iranian government. Iran’s leadership is misguided on several fronts he tells reporters, but Americans should know that Iranian people love America – as he does. It’s his way of trying to steer every conversation back to safer, common ground.

Delshad, a Jew, also noted the opportunities he’s had since he immigrated to the US nearly 50 years ago. He came to America with about $100 in his pocket and went on to be a computer entrepreneur. “I am here to give back to the country which made me rich from nothing, and show other minorities that America is indeed still the land of opportunity for all,” he says. “Persians all over the world see pride in my becoming mayor ... a chance for something good to come into the news after all the negativity between the US and Iran.”

Wearing a hand-tailored suit and purple silk tie, Delshad exhibits the same elegance and elan that won him election for the second time to the Beverly Hills City Council earlier this month. He then was formally selected as mayor. Some news reports say his election by a mere 171 votes heightened ethnic tensions in this wealthy conclave of 35,000, where many of the 8,000 Iranians who live here fled their native country in 1979 after the fall of the Shah. But none of that is evident from crowd comments at his white-tent inauguration Tuesday. “Ethnicity was not an issue, as I saw it,” says Bert Serden, a 32-year Beverly Hills resident. “For voters here, it was the individual who was important. [Delshad] comes across as being very straightforward and without any bias or ax to grind, and that’s what really attracted people to him. People find him very direct and wanting to help.” That assessment of ethnicity-blind voting is music to the ears of Iranian-American political activists who see the selection of Delshad as Beverly Hills’s mayor as a turning point for Iranian participation in American politics. “This is very significant. It is the first time an Iranian-American has risen to this high a level,” says Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council in Washington. “It proves there has been a political maturing of a community that has become extremely wealthy and successful in many areas of American life, but has still been [a community] that has marginalized itself by taking a very low profile as long ago as the hostage crisis of 1979 and as recently as 9/11.” Nationwide, census figures show about 350,000 Iranians in the US, but the number may be three times that because there is a lack of ways to easily identify them on census forms, Mr. Parsi says. Many identify themselves in other ways, from Jewish to Christian Armenian. “We are seeing greater participation by Iranians in elections across the country, but more importantly in making their views known to elected officials from Congress to statehouses,” says Parsi. “This will have a symbolic effect on increasing that.”

In interviews, Delshad says he wants to put Beverly Hills on the national map as the “safest and smartest” community in America. At the outset that means placing surveillance cameras on various neighborhood streets to report to local police activities that range from traffic violations to theft to injury. After traveling to Israel, London, and Paris, he says that a new, intelligent “forensic and analytical” software is available that can detect if a person has fallen down, or whether a package has been left unattended. “These cameras will make us an example for homeland security for cities across America,” he says. To deal with one of the city’s thorniest quality-of-life issues, he wants to install new, mini-parking meters that accept dollar bills and credit cards and allow people to use their cellphones to reserve additional time.
The handicrafts of each land, in addition to symbols of the region’s art, are also footprints of the identity and history of its people. One might even say that these handicrafts transmit fond memories of the past. The giving and receiving of these handicrafts are markers in our memories of our lives; from the trips we have taken, the friends we have made and the loved ones who have always awaited our return. No matter what the occasion, Iranians have always tried to give the very best of possible gifts, which would not only be valuable on its own, but also serve as a testament to the art and talent of their homeland. Given all the dark and bitter segments that exist in the history of Iran’s handicrafts, it is still possible (although infrequent) to find examples of such worthy Iranian handicrafts.

I should first begin by clarifying that when I make reference to craftsmen (instead of artists), it is not with the intention of de-meaning craftsmanship. The task of a craftsman is to produce, which is different than the task and essence of the artist who uses her talent to invent and create. In the production of each craft, however, we encounter points of complexity which resembles the work of an artist. My goal in this article is to introduce you to these craftsmen and to their valuable crafts.

That which we today refer to as handicrafts, in the past was considered art work, examples of which can be found in museums today. These works have become the source of inspiration for many of today’s artists. From these collections, the pieces that were easily replicable were reproduced in mass quantities by craftsmen. It is important here to remember that Iranian art is and has always been valued by two standards; the first is its decorative beauty and the second is the usefulness of the piece. Needless to say, the pieces which were reproduced were ones that fit this criterion.

In the olden days, it was difficult to separate a craftsman from an artist and art in general played a more critical part of every Iranians’ daily life. Proof of this is evident from the architecture to rugs, metals to ceramics, calligraphy to books, and even including fabrics and clothing produced in those years. We witness the height of this creativity and vision in the centuries leading to the arrival of Islam to Iran. Islam also brought with it prohibitions against the portrayal of human form, forcing the creativity and vision that was thriving until then to reinvent and redirect itself into other channels. This led to the use of bright colors in an effort to compensate for the otherwise missing elements, especially in works of painting and calligraphy. The Iranian artist began integrating and experimenting with elements of nature such as plants and animals. By incorporating these images into ceramics, a new line of art was introduced which bore resemblance to ancient Persian artifacts.

The next wave of change that we witness in Iranian art, took place during the constitutional revolution and the reign of the Pahlavi monarchy, which disrupted the manner in which the arts had been progressing up to that point. The introduction of methods of mass-production transformed delicate miniatures and paintings of the Teymourid and Safavid periods, into deformed and bleak images void of identity. Intricate metal pieces from the Seljuq period gave way to flimsy and meager replicas of the same. During this time, the fabric factories that had long produced velvet, gold-wovens and Termeh were soon forgotten. Rugs, Gilims and other such woven pieces were now produced with low-quality chemical colors and unsuitable materials. Papier-mache and lacquer pieces that were once uniquely proud symbols of Iranian art became abundantly produced in the form of cheap and worthless copies that were then sold around Isfahan’s Shah square. It was as though a strong and powerful storm of bad taste had blown through Iran’s art world. The country suffered in the grips of this poor taste until the early 1960s when the government established the National Organization of Handicrafts (NOH). The NOH started off well, showing promising signs for the future. Unfortunately, it also introduced terrible non-Iranian works such as paintings on leather. The organization eventually fell short of its mission to supervise and manage these arts, and without this much needed direction, the handicrafts lost prominence.
Industrialization of life was another reason for the downward spiral of handicrafts. Historically, handicrafts originated from small villages and towns. With the wave of migration to the cities in search of a better life, many of these crafts that were once family traditions, handed down from generation to generation, were lost. The age of mass-production meant that everyone was chasing less effort and more production; a concept that is directly in conflict with the patience and dedication required in art. With the arrival of the Islamic revolution and the total collapse of tourism, the remaining roots of any praiseworthy handicrafts were wiped out. In reality, although difficult to accept, the standards of our handicrafts are still spiraling downwards. It is only the few and remaining struggling and talented artists and their passion for their art that keeps our handicrafts alive albeit by a thread. One weapon to combat this threat is to recognize and support these artists and purchase from them in our travels around Iran.

To recognize what separates quality art from a cheap replica, we must take a closer look at Iranian handicrafts which we will separate into several categories. These categories include ceramics and glass, metal, semi-precious jewelry, woven fabrics, rugs and kilims, wood and khatam, lacquered papier-mache, painting and calligraphy and lastly, leather-making.

**Ceramics and Glass**

Ceramic and glass work have a history as lengthy as Iran’s own national history and fortunately there are still good examples of these works in existence today. The Tehran Museum of Glass and Ceramics showcases good instances of such works. Generally speaking, ceramics is produced by one of two methods; hand-molding or wheel. After the ceramic is fired, it is covered with glaze and put back into the kiln. Unfortunately, many of Iran’s ceramic craftsmen use lead-based glaze which makes the pieces unsuitable for contact with food. There are several things to consider when purchasing ceramics.

1. The first is the shape and design, especially for pieces made by wheel. They should be symmetrical and stable.
2. The firing of the pieces and its glaze should be done with attention to the proper temperature and duration until completely oxidized. Chipping of ceramic pieces is a sign of under-firing. One easy way to distinguish whether a piece has been fired properly or not is by lightly placing your tongue in an unglazed portion of the item (usually the base). If your tongue sticks to the item that is a sign that the item is inadequately fired. The second way to tell is by gently tapping the item with a key. If it makes a crisp resonating sound, then it has been properly fired. If the sound is dull and flat, it is a sign that it is not oxidized properly and/or may contain a hidden crack.
3. When purchasing ceramic vases or other items that will hold water, verify that the inside has also been glazed so as not to let out any water.
4. Make sure all attachments such as handles or other adornments are well bound and free of cracks and chips.
5. If you see numerous pinholes on the glaze, it is a sign of defect.
6. Recently, some imitators have replaced glaze with cheap paint and oil-based colors. The test for distinguishing this is as simple as running your nail on the item. If it scratches it is a sign of imitation glaze. For sculptors this method may be acceptable, however, for pieces that will come into contact with water, these fragile items will easily come undone.
7. Some antique stores in Tehran sell ceramic pieces that misleadingly appear to be old. To distinguish the difference between a true antique and a fake replica, you need to consult and rely on an expert. It is therefore best to avoid such a purchase until you are sure of what you are purchasing as this could also cause a headache for you at the airport when trying to take this item out. To be safe, contact the Organization of Iranian Heritage and obtain an approval slip from them.

Not long ago it was easy to find numerous pottery making spots all throughout Iran, but today these are unfortunately hard to find. The few areas that continue this work include Laljin in Hamedan, Tabriz, Meybod in Yazd, Shahrood, Semnan in Karaj, Minab, Siahkal in Gilan. The majorities of these factories have set aside old techniques and are focused towards new, yet unsuitable modernization which will not last long. An example of such modernization is in the most famous ceramic-producing region of Iran which is Lalejin in Hamedan, where you can not find a single example of genuine Iranian handicraft. The majority of the items found there are brittle and unstable with a dull and thick glaze.

Now that we have pointed out some characteristics of lower quality ceramics, you might be wondering where to locate the few genuine articles. Fortunately, in Tabriz, the brothers Ghabchi who are in their 80s and still using the old fashioned wheel-method of pottery continue their craft and produce pieces of excellence. Their creations incorporate beautiful turquoise glaze and their method for acquiring and processing the clay and glaze is totally old-fashioned. A visit to their factory is a must for any true pottery enthusiast. In Tehran, Ms. Tatheeri Moghadam and her students, also use the same technique as the Ghabchi brothers.

Continued on page 19
Interview with Parvin Heydari Nassab

Parvin Heydari Nassab works in the field of Islamic calligraphy and illumination. Her work has been exhibited in some of the finest galleries and museums. As one of the few women artists in her field, her originality and modern style has placed her amongst the very best in the world. Teaching at the prestigious Iranian Calligraphy Association has afforded her the opportunity to expand her expertise to the many fine crafts of Iran. With her vast knowledge of the field and impeccable technique, she has been called upon by collectors and preservationists for the repair of antique Iranian calligraphies, papier mache objects and paintings.

Recently PEYK editors were fortunate enough to have the pleasure of sitting down with this delightful artist for a fascinating conversation regarding the history of Iranian classical art and calligraphy and more specifically her personal journey and contributions in this area.

PEYK: What inspired you to pursue this career professionally?

Parvin: I would frequently visit museums, such as “Negarestan” (which no longer exists), and others. I recall that Negarestan displayed works from the 13th and 14th centuries, which I found particularly beautiful. In addition to their vast collections of arts, these museums also offered classes in painting and calligraphy. These classes became the first step in my professional training. It was also from my attendance in these classes that I became aware of the disparity between the sexes in this particular area of the arts. I noticed that men dominated the field of calligraphy, and as a woman who was just starting out, I would have quite a challenging road ahead. I think this challenge was what gave me even more incentive and motivation to not only pursue my passion for this line of work, but also to attain a very high level of proficiency and expertise.

After my classes ended and the museum was closed, I entered The Iranian Calligraphy Association and completed a 3 year professional program. I graduated in 1980 and in 1983, I was hired at that same school as their first female professor. I spent 20 years teaching in that school to female students. I have also taught at the Azad University in Tehran, as well as art institutes.

Peyk: What do you think kept women away from the field of Calligraphy and what was your key to success?

During my years spent teaching at the Iranian Calligraphy Association, I noticed an increase in female students. Calligraphy is generally a very difficult path, for that reason women did not typically stay with it due to the conflicts it caused with other parts of their life. It requires a high level of commitment, which is difficult to manage with the many obligations of the traditional Iranian woman. Calligraphy also requires a great deal of patience and continued effort. I believe that regardless of gender, whoever can demonstrate these qualities, will be successful. That has been my belief and sustaining force.

Parvin: I was born in Tehran, Iran and that is where I grew up. My interest in the arts began at a very young age. My first direct encounter with painting and calligraphy was at school. What I became exposed to in those early childhood classes, planted the seed for what would later on become my life’s passion and work. I continued with my classes until I graduated from High School and got my Diploma. From that point on, things became much more serious and I began exploring the arts as a profession.
Peyk: What are the historical origins of Calligraphy and how has that evolved over time?

Calligraphy was always used in books. Centuries ago, before the invention of modern press, there were professional calligraphers who would be contracted to write books and this is how they made a living. With the introduction of press printing in Iran, calligraphy lost its original purpose. For many years, professional calligraphists worked alongside lithographic (19th century) press, which was the start of mass production. From the Pahlavi era forward, letter pressing became available, leading to the diminution of calligraphy. One thing that has remained quite consistent with calligraphy is the method it is taught and passed along. The teacher gives the students a lesson and the pupil will advance to the next lesson only when he/she can copy the first one exactly. The rules of size and lessons on connecting and format are all pursuant to strict code that has carried over the centuries.

Peyk: What type of art did you start out with and how has that changed?

In my early works I mostly focused on calligraphy (nasta’ligh) and classic Iranian painting with a specialty in “flower and bird” design. These two fields have always gone hand in hand throughout Iranian art history.

With calligraphy, I used poems and created nostalgic pieces reminiscent of old books and antique formats and illuminations (decorative medallion used to embellish calligraphy, usually golden). My focus was gaining experience in the traditional/classical format before coming into the new and altering/modernizing it. Slowly, over time, when I began to gain experience and some proficiency, I started experimenting. I experimented in their composition, in their negative and positive spaces and started to alter them focusing towards building a larger painting. I never drew large portraits or paintings. Typically calligraphy in Iranian history has always been used for giving an advice or a message. What I did was to change the composition of the words to create a painting carrying the words as images and thereby transmitting the message. This approach values calligraphy for the sake of its own beauty, like an abstract painting with words. I took those same nostalgic pieces and gave them a new and modern feel, changing the composition to a new format, but making sure that the feeling they transmit is still the same.

Calligraphy has very strict limits and rules, which do not exist in painting. In painting there is generally greater freedom to create. I took the knowledge of basic calligraphy that I had gained from formal training and incorporated some of the freedom of painting and my creativity to create images with words.

Alongside calligraphy, I also continued my work with flower and bird painting. This style of painting is the artist’s impression of nature. It has never been a realistic style of painting. Flowers and birds have always been an intricate part of Iranian classical painting art. One reason might be the fact that Iran is a dry desert-filled country causing a great general love of a luscious green nature filled with flowers and birds. Another connection of flower and bird painting to calligraphy is from the pages of ancient poetry books which always decorated with flowers thereby marrying the two together. This style of painting reached its peak during from the Saffavid era to the Ghajar era. Unfortunately, in recent years it has started to gain a more western feel, which I feel is not representative of the simplicity and beauty of its original Iranian identity. The newer versions use a form, color and composition that is free of Iranian identity and I feel strongly that the “flower and bird” style of painting must stay true to its traditional form.

Nahid Rachlin reading from

Persian Girls

Friday, May 25, 2:00 pm
deCerteau Room, 155 Literature Building

Persian Girls and Jumping Over Fire will be for sale at the event, and Nahid Rachlin will be available for booksigning.
Peyk: What is the role of calligraphy in modern art today?

Calligraphy is an Eastern art which is none existent in the West. It is therefore, a symbol of the East, both with Japanese and Chinese calligraphy, as well as Middle-Eastern calligraphy. The Iranian (nasta’ligh) style stands out a great deal among the Middle Eastern approaches. What distinguishes Nasta’ligh from Arabic calligraphy is its softness which comes from its historic association with poetry. Arabic calligraphy was always used for the Koran and for that same reason since it represented something holy and sacred it was always displayed in a very formal and serious manner. Iranians, however, are sensitive souls that are interested in emotions and enjoyment. The calligraphy that comes out of Iran is a representation of Iran, especially nasta’ligh because it carries a distinctively Iranian personality.

Lately calligraphy has really come into the light causing everyone to give it a second look. It is like a treasure that was once forgotten and is now refound. There is also more attention paid to the Islamic world since 9/11 including Islamic art and we find that the West is once again looking towards Eastern art. I believe that calligraphy holds a very special place for us Iranians since it holds our Iranian identity and history. We may have borrowed our alphabet from the Arabs, however, we created with that alphabet is 1400 years of Iranian talent and a great source of national pride. Unfortunately, calligraphy was brushed aside by a large portion of the Iranian Diaspora, when they quickly (and incorrectly) branded the style as purely Islamic and thereby drew a direct political association to the current Government. Instead they looked only to Persepolis as a symbol of Iran’s artistic achievements and grandeur. This thinking would disregard all the work that countless Iranian artists have contributed to art, Islamic or not. If anything, Iranian calligraphy is responsible for the significance Middle Eastern art has gained and we must continue to bring it to the international stage.

Peyk: What are some of your current projects?

I’ve been in the US for almost two years now. In that time, I have had the chance to work on various projects. I worked with my husband on a private Iranian house. This project consisted of painting the ceilings and walls of a home in a classic Iranian style, with each ceiling displaying a different style from a different era. We included patterns from the Saffavid to the Ghajar dynasties. It was very detailed work, which took 1.5 years to complete. Another project I have worked on is creating classical marriage certificates. These painted documents are inspired by those that became famous in the Ghajar period and were commonly used by wealthy families in that era. Marriage certificates are extremely meticulous and customized for the couple whom I am creating it for. I include their names, and any details of the marriage contract that is of significance to them. I also had a show in Oman in October and another in Los Angeles in March of this year. There are always many projects that surface to keep me busy. As for the future, I may be interested in returning to teaching at some point.

Peyk: What do you see for the future of Iranian Art?

I feel that there is far more attention being paid to calligraphy and art now in the last 10 years than after the revolution. This is a great opportunity and responsibility for artists. As a result there is significantly more work being done on Iranian classical art. Some of the new artists are untrained in the traditional sense and lack the knowledge and they improvise in the name of modernity. On the other hand, there are also a great deal of very talented newcomers. I think whatever it holds, the future will be bright. I am confident that art students today will continue to put out quality work in the future as it has been done for centuries in Iran.
Persian Cultural Center
Tel: (858) 653-0336 - Fax & Voice Mail: (619) 374-7335
Website: www.pccus.org

Persian Cultural Center Annual Meeting & Election
Sunday May 20, 2007, 1:30-3:30 pm
At Standley Middle School

A CINEMATOGRAPHIC REVOLUTION
Sunday May 20, 2007 at 6:3 pm
UCSD Price Center Theater

A Special Exhibition and Fundraising
Friday June 15, 2007 at 7pm
San Diego Museum of Art

Hafez Modirzadeh’s concert
Friday June 29, 2007 at 8pm
The Neurosciences Institute

Daf Workshop, at PCC office, instructor: Ali Sadr
Every Tuesday, 6:00-7:30 pm

Setar Classes, at PCC office, by Kourosh Taghavi • 858-717-6389

Iranian School of San Diego
Iranian School of San Diego, End of the Year Celebration
Sunday June 10, 2007
At Standley Middle School

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Every Sunday at Iranian School of San Diego
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Last Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm
Meetings at Qualcomm

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Tel: (858) 538-0829
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House of Iran
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Reflections of a Displaced Persian
Education at the Iranian School of San Diego Means More than Just Learning Farsi

By: Shaghayegh Hanson

Like a lot of San Diegans, I am a transplant from another place actually, two other places. I was born in Iran, grew up in London, married an American and moved to the U.S. Identity crisis has been a way of life for me. But recently I decided to reconnect with my roots and took up adult reading and writing classes at the Iranian School of San Diego. After a few short months, and thanks to a great teacher, I am thrilled to be reading children's books in Farsi to my daughter. I consider this to be a reawakening which has been a long time coming.

At times, when I was growing up in England, being Iranian seemed like a hardship rather than an honor. For example, I have lost count of the many different ways in which the public-at-large was able to butcher my first name. Iranians would always say, “Oh, Shaghayegh, what a beautiful name!” Yet my friends called me “Shaggy” all the way from second grade through the end of high school. You think that’s bad but really it was a blessing when faced with the alternatives; “Shagufa,” “Shagrea,” “Shahag,” “Shagdog” (oh yes, it’s true)...so on and so on. Apparently, the beauty of my name was quite lost on the inhabitants of London.

Let’s not forget the clash of cultures. British people—shy, reserved, quiet, untactile—would come to my parents’ house for dinner and end up in therapy. I mean how else did they cope with the onslaught of human touching: the hugging, the kissing of cheeks, the slapping of backs. Or the endless filling up of their plates with food after their conscientious efforts at leaving a clean plate. Or just when they thought they could sit back and let their food digest, they would be dragged to a makeshift dance floor and ordered to wriggle their hips to Persian disco music in front of the assembled guests. Well, the British are good sports, even if they haven’t realized the potential of their hips, and they always tried. Then they would be sent home, dripping with sweat, their ears ringing with foreign music, and the sugar from Bakhlava and the caffeine from endless cups of tea coursing through their veins. They would stagger past the BMWs and Mercedes to their practical Peugets wishing they were already in bed with a good book. In their cars, on the way home, I could imagine them saying things like, “I think I ate too much... pull over!” Then, “Well, if you hadn’t jiggled yourself all over that Lahle and her hips!”

Then there were all those mortifying, messy picnics in perfectly tidy and manicured English parks and gardens. While most people sat quietly on the benches munching on tiny crust-less cucumber sandwiches, we would noisily descend upon the park, en masse, cordon off a good portion of land, practically knocking over the “Keep off the grass” signs. Out came the pots of still-hot food, the multitudes of oversized blankets and towels, the games and thermoses of hot tea. In effect, we would have an outdoor feast that made cucumber sandwiches seem like bird seed. And we would stay...and stay...until the sun went down...until we had amused, annoyed and entertained the entirety of London.

Oh, and what about the mother of all hardship in a country where fair hair and skin is the norm, the battle against noticeable facial hair seemed endless. I realize that at some point in our history eyebrows that met in the middle were considered pleasing (evidently eye care was hard to come by in ancient Persia) but by modern day standards anyone sporting such classic beauty would be thought of by that cruel epithet of “hairy.” And what about the taboo subject of upper lip hair? A boyfriend of mine (yes, I managed to have one despite near-imprisonment as a teenager) once told me that his friend had asked him when I was going to start shaving. Of course, I have been scarred for life ever since and spend a substantial portion of my income on a variety of depilatory products, bleaching creams and waxing services (there’s this great little place in La Jolla). I try not to think of how many African nations’ debts I could have paid off by now if I had just learned to live with one eyebrow or a little bit of soft wispy hair on my upper lip.

I knew I was in love with my American husband when he actually said he liked my nose. No, he said I had a beautiful nose. In the interests of full disclosure, I did inform him that good money had been paid by good people to get rid of noses like mine. To this day, he holds his ground. Go figure!

Well, as the years have gone by I have truly begun to feel the honor and pride in my heritage (I have even begun to embrace my nose). Whatever the politics of the day, the rich history and depth of Persian culture will always endure and claim its rightful place in the development of human civilization. And we are a warm, fun-loving, open-armed community (just ask the Brits who came to my parents’ house in London... or their therapists).

I wish now that I had spent less time feeling embarrassed about being different and more time basking in the warm rays of my sunny culture. As I have grown older, I have seen family members pass away or move away, I have moved myself, and over time everyone has become much more westernized and some things, like the elaborate picnics in the park, just don’t happen with the same fervor anymore. All of a sudden, when I started to have children, I worried that they might never know what it means to be Iranian because I couldn’t teach them on my own. If it “takes a village” to raise an American child, it also takes an Iranian village to raise an Iranian child.

I joined the adult classes at the Iranian School of San Diego because I felt it was high time I realized the full potential of my heritage. I need to fill out the skin I’m in and I have the duty and privilege of passing my culture onto my children. Learning to read and write Farsi, improving my spoken Farsi, celebrating traditional holidays, and watching my 5-year-old begin dance and kindergarten classes at the school is like coming back home to me. It’s like reconnecting to that 6-year-old fresh off the plane in London from Mashad, speaking nothing but Farsi. What happened to her? She almost got lost trying to find her way back home.
Dear business owner,

Information or advertising about your business could reach 6,000 more customers if you were to advertise in Peyk, the bilingual, bi-monthly newsletter of the Iranian-American community of San Diego. Peyk serves as a powerful advertising forum for both the Iranian-American community in your town as well as for non-Iranian readers of the publication. The magazine’s rapid expansion, from a one-page newsletter in 1991, to a 60-page cultural magazine, attests to both the growing numbers of Iranians in this community and their willingness to support businesses in the San Diego area. In 2005, Peyk reached a circulation of 6,000 copies directly mailed to members of the Persian Cultural Center or available at local businesses in San Diego, Orange County, Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, Chicago, St. Louis, Houston and Maryland. Peyk’s goal is to feature articles about Iran, Iranian culture, and profiles of prominent Iranians and provide information about upcoming events hosted by the Persian Cultural Center, as well as other cultural events happening in San Diego. These well-attended cultural events range from large and popular music concerts, to intimate performances of dance, music and traditional arts. Given the rapid increase in readership, Peyk can serve as an effective business tool to help you reach an ever-increasing population of successful professionals and entrepreneurs.

Advantages to Advertising in Peyk

- Your advertisement will reach a significant number of people who are involved, successful, and invested in the community.
- Peyk remains in people’s homes for several months. Many people even collect the issues. This assures repeated viewing of your advertisement.
- Peyk is non-profit, so the amount of advertising space is restricted. Your advertisement will stand out. It will not be buried among hundreds of other ads.

Please contact us for additional information. We look forward to your continued support.

For more information please contact the PCC office: 858-653-0336

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Membership Application

The best way to support the Persian Cultural Center (PCC) is by becoming a member today! Your membership will help the PCC in promoting and upholding Iranian cultural values.

(Please Print)

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☐ $50 Family
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As a member of PCC, you will enjoy special discounts and privileges and receive six issue of Peyk magazine per year.

☐ $12 I only wish to receive six issues of Peyk via mail.

Complete form and send check to:
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The Persian Cultural Center and the San Diego Museum of Art’s Asian Arts Council present:

A Night of Persian Art for All the Senses at the San Diego Museum of Art

June 15, 2007

For the first time in the history of San Diego, two installations dedicated to Persian art, literature, and culture will be on view at the San Diego Museum of Art. Come for a special preview of the exhibition, Lyric Visions from Nezami’s “Quintet” (opens June 16) and celebrate with Persian cuisine, no-host bar, and music.

Musical performance and informal talk by master musicians Hossein Omoumi on the nay (wind instrument) and vocals, Mehrdad Arab on the tombak and daf (percussion) and Kourosh Taghavi on setar (string). James S. Copley Auditorium, San Diego Museum of Art

RSVP by June 5, 2007
$100 per person
$75 SDMA and PCC members
After June 5 and at the door: $125 per person
Dear House of Iran members and supporters:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the House of Iran, I would like to provide you with a report on our activities for the first quarter of 2007.

Ruz-e-Iran 15th Annual Festival was a true success. It takes hundreds of hours of volunteer and professional work to present such an event, free of charge, to over 3,000 members of the community who joined us that day. For the ones who were there, thank you for showing up and supporting us. We owe our big crowd to our flyers, announcements, press releases, San Diego Union Tribune calendar of events, Chekhbar.com, Variety TV for their 1/2 hour program about the House of Iran, and to the Iranian markets who let us place our flyers in their stores.

That Sunday, March 25th, mother Nature granted us one of its most gorgeous, sunny and beautiful days. Our cottage went through spring cleaning and display cases were redecorated. Spring flowers and pansies were planted by Minou Sadeghi and Kojie Turner around the Cyrus the Great Declaration of Human Rights monument. Our Haft-Seen table, the masterpiece of the cottage, was set up by Mrs. Fakhry Ebadat. What a beautiful and traditional show case that was! Our great hostesses Karmen Azizian, Parvin Taheri, Shahnaz Elkhani, Tahereh Jahandideh and Fayeza Zomorrod located people and served tea in the cottage. The delicious and fresh Persian cookies and Sholleh Zard were baked and served by Simin and Keyvan, the owners of the LiLi Bakery and Sahar Jaberi and Azar Boney hosted our membership booth.

There was a lot of tasty and yummy food served in the food tent catered by the Balboa International Market. Bravo to Mr. Abbas Abbasov and his crew for such a fantastic job of serving several thousand plates of Persian cuisine! Major shopping was conducted by Mr. Abbasov and Arya Zeighamnia. Our main cashier who sold thousands of dollars worth of food for us was Mr. Kamran Parvini. The collection of funds was monitored by Shahin Parvini. The volunteers in the food tent were: Mali Abbasov, Mr. Ahadian, Khosrow Taheri, Behrooz Shalchi, Francisco, Eduardo, Rosa, Mr. Kaveh, Farnaz and Dara Sari Aslani.

The stage was decorated by Reza Fadaei and Arya Zeighamnia. Our stage program, which I had the pleasure of chairing, was cheerful and exciting. The program started with the marching of the flags by our House of Iran ranking Queen, Yekta Mohammadi and Atena Mohammadi, followed by a Haji Firooz dance by Mr. Kaveh in traditional red costume. Carolyn Flor, the President of the House of Pacific Relations opened the stage program and led the audience into the pledge of allegiance, followed by the U.S. National Anthem which was beautifully performed by two talented sisters, Julie Roloff and Melissa Litchford. ‘Ey-Iran’ was then featured by Mr. Hassan Farrahi, accompanied by the divine violin of Mastaneh Nikravesh. The Masters of Ceremony were our competent and beautiful Minou Sadeghi and Samira Rostami. I spoke on behalf of the House of Iran Board of Directors and recognized the following Board members: Minou Sadeghi, Reza Fadaei, Sahar Jaberi, Shahin Parvini, Kojie Turner, Arya Zeighamnia, Abbas Abbasov and Torang Asadi, and our Legal Counsel Ali Golchin, Esq. I also presented a plaque and a medallion to our outgoing Board member, Mali Abbasov, with gratitude and in recognition of her years of service as Board member.

Our dance group was our one and only Djanbazian Dance Academy, who joined us all the way from Los Angeles, in beautiful and colorful costumes and with a great performance. The choreography of these dances was superb. “The dances were: Kereshmeh, Zang, Kasht-o-Bardasht, Riz Bia and Friends. House of Iran was pleased to introduce a special guest on the stage, Ostad Farhang Mehr, the former Chancellor of the Pahlavi University in Shiraz, who gave us a surprise visit and gave a few words of wisdom in a speech to the audience. The beautiful and cheerful folk music played by Hasan Farrahi and Mastaneh Nikravesh brought a cheerful conclusion to our stage program.
Thank you, Kojie Turner, for taking the lead in managing the raffle prizes. We thank Bandar Restaurant, Lili Bakery, Parsian Market, Balboa International Market, House of Iran and Sahel Bazzar for their generous donations for our raffle prizes. Together, we raffled more than $1,000 worth of gifts and prizes.

The blissful program continued outside of the cottage, where people danced to the music of Mohsen DJ and his partners. They brought much joy and happiness to the crowd and got everybody dancing and moving. The event was videotaped by Mr. Casey, and was photographed by Mr. Essy Afsahi. The Variety TV featured our program two weeks in a row! Thank you for the wonderful coverage!

Also in the news for House of Iran:

• Nowruz Greeting Cards were designed by talented graphic designer Noush Navae, they were mailed out with our first membership letters.

• House of Iran first ever brochure came off the press. The beautiful brochure was created from the combined efforts of: Minou Sadeghi and Sussan Johnsen for text, Shahrz Estakhry as coordinator, photography of Balboa Park by Mr. Majid Fadaeian, design and print by our talented Saeed Jalali. The financial sponsor of the brochure is Icono Financial Services, Inc. We thank them for making this long time wish of ours a reality.

Doesn’t it take hundreds of volunteer hours to present you such wonderful programs? It is hard work, however, it is gratifying to see everyone happy and smiling, and that makes every effort worthwhile. We are glad to have the opportunity to serve you. Please join us as MEMBERS of the House of Iran. House of Iran was built through the donation of the Iranian American community and its operation is based solely on membership fees and the sale of food from two major events throughout the year. Therefore ask you to join us by simply filling out our membership form and sending us your tax deductible membership dues. We are planning more events and some “bazm nights”, and if you would like to receive an invitation, you need to be on our membership list. Please come and visit us at the cottage, we are open to the public every Sunday, from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. We appreciate your support and we look forward to seeing you.

House of Iran Board of Directors
Sussan Johnsen, President

Continued from page 11

A review of the

IRANIAN HANDICRAFTS

• In the Gilan region, you can find dishes known as ‘Gamaej’, which are very simplistic and thick with dark green glaze. These dishes are very popular as decorative items because of their primitive look and feel.

• In between the road of Siahkal and Deylaman, there is an old man who has a little workshop where he employs the same techniques as those used hundreds of years ago. His small statues are of exceptional beauty. I hope that he is in good health and that he continues his work today.

• In the Meybod region of Yazd there are a few remaining workshops which continue to make ceramic dishes similar to Chinese imported dishes, although of a lower quality.

• In the Karaj region, there are also a few ceramic workshops that are dedicated to making decorative items. Behzad Ajdari is one of the workshop owners who not only is very knowledgeable in the field but also employs ancient patterns and great technique to create interesting new items. He has won several awards and been recognized in the field.

• In the suburb of Shahrood, Nahid Sadeh and Fartash Faribor, using the pottery wheel and employing carving techniques with a bright red color and antique-looking glaze to create exciting pieces.

• In the southern region of Iran, in the city of Minab and parts of Sistan and Baloochestan, one may find practical and simplistic dishes with great form. These pieces which include jars and jugs are created with basic patterns formed from dots and lines similar to works found 3000 years ago. These craftsmen are faithful to the ancient methods they employ and they continue to make great pieces. Interestingly enough, the designs and decoration of these pieces are done by women. Among the greatest ceramic artists in the south of Iran, was a lady named Khaztoon, who lived in one of the villages around Sangez. Unfortunately for the art community, she passed away several years ago. Her primitive and simple look and feel. Her small statue was of exceptional beauty. I hope that he is in good health and that he continues his work today.

I hope this brief introduction to Iranian handicrafts will be of use to you and help guide you in developing an eye for quality craftsmanship. In closing I would like to mention that there are numerous unrecognized artists and craftsmen across Iran and if I have failed to mention them it is due to my lack of information, and not their talent. If any of the readers have knowledge of any particular artists worthy of mention, please contact Peyk and introduce us to their work.
For those of us Iranians born in the West or having arrived here as children, Azadeh Moaveni takes a deeply resonating journey back to a troubled homeland. Her memoir, “Lipstick Jihad,” of “Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran” poignantly captures the yearning a generation of displaced Iranians feels for a place to call “home,” where they are the same as everyone else, a place where they truly “belong,” and uncovers the sobering truth that Iran, contrary to what we would hope, is not that place.

Instead, Iran is a place where her “American-ness” singles her out (just as her Iranian-ness does in America) and is seen in the smallest of gestures, from the way she walks or smiles to her eating habits and the Farsi she speaks which “groaned under an American accent.” It is a place where even Iranians who never left feel disconnected from one another along both political and cultural lines. Iran is a society still trying to rebuild itself after the Revolution, a people who have been in a state of flux for years with no clear path ahead.

Moaveni’s frank, witty, insightful and, at times, lyrical, style of writing carries us effortlessly along on her personal and political experiences. Her story begins with a child’s memory of Iran, of a vacation she took in Tehran with her mother when she was five years old. It is a memory she has carried with her through her upbringing in San Jose, California. She recalls a relaxed mother who lost the tense attitude that was normal in California, an environment full of laughter, and an exotic place of hot buttered barbari bread covered with carrot, quince or fig jam, of snuggling under a korsi, of sleeping outdoors under the stars in the summer, of gardens and orchards and of climbing mulberry (toot) trees, eating their fruit fresh off the branches.

In stark contrast, she recounts the difficulties of growing up in the United States in the 1980’s, of living “in the shadow of the hostage crisis.” Moaveni captures it thus: “That my name gave me away, that people would ask in a smiley, kind way where I was from, and that I would have to say it, ‘Iran,’ and watch their faces settle into a blank, this was a permanent source of discomfort. I wasn’t sure what made me feel more wretched: being embarrassed to be Iranian, or guilt at being embarrassed.”

All young Iranians have stories of cultural combat with their parents over such things as dating, clothing and pop idols. In Moaveni’s case, there is her memorable defense of Madonna against her mother’s accusation that the pop diva was a jendeh, a prostitute. Or the time she is duped into thinking her meditating, yoga-class-taking mother is liberal minded enough to accept Moaveni’s blossoming sex life in high school. Her mother tells her, “Azadeh jan, I want you to know that if you ever decide to become, ahem, close with your boyfriend, I’m here for you, and want to know about it...,“ and then upon being told, breaks into uncontrollable sobbing and over-reactions: “Khak bar saram [may dust fall on my head]... vay, vay... You’re too young, why did we ever come to this mamlekate-e-kharabshodeh [ruined country]...”

Despite feeling an estrangement from Iranian culture during much of her teens, Moaveni held a “cavernous longing for Iran,” which eventually leads her to Tehran again, in 1999, where she works for two years as a journalist for Time magazine. Moaveni arrives at a time of student riots and anti-regime demonstrations. There was a reformist mood in the air. In 1997, Mohammad Khatami, a moderate cleric was elected as President and represented the “reform movement,” a mixture of liberal Islamists and secularists. Although the hard-liners were ultimately in control of the country, Khatami’s influence had changed the political climate. Moaveni states, “For years, public space had been the domain of Islamic vigilantes and the morality police, who arbitrarily terrorized people. Khatami reined them in, and under him Tehran became almost a normal city, with couples strolling in the park arm in arm, licking ice cream cones. The demonstrations both fed off and propelled this energy.”

LIPSTICK JIHAD

By: Azadeh Moaveni
Reviewed by Shaghayegh Hanson

LIPSTICK JIHAD

A MEMOIR OF GROWING UP IRANIAN IN AMERICA AND AMERICAN IN IRAN
AZADEH MOAVENI
Moaveni’s work as a journalist exposes her to all kinds of players: the President’s staff, student leaders, political dissidents, Iranian journalists sticking out their necks in pursuit of independence and her generation of young people (under thirty) who made up two-thirds of the 70 million population. She finds a “nation of ambivalent Muslims” where taxi drivers purposely ignore mullahs hailing a ride and where the ratio of non-fasters to fasters at Ramadan is 6:1. She concludes that most Iranians dream of a secular government and are frustrated with the slow pace of political change.

Moaveni recounts how young people had become experts in subterfuge in order to manage social lives. They were adept at avoiding the police and learned to “take” their freedom as opposed to the easy, given freedom of America. Although the Orwellian-style laws of the land never changed, women slowly started to wear more colorful, lighter fabrics and began to expose their toes and waistlines. The veils fell further and further back on their heads and they wore “too much lipstick.” This “slow, deliberate, widespread act of defiance” is the “jihad” Moaveni is referring to in the title of the book; literally the “struggle” for freedom.

When Moaveni is finally forced to leave Tehran, it is an outcome directly linked to George Bush’s “axis of evil” speech. Moaveni notes the irony in this turn of events... “The term ‘axis of evil’ sounded funny in English, but in Farsi it struck a bizarrely familiar note: It was ideological and inflammatory, the sort of phrase a mullah would think up and bellow out during Friday prayer.” With the government feeling under threat, Moaveni is contacted by an official who “suggests” that all her articles be approved by him first before they are sent to Time magazine in America. Not wanting to compromise her work or her safety, Moaveni leaves Tehran.

Back in New York City, Moaveni and her Iranian friends and relatives have to face the fallout from 9/11 and the “axis of evil” speech. She likens the effect of these events to the hostage crisis; as an Iranian, you “had to walk around with a scarlet letter of association” with them. The mere fact that you were Middle Eastern, looked Middle Eastern or were linked to Islam evoked suspicion.

In the end, Moaveni’s journey and her search for home, for Iran, takes her back not to a place, but to herself. She realizes that America feels just as much like home to her as Tehran did and that she would “perpetually exist in each world feeling the tug of the other.” She accepts that she is “whole, but composed of both[,]” the Iranian and the American. “This was the modern Iranian experience, that bound the Diaspora to Iran. We were all displaced, whether internally, on the streets of Tehran, captives in living rooms, strangers in our own country, or externally, in exile, sitting in this New York bar, foreigners in a foreign country, at home together.”
For as long as I can remember, every summer has been an amazing two months that serves as my special treat in transitioning from one hectic school year to the next. For the summer of 2006, my parents had heard about an Iranian-American Leadership Camp for high school students, created by a group called Iranian Alliances Across Borders (IAAB)—which sounded like the strangest thing I had ever heard—and were shipping my sister and I off (literally, the camp was on an island) for the first week of summer to meet other Iranian-American students and learn about our culture and our roles in society. The purpose of the camp stressed the leadership skills campers would acquire, and the importance of creating a strong community among the second-generation diaspora—whatever that meant. It was the first year of the camp, and my sister and I had no idea what to expect.

Upon arriving at the island, we were greeted by a group of exceedingly enthusiastic counselors and were showered with introductions and ruboosi’s. We were led to our dorms, and were told our names were on the doors of our assigned rooms. I walked down the hall and found my name written in beautiful Farsi on a handcrafted Iran flag, complete with colorful paisley decorations. My roommates and I introduced ourselves to one another and went to the conference room where we were divided into groups and began an evening of meet and greet games.

On the second night of camp, I called my mother to check in, and after teasing me for having forgotten all about my family at home already, she asked me how camp was. This was immediately followed by the maternal question she has asked me on every telephone conversation we have ever had: “what have you eaten today?” I giggle thinking about the fact that many of the campers’ parents had asked them that very same question, “what have you eaten today?” whenever I was about to walk through a door, there was always a chivalrous ta’aroofing Irooni boy holding it open for me and insisting I walk through first.

We spent a great deal of time learning from one another. We had many enthralling discussions regarding issues, such as our views of ourselves as Iranian-Americans growing up in America and how we can expand and strengthen the second-generation diaspora, while keeping our culture alive outside of Iran. Some of our discussions were so in depth and mature, I could not believe that many of the campers were younger than me. We were also given informative presentations on skills necessary for public speaking and the importance of leadership. In between lectures, panels, and discussions, we had time to do a wide variety of activities. We did cultural activities such as team cooking, learning about Iranian holidays, and learning how to dance “Iranian style.” We played different outdoors games, such as soccer and, everyone’s favorite, vasati.

The final night of camp each team put on a performance for the talent show, which proved to be a huge success. The next morning, there was a sadness looming in the air as everyone woke up for the last day of camp. At 2 o’clock, all of the campers and a few counselors boarded the ferry back to Boston, and through tears and heartfelt goodbyes, reminiscing on the incredible experience of the past week. The lessons I learned and the bonds I made that week are truly invaluable. In that one week, we all learned a lot about our culture and our role in society as second generation Iranians, did many teambuilding activities, danced a lot, sang a lot, ate a lot, ta’aroofed a lot, laughed A LOT, and came home with 35 new family members.

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Iranian Alliances Across Borders (IAAB) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, D.C. IAAB’s mission is to strengthen the Iranian diaspora community and to empower its youth. Presently, IAAB’s young, volunteer staff, is engaged in three major projects: The Third International Conference on the Iranian Diaspora, Transform/nation: Contemporary Art of Iran and its Diaspora, and Camp Ayandeh: Iranian-American Leadership Camp. Camp Ayendeh, IAAB’s second annual Iranian-American Leadership Camp for high school students, will be held the week of July 1-7, 2007 at the Hemlock Overlook Center for Outdoor Education in Clifton, Virginia. To learn more about IAAB, please visit: http://www.iranianalliances.org/. Our first camp was held in 2006 on Thompson Island, Massachusetts.
Upon the arrival of spring, the Iranian-American community of San Diego welcomed and celebrated Nowruz by participating in various activities around the city.

• To announce and welcome the arrival of Nowruz, Persian Cultural Center (PCC) organized displays of Haft Seen in several libraries in the San Diego area.
• On March 11th the Iranian School of San Diego (ISSD) had its annual Nowruz preparation and Charity Bazar. Children helped color eggs and grew sprouts. Haft Seen items were sold to raise money for the $1 a Month fund.
• In a joint effort by PCC, Association of Iranian American Professionals (AIAP) and House of Iran (HOI), Chaharshanbeh Soori was celebrated on March 13th. Thousands of people gathered in Mission Bay Park and got a chance to socialize, dance to DJ music and have a great night.
• ISSD celebrated Nowruz on March 18th by organizing a lively program in Dana Middle school at Point Loma. The program included great dance performances, two impressive plays by ISSD students, songs performed by the chorus and last but not least an appearance by Amoo Nowruz.
• March 24th was marked by Persian Cultural Center Nowruz celebration at the Hyatt hotel. Guests enjoyed a variety of programs from a live band to a performance of the young dancers of the Persian Dance Academy of San Diego and ended the night with dancing to a DJ music-mix.
• AIAP celebrated Nowruz also on the 24th of March at the Sheraton hotel.
• On March 25th, Ruz-e-Iran, a Nowruz celebration was held at House of Iran in Balboa Park.
• April 1st was our community’s celebration of Sizdah Bedar. This event was also the result of a collaboration made between HOI, AIAP and PCC.
• UCSD students had their celebration of Nowruz on April 7th with a variety of programs that included poetry readings, Persian classical music, pop music and dance.

Many thanks to the efforts of all the individuals and groups, who volunteered, organized and supported these festivities resulting in a great success for the community. 2007 marked another memorable Nowruz for San Diego.