Happy Nowruz
Happy Persian New Year

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Celebrating Diversity – Learning To Respect Differences

Once again, it is time for the jubilation of Norouz. Time to say farewell to the dormancy of another winter season and welcome the rejuvenation of our Mother Earth with the coming of spring. We should get ready to dance with the blossoming of every flower and be thankful to have been given another spring to celebrate and enjoy the blessing of being alive.

As I write this editorial it is the beginning of the Chinese New Year, the year of the Dragon. Less than a month ago we celebrated the coming of 2012 in the Gregorian calendar. Now coming up on the first day of spring will be the Norouz celebration, representing a new year for nearly 300 million people around the world.

Due to the amazing progress in technology, we have become a global family involved in one another’s cultural heritages and celebrations. Let us hope by witnessing such beautiful and extraordinary occasions, giving us the opportunity to celebrate together, we will also learn the art of tolerance, respect and acceptance of one another and our differences.

Our Mother Earth has around 7 billion living children in 194-196 nations. We are of different cultural backgrounds and habits, different languages, and different races. According to infoplease.com “There are roughly 6,500 spoken languages in the world today. However, about 2,000 of those languages have fewer than 1,000 speakers.” Ethnologue also reports “a total of 238 languages in the United States, 162 of which are ‘living.’”

Today, one thing is for sure, in all corners of the world the majority of world citizens are operating a cell phone with all kinds of gadgets and/or at least a computer. We can even see each other’s backyards across the world if we choose to. This is how close we are to one another whether we want to recognize these facts or not. We really are a global family and it would be advantageous to all of us to act as a family and support and protect one another. If nothing else, the natural global disasters of recent years should have taught us.

Thus, here are my resolutions for whatever days of life are left for me to enjoy and celebrate. There are 194-196 nations on earth and each must have at least one specific day of celebration that represents them – I want to celebrate that nation and its people on their special day. I want to learn more about them and their cultural heritage. Wouldn’t understanding one another bring tolerance and begin paving a road to global peace?

“I have learned that a man has only the right to look down to another when he has to help him to stand up. There is always a tomorrow and life gives us the opportunity to do things right.” Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Norouz brings with its celebration the message of a new life, hope, gratitude, respect and the wisdom to always remember: Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds for all mankind.

Happy and Joyous Season of Norouz to all.

By: Shahri Estakhry

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PCC Foundation
Charitable Organization
Affiliate of Persian Cultural Center
Tel.(858) 653-0336
Fax & Message: (619) 374-7335

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Disclaimer: This magazine may contain inconsistent spelling of Persian words in English. Acknowledging this to be a function of the imprecise nature of transliteration, the policy of Peyk is to allow, wherever reasonable, individual authors the discretion to use their choice of spelling.
On January 29, 2012, PCC (Persian Cultural Center) Board members attended PAAIA’s (Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans) Passing of the Torch event which took place in San Diego this year. The event is designed to “educate, inspire, and empower” the next generation of Iranian Americans. In that spirit, PAAIA partnered with ISTA (Iranian STudent Association at UCSD) to present the show. This year’s event was hosted by comedian and actor, Maz Jobrani, and Fox News Anchor, Shally Zomorodi. Many impressive speakers and interviewees from a variety of occupations and backgrounds were featured. Included in the line-up was a 6-minute video about our very own Iranian School of San Diego (ISSD). Maz Jobrani presented the video as a “success story.” He was so impressed that he has committed to doing some fundraising events for us here in San Diego! On this page you will see a picture of PCC President, Shaghayegh Hanson, with the Jobrani brothers and our “Building the Dream” pamphlet. Watch this space for more information in the next Peyk!

In general, our ISSD video was very well received at the PAAIA event. Several audience members were in tears and many ISSD parents cheered proudly. We have much to be proud of in San Diego for our community achievements! You can view our ISSD video on our website at www.pccsd.org.

As we go to print, we are excitedly preparing for our big Nowruz Gala at the Hyatt Regency in La Jolla (details on page 15). We have really gone all out this year to give our town a wonderful beginning to the year! We will have Shahram Shabpareh singing live along with DJ Julius to see us into the wee hours. We will also have folk dancing by our own Persian Academy Dancers and an authentic Chai khane (teahouse) set up for those with a taste for tradition. The food and venue is nothing but the best this year—do you see your name there? We wish you a joyous Nowruz and look forward to celebrating with you!

On April 8, 2012, PCC and ISSD is sponsoring a program very dear to our hearts and to the hearts of the hundreds of dance students that have attended Hengameh Ayari’s dance classes at the Persian Dance Academy over the last 30 years. Hengameh’s daughter, Parnia, is reuniting prior and current students, and compiling her mother’s original choreography, video footage and photographs, to present a performance called “My Teacher, My Mom” at the Museum of Contemporary Art in La Jolla. You will find the flyer on page 13. This will be a unique and timely tribute to a much-loved member of our community without whom generations of Iranian American children would not have been exposed to the dance traditions of their heritage. Purchase your tickets early as this will sell out fast!

Do not forget to log onto our website or call the office for information about all upcoming events. Please spread the word about our Building the Dream campaign so that we can have a “place of our own” in the coming year! Our list of donors is growing—do you see your name there? We wish you a joyous Nowruz and look forward to celebrating with you!

Solicitation of Material

Do you have an opinion on something you see here? Have you written an article that you would like us to publish? If so, we would love to hear from you! For directions on how to submit your piece, please contact PEYK- PCC’s office at: P.O. Box 500914, San Diego, CA 92150. You might find your submission printed in the next issue of Peyk!

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"BUILDING THE DREAM"

After 23 years of service to the community, the Persian Cultural Center (PCC) sees this as the perfect time to rally around our community’s long-time dream of creating a physical Center to house our current activities and provide further, much needed, community services and programming for the Iranian-American Community.

The conditions have never been so favorable and the need never so compelling. Here are just a few reasons why this dream is so important:

- Members of our aging population and their families need support
- The younger generation needs structure, guidance and language skills
- Parents will be helped by increased resources and networking
- The current real estate market is absolutely encouraging

LET'S KEEP THE DREAM GOING!

WE'RE EXTENDING THE BUILDING THE DREAM FUNDRAISING PERIOD!

If you were unable to make a donation last year to the building the dream fund, we have great news! We’re extending the fundraising period. Why? Because we have raised so much so far, the market conditions are still favorable, and popular support demands that we give the dream more time to succeed. We would like to thank all of you who have contributed to the building fund so far; your vision and generosity will serve generations of Iranian-Americans and San Diegans in the future.

Let’s march forward in this new year and make a renewed effort to spread the word and realize the dream!

All donors’ names will be recognized prominently on a plaque posted at the entrance of the Center and entitled, “Founders’ Circle.” In addition, at certain donation levels special recognition applies as indicated.

This Center will not only serve you, your loved ones, and the community, but it will also benefit future generations and those who want to reach out and learn about Iranian Culture and the Persian language. As an established and respected community, we owe it to ourselves, our children, and the survival of our heritage to achieve this goal.

You have the following donation options

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Assadian, Dr. A. R.
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Tahrir, Hamid & Matanah
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Finding my groove

Anyone who has ever traveled in my car, waited for me to pick them up or meet them somewhere, or anyone who has tried to give me directions knows that I will inevitably take at least one wrong turn, if not get completely lost. I get lost going to places that I have been to a thousand times. I get lost even when I have directions printed out. I get lost, albeit less often, with my GPS on. When my kids were toddlers strapped in their car seats in the back, they would often say, with complete resignation in their tiny voices, “Uh-oh Mommy, are we lost again?” I have learned to make time for getting lost when I am going to a new location. There’s nothing like being an imbecile at something important that others seem to manage perfectly well to make you feel really bad about yourself.

But then there are things that you just seem born to do really well. Sleeping is high on my list, as is talking complete nonsense to fill silences in conversations. I’m also pretty good at knowing a little bit about a lot of things so that I sound somewhat knowledgeable…but do not delve deep, you’ll find no treasure there. Where I really come into my own though, and have always done so, is volunteering. It struck me the other day that I have always been a volunteer. Even at school, I was the kid who would fetch things for the teacher or stick my hand up to help with projects. Except for a few rebellious teenage years, I was always some sort of prefect at school, or lower grade reading mentor. In college I was on student councils and committees and volunteered my time off campus at daycares and thrift shops. And these days I volunteer quite a few hours a week to PCC business, legal outreach into schools, and to certain programs at my kids’ school.

At times when my volunteer work takes over my life I can hear my Mother’s voice, “Mageh to mareaezi?” (meaning my volunteerism is an illness). But she knows, and is used to, my love affair with doing things that don’t just affect me in particular. Being a volunteer makes me happy; more than that, it’s where I find my groove, a place where my life carries a meaning beyond my years on this earth, a rhythm that puts my personal troubles into perspective and allows me to enjoy what I do have all the more. Volunteering is an arena in which I can’t go wrong because just by being there and caring enough I’m doing right. It gives me satisfaction and control over the negatives in this world to think that I can get up and do something to make things better in some way.

Sometimes, when I enjoy doing my volunteer work more than my paid work (such as writing in Peyk), I wonder if all this is benefitting me more than anyone else. Truth is, it doesn’t really matter. As long as what I do is contributing a good thing to my community, my personal reasons for doing it are irrelevant. I believe the seeds of my volunteerism were planted by my Grandma when I was a little girl in Iran. I remember she would always pray for the poor and leave clothes outside our door for pick up. She told me we had a duty to care for our fellow human beings who were less fortunate. The message was that life is bigger than just our personal space and duty was more than helping ourselves. She did not preach much; it was through her actions that I learned the meaning of spreading goodwill and caring for my community. She is still alive, I am happy to report, and still praying five times a day at the age of 95. Her mind continues to be sharp and her humor is still intact. Perhaps living a less self-indulgent life is even good for you! I hope that I set the same example for my children as my grandma did for me. I want them to respect their fellow human beings and care about their community enough to make a personal contribution and commitment to its well being. We all know that children will only learn if you practice what you preach so I hope they learn from watching me. It’s not always easy or fun to volunteer but if you focus on the goal or end result, it is just as much a gift to yourself as it is to anyone else.

Recently at PAAIA’s Passing the Torch event, featured speaker Firoozeh Dumas was asked what message she had for the younger Iranian-American community. She said, “Please volunteer” and explained why. The crowd clapped vigorously but I wondered how many of those clapping had volunteered or were volunteering in their communities. Volunteerism should not just be a noble idea; it is nothing unless practiced. In all the years I have been volunteering I have come across countless numbers of good people who thank me for the things I do. I do not want nor expect thanks for what I do, I would, however, like some help. If you have ever thought about volunteering, make this the year that you try it—dive in, the water’s warm. You never know, you may even find your groove in life!

By Shaghayegh Hanson
In Memory of
Dr. Mally Zomorrodi

Sunrise: April 17, 1945 Rasht, Iran
Sunset: January 7, 2012 La Jolla, California

Many of us had the pleasure of serving with Dr. Zomorrodi on the Board of Directors of the Persian Cultural Center. The community and the organization benefited by her wisdom and leadership. It was at a time when PCC did not have an office and often we held our Board meetings in the waiting room of her office. She always welcomed us with open arms and her beautiful smile and always fed the gang of us with ample food.

She had tremendous respect and passion for her cultural heritage. When time and situation demanded, she was a no nonsense person and a decision maker. Always with clear ideas and a warm heart she was there helping to promote whatever was in the best interests of the community. We remember her with deep gratitude and appreciation for her time and volunteer services.

She was born in Rasht and completed her dental school at the University of Tehran, where she met her late husband Bijan Mostofi. After the revolution they moved with their two daughters to Australia and then in 1984 moved to San Diego and La Jolla became their home. Upon their move to the United States, she passed her Dental Board for California and became a family dentist who served the San Diego community for 26 years. She was well known in her field and highly respected for her skills.

The loss of Mally has not only been difficult for her family but also for many of her friends and her community. It was too soon to have lost her and for many reasons she will be missed tremendously. Those of us who knew her will never forget her “Million Dollar Smile.”

She is survived by her two daughters, two grandchildren, sisters and brothers and their families. To all of them, our deep condolences and remembrance. We share in this loss and wish each of them peace and serenity during these difficult times and future days ahead.

Shahri Estakhry
On behalf of the Persian Cultural Center

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the PCC membership drive. Even though the drive is over, we would still like to encourage more people to become members. Your support is vital to the existence of our organization. Congratulations to the winners!

The winners of the raffle are the following:

1- Habibafshar Azar
2- Brocious Charles and Orousha
3- Alagheband Sara
4- Afshar Ghotli Mashallah and Gity
5- Maheronnaghsh Mahmoud and Manijeh
6- Milani Dr. Cyrus S. and Afshaneh
7- Aghassi Sarah
8- Sadat-Rafiei Rahim
9- Homayounpour Kourosh and Shohreh
10- Hanson Harrison Mary
11- Asgarian Nahavandi Afshin
12- Ardjmand Homayoun
13- Talesghani Reza El. Sumer Y Hasenin
14- Hosseinizad Sara and Kourosh Taghavi Faye
15- Grish

Ipad
E-travel gift
Alborz gift
Target gift card
Lash Studio gift card
Free Sunday Brunch at Sufi Restaurant
Luna Grill Gift Card
photo printer
Free Birthday Cake from Balboa Bakery
Free Haircut at Balboa Salon
Free Lunch at Balboa Market
Free Lunch for two at Grill house café
One Hour free Music Lesson
Free Meditation CD
One Hour Handyman

Please Join Persian Cultural Center:
A Lifeline to Your Community & Your Heritage

By joining PCC you will support:
• Excellent cultural activities such as concerts, lectures, and exhibitions.
• Traditional celebrations, such as Nowruz, Charshanbehsoori, Sizdehbedar, Mehregan, and Yalda.
• Iranian School of San Diego.
• Publication and distribution of Peyk magazine.
• Charitable activities.

By becoming a member of PCC you will enjoy:
• Special discounted tickets for PCC events and activities.
• Special discounts to many local businesses (for the list of participating businesses, please visit our website www.pccsd.org).
• Receive Peyk by mail.

☐ $50 Family Donation
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Your contributions will be tax deductible. To become a member, donate or to volunteer, please visit our website at www.pccsd.org or contact our office at (858)653-0336.
‘one arrives and one departs’

The Poetry of Bijan Jalali

Peyk’s literary column strives to illuminate Iranian and Afghan culture in the context of poetry by introducing the voices and figures of Persian verse today. Aligned with Peyk’s vision and efforts, our columnist has recently launched Alef, a blog dedicated to providing accessible information, insights, and various resources pertinent to the contemporary literature of Iran, Afghanistan, and the Persian-speaking diaspora. You can follow Alef at www.ariafani.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Bijan Jalali was born in 1928 in Tehran, where he received his elementary and secondary education. For several years he studied physics at the University of Tehran and natural sciences in Paris and Toulouse. Ultimately, his passion for poetry led him to obtain a bachelor’s degree in French literature from the University of Tehran. Over the course of his professional life until his retirement in 1981, Jalali taught English and French, consulted with the Ministry of Culture’s Museum of Anthropology, and worked for Tehran’s Petrochemical Organization as a translator. In 1999, he passed away in the city of his birth.

my poems have not stepped further than joy and sorrow
the same joy and sorrow that bring me to you


I have something to say that I have yet to write for it is whiter than paper

Poetics and lyricism developed simultaneously in the Persian literary tradition. Consequently, poetry has been conceptualized and described to Persian readers as lyrical. Simin Behbahani (b. 1927), a distinguished voice in Iranian literature, has credited Jalali with changing the mode of perception of traditional poetry readers toward She’r-e Sepid (Unrhymed Verse, Free Verse), an evolving tradition in Persian poetry that does not adhere to regular schemes of rhyme and meter. In terms of composition,

cleansing in the sound of waves
the sea for long appears in uproar
and I am a pebble resting on seabed

In his introductory essay, “On the Components of Rhetorical Analysis,” the prominent poet and scholar Mohammad Reza Shafi’i Kadkani (b. 1939) asserts that classical literary critics did not examine the overall structure of a poem, but rather focused on each beyt, a metrical unit in Perso-Arabic poetry more or less equivalent to the line in English poetry. In contemporary Persian poetry, poems are not assessed on the basis of each line. Kadkani further argues that a poem may not employ any literary devices, yet still masterfully convey a message that both resonates meaningfully with the poet’s readers and transcends their time and place. Jalali’s verse departs from qualities of the classical tradition. There is no reliance on figures of speech or literary devices such as hyperbole. Jalali skillfully makes use of a great body of imagery, strengthened by his sharp observations and brevity. His body of work has redefined the role of aesthetics in Persian poetry by placing an elegantly simple and brief form of expression at the heart of the poetic process.

how much of a poet does one need to be to see or to recite a flower

An extension of his personality, Jalali’s imagination is gentle and peaceful. “When you met him, and if you did not know he was a poet, you would never be able to find out. He never talked about it; although he always engaged you in a deep discussion about many things,” writes Goli Emami, a distinguished writer and translator. Jalali has dealt with enduring despair, largely due to the heartbreaking death of his adopted son, a tragedy from which he never recovered. Remarkably, Jalali’s poetry is profoundly at peace with the world.

Jalali’s poetry bears no similarities to classical verse and very few to She’r-e No (Modern Verse). The reader does not encounter dazzling diction or complicated verbiage, but an unadorned, straightforward phraseology expressed through a light-hearted and unpretentious voice. Jalali’s eloquence resides not in complexity and sophistication but in simplicity. His verse is filled with lifelike, unemphasized narratives.
All the same, his pain remains tangible and heartfelt, which gives the serenity of his verse more depth. For instance:

I entrust my sorrow
   to words
   that ripple
   like a sea
   that drowns me

One of the most dynamic elements of Jalali’s verse is the place of dialogue and the absence of authority, the latter defined as the poet’s lack of judgment. Readers are given intellectual space to freely probe their unique points of view. In Encounters, published posthumously, Jalali writes, “There exists in my poems a continuous dialogue, at times with God, the world, or nature. In this regard, these poems always possess a dark and a bright side, but their common factor is the continuation of thought at large.” Jalali turns his thoughts and observations into short narratives; many of his poems would work perfectly as the beginning or concluding sentences of a novel: “only possibilities smiled / and passed me by / leaving me / befallen / to impossibilities.”

Another example:

It was for you
my long-enduring silence
and it is for you
now that I disclose
the silence of my past

History is not at all present in Jalali’s verse. His disregard for historical developments and events sets him apart from many of his contemporaries who adhered to the poetry of commitment (littérature engagée). The theory of commitment (ta’ āh hed, iltizam), which declares that the artist has a responsibility to society, was circulated before and after the Iranian Revolution—prevalent in the works of Kadkani, Ahmad Shamlu (1925-2000), Saeed Soltanpour (1940-81), Mohammad Mokhtari (1942-98), and others. Labeled as Gheyr-e Mote’ āhed (noncommitted), poets such as Sohrab Sepehri (1928-80) and Jalali were dismissed by some for their disregard of the anxieties of their era. Jalali was uncontroversial and quiet. He did not make headlines or receive much media attention at all. He was weary of geopolitical history. The history of the human struggle to achieve happiness and reconcile with the forces of nature—this is what preoccupied his mind and shaped his artistic imagination.

Describing his poems as dialogues with the world, Jalali wrote, “It means that they express an idea and further provide a background that ignites a passion for thinking and ruminating. These dialogues always remain interrupted, unfinished, which creates a sense of anticipation. They do not have a logical form, whether outwardly or inwardly, and thus they are not an impediment to the reading process; the path for continued thinking is wide open thereafter.” Jalali was a devout animal lover and shared his home with many dogs and cats. Devoted to his mother, he never married. The Bijan Jalali Literary Award was established in memory of his lasting accomplishments.

One arrives
   and one departs
   and their sweet
   smiles turn bitter

pity the myth
   that we weave
every time
   like cobweb

a housewife,
once unfamiliar to us
freely tears
rubbs and
throws it all
away

***

should someone ask
or me tell them
he has gone to watch
the rain

if they insist
tell them he has gone
to see the storms

if they proved
adamant tell them
he will not return

Further Reading:
To access the Persian original of the current selection, see www.ariafani.com (“Contemporary Persian Poetry”); accessed March 27, 2011. For more on She ʿ-e Sepid (Free Verse), please see Peyk # 133.

Please direct your questions and views to af@ariafani.com

Photo: Maryam Zandi

looking at it
carefully—a flower
is everything

and it seems
that the world is big
staring at us
with its astonished
bright eyes

and roaring rivers flow

i begin where
the world ends
where mountains are flat
and roaring rivers no longer flow

it is there
where my heart—in its emptiness—beats
like a volcano

the world begins
where i end
where i am no more
tall mountains rise
Sohaan Assal:
Almond/Honey Candy, preparation time 1 hour, makes 1 medium plate full.

1 cup slivered almonds; ½ cup sugar; ¼ cup honey; 1 tablespoon cold water; 1 tablespoon unsalted butter; 5-7 drops of liquid saffron (grind saffron- for every ½ tsp saffron powder use 2 tablespoons of boiling water); 2 tablespoons ground raw pistachios

Note: For best results, make this candy only on dry, low-humidity days, as moisture makes it very sticky.

1. In a stainless steel pan, cook sugar, water, butter and honey over medium heat, stirring only once.
2. When sugar melts, add almonds and stir, then add saffron.
3. Continue cooking 8-10 minutes, until mixture turns color
4. Examine the mixture in the light. It should be a reddish color.
5. Test mixture of doneness, by dropping a small amount in a bowl of cold water, then eating it.
6. If mixture sticks to your teeth, continue cooking for 2-3 minutes.
7. Sohaan Assal is done when it is brittle and non-sticky.
8. Grease a cookie sheet and have 2 small teaspoons
9. Use spoons to place small pieces of candy mixture on the tray (smaller candy pieces look more appealing).
10. While candy is still warm, sprinkle each piece with the ground pistachio.
11. If candy hardens, warm pan briefly over low heat.
12. Store in the freeze in airtight containers.

Traditional NOWRUZ Recipes
From: The Joy of Persian Cooking by Pari Ardalan Malek

Kookoo Sabzi:
Fresh Herb Quiche/Souffle, preparation time 45 minutes, makes 8 wedges.

4 cups chopped parsley; 4 cups chopped spring onions; 1 cup chopped Chinese parsley; 1 cup chopped dill; 4 green lettuce leaves; 7 eggs; 1 tsp baking soda; 1 tablespoon flour; 6 tablespoons oil; ⅛ tsp salt; ¼ tsp pepper; ⅛ tsp turmeric and ⅛ tsp cinnamon

1. Chop dill and lettuce leaves finely by hand.
2. Chop remaining vegetables in a food processor or by hand.
3. Heat 3 tablespoons oil in a large skillet, then sauté vegetables and set aside.
4. When cool, mix vegetables with remaining ingredients (except oil) in a large bowl. Beat with electric mixer for 3 minutes.
5. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Pour remaining oil into a 9 or 10 inch round Pyrex dish and place in the oven.
6. When oil is hot, remove Pyrex dish and fill with vegetables, smoothing the top.
7. Bake uncovered for 35-45 minutes.
8. Remove from oven and slice into wedges.
9. To give the sides an even color, fry kookoo on all sides in 1 tablespoon oil.

OPTIONAL: Add 2 tablespoons barberries (zereshk) and 2 tablespoon chopped walnuts in step 3.
ROOFTOPS OF TEHRAN
by Mahbod Seraji

Reviewed by Ahmad Fattahipour
(New American Library, Penguin- 2009)
Available in English and fourteen other languages

Dr. Seraji’s critically acclaimed book, Rooftops of Tehran, released in 2009, has been the recipient of many literary honors; it was the University of Villanova’s One Book Program selection in 2009, Broward College’s Writes of Spring 2010 pick, Earlham College’s College Wide Read for 2011, and American booksellers Association’s honoree in the Outstanding Debut category. Rooftops was also recognized as one of the top fifty books of the Bay Area by the San Francisco Chronicle, and voted as one of the top twenty-five nationwide book club favorites of 2009 by the Book Reporter in New York.

The story occurs in 1973-1974 in a middle-class neighborhood in Tehran. It is an interesting and intriguing story of teenagers attending high school in the 1970s just a few years before the Islamic Revolution. The narrator, teenager Pasha, takes us into the everyday lives of his social circle revealing much about the mores of Persian Culture, and sex, love and marriage. Pasha hangs out on the rooftop terrace of his house discussing all aspects of life with his best friend, Ahmad. From this perspective, the novel greatly contributes to our knowledge of coming of age in a totalitarian culture ruled by a repressive political regime.

Apart from Pasha and Ahmad, other major players in this novel are Faheemah, Zari, Iraj, and the “Doctor,” Pasha’s mentor. Doctor’s actions are eventful and consequential. He is an avid reader of communist writers such as Maxim Gorky, Karl Marx, Louis Althusser, Erich Fromm and Antonio Gramsci and is concerned about the conditions of the poor villagers in Iran in contrast to the luxurious extravagant life of the Shah. Although he was born into a middle-class family, after the death of his father, at the age of twelve years old his family is plunged into poverty. He believes a Revolution should take place against the Shah and the Shah’s American backers. Pasha is also an avid reader and gravitates towards Doctor. When the trial of a Tudeh (Communist) party leader, Gole-Sorkhi, leads to execution, Pasha realizes it is Doctor who is responsible for pasting Red Roses on the walls. Doctor eventually joins a group of anti-Shah Marxists in the north of Iran. This complicates the romantic life of Zari who loves and is loved by Pasha on the one hand, but is betrothed by her parents from the time of her birth to marry Doctor. The political and personal events following Doctor’s departure are extraordinary and make reading of this novel compelling.
Homework Breakthrough

By Sheiveh N. Jones, Ed.D.

As my children get older, homework has created more challenges over the years. I often ask my teachers to think about their purpose when they assign homework. Is it to teach responsibility, re-enforce the content learned in class, or prevent parent complaints from those who demand their children receive homework every night? The reality of it is that the research points to very little benefit from homework. Robert Marzano, a well-known researcher in the educational community, even points to the fact that homework increases learning by only two percent! That is quite insignificant when you think about all the other great tools and teaching strategies there are that increase learning by between ten and twenty percent.

A teacher’s biggest objective is to make sure students are meeting the learning goals put forth by the state and the district. Oftentimes, this learning can be demonstrated through assessments, projects, and really overall during class time. My biggest pet peeve is when teachers give students worksheets that are not connected to the learning goals. Unfortunately for our household, both of my children are not too fond of homework. When it has little to no purpose, it is really hard and quite frankly unfair to make them do it.

This year, the sixth grade social studies teacher gives students “projects” once a week. The project includes copying a map or some type of picture—most recently it was a man in the middle of a lake on a canoe in China. The same week the English teacher gave him an assignment to copy a make-believe map that reflected “The Sea of Knowledge.” Needless to say, I ranted on Facebook and asked my friends for feedback as to how these assignments had any relevance to learning. Immediately, a colleague of mine wrote me back just as furious and told me we would talk at work the next day. In the meantime, she directed me to her blog, www.tamysteachings.com, which had just addressed the homework issues. What came out of reading her blog and having a conversation the next day was a great brainstorm among two educators about the purpose of homework and its impact on children and families. We came up with a great solution about how to approach the teachers regarding this dilemma. We agreed the best approach was not to be confrontational, but rather propose alternative, meaningful assignments that made sense for my son.

My colleague, Tammy, expressed her disappointment over how we view homework in this society. I explained to her it was not just this society and shared with her the ins and outs of parental expectations in Iranian culture, which oftentimes views homework time as directly related to their children’s success. Because we both work in the field and continuously read the research, we both know that times are changing and traditional homework is an archaic concept that does not necessarily prepare children for their futures. What is extremely important is that children grow up to become critical thinkers who can navigate through the complex future that we cannot even begin to predict. It is going to be their ability to think globally, make decisions in split seconds, and collaborate with people on the other side of the globe who they may not have ever met that will very likely determine their success.

I was a bit skeptical about whether or not the teachers would be willing to change their homework policy, but I also knew that my son has great educators. So I wrote an e-mail to both the English teacher and the Social Studies teacher. The e-mail to the English teacher explained that Ashkon was spending upward of four hours a night on English homework; given that homework should be 10 minutes per grade, Ashkon was spending three hours more than he should on homework and that was just English! I asked the teacher if we could stop at a certain point without it affecting his grade, with the understanding that I would send a note to school when this happened. I then e-mailed the Social Studies teacher and asked if we could have Ashkon do assignments that helped him make connections between the unit and the work without having to copy pictures. My proposal was to have him create a Glogster (www.glogster.com) with videos and pictures around the content. Both teachers wrote back immediately and fully supported the ideas.

While I was on this roll, I also e-mailed the second grade teacher and asked if we could modify homework for Koosha, my youngest son who is six months behind grade level. Again, I offered an alternative, which was to spend more time on reading and addressing some of the math skills he is still struggling with. The second grade teacher was also flexible and willing to give up half of the homework packet for more time on reading.

These teachers’ willingness to be flexible so they could meet the learning needs of individual students attests to their understanding that each child has different needs and it is their job to ensure all their students learn. My approaching them with alternative assignments actually makes their job easier because they see I am willing to monitor my children’s work, be involved in their learning, and provide alternate suggestions for them. In the end, we must all realize we are preparing our children for a future that not even we could begin to understand or envision; it is with that mindset we should view homework and confidently approach our children’s teachers.
Charshanbe Soori, with HOI and AIAP
Tuesday, March 13, 2012 7:00 to 10:00 pm
NTC Park 2455 Cushing Rd  San Diego, CA  92106

PCC Nowruz Celebration with Shahram Shabpareh
Saturday, March 17, 2012 at
Hyatt Regency La Jolla
3777 La Jolla Village Dr • San Diego, CA  92122
Tel: 858-653-0336

The San Diego Museum of Art
www.TheSanDiegoMuseumofArt.org
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twitter:  @SDMA  •  Tel:  619.232.7931

Art Alive 2012 is an annual floral interpretations of famous works of art. Exhibition April 13-15, 2012

Sizdeh Bedar
Sunday, April 1, 2012  1:00 to 6:00 PM
NTC Park  2455 Cushing Rd, San Diego, CA  92106

MY Teacher, My Mom (Hengameh Ayari’s Appreciation)
Sunday April 8, 2012  (on page 13)
Setar Workshop by Kourosh Taghavi
Registration and info: (858)-243-6008
Tar Classes by Ali Noori (858) 220-3674
Daf Workshop with Ali Sadar,
Tuesdays 6 to 7:30 PM at PCC office.

Iranian School of San Diego
(858) 653-0336
Branch I: Sundays 9:30 am- 1:00 pm
Branch II: Thursday 6:00 pm - 8:00pm
At  . Mt. Carmel High School
9550 Carmel Mt. Rd, San Diego, CA 92129

ISSD Nowruz preparation, March 4, 2012 ,10am
ISSD Nowruz Celebration, March 11, 2012

Persian Dance Academy of San Diego
(858) 653-0336  www.pccus.org

Dollar a Month Fund
Tel: (858) 653-0336 • www.dmfund.org
http://www.facebook.com/pages/Dollar-a-Month-Fund
Nowruz Bazaar
March 4, 2012 from 10am – 12 pm
At Mt. Carmel High School

PCC Nowruz Celebration with Shahram Shabpareh
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Nowruz Bazaar
March 4, 2012 from 10am – 12 pm
At Mt. Carmel High School

If you are in the neighborhood of the following public libraries, please check-out our Nowruz and cultural presentations.

From March 1st -March 31st
Carmel Valley Branch Library: 3919 Townsgate Drive, San Diego, CA  92130
Linda Vista Branch Library: 2160 Ulric Street , San Diego, CA  92111
Rancho Peñasquitos Branch Library: 13330 Salmon River Road, San Diego , CA 92129
Pacific Beach Branch Library: 4275 Cass Street , San Diego , CA  92109
North University Community Branch Library: 8820 Judicial Drive, San Diego,CA 92122
College-Rolando Branch Library: 6600 Montezuma Road, San Diego, CA 92115-2828
La Jolla/Riford Branch Library: 7555 Draper Avenue, La Jolla, CA 92037-4802
January 31, 2012, San Diego, CA - Garnering the support of a sold out audience in UCSD’s Mandeville Auditorium, the Passing of the Torch of Success (“PTT”) event held on January 29, 2012, rocked San Diego. Billed as an event which would educate, inspire, and empower, the PTT in San Diego more than delivered. As one audience member noted: “What an incredible panel of speakers….so inspiring…everyone left empowered with an amazing sense of pride as Iranian Americans.”

Reminding the audience of the value of being proud of one’s heritage, each speaker shared insights about the keys to achieving success. All the while, co-hosts Maz Jobrani and Shally Zomorodi brought good humor and smiles to all hearts.

Humorist and author of Funny in Farsi and Laughing Without an Accent, Firoozeh Dumas recounted her journey by noting that her inspiration to write came from stories her father had told her and her desire to tell her own children her story. She encouraged the audience to give back to society. Firoozeh Dumas was followed by Former Senior Advisor to the Obama Administration, Vali Nasr, who recounted how, at times, life calls one to take an unplanned path and how responding to the unanticipated summons can lead to unexpected opportunities, as was the case with Dr. Nasr.

The sound of music then filled the auditorium as world class pianist, Tara Kamangar, played four pieces. Mesmerized by the “Notes from Persia”, the audience watched Ms. Kamangar’s fingers race across the keyboard with aplomb. Many who remain thirsty for more music from Ms. Kamangar may find information about her on her website.

A short video about the success of the Iranian School in San Diego, which now boasts over 250 students and is financially self-sustaining, followed. The school creates a great example for how other communities may create schools designed to preserve language and culture.

Celebrating the diverse population base of San Diego, Mayor Jerry Sanders praised the PTT event and issued a Proclamation on behalf of the City of San Diego. The proclamation marked January 29, 2012, as “Passing the Torch of Success Day” in San Diego. More information may be found on the Office of the Mayor/City of San Diego website.

A Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition and a flag that had been flown over the United States Capitol had also been presented to PAAIA by Congressman Duncan Hunter “in recognition of the dedication and effort of PAAIA to educate and mentor the next generation by sharing wisdom and experiences of the lives of successful Iranian Americans.”

Noting the common bond all of us have with newborns, San Diego obstetrician Shahram Daneshmand recounted how even in childhood he desired to be a physician. Witnessing the pain of mothers who could not afford the necessities of life after childbirth, Dr. Daneshmand explained how he established Miracle Babies to help families who faced financial challenges. He finds much satisfaction in giving back by helping families with new babies live a more normal life during one of the tenderest times in one’s life.

Venture capitalist, global entrepreneur, and philanthropist Kamran Elahian centered his remarks on the virtues of failure. Recounting his own experience with being fired at one of his companies that failed, Mr. Elahian defined true success as the ability to cope with and react positively to failure.

Follow your dreams is what Grammy award winning DJ and producer, Shahram Tayebi, exhorted to the audience. Noting the cultural and financial barriers that exist in pursuing a dream different from the classical professions of engineer or doctor, Shahram explained that through persistence, dreams can be realized even if one has to create a new path.

Drawing on thirty years of experience, first as a professor of physics at Princeton, then as a partner of a leading management consulting firm, and finally as a senior executive of global giant Citicorp, Dr. Biglari analogized his career to a climb and shared ten insights he has learned from his climb. These insights, which included perspectives about the role of luck versus skill, when it is expedient to lose a battle in order to win a war, and the role of emotions in making decisions, captivated the crowd and led to a standing ovation in reaction to the impactful wisdom shared with the audience at large.

As another participant mentioned after the event, “I would like to praise your laudable effort and hard work to initiate and organize such a powerful program last night. The message was very powerful especially for new generations. I can see clearly that the program was an inspiration to my son, 18 years old, who usually denies involvement with most of the activities related to Iranians and Iranian Americans. I believe that last night’s program opened a fresh, new window to his mind and future.”
The art that was produced in the Qajar period (1779 – 1924) is rich in two regards—modern techniques and restoration of successful older styles. The Qajars reunited the country that had been controlled by rivaling sectors since the fall of the Safavids in 1722. To celebrate their success in unifying the country and to build a historical legitimacy, the earliest Qajar shahs associated themselves with the Achaemenids (559–330 B.C.) and the Sasanians (224–651), the ancient empires that had established the foundations of the Persian nation and its culture. As the Qajar dynasty grew stronger and became more stable, so did the country’s link with European countries. This international connection expedited the process of modernization in Iran.

Fath Ali Shah commissioned rock-cut reliefs where the earlier kings of ancient Persian empire had ordered carved reliefs with their own portraits. His additions were life-size and located at generally accessible sites such as Taq-i Bustan and Ray. These stone reliefs were meant to publicly link the Qajars with their legendary precursors. These imperial images relied on traditional artistic practices.

In the late nineteenth century, artists established an interest in the painting and drawing styles of the Safavid period. Muhammad Davari Vesal (1822–1865), for example, looked to both early Safavid and late seventeenth-century models in his eclectic illustrations of the Davari Shahnama (1855), while other artists looked to the drawings and calligraphic compositions of Riza Abbasi (ca. 1585–1635) from earlier times.

In the decorative arts, objects in lacquer and enamel had an increasing popularity. The rose and nightingale (gool-o-bolbol) motif, which was a popular ornamentation design since the seventeenth century, retains its popularity in different decorative objects of the Qajar period. The
European demand for such decorative products also contributed to the prolongation of traditions in the decorative arts. Europeans were also widely collecting Persian carpets; it was during this period, for example, that the carpets from the Ardabil shrine were famed in the West and as a result of the western obsession with Persian carpet, many weavers found jobs making traditional-style rugs for those Europeans who could not purchase the antique ones.

Qajar shahs commissioned great numbers of life-size portraits of themselves and the royal family, mostly their sons. These imperial images were placed in the interiors of the palaces. Mirza Baba (active 1780s–1810), Mihr Ali (active ca. 1798–1815), and other court painters created series of paintings depicting Fath Ali Shah in a variety of royal activities and roles—ruler, warrior, hunter. These portraits were not intended to be realistic depictions of their subject matters but, in fact, they were meant to present the viewer with symbolic images of power, strength, and stability. The Qajar imperial portraits are characterized by dark, rich colors, and figures with idealized characteristics in understood powerful poses. The Zand and Afsharid dynasties had been already introduced to oil painting, but it was the Qajars who extensively took this medium to new heights.

Fath Ali Shah’s heirs adopted other media as new technologies for reproducing images became accessible. Dar al-Funun (House of Sciences), founded in 1851, was Iran’s first institution of higher learning based on western models. This school played a crucial role in the distribution of these new technologies and methods in sciences, administrative, and arts. Dar al-Funun academy was planned by Nasir al-Din Shah’s prime minister, Amir Kabir, as a training ground for future civil servants and military men. After a decade, the school began to offer workshops in painting, lithography, photography, and music.

Our next column will be dedicated to the Early Age of Photography in Iran.

**Celebrate the Persian New Year with One Book, One San Diego**

**Date:** Wednesday, March 29, 2012
**Time:** Presentation 6:30 – 7:30 PM; Reception 7:30 – 8:30 PM
**Location:** The San Diego Museum of Art, 1450 El Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego, CA 92101

**Description:**
Celebrate the Persian New Year with One Book, One San Diego! Join us for an evening of Persian art and literature, including:
- Panel discussion with experts on Persian art and literature.
- Original art on display by Zohreh Ghahremani.
- The San Diego Museum of Art’s special Persian art exhibition, *Temple, Palace, Mosque*, will be open for attendees.
- Traditional Persian tea and dessert reception and book signing.

**RSVP at www.kpbs.org/poppies**

**For more information, call**
Clare Pister at (619) 594-2487

This event is brought to you by KPBS, the San Diego Public Library, the San Diego Museum of Art, the Persian Cultural Center

Major support for One Book, One San Diego comes from the Linden Root Dickinson Foundation. Additional support comes from Lloyd Pest Control, Cubic Corporation, the John and Henry Fox Foundation and the Network of Iranian-Americans at HP San Diego. KPBS is a public service of San Diego Public University.

**For book related news and events, visit kpbs.org/onebook, “like” us on Facebook, and follow us on Twitter @OneBookSD.**

SD Museum of Art, SDPL, PCC, Lloyd Pest, Cubic Corporation, NIA.
Baha’ís of Iran: A Story of Struggle

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

A few weeks ago, we celebrated Martin Luther King’s birthday. King, a man who used nonviolence in the universal struggle to overcome injustice and oppression, has much in common with a group of Iranians who have used a similar approach for more than a century. Fariba, Jamaloddin, Afif, Saeid, Behrouz, Vahid, Mahvash — they are just seven names, seven Persian names to be specific, seven Persian names of the Baha’i leaders currently in prison to be crystal clear.

Baha’ís have lived in Iran for more than a hundred years. The religion, mislabeled as an anti-Iranian cult spying for foreign governments and deemed fraudulent (mazhab-e zaleh) by the Islamic Republic, was founded in nineteenth century Persia. Since its inception in the homes of Shiraz and the streets of Tehran, the faith has become the world’s second most widespread religion. They are respected for their ideals in every corner of the globe, except in the country of its birth. But the Iranian attitude towards the Baha’i community has not been limited to disrespect only; the governments of both past and present have gone out of their way to disdain, dehumanize, diminish and disown some 300,000 of its own citizens which represent the country’s largest religious minority. A Canadian senator recently remarked on the situation saying, “We are watching genocide in slow motion in Iran.” Why, you may ask? Well, it’s a question that we should ask the Iranian government who has proudly introduced and executed multiple campaigns against a community of native born and bred Iranians who officially have no citizenship rights in their own birthplace.

While for many years, the larger Iranian community has been quiet about the treatment of their countrymen, the recent imprisonment and increased harassment of the Baha’ís have provoked many to break the silence and recognize the systematic and unjust behaviors of their officials. In an open letter written by Iranian intellectuals, scholars, writers, journalists, activists, and artists throughout the world, more than two hundred prominent figures who are signatory to this document state that they are “ashamed” for being silent about the suffering of their countrymen and will no longer avoid the subject due to its status as “taboo” in Iranian culture.

One such example is Iranian Taboo, a documentary made by Reza Allamehzadeh that addresses the persecution of Iranian Baha’ís. The film tells the story of Nader and her fourteen year-old son who leave behind their beloved Iran and take
refuge in the West. Through their cry of dispossession, the documentary sheds light on the narrative of Baha’i struggle and resilience. Illuminating the culture of Iranian Baha’is in the context of their love for education, Iranian Taboo as well as Education Under Fire—another documentary made by Jeff Kaufman—explore independent Baha’i universities (BIHE) that resist discriminatory laws that ban Baha’i students from higher education only based on faith. Also featured in the documentaries are interviews with respected intellectuals, peace activists, scholars, and ordinary Baha’is give unique insights into the historical persecution of Baha’is.

While the Iranian and the international community have finally begun to stand for the rights of this group on legal and moral platforms, we cannot but showcase an attitude of compassion and solidarity towards the family and friends of the Baha’i prisoners who still remain in prison. Recently I was able to meet and spend sometime with the mother of Fariba Kamalabadi, one of the seven Baha’i leaders currently serving a 20-year prison sentence. She and her other six colleagues have refused to sign a sheet of paper stating, “I am not a Baha’i.” A simple statement that would set her free and enable her to have full citizenship rights, including the right to send her daughter to school who otherwise would have no access to higher education. Their noble courage not only reflects the historical resilience of Iranian Baha’is but also showcases the best of our humanity in the face of marginalization.

When her mother visits Fariba in the prison cell and looks at her dear daughter locked behind bars, she doesn’t sense fear in Fariba’s spirit; she sees courage in her teary eyes, strength in her flesh-and-bone hands, love for humanity in her broken heart. There lies a vision for world peace in her tortured mind, a sound of ‘freedom’ in her crackling voice. With a vision far from self-righteousness, a non-violent response similar to the successful struggles of Gandhi and King, how could Fariba or any other member of the 300,000 women, men and children of the community choose to reject their faith and quench the light of hope for themselves and for millions of other human beings struggling for the betterment of the world?

They cannot. They will not.

Take Action:

Watch:
- Iranian Taboo by Iranian filmmaker Reza Alamehzadeh, March 1st, ‘12 @ Hillcrest Cinemas, San Diego.
- Quenching the Light, by the writer, @ kdkfactory.com/quench
- Education Under Fire by Jewish filmmaker Jeff Kaufman, March 9th, ‘12 @ UCSD

Visit:
- IranPressWatch.org
- BahaiRights.org
- Iran.Bahai.us

Sources:
Canadian Parliament Statement: http://goo.gl/ULrBN
The Full Open Letter: http://goo.gl/r3Sno
Cultural cleansing in Iran: http://goo.gl/Z8Nms

About the Columnist:
Mithaq Kazimi is an Afghan-American filmmaker residing in San Diego, California. He holds a degree in the field and is the current program director of Dawn Breakers International Film Festival. He has recently started interviewing a number of unique and prolific individuals on his personal blog, Perspactive: kdkfactory.com/perspactive
Do you need more information about Medicare?

Elderly and disabled residents of San Diego and Imperial Counties have a valuable resource when it comes to making decisions about Medicare.

Elder Law & Advocacy’s HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program) program is staffed by trained counselors who can give you the information you need to make an informed decision about your healthcare choices. All HICAP counselors are registered with the California Department of Aging and provide unbiased, impartial information and counseling. There is a staff attorney who provides representation and counsel advice, including appeals. In addition to Medicare, HICAP also provides counseling on long-term care insurance plans, low income programs to help pay for healthcare costs, and Medicare fraud referrals. Counselors are available at many local community senior centers and other sites throughout San Diego County. HICAP services are free.

To contact the HICAP program call 1-800-434-0222.
Dear Readers:

As a part of our community services, we have approached some of the Iranian medical specialist in various fields to send us their information to share with the community. We appreciate the work of Dr. Reza Shirazi who spearheaded this effort. The following list is not complete by any means. If you are a Medical Doctor and would like to be added to this list, please send your information to Dr. Shirazi or directly to Peyk.

**Afshin Bahador M.D.**  
So. Coast Gynecologic Oncology, Inc.  
Gynecologist Oncologist  
9850 Genesee #570  
La Jolla, CA 92037  
858/455-5572

**Kaveh Bagheri, MD, FACO, FCCP**  
Internal Med, Pulmonary Med, and Critical Care Med.  
8851 Center Drive, Suite 405  
La Mesa, CA 91942  
619-589-2535

**Hamid Ghazi, M.D.**  
Internal Medicine  
Kaiser Permanente-Rancho San Diego  
Kaiser Permanente 3875 Avocado Blvd.  
La Mesa, CA 91941  
619-670-2924

**Anoosh Ghodsi-Shirazi, M.D.**  
Kaiser Permanente  
Obstetrics and Gynecologist  
Rancho Bernardo Medical Offices  
17140 Bernardo Center Dr, Suite # 100  
San Diego, CA 92128  
800-290-5000

**Mahshid Hamidi, M.D. Family**  
5222 Balboa Ave, Suite 31  
San Diego, CA 92117  
858-565-6394

**Alborz Hassankhani, M.D., Ph.D.**  
Cardiology and Cardiac Electrophysiology  
5525 Grossmont Center Drive, Suite 609  
La Mesa, CA 91942  
(619) 668-0044  
(619) 668-0889 (fax)

**Maryam Hekmat, M.D.**  
Scripps Clinic - Rancho Bernardo  
Internal Medicine  
15004 Innovation Drive  
San Diego, CA 92128  
858-605-7180

**Robert B. Lavjardi M.D.**  
Encompass Family and Internal Medicine Group  
7339 El Cajon Blvd., Suite E  
La Mesa, CA 91941  
tel. 619-460-7775  
fax 619-460-7023  
www.EncompassMD.com

**Haleh Mahdavieh, M.D.**  
Scripps Clinic - Rancho Bernardo  
Internal Medicine  
15004 Innovation Drive, Suite 97  
San Diego, CA 92128  
858-605-7887

**Mehrooosh Majd, D.D.S**  
Family and Cosmetic Dentistry  
10717 Camino Ruiz, #150  
San Diego, CA 92126  
-858-336-5326

**Camron Mirkarim, M.D.**  
Board certified Internal Medicine/ Hospitalist  
Clairemont Family Medical Group  
3863 Clairemont Dr. San Diego, CA 92117  
Phone. 858-483-5570  
Fax 858-483-5572

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**Morey Mirkarimi, M.D.**  
General Practice  
Clairemont Family Medical Group  
3863 Clairemont Dr. San Diego, CA 92117  
Phone. 858-483-5570  
Fax 858-483-5572

**New Age Dental Group**  
858-521-0000  
11968 Bernardo Center Dr.  
in the Vons Center, San Diego, CA 92128

**Bijan Razi M.D.**  
Cardiologist  
5555 Reservoir Drive, Suite 100  
San Diego, CA 92120  
Phone 619/265-0200  
Fax 619/287-2825

**Hossain Ronaghy, M.D.**  
Internal Medicine  
3023 Bunker Hill Street, Suite 106  
San Diego, CA 92109  
619-275-2700

**Mahtab Saadatmandi, D.M.D.**  
Premier Dental Arts  
2311 S. Melrose Dr. Vista, CA 92081  
760-599-1100  
www.premierdental-arts.com

**Majid Shahbaz, M.D.**  
Internal Medicine  
5555 Reservoir Drive, Suite 312  
San Diego, CA 92120  
619/583-1174

**Reza Shirazi, MD, DABR, MS, EE**  
Radiation Oncologist  
www.sdcyberknife.com

**Maryam Zarei, M.D.**  
Saffron Market  
4444 Auburn Blvd.  
Sacramento, CA 95841  
Tel: 916-978-7978

**Saffron Grill**  
1025-A Seneca Rd, Watertown, MA 02472-4118  
(617) 924-4978

**Shahrzad Restaurant**  
3919 Townsgate Dr, Suite 100  
San Diego, CA 92101  
Tel: 619-230-1001

**Shahrazad Restaurant**  
2311 Holiday Court., Ste 100  
La Jolla, CA 92307  
Tel: 858-539-9700

**Shahrazad Restaurant**  
1419 Westwood Blvd  
Los Angeles, CA 90024  
Tel: 310-477-7477

**Shahrazad Restaurant**  
27771 Center Drive  
Mission Viejo, CA 92691  
Tel: 949-340-1010

**Shahrazad Restaurant**  
12222 Poway Rd  
Poway, CA 92064  
Tel: 858-486-1114

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(617) 924-4978

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Ms. Nazi A Kite

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**Tennessee**  
International Food Mart  
2855 Logan St.  
Nashville, TN 37211

**Virginia**  
Saffron Grill  
1025-A Seneca Rd, Great Falls, VA 22066  
Tel: 703-421-0082

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