



Saeed Jafarizadeh

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www.peykmagazine.com

32nd Year Iranian School of San Diego
Registration, August 25 and 29, 2019



IN SEARCH OF HUMANITY

Hope. It is the element that human beings permit themselves for a better future. It is the force behind the impossible. It is the prayer to guide those lost in their surroundings, in impossible situations.

It was with this hope that thousands fled their homelands, leaving behind families and familiarities and, against all odds, got themselves to the gates of the United States, which they believed was the land of opportunity, justice, and humanity... with much hope for their future. At this point came the unspeakable tragedies which have stopped them and shocked the world, demolishing the respect and the credit this country has earned through its short history. Despite this nation's history with slavery and genocide of indigenous Americans, it seemed—until recently—that this country was still striving to be a land of opportunity, justice, and humanity.

it seemed-until recently-that this country was still striving to be a land of opportunity, justice, and humanity.

I have been working globally for the benefit of children in need for 48 years of my life. Children in need of education, children in need of good health, and foremost children in dire need of nourishment. According to UNICEF, hunger is the number one killer of children globally. I thought I had seen the worst that was possible to see until now. Witnessing the cruelty and inhumane standard we have adopted at our border gates is unbelievable. I never thought I would

live to see such horrific cruelty. We all are seeing and reading about what is happening and yet many have chosen to be silent about it. We need to imagine ourselves in their places. So painful, so unreal to see families torn apart. The border images will remain with me for the rest of my life.

For a long time, I have strongly believed that U.S. immigration policy has no rhyme or reason. The present system we have is truly beneficial only to those who know how to use its flaws and loopholes. It is a broken system and a disgrace beyond words. This is not how the defenders of democracy and freedom should resolve problems.

Timothy Snyder Levin, Professor of History at Yale University and author of the book *Tyranny*, writes: “anticipatory obedience is a political tragedy. Perhaps rulers did not initially know that citizens were willing to compromise this value or that principle.”

Today, we are at the crossing of the tragedy of anticipatory obedience. What are you willing to compromise?



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Persian Cultural Center

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PCC (Persian Cultural Center):

PCC NEWS

Family Game Night – June 28, 2019

On June 28, a good number of people of all ages got together and enjoyed a family night of playing traditional games, singing karaoke, and eating great food at the Iranian American Center (IAC).

Docunight – July 3, 2019

The documentary “Like a Woman,” directed by Mojgan Inanlou, was screened in the month of July. “Like A Woman” is the first and only documentary about Faezeh Hashemi’s political and private life. The movie covers many unseen aspects of Hashemi Rafsanjani’s family and his controversial children. After the movie, an audience discussion was moderated by Ali Khorsandian.

Jong-e Farhangi - July 12, 2019

The July Jong was hosted by Reza Khabazian. This event had two guests. First, author Zohreh Ghahremani spoke about “storytelling” and her latest novel. In the second half, Hans Farrahi spoke about his experience as a musician and instructor. He then played few pieces of music on piano. In each section, the audience members asked their questions during a Q&A session.

Movie and Discussion Series – July 19, 2019

The July movie selection was *Crazy Rook*, directed by Abolhassan Davoodi, with a cast including Saber Abar, Bijan Emkanian and Gohar Kheirandish. The movie is about a group of young people who meet on social media, get together to have some fun, but the story turns when one of them committed a crime. Each character has a very different version of the incident. The movie has won five *Simorgh Bolurin* awards at the Fajr International Film Festival—Iran’s major annual film festival—for Best Movie Selected by Audience, Best Film, Best Director, Best Sound, and Special Effects. After the screening, host Mahmoud Reza Pirouzian introduced the director and facilitated a discussion on the different aspects of the film with attendees.

Screening *Nabat* and Q&A by Shahab Hosseini – August 3 and 4, 2019

In cooperation with POL Media and PCC, the movie *Nabat* (2016) was screened on August 3 and 4 at the “Q” auditorium in San Diego. *Nabat* is directed by Pegah Arzi, with a cast including Shahab Hosseini, Nazanin Farahani, and Setayesh Hosseini. After the screening, a Q&A session with Shahab Hosseini was moderated by Mahmoud Pirouzian. At the end, the attendees took memorable pictures with Shahab Hosseini on the red carpet. More than 500 people came to see the movie in two days.

Docunight – August 7, 2019

The documentary “Janbal,” directed by Mina Bozorgmehr and Hadi Kamali Mogahdam, was screened at the IAC on August 7. Inspired by an ancient Hormoz Island myth in which people sacrifice the clothing of the deceased to the sea so that the goddess Sea-Mother will cleanse their souls, “Janbal” takes stories told by the island’s



dwellers as its starting point, and playfully finds its form from there. After the movie, the discussion section was moderated by Ali Khorsandian.

Jong-e Farhangi - August 9, 2019

The August Jong was hosted by Ali Sadr. The first guest of this event was Khodadad Sharif, a lawyer and member of the Iranian American Bar Association, who discussed financial aspects of civil litigation and family law and took questions from audience members. Essy Ghavamodini, a professional photographer, was the second guest of this event and he described his forty-year journey working as a photographer for major sporting events and major concerts in San Diego. Some of his pictures were exhibited at the Center.

PCC's Board Meetings

PCC's board of directors holds its meetings every second Wednesday of the month at IAC. The last two meetings took place on July 10 and August 14, 2019.

Art Gallery: A Dream of Humanity– August 17 through October 19, 2019

In cooperation with UCSD's Art and Humanities department, a collection of Reza Deghati's works is being shown by PCC at the Iranian American Center from August 17 through October 19. This gallery is presented by Gallery Yellow. The event is free, and the photographs are available for purchase.

San Diego Iranian School Registration – August 25 and 29, 2019

Registration for the school year of 2019 - 2020 was held on August 25 and 29, 2019, at Mt. Carmel High School.



In 2013, I wrote an essay in *Peyk* in which I examined border militarization as a political phenomenon in the United States and Israel. In it, I argued that in both countries, border militarization is rooted in the destruction of land and the dehumanization of indigenous communities. What had given occasion to this essay was the fact that the US Congress had passed a massive budget to further militarize the border and it was signed into law by Barack Obama. Six years later, we have an openly xenophobic president in the White House who ran a presidential campaign based on a promised border wall. In reprinting this essay, I would like to point your attention to the ways in which our inhumane immigration laws predate the current administration. In order to fight for a more humane and inclusive immigration system, we must understand that the current administration has only inherited and dramatically intensified cruel policies that were already in place in previous administrations, policies that were implemented on an institutional level by presidents who even paid lip service to the idea of inclusion and justice.

No Wall Is High Enough!

Policies and politics of apartheid from Berlin to Jerusalem

“Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state, [and] the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country”—Article 13, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 not only cut Germany into two political entities, it also segregated the country culturally, socially, and economically. It split families, lovers, friends. In 1987, two years before its fall, President Ronald Reagan famously challenged Mikhail Gorbachev—General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—to “tear down this wall,” in a speech made at the Brandenburg Gate. Reagan remarked, “Mr. Gorbachev, we welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace.” Having been reduced to countless pieces, today the Berlin Wall tours the world, from one exhibition to another, reminding us of the concrete reality of a polarized world marked by policies and politics of segregation.

Like its existence, the Berlin Wall’s collapse in that momentous November in 1989 also became an enduring symbol, one for tolerance and freedom, a fall that was internationally celebrated. Time may have eventually chipped away at the Berlin Wall, but its legacy persists even more powerfully today. It is no longer in the Brandenburg Gate, but rather elsewhere where President Reagan’s words resonate today: Qalandia, Bethlehem, Jenin, Erez, Rafah, Tijuana, Nogales, Reynosa, Agua Prieta. This time, however, much more than a call for “change and openness” ties us—as Americans—to the barriers that stand between Palestine and Israel, Mexico and the United States. These Walls are rooted in our political intolerance; they marginalize and terrorize indigenous peoples, tear communities apart, disturb ecosystems, feed the industry of fear, and destroy the identity of landscapes. They enable policies and politics of apartheid.



Let us start in Palestine. Funded by U.S. taxpayers, the construction of the Israeli Wall began more than a decade ago. At its core, it isolates the West Bank from historic Palestine—the State of Israel today—where twenty percent of the population is Palestinian. The Israeli Wall is 450 miles long—the distance from San Diego to San Francisco—and stands 26 feet tall, more than twice as high as the Berlin Wall. It is called the “Security Fence” by Israel and the “Apartheid Wall” by Palestinians. The Israeli Wall functions through an advanced and multifaceted security infrastructure: watchtowers, cameras, sensors, electronic fences, and barbwire. While it is important to consider official narratives—political statements and opinions—overlooking the stories of ordinary Palestinians on the ground would only highlight, strengthen, and extend the existence of the Israeli Wall not only as a physical barrier but also as a metaphor for segregation.



My summer plan to study Arabic language and literature took me to Palestine where I witnessed the impact of the Israeli Wall up-close and personally. The Wall’s immediate impact has been on the Palestinian landscape, uprooting thousands of trees and creating a prison-like environment that disheartens and terrorizes locals and intimidates undetermined visitors. For instance, Qalandia, once a small charming village near Ramallah, has been transformed into an open-prison compound: a military base with multiple watchtowers, a checkpoint equipped with revolving doors and fingerprint scanners, an area filled with Jerusalem-bound *serveeces*, and ambulances on standby in case of clashes between Palestinian youth and the IDF. Qalandia is no longer; it is *al-ma’bar*, the crossing, *al-hajiz*, the checkpoint.

The Israeli Wall prevents thousands of Palestinians from reaching their workplaces, schools, farmlands, and hospitals while it curtails their access to the hub of Palestinian life and economy in East Jerusalem. From many parts of Abu Dis, a town in East Jerusalem, the Dome of the Rock in the Old City is visible; a distance previously covered in several minutes now takes more than an hour. In Salfit, central West Bank, the property of Mr. Hani Amer has been entirely enclosed by all sides; the Wall, electronic fence, and the Elkana settlement surround his property. He has been entirely isolated from the nearby village of Masah. For months, Mr. Amer and his family were only allowed to leave their house two times a day; he was only recently able to get a key to his own property. Having resorted to humor, the entrance to his house reads: “Welcome to the State of Hani Amer.”

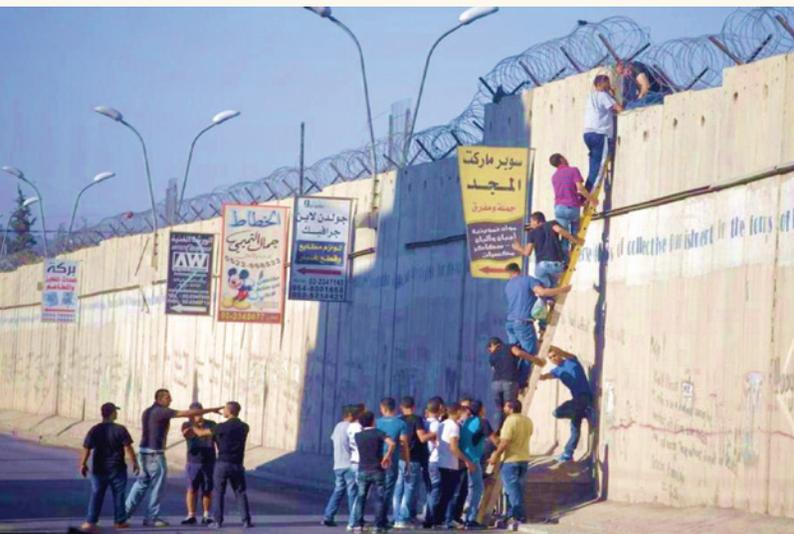


In Bethlehem, the Israeli Wall has shut down businesses and separated families from each other. In one of the neighborhoods, it surrounds a house on all three sides; the family is not allowed to use their rooftop or keep its blinds open due to the Wall's proximity to their house. The Wall has also been turned into a mural by Palestinian and international graffiti artists and painters. Many residential areas have lost their sense of privacy as tourists pour into Bethlehem to capture the graffiti art or leave their own mark. In the most infamous case yet, Qalqilia, a city northwest of the West Bank, has been entirely enclosed by the Wall; there are only two crossings for thousands of residents. Families who live near the Wall no longer see the sun set or rise. All over the West

Bank, farmers' access to their properties has been severed; many have to walk several kilometers to get to their farm while others have to wait for soldiers to open the gate and allow them in only a few times a day. Many have abandoned their lands.



Referring to an approximately twenty-five foot tall structure as a "fence," Israel says the Wall merely serves security objectives, and has stopped waves of suicide attacks that target its citizens. Many Palestinians point out that the majority of suicide bombers have come from within Israel—namely Nazareth. It is needless to say that the Wall is not entirely built on the 1967 borders—the Green Line—and consequently has grabbed eleven percent of Palestinian land. Like most walls—in spite of billions of dollars spent on its construction and surveillance infrastructure—the Israeli Wall is incapable of keeping out all "intruders." *Infiltrators* (2012), an



award-winning documentary directed by Khaled Jarrar, follows several groups of Palestinians in their adventure to sneak through the Wall and into East Jerusalem. Some pay individuals who are familiar with the Wall's gaps, hoping to end up somewhere safe and unguarded on the "other side." The Israeli government has not attempted to fill these gaps which raises the question whether the Wall serves security measures³.

The Israeli Wall is an extension of Israel's policies and politics of apartheid; it is only a part of Israel's ruling apparatus in the

Occupied Territories. While half a million Jewish settlers are connected to Israel via Jewish-only fast roads, West Bankers face traveling restrictions and more fragmentation of their land every day through settlements, settler roads, military bases, trenches, roadblocks, walls, fences, barbed wire, tunnels, etc. Interactions between Jewish and Arab populations have been minimized as a result of the concrete barriers that separate communities. For instance, many Israelis went to Masah, a village in Salfit, to buy its quality, inexpensive furniture. According to NPR, "[n]ow Palestinians must carry goods over barricades installed by the Israeli army, and business is drying up²." Overall, militarization of the West Bank indiscriminately terrorizes and humiliates thousands and millions of Palestinians on a daily basis while relying on acts of violent resistance to justify its existence on the grounds of "national security."

"We'll be the most militarized border since the fall of the Berlin Wall. That's why I think this amendment was very important"—Senator John McCain, June 2013

Located in different terrain, the U.S.-Mexico barriers narrate similar stories, reveal identical scars. Erecting a series of barriers along the U.S. border with Mexico has been one of the main strategies of the U.S. government to combat "illegal immigration and terrorism," most particularly since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Ten feet tall, the first phase of the barrier in California—coded "Operation Gatekeeper"—started in 1993 along the Pacific Ocean to the Otay Port of Entry. Later, surveillance cameras and stadium lights were added and the barrier was expanded. In 2006, President George W. Bush signed "The Secure Fence Act of 2006" into law, remarking that "this bill will help protect the American people. This bill will make our borders more secure. It is an important step toward immigration reform." Just recently in June 2013, the

Continue on page 8

Senate passed a comprehensive immigration bill which constitutes the construction of 700 miles of new fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The destructive impact of barriers on communities and ecosystems demonstrates the existing disconnect between the air-conditioned chambers of the United States Capitol and the natural and social landscapes devastated by such policies. Exempted from following environmental regulations, the Department of Homeland Security acts based on what it deems “security measures.” For decades, environmentalists have been expressing concern that putting up barriers across the border is disturbing ecosystems and endangering animal species. The barriers cut through wildlife preserves, private property, and state and national parks. Hundreds of pages of research by Mexican and American environmentalists reflect the devastating impact of these barriers on hundreds of plants and animals, but the U.S. government does not seem to base any of its border conclusions on a serious consideration of such studies.

As in the case of Palestine, the U.S.-Mexico barriers are incapable of stopping people from entering the “other side.” But they are capable of endangering the lives of migrant workers—indigenous to this region—by driving them deep into the desert; many die of dehydration. Further militarization of the border will affect six million people who call the border their home in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, as well as thousands of migrant workers who have been living and working in the United States for many decades and wish to visit their families. According to the Department of State, Mexico is Texas’ number one trading partner and the third trading partner for the country at large; such policies will not only alienate an important economical partner, but also darken social relations with our southern neighbor. While San Diego is inaccessible to Mexican and Central American immigrants, Tijuana, Mexico’s third largest municipality, remains welcoming to thousands of Americans who visit each week for



work, entertainment, or medical tourism, as well as hundreds of displaced workers who seek shelter having been deported from the United States.

The U.S.-Mexico barriers have torn indigenous communities apart by driving a physical block between them, forever transforming the identity of their landscape. Friendship Park is an example;

dedicated by Pat Nixon, it was built in 1971 on San Diego hills to foster relations between the U.S. and Mexico. Then, only barbed fence marked the border; now the Department of Homeland Security has built a wall: a twenty-foot tall steel barrier with metal posts that continue into the ocean. Once a place for friends and families to come and socialize with each other from both sides, in recent years, free access to the Park has been rare. Jill Hoslin, a professor at San Diego State University, describes these changes: the DHS “blocked off Friendship Park, and suddenly Sundays felt like visiting day at a maximum security prison.” After months of negotiations with San Diego Sector Border Patrol, the Park is now open to the public on weekends. A barrier built to prevent illegal immigration has itself crossed many borders, communities, and families. *One frontier, All frontiers* (2010), a documentary film by David Pablos, highlights how Mexicans have integrated the border wall into their daily lives, trying to overcome its primary function, segregation, by developing new relationships with their loved ones who live on the “other side.”

You may ask, what connects the Israeli Wall in Palestine to the U.S.-Mexico barriers? Both Walls have been constructed on the destruction of landscape and community life, and neither Wall has taken into account the existence and needs of people whose lives are affected. Both barriers obscure critical issues that have remained unaddressed and unresolved: in the case of Palestine, Israel’s almost half a century-old military occupation, and in Mexico’s case, the corporate-building policies of NAFTA, lack of labor and civil rights for migrant workers, and the U.S. support for the “War on Drugs” that has consumed the lives of more than 40,000 Mexicans since 2006. Both Walls have been born as a result of xenophobic climates against indigenous peoples and feed the billion-dollar industry of border control. In fact, Elbit Systems Ltd., a defense electronics manufacturer based in Haifa, Israel, has been given a multi-billion dollar contract to build the surveillance mechanisms of the U.S. border wall; this is the same company that enables the Israeli occupation to control the movement of millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The spirit of the Berlin Wall lives on through the Israeli Wall and the U.S.-Mexico barriers. Qalandia Crossing will one day follow the fate of Berlin’s Checkpoint Charlie, reduced to a replica built for curious tourists, a glimpse into Israel’s historic apartheid. With each immigrant who jumps over the U.S.-Mexico barrier, the policies and politics of apartheid that marginalize indigenous populations and rely on xenophobia and criminality to feed the cynical industry of border control will be increasingly clear. As Americans, we are tied to these Walls; as humans, to every wall.

Notes:

1. Title extracted from President Obama’s speech in Jerusalem in March 2013.
2. Source: www.npr.org/news/specials/mideast/galleries/kenyon/settlement/020529.kenyon3.html
3. A student at Birzeit University shared with me that an IDF soldier spotted her after she crossed under a hole into Israel from Al-Ram, north of Jerusalem, but did not attempt to stop or chase her.

Photo credit for the Israeli Wall in the West Bank, Aria Fani; for West Bankers jumping over the Israeli Wall, Oren Ziv; the coast of San Diego-Tijuana, John Gibbins; and for hands and the fence, David Maung.

A native of Iran, Aria Fani has spent time living and studying in Palestine and Mexico. Aria holds a PhD in Near Eastern Studies from the University of California, Berkeley.

Events in San Diego

Persian Cultural Center

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

Kourosh Taghavi in Concert

Saturday September 21, 2019 at 7 pm at IAC
Tickets and Information www.pccsd.org or 858-552-9355

Hafez Day, collaboration with the Central Library of San Diego

Friday, October 4, 2019 from 6:30 to 8:30

Persian Mehregan Festival with Reza Rohani & Sara Naeini

Saturday October 5th, 2019 - 7 PM

San Diego Museum of Art

Tickets and Information www.pccsd.org or 858-552-9355

Mohsen Namjoo live in San Diego

New Album Release in Collaboration with Ehsan Matoori

Saturday November 9, 2019 at 7 pm

The Q Auditorium of Qualcomm

Tickets and Information www.pccsd.org or 858-552-9355

Art Gallery - A Dream of Humanity by Reza

August 17 through October 19, 2019

Weekdays 9:00 AM to #:00 PM,

Evenings and weekends by appointment

Docunight

Wednesday, September 4, 2019, 7 PM at IAC

Wednesday, October 2, 2019, 7 PM at IAC

Jong e Farhangi

Friday, September 13, 2019 7:30 PM at IAC

Friday, October 11, 2019 7:30 PM at IAC

Movie and Discussion

Friday, September 20, 2019 7:30 PM at IAC

Friday, October 18, 2019 7:30 PM at IAC

Art Exhibition Open to Public

From 9:00 am to 3:00 pm (Monday to Friday)

Iranian-American Center • 6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121

Info: 858-552-9355

Setar Class by Kourosh Taghavi

Registration and info: (858) 717-6389

Tar & Guitar Class by Farhad Bahrami

Registration and info: (619) 318 1286

Tombak Class by Milad Jahadi

Registration and Info: (858) 735-9634

Iranian School of San Diego

858-552-9355

ISSD first day of school

Branch I Sunday, September 8, 2019 from 9:30 am to 1:00 pm

Branch II Thursday, September 12, 2019 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Mount Carmel High School

9550 Carmel Mountain Road

San Diego, CA 92129

Persian Dance Academy of San Diego

Dance classes for all ages at the location of Iranian School

10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

(858) 552-9355

www.pccsd.org

Dollar a Month Fund

Tel: 858-552-9355 • www.dmfund.org

www.facebook.com/DollaraMonthFund

AIAP (Association of Iranian-American Professionals)

Tel: (858) 207 6232 • www.aiap.org

Last Wednesday of each month at 6:30 PM

at Sufi Mediterranean Cuisine

5915 Balboa Ave, San Diego, CA 92111



ISTA (Iranian Student Association at UC San Diego)

www.istaucsd.org

House of Iran

House of Iran Balboa Park

Open to public Sat. and Sun. from 12-5pm

Persian Harvest Festival

Sunday November 3rd, 2019 • 11AM- 6PM

www.thehouseofiran.com

Iranian-American Scholarship Fund

Tel: (858) 552-9355 • www.iasfund.org

www.facebook.com/Iranian-AmericanScholarshipFund

Mehrgan Foundation

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

PAAIA

www.paaia.org

Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian-Americans

NIAC

www.niac.org

National Iranian-American Council

IABA

Iranian-American Bar Association

www.iaba.us/chapters/san-diego

Book Club Meeting

Last Saturday of each month

Iranian-American Center (IAC)

6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121

Tel (858) 552-9355

Iranian-American Life Science Network (IALSN)

www.ialsn.org

For latest events in San Diego visit:

www.chekhabar.com

SAN DIEGO RESTAURANT WEEK

California Restaurant Association San Diego County

Sep 22 - Sep 29, 2019

LA MESA OKTOBERFEST

FREE • Oct 4 - Oct 6, 2019

OLD TOWN SAN DIEGO FIESTAS PATRIAS

FREE • Sep 14, 2019

FOUNDERS' DAY FESTIVAL

CELEBRATE HISTORY

FREE • Sep 14 - Sep 15, 2019

Old Town Artisan's Market

Saturday, September 14, 2019 - 9:00am to 4:30pm

A weekend open air market offering an array of interesting art, jewelry,

pottery, clothing, gift items and more by local artists.

38th Annual Adams Avenue Street Fair (2-Day Event)

Saturday, September 21, 2019 - 10:00am to 10:00pm

This popular festival has seven stages and 90 musical performances of

rock, blues, folk, and jazz. Art, food, and craft vendors number about

300. You can also go on carnival rides and visit the beer garden. Take

your time to enjoy it all ~ the event is for two full days.

The Haunted Trail of Balboa Park (37-Day Event)

Friday, October 4, 2019 - 7:00pm to 12:00am

A haunted forest in the darkness of night is beckoning you to come and

walk upon its trail. Are you ready to walk amid eerie sounds and lurking

shadows where eyes glow in the dark and creepy fingers reach out for

you? Hang onto the rope! You don't want to get lost in this forest!



Visit Our web site at www.pccsd.org



"What's in a name?"

By Marriam Zarabi

This think piece is inspired by an ongoing reflection of my name, and the names and associated identities of loved ones.

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose. By any other name would smell as sweet."

Romeo and Juliet (II, ii, 1-2)

With respect, yeah right Shakespeare. Take a look at the list below. On one side, you will read traditional Iranian names. On the other, you might recognize common abbreviations or nicknames:

- Manijeh — Meme
- Behrad — Brad
- Farideh — Fari
- Babak — Bobby
- Jahangeer — Johnny
- Marjan — Marjie

The creative shortening of long and complex names: abbreviated, shortened, butchered, and diluted, ultimately, into misnomers. Abbreviated, shorted, butchered, and diluted into a name that *sounds like* or *is similar to* a common Western name. The process of shortening a name, or providing a nickname quickly after an introduction, is common practice in my life. The Manijeh Joons in my life started to go by Meme; Agha-e Jahangeer chose Johnny and Marjaneh identified as MJ. I did not question this common practice until friends asked me how to correctly pronounce the names of my family members. It was obvious that Agha-e Jahangeer did not *look like* a Johnny.

Many essays are written about names—their confining limits of power, mispronunciation, and misunderstanding. Following the mass shootings in Gilroy and El Paso, I was again called to reflect on my appearance and the visible ways that I represent someone, and something, different or separate from the dominant Western culture. While this may seem like a tired topic, I'm not sure it is. Not only do I look different—dark hair, olive skin tone—my name is also different. While the spelling of my name is certainly, and purposefully, Westernized, the spelling of Marriam (fingers crossed) was a conscious effort to make things easier. In conversations with my parents, this spelling was perhaps meant to function as a protective factor. *Maryam sakht-e vasey-eh Americai-ah*. The pronunciation of *Maryam* is too difficult for Americans, they often shared. In various introductions, many compared my name to the city of Merriam; I smiled and nodded, a grateful sense of relief that my name was easily associated with a common frame of reference. What's off-putting about this sense of relief is that my name, as compared to names of my Iranian and Iranian-American peers, is common. My name is a protective factor when paired with my appearance.



In thinking about visible appearances of "otherness," what is the function of shortening names? Is it an attempt at assimilating, or diving into cultural niceties of making life less inconvenient for others, or perhaps the adults in my life did not like their given name?

I hold my name as something sacred, and prefer friends and loved ones call me Marriam unless they are of Middle Eastern descent and can pronounce *Maryam*. While I identify with both names, as I am Marriam as much as *Maryam*, both names are the framework for the same person, and the same identity. Although one might associate my name with *gol-e Maryam* (don't get too excited, Shakespeare), I recognize my name to be an extension of my family: a piece of my family's immigration story, an effort to bridge Iranian and American culture, the name of a flower that also connects me with my sisters, as their names are also the names of flowers. My name connects me with my family and my Iranian-American culture. My name connects me with my parents, my sisters, my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins; I carry them with me in my name.

Take a look below. You will see two versions of my name, my legal name with a Western flare, and my name with a Farsi pronunciation:

Marriam — *Maryam*

Both names represent something different as they are deemed as "other" than dominant culture. But both names are me.

I am Marriam.
I am *Maryam*.

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

Questions? Comments? Story ideas? Please send me an email: marriamzarabi@gmail.com

EDUCATIONAL SERIES

The Science of

Nutrition

Water and Life



By: Mohammad Ahrar, PhD

Introduction

Anytime the subject of nutrition comes up, we usually think about fats (see discussion in *Peyk* ##159-161), proteins (*Peyk* #162), carbs (*Peyk* #165), vitamins (*Peyk* ##169-174), and minerals (*Peyk* #175), but we hardly talk about water. In this issue of *Peyk*, we will discuss the importance of water in the human body and why water is essential to life.

Bodily water composition

The amount of water in the body depends on age, gender, and physical activity. The approximate percentage of water in men is 60-65%, in women is 50-54%, and in infants is approximately 75%. About 2/3 of the water is inside cells, referred to as intracellular fluid (ICF), and only one third is outside the cells, referred to as extracellular fluid (ECF), mainly in the blood and lymph nodes, plus fluids surrounding the brain, spinal cord, in joints, and in other organs.

Sources of water in the body

Beverages and food are the major sources of water for the body. Beverages comprise the largest source, but most foods can also contribute to meeting daily water needs (Table 1). Besides the water intake from foods and drinks, some water is also generated in the body during cellular metabolism, referred to as *metabolic water*. This happens when your body is producing fat, proteins, and some other organic compounds. For example, synthesis of 1 gram of fat produces 1.07 grams of water. Maybe that is a reason camels can go without water for a long period of time! All these water sources (beverage, foods, and metabolic water) contribute to about 2,550 ml of water in the body.

Table 1: Water content in some foods

Food source	% Water
Apple	84.3
Banana	76.8
Bread – Pita	32.8
Carrots, raw	89.2
Celery	93.1
Cheese, feta	62.0
Chicken breast, cooked	65.0
Coffee	99.0
Coke	88.0
Cucumber, raw	95.1
Grapes	84.5
Lettuce	94.0
Milk	87.6
Orange	85.2
Spinach	93.6
Tomatoes	93.9
Water melon	89.3

Water loss from the body

The majority of fluid lost from the body is through the kidneys, which produce approximately 1,500 milliliters of urine each day. Another way of water loss is through sweat which varies based on environmental factors, such as temperature, and the amount of physical activity a person does. The body also loses about 200 to 400 milliliters of water per day through the skin and during breathing (referred to as insensible water loss), and some water is lost from the large intestine.

The role of water in the body

In short, no life can exist without water. A water molecule (H₂O) has a unique chemistry (polar covalent bond between oxygen and hydrogen atoms) that makes it possible for all living organisms to live. Most chemical reactions that occur inside the cells require water. Digestion of food and breakdown of large molecules into smaller molecules during digestion and cellular metabolism require water;



Figure 1- Sources of Body Water and Routes of Excretion. The amount of water intake and the amount of water output should be equal. Adapted from reference 4.

production of energy to sustain life cannot be done without water. Brain functions, heart performance, hormone production by endocrine glands, and all metabolic activities in the liver depend on water. Without water, the joints would be stiff and nonfunctional, muscles could not function, and transport of dissolved materials such as oxygen, nutrients, hormones, and other substances into and out of the cells—and throughout the body—depends on water. In other words, life would cease without water. When the amount of water consumed is equal to the amount excreted, the body is in *water balance*.

Amount of water needed per day

The amount of water a person needs depends on physical activity, diet, and environmental factors such as air temperature. However, no single formula fits everyone. According to a Mayo Clinic report, an adequate daily fluid intake is about 15.5 cups of fluids for men, and about 11.5 cups for women. These recommendations cover fluids contained in both beverages and food. About 20 percent of daily fluid intake usually comes from food and the rest comes from drinks.

You’ve probably heard the advice “drink eight glasses of water a day.” That’s easy to remember, and it’s a reasonable goal. (1 glass of water = 8 Oz., equals to 250 milliliters.)

Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when there is an insufficient amount of water in the body due to reduced fluid intake, or to the loss of water through excessive sweating, or as a result of diarrhea, vomiting, high fever, or use of diuretics.

Signs of dehydration- Thirst is often the first physical sign of dehydration. Other signs include dry mouth, fatigue, loss of short-term and long-term memory, and lower attention span and cognition. Dehydration causes a reduced blood volume and blood pressure (hypotension). Hypotension, if severe enough, results in reduced cardiac output, impaired digestion, and fainting or blackout. Dehydration in infants can be very critical and needs immediate attention.

A practical way to see if you are well hydrated is to pay attention to the color of your urine. If the color of urine is dark, that is a sign of not enough water in your body. If the color of urine is brown, it needs medical attention. The urine color chart below can be used as a guideline to assess hydration.

How the body controls water balance

The kidneys play a key role in regulating blood volume, as well as electrolyte balance through tightly controlled hormonal signals. When blood volume drops, the thirst center in the hypothalamus detects a decrease in blood pressure and the change in electrolytes, and you begin to feel thirsty. At the same time a hormone called Anti Diuretic Hormone (ADH) is released from the posterior pituitary gland. This hormone travels through the blood to the kidneys and stimulates reabsorption of water from the kidney tubules back into the blood stream to conserve water. This results in less urine output and a darker urine. The urine color guide shown below, suggested by The National Athletic Trainers Association, can be used as a guide for proper hydration. Clear or light-yellow urine (colors 1 and 2) indicates adequate hydration. Dark urine (colors 7 and 8) indicates dehydration and the need to consume more fluid.

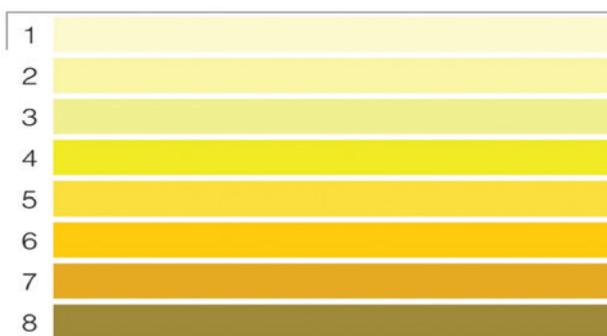


Chart 1- Urine Color guide for assessing dehydration.

Regulation and sources of tap and bottled water

Water sources vary from faucet to faucet and bottle to bottle. In the United States, tap water (the water that comes from sink faucets) is generally clean and safe to drink. The sources of tap water in most cities and communities can be underground, wells or springs, rivers, lakes, or reservoirs. Regardless of the source, municipal water is sent to treatment plants where dirt and debris are filtered out, bacteria are killed, and other contaminants are removed. Billions of dollars have been invested in water treatment systems to ensure that public water is safe to drink. People who drink tap water may also get some fluoride in their water which can reduce the incidence of dental cavities. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) oversees the safety of public drinking water. Bottled water should be safe to drink. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates bottled water and sets the standard of identity. All bottled water must be labeled. If the label on the bottle states that it is “spring water,” the manufacturer must derive the water from a very specific source, such as a spring or a well. Some bottled water may actually come from a municipal water source. This bottled water must also adhere to a standard of quality set forth by the FDA. However, water that is bottled and sold within the same state is not regulated by the FDA. The main concern about bottled water is the cost of production and the contamination to the environment. Some bottles are reused and refilled and may not be thoroughly cleaned. Some may have stayed in storage or under the sun for a long period of time, and there is a possibility that chemicals leak from the plastic of the bottle into the water. The bottom line is that both tap water and bottled water can be safe to drink, and the choice is likely to come down to personal preference, costs, and concern about environmental impacts.

“Hard” water

The “hardness” of water refers to the amount of minerals—specifically calcium and magnesium—in water. The higher the amount, the “harder” the water. There aren’t any health concerns from drinking hard water. In fact, hard water may even contribute small amount of minerals to the diet. For example, calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium, which can be found in tap water, are essential for building bones and teeth. Calcium is also essential for muscle contraction, nerve impulses, releasing hormones, blood clotting, and maintaining a normal heartbeat.

Consuming too much water

Although water is an essential nutrient, it can also be harmful if consumed in excess. Drinking too much fluid, especially demineralized water, and drinking it too fast can cause water intoxication. When too much water enters the cells, the tissues swell with excess fluid, while the concentration of sodium surrounding the cells drops, resulting in a condition referred to as hyponatremia which means low sodium in blood.

The brain is very sensitive to electrolyte change. When the fluid outside the cells is diluted, electrolytes inside the cells become more concentrated and water rushes from outside the cells into the cells which causes the tissues to swell to the point of bursting. If the swelling occurs in brain cells, it may cause death.

Symptoms of water intoxication include fatigue, confusion, and disorientation. Mistakenly treating these symptoms by consuming more water only makes matter worse. This has happened to some marathon runners who didn’t have time to use the bathroom, resulting in death. Drinking mineralized or enhanced water can supply both water and electrolytes during physical activities.

Tea and coffee as water substitutes

Easy answer; if you make tea or coffee with water, then they can substitute water. Both tea and coffee contain about 99% water, and moderate consumption of them can substitute almost the same amount of water. Caffeine is a mild diuretic and blocks the action of ADH in the kidneys, but it does not cause a significant loss of body water over the course of the day.

Effect of alcohol on water balance

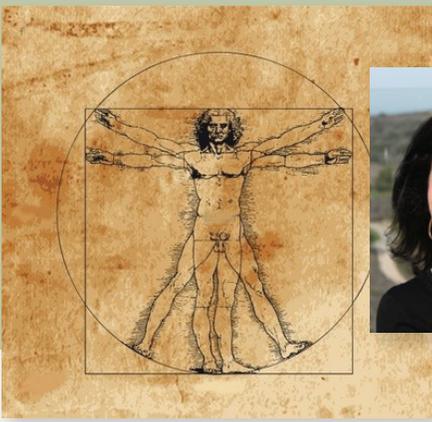
Alcohol interferes with water balance by inhibiting ADH in the kidneys. The water loss affects electrolyte concentration, especially potassium which in turn affects metabolism. Reducing the amount of alcohol consumed and drinking water after consuming alcohol can help prevent dehydration and a hangover, which is a result of dehydration.

Summary

Water in the body of an adult is about 54 to 65%, and in infants 75%. The main sources of water in the body are from beverages, foods, and metabolic water. Tap water and bottled water are both safe to drink, and the choice is personal preference. Tea and coffee can substitute for water.

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By Sanaz Majd, MD



5 Most Popular Weight Loss Diets

Atkins, Keto, Weight Watchers, Flexitarian, Paleo — if you're trying to lose weight, it is all enough to make your head spin. This year's U.S. News & World Report ranked 41 of today's most popular diets for weight loss and best overall diets:

<https://health.usnews.com/best-diet/best-weight-loss-diets>

The results for the weight loss rankings are quite interesting and may actually surprise you.

Let's review the pros and cons and weigh in on (no pun intended) 5 of the most popular diets of today.

Atkins: Ranked #17 out of 41 in best weight loss diets, #37 in best diets overall.

The Atkins diet initially gained headlines in the 1970s, accusing carbohydrates of being the culprit of obesity, rather than fat. Now, almost five decades after Atkins, the medical community has finally started to shift its goals away from recommending a "low fat" diet to now slashing the carb intake. We have now concluded that the causes of the ever-increasing obesity epidemic are carbohydrates like bread, rice, tortillas, potatoes, pasta, sweets, and sugary drinks.

NOT Fat.

Here's how the Atkins diet works: high fat and higher protein consumption are the key, along with minimal carbohydrate (aka "glucose") intake. If there is insufficient glucose circulating in the blood stream for fuel, your body doesn't have a choice but to enter a metabolic state called "ketosis." While in ketosis you will start burning your fat stores for energy next, hence weight loss. There are 4 phases:

Phase 1: requires you to restrict carbs to less than 20 grams a day from vegetable sources, for 2 weeks minimum. It requires protein at every meal, and no restrictions on fat intake.

Phase 2: allows you to gradually increase vegetable carbs and lasts until a 10-pound weight loss is achieved.

Phase 3: here you will continue to gradually add back about 10 grams of carbs a week, now including whole grains and fruits. But you must cut back on the carbs if your weight loss plateaus.

Phase 4: once goal weight is achieved, you maintain that balance of carbs, protein, and fats for life.

Pros:

- Foods are tasty, most especially for carnivores.
- Weight loss is one of the most rapid of all diets.

Cons:

- You can gain the weight back just as quickly.
- It's extreme and therefore quite a challenge to keep up long term for many people.
- If you do choose to give it a shot, opt for healthier non-processed, fat-rich foods, such as avocados and nuts/seeds, and healthier protein choices, such as chicken, fish (not fried), turkey, etc.
- With such little fiber from limited fruits/veggies, there may likely be changes in your bowel — if you're prone to constipation, beware.

Keto: Ranked #12 in best weight loss diets, #38 in best diets overall.

Now, fast forward almost 5 decades, the "ketogenic" diet is another rather extreme, but more straightforward, version of Atkins. Yet it is

perhaps even more restrictive in its carbohydrate allowance, limiting it to anywhere from 20 to 60 grams of carbs a day depending on the version — this is often less than an apple a day. For being perhaps the diet with the most hype around it today, it did not rank too well.

Its pros and cons: similar to Atkins.

Weight Watchers: Ranked #1 in best weight loss diets, #4 in best diets overall.

Interestingly, Weight Watchers ranked pretty well in today's diets. It incorporates a rather balanced diet, using the appropriate amount of each food group into the regimen. It does so by using a point system, where every edible item is assigned a point value depending on how healthy it is.

Pros:

- it's not as restrictive with any particular food group—you can eat what you want, just in limited quantities.
- If you like the idea of being held accountable for your weight loss, the support and handholding is a big plus—they use in-person weigh-ins, phone calls, or online chats to achieve this.

Cons:

- It's costly.
- It's non-sustainable for many long-term. What happens when you don't have weigh-in sessions and are on your own? Will you keep it up for life?

Flexitarian: Ranked #3 in best weight loss diets, #3 in best diets overall.

Why did it rank so high? The flexitarian diet is really a vegetarian diet that allows the flexibility of an occasional meat product.

Pros:

- It's heart healthy.
- It can improve cholesterol levels.

Cons:

- It's meat-lover misery: If you love meat and are not fond of veggies/fruits, it may not be sustainable long term.
- You will need to watch the carbs — often a challenge for some vegetarians, especially if you eat out.
- You'll need to make extra effort in meal planning and learning how to eat as a vegetarian in order to obtain the proper nutrients.

Paleo: Ranked #31 in best weight loss diets, #33 in best diets overall.

The overall Paleo message is pretty simple — if the cavemen didn't eat it, you shouldn't either. And it does perhaps make sense; the advent of processed foods may have a lot to do with why we've become so obese in today's day and age.

Pros:

- It's carnivore heaven if you enjoy eating meat.

Cons:

- It's expensive.
- It restricts entire food groups—grains and dairy are completely eliminated from this diet.

Sanaz Majd, MD, is a board-certified family medicine physician who hosts a patient-education YouTube channel (@MajdMD), sharing home treatment tips for common medical conditions. You can also follow her on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram: @SMajdMD.



Noush-e Jan

From Najmeh Batmanghelij's
"Cooking in Iran-Regional Recipes"

Persian Cuisine



"Isfahan lies in the center of Iran. Twice it has been the capital of Iran- first in the 11th century under the Seljuk Empire and then again during the 16th and 17th centuries under the Safavids, when it was embellished with some of the most magnificent architecture in all of Iran, it is a historical treasure-house. Since its inception Isfahan has been ethnically diverse – embracing a mix that includes two important enclaves, one Jewish and the other Armenian-Christian. Both communities are still there but in lesser numbers than before the revolution. The food of Isfahan was greatly influenced by the ethnic communities and also by the refinements of Safavid court cuisine. It has been said that Shah Abbas encouraged Christian missionaries to come to the city in the hope that Isfahan's winemaking would improve and surpass that of Shiraz. Seventeenth-century traveler Jean Chardin considered it the cleanest city he'd been to and wished that the people of London or Paris would take baths as regularly as the Isfahanis."

Saffroned Chicken+Yogurt Braise (Khoreshe-mast-e Isfahani ba morph)

Prep: 25 minutes **Cooking:** 11/2 hours **Serves:** 4 to 6

Chicken: 1 Tbsp. oil, butter, or ghee; 2 medium onions, thinly sliced; 2 lb/900g boneless chicken thighs cut into 4 in/10cm pieces; 2 tsp. fine sea salt; ½ tsp. freshly ground pepper; 1 tsp. ground saffron threads dissolved in ¼ cup/60ml rose water; zest of 2 oranges or 1 tsp. dried slivered orange peel; 6 kaffir lime leaves, crushed.

Yogurt: 2 cups/480g strained plain whole yogurt or labneh; ½ cup/80g raw almonds; ½ cup/35g raisins.

Nuts: 1 tsp. oil; 1 cup/170g whole raw almonds; ¼ cup/30g coarsely chopped walnuts; ¼ cup/30g slivered pistachios.

Caramelized Barberries: 1 cup barbarrie/zeresk (cleaned and rinsed thoroughly); 2 tsp. sugar; 2 tsp. oil or ghee; 2 tsp. water.

Garnish: Bowl of fresh Persian basil leaves.

- To cook the chicken:** Heat 2 tsp. oil in a medium-sized laminated cast-iron braiser or pot until hot. Add the onions and sauté for 5 to 10 minutes until the onion is translucent. Add the chicken and sauté for another 5 minutes. Add the salt, pepper, saffron, orange-zest, and lime leaves and sauté for 10 to 15 minutes until all the juice has been absorbed.
- Meanwhile, in a food processor, puree the almonds and raisins, then add the yogurt and mix for 5 minutes (beating the yogurt prevents it from curdling when cooked). Add this mixture to the pot and give it a gentle stir.
- Cover and simmer over low heat for 45 to 55 minutes until the chicken is tender. Remove the lime leaves and adjust seasoning to taste. Keep covered and warm until ready to serve.
- To roast the nuts:** Heat 1 tsp. oil in a wide skillet over medium heat until hot. Add the almonds and stir-fry for about 1 minute

or until slightly golden. Add the walnuts and pistachios and stir. Transfer to a small serving bowl and set aside. Wipe the skillet.

- To caramelize the barberries:** In the same skillet, combine the barberries, sugar, oil, and water and stir-fry for 4 minutes over medium-high heat. Set aside.
- To serve:** In individual serving bowls of cooked Persian rice, ladle on the yogurt and chicken braise, 2 tsp. of barberries, 1tsp. of nuts, and a few sprigs of basil.

Noush e Jan



Public Announcement



Need help with your energy bill? (Choose 1 of 4 images that works with your audience)

SDG&E has several assistance programs to help lower your monthly energy bill while keeping your home comfortable.

California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) Program: Save 30% or more every month on your bill. Eligibility is based on participation in certain public assistance programs, or household income and how many people live in your home. Visit sdge.com/CARE to learn more.

Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) Program: If you don't qualify for CARE, you may for FERA. You could receive a 12% discount on your energy bill. FERA is only open to households with three or more people. Visit sdge.com/FERA to learn more.

Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) Program: You may receive free energy-saving improvements for your apartment, condo, house or mobile home; such as lighting, furnace repair, weather-stripping, attic insulation and select appliances like a refrigerator. Visit sdge.com/ESAP to learn more.

For details about SDG&E's programs, visit sdge.com/Assistance, call 1-800-411-7343 or email billdiscount@sdge.com.

ABBAS KIAROSTAMI, THE FILMMAKER AND THE MAN: AN INTERVIEW WITH GODFREY CHESHIRE

by Matt Zoller Seit July 26, 2019

Like a lot of American movie fans, my first exposure to the work of the great Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami came through the writings of my friend Godfrey Cheshire, a veteran critic and film programmer who's now a contributor to RogerEbert.com. Godfrey worked alongside me in the 1990s in the film section of the now-defunct alternative weekly *New York Press*. He became friends with Kiarostami around that time, via the New York Film Festival, and subsequently visited him regularly in Teheran. Godfrey also started building an impressive body of writing about the director's filmography and getting to know him as a person. Soon thereafter, Godfrey became one of the few American film critics to be welcomed by the Iranian government and trusted as someone who understood and appreciated the work of one of the nation's great artists.

Over the next couple of decades, up through Kiarostami's death in Paris in 2016, Godfrey recorded many conversations between them. These are collected for the first time in "Conversations with Kiarostami." The book is being released around the same time as a major retrospective of Kiarostami's work at New York City's IFC Film Center, curated by Janus Films. In addition to the major features, the retrospective includes screenings of many rarely-seen Kiarostami short films. Godfrey will be present for two talks, on July 27 and August 3, and will participate in a discussion August 4.

A conversation about Godfrey's book and the film series appears below. To order "Conversations with Kiarostami,"

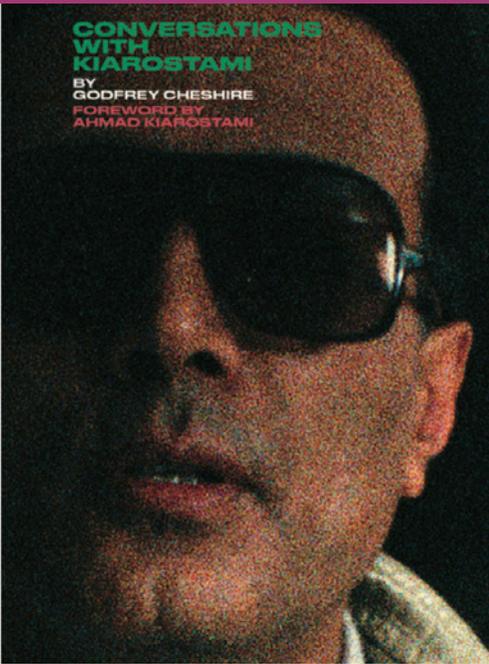
Can you start by telling us about the Abbas Kiarostami retrospective?

It starts at the IFC Center and will run there two weeks starting today, Friday, July 26. It is the largest retrospective that has ever been done of his work in this country, and it includes a lot of restorations of virtually all of his films. They are really beautiful restorations.

There are two things that I think are most noteworthy about the retrospective. One is that it includes a trilogy of his most important films, the Koker trilogy, all together. The Koker trilogy has very rarely been shown publicly as a unit, or as three films together. I think the chance to see those films on a big screen together is a great opportunity for people, whether they've seen other Kiarostami films, or these three films, in the past or not. The festival also includes a lot of films from early in his career that have basically never been shown. A lot of shorter films, short features—and these things are really fascinating. I just encourage people who live in New York City to dive in and see as many of those films as they can.

How can people see Kiarostami films if they don't live in New York?

The Koker Trilogy will come out on DVD in August from the Criterion Collection next month. As for a lot of those earlier short films, they don't have release plans at the moment. I'm sure they will eventually be released.



Conversations with Kiarostami by Godfrey Cheshire

Edited by Jim Colvill
Foreword by Ahmad Kiarostami
Translations by Tania Ahmadi
Publisher: The Film Desk (2019)

Conversations with Kiarostami collects for the first time a far-ranging series of interviews with the celebrated director Abbas Kiarostami by film critic, and Iranian cinema expert, Godfrey Cheshire.

Conducted in the 1990s, these in-depth conversations offer a film-by-film account of Kiarostami's views of his artistic development from his first short *Bread and Alley* in 1970 to the 1999 feature *The Wind Will Carry Us*, covering his lesser known, and seldom written about, shorts from earlier in his career, along with the masterworks that made him world famous, such as the Koker Trilogy (*Where Is the Friend's House?*, *And Life Goes On*, *Through the Olive Trees*), *Close-Up* and *Taste of Cherry*. The book includes a Foreword by Ahmad Kiarostami, the director's son, as well as an introduction from Cheshire that contextualizes the interviews and discusses his relationship with the director.

"During Godfrey's several visits to Iran throughout a decade, he formed a relationship with my father that I had rarely seen him having with other writers. I believe this is because of Godfrey's ability to go beyond the surface; his unique views and interpretations...It is well-known that Godfrey was one of the first people who introduced the Iranian cinema to America and, yet, there is no trace of the usual "exotic" approach...That is what you will find in this book: a refreshing conversation with Abbas that has substance, and is far from cliché."—Ahmad Kiarostami, from his foreword.

"For Kiarostami's own overview of his early career, I'd recommend *Conversations with Kiarostami* by the critic and filmmaker Godfrey Cheshire."—Richard Brody, *The New Yorker*

Published by Woodville Press. Perfect bound softcover. 188 pages. Edition of 750.



For the benefit of people who have never experienced Abbas Kiarostami's cinema before and would like to sample it, what would you say is the best movie to start with?

I was lucky, in that the first four Kiarostami features I saw were some of the most accessible and the most immediately gratifying, and those were the first two films of what's known as the Koker trilogy, "Where is the Friend's House?" and "And Life Goes On." To that I would add the other film of the Koker trilogy, "Through the Olive Trees." If you see those three films consecutively, they really are fascinating. So I definitely recommend those.

And then the other film from that period that was the one that grabbed me the most was "Close-Up," and "Close-Up" I think is also a great place to start with Kiarostami. It is so fascinating on so many levels. I've shown that film in all sorts of different situations to all sorts of different audiences, and it's the one Iranian film I've shown that everyone is really taken with.

How did knowing Abbas Kiarostami alter your understanding of his work?

I considered him a very good friend. We became better friends as the years went by.

You know, it's an interesting question as to how you see the work of people who you know versus those you don't know. When I was starting my career as a critic, for a number of years I lived and wrote in North Carolina, and during that time I thought I was lucky not to know filmmakers, because I thought it might influence my opinion. I liked having the distance that I did in that situation. But after I moved to New York and began getting to know filmmakers personally, I felt like, on the contrary, that enriched my understanding of their work in some cases.

And in the case of Kiarostami, it definitely changed my outlook, in the sense that I got to know him well enough that I saw a kind of autobiographical dimension in his work that I don't think I would have seen, or seen as clearly, if I hadn't known him personally.

And you know, I've gotten to know other directors too and I think in telling those cases, it's not necessarily that I see an autobiographical dimension, but I do see their personalities at work in the films. Other directors I've gotten to know personally include Terrence Malick, David Lynch, and Oliver Stone, who you also know. And I think if you spend time with people like that and you see certain qualities that they have, you really see them manifest those qualities in their films. It could be quirky little things, but it's really a way of seeing the world.

I think that one thing that draws me to the films of all the directors who I just named are a kind of vision that has to do with the way they perceive life, and also the way that they perceive film and how it communicates.

Those two things together constitute the vision that they have, the vision that is what I think people respond to in their films.

Did you think of Kiarostami as having a special view of life before you had met him, or was that perception something that followed as a result of your personal interactions with him as you became friends?

No, I think that he had this vision all along. But it was after I got to know him that I saw in films that he made, you know subsequent to that but also prior to that, things about his life and his personality that I could perceive more clearly the better I got to know him.

Can you give me an example of what you're talking about?

Sure. His second feature, and the second of only two features that he made prior to the Revolution, is called "The Report." It's about a man whose life is falling apart in a couple of ways. He's having trouble with his wife and he's having trouble at work too—he's accused of a kind of a malfeasance. And it was in getting to know Kiarostami that I saw the trouble in the man's marriage, especially as something that came out of his life.

And this is something that he told me about: when I asked him why he didn't leave Iran at the time of the Revolution, as so many filmmakers did and other people. He said, "It was because I was having a revolution in my own home." By which he meant that his marriage was falling apart.

And that was something that affected him in his own work in various ways from then on.

I can really point to a particular example of how knowing this aspect of his life really influenced the way I saw his films, and that was with "Certified Copy," which came later. To me, this film is reflecting on the cost of this kind of marital breakdown. And it was a film that he couldn't make during the time he was making films in Iran. It was made in Italy, as you know, in the latter stage of his career. And he could only make it there, because only making a film outside of Iran allowed him to portray adult men and women interacting intimately in a way that wouldn't have been permitted in Iran. So in that film, finally, he addresses marriage in a way that I think he had wanted to do much earlier, and that he had done previously only prior to the Revolution, in "The Report."

In what way would you say Kiarostami was a political filmmaker, and how is his ability to express himself politically affected by the ways Iran changed over the decades?

I don't think that Kiarostami was a very political filmmaker in the sense that the phrase is typically understood, and when I talked to him about questions like this, he said he really wasn't interested in making films that were very direct about politics or sociology or anything like that. That wasn't what he was interested in as a filmmaker.

But I do think that, at the same time, there was a real political dimension to his films, in the sense that he expressed things that involved politics, but in a way that was kind of multi-layered. He had a poetic approach to cinema that allowed different meanings off of different levels.

What do you mean by that?

I'll give you an example. In the film "Close-Up," this pseudo or quasi-documentary about a young man who gets arrested for impersonating the filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf, one of the things that is interesting to Kiarostami, and that is expressed in this film, is the sense that Iran has certain kinds of disquiet at that time. This was 1989, a decade after the Revolution, where it was still class [inequities] that a lot of people thought might be overcome by the Revolution but were not—they remained in place. So I do think, that in a sense, "Close-Up" reflects on the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution and the dreams that it left unfulfilled. So there is a political sense in that perception, and I think it is something that was conscious on the part of Kiarostami.

And yet you can't say he set out to make a political film. He set out to make a film about this particular case that had these different resonances that included political resonances.

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ABBAS KIAROSTAMI, THE FILMMAKER AND THE MAN:

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And another example is the film “And Life Goes On,” the second film in the Koker Trilogy, where a filmmaker based on Kiarostami drives out to this earthquake-stricken area to see if the kids who acted in his previous film had survived the earthquake. When I interviewed him about it, I deemed you could take this whole situation as a kind of a metaphor for the Iranian Revolution and the aftermath to it. It’s like, the Iranian Revolution hit Iran much as this earthquake hit this particular region of Iran. It was shocking and sudden and left some people disoriented and some people dead. And he understood that, and he said that that was basically correct. So there is this dimension of political implications in that film that are conscious on his part.

But again, he didn’t set out to make a political film there. He set out to make a film about the experience that he had had while driving into this earthquake-stricken region.

That’s interesting. It almost reminds me of the way that science-fiction writers couch their political musings in metaphor if they’re living under authoritarian regimes.

I agree with that. I think that that’s true. But as I say, I don’t think that he was sort of “hiding” a political meaning inside these other things. I think that the political dimensions to the film were sort of natural parts of the stories he set out to tell and that his basic approach really was poetic.

Incidental? Like, emerging incidentally from him following his muse?

Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Were you self-conscious at the beginning of your relationship with him about being an English-speaking white guy from the United States talking to this preeminent Iranian director?

No, not really. I first met him in New York when he came here with *Through the Olive Trees* at the New York Film Festival, and I just, I felt a real rapport with him from that very first meeting. I mean, he was very...he was a really very genuine and kind person, and David Hudson wrote about my book for Criterion Daily that what came across to him in my interviews was that Kiarostami was a very open and generous person, and I think that was really the case. I think that he didn’t look at me as a “white guy,” “American guy,” or whatever. He just looked at me as a person, and fortunately he liked the person he saw. But I think he was genuinely open and available to lots of people, and he was really a pleasure to be with and to talk to.

Did you get a sense of him as being in any way a troubled or neurotic or driven person? So many directors are.

Yeah, I think that Kiarostami was all of the things that you’ve said: calm and reflective. But on the other hand, I do think that he had depths to his personality, and there were some depths there that were troubled at various times in various ways, and there were certain kinds of obsessions that he worked out through his filmmaking and through his artistry.

And I also think that he kept busy almost more than any other filmmaker I know, in the sense that when he wasn’t working on a film, he was writing poetry, he was making furniture for his house, he was doing photography. He was a very creative person, and it almost seemed to me like that creativity had a lot to do with just keeping going and dealing with his interior life by pushing it outward.

Can you tell the story about the structure of “Close-Up” again? It came about almost as a result of an accident, right?

Well, what happened was I asked him in my interview why the film that I saw first, which was at this festival of Iranian films, which was the first big exposure I had to Iranian cinema, it was in 1992 in New York, that was one thing, that was one version of the film. And then when I saw it again later and every time subsequently it was edited somewhat differently. And he explained that early in the film’s career, he was at a festival in Germany and the projectionist mixed up the reels and he was about to go up into the projection booth and try to get the guy to straighten him out – and then he realized he kind of liked it better. And so he went back and re-edited in the film in the way that it had been shown incorrectly in German.

That’s amazing to me. It’s almost like they’re such different filmmakers, but it reminds me of a story about the making of “2001: A Space Odyssey.” The popular perception of Stanley Kubrick is as somebody who not only had a plan but always executed it meticulously, and there’s not a single thing on screen that he didn’t intend to be there. In what’s arguably his greatest movie of all, one of the masterstrokes is that you don’t see the aliens, or whatever it is that’s causing all these myterious things to happen. But this recent book by Michael Benson reveals that he always wanted to show the alien but he could just never come up with an impressive enough alien. And he got to the end of the production process and it was like “Well, we’re out of time and money. I guess we’re not showing the alien.” And of course 50 years later that’s one of the things that people praise about the movie! “What incredible intellectual discipline, not to show the alien!”

Yeah, exactly. The “Close-Up” story also reminded me of something Jean-Luc Godard said. During his revolutionary period in the late 60s, there was one or two of his films where he said the projectionist should flip a coin to decide which order to show the reels in. He also said at a certain point that if a film was good, it didn’t matter which order you showed the reels in.

My first wife rented “The Deer Hunter” from the video store in the ‘90s, and it was on two cassettes. The first cassette was the wedding followed by the Vietnam section, and then the second cassette was the group of soldiers coming



home. She accidentally put the second cassette in first. Not only did it play fine, she liked it better than the actual order the director had intended. From that point on, whenever that film was mentioned, she always that said she preferred the original cut.

That’s hilarious!

I wanted to ask you about what, to me, is one of the most amazing quotes I’ve ever heard from a major filmmaker. At one point you say to Kiarostami, “I have a theory that there are two types of filmmakers. One kind, if you took away the cinema, they would turn to some other medium like painting or music or writing. The other kind, if you took away cinema they wouldn’t know what to do, they’re only about cinema.”

And he says, “I’m the first kind. Sometimes I wouldn’t mind if they took cinema away from me. I wouldn’t say I wish they would, just that I would mind if they did.”

Yeah, yeah.

How do you feel about that? It's almost inconceivable to me that someone could devote their life to expressing themselves so eloquently in a particular medium and then say that they wouldn't mind if it were taken away from them.

That response was very true and very accurate to who he was. I had that idea of the different kinds of directors, one kind or the other, for a long time, but I think I asked him that question because I perceived that he was the kind that could gladly go on to another medium. And in fact, he did go on to other media throughout his life, and he was so much that way that if cinema was taken away from him, it wouldn't bother him that much. He would be able to express himself in any number of other media.

But the other thing that I would say about that is that I perceive that as he got more and more famous through the 90s—and that was a question I asked after he won the Palme d'Or at Cannes in '97—I perceived that this increasing fame and the expectations it engendered were a little bit onerous to him. That part of it was not entirely gratifying. And if he could have escaped to something else, he might really have wanted to do that.

After he won the Palme d'Or the next film that he did was “The Wind Will Carry Us,” and I felt like that film in a way reflected his dissatisfaction with where he was in life. It reflected a sense of entrapments and sort of unhappiness with where he was.

And so I think that he turned away from...I mean, “The Wind Will Carry Us” was his last celluloid film, the last sort of conventional big feature that he made in Iran. Thereafter he only made small digital films, or he worked outside of Iran. And so I think that when he talks about how he could have easily gone to another medium, it was reflecting the sense that cinema was maybe something that, at times, he wanted to escape from.

Is there a moment from your personal relationship with Kiarostami when you felt like you understood him in a new way, or that maybe disabused you of any preconceived notions you might have had?

Yes. The first two parts [of the interviews] were about the first two films I mentioned to you earlier, features that he made before the Revolution, “The Traveler” and “The Report.” Well, “The Traveler” is about a boy that going to all sorts of extremes in terms of tricking adults and basically stealing from kids in order to get to Tehran to see a soccer match. I asked him if this was a critique of a certain aspect of the Iranian character, and he said no, that he would never make a film approaching it like that. Basically he was saying that this boy was a reflection of himself. He wasn't criticizing something abstract like the Iranian character. If anything, he was criticizing himself.

And the same sort of thing happened when I asked him about “The Report.” I asked him if the main character, the man whose life is falling apart, whose marriage is falling apart, was a critique of a certain way that an adult middle class male behaved in Iranian society and the kind of character he had. Again, Kiarostami said no, he would never approach it like that. Basically he was saying again that this guy was more a reflection of him rather than kind of a general type.

And I think all that that really helped me get over approaching some of his films as kind of intellectual statements from an objective standpoint, and to see them more as very personal reflections of his own thinking and feeling and experience.

I sometimes wonder if, as critics, we aren't reflexively looking for the larger meaning when in fact the smaller one may be the



only meaning that was intended, and perhaps the only one that, as viewers, we actually need.

I think that you're right, in the sense that the smaller meaning is maybe where the story comes from, is where the story originates, and is what is most important to the filmmaker, the artist.

But I also think that in the case of Kiarostami, he read a lot of poetry, he knew a lot of poetry, he thought a lot about poetry in the way that a lot of Iranians do. It's so important to their culture and to their heritage. And I think that he would say the greater meanings that are there in any work are there, but it's not where they start.

And yet I think he would also say that the original meanings and smaller meanings are not where they should end, either.

When you think of your friendship with Kiarostami, is there a particular image of him that comes to mind?

Kiarostami loved to drive. He's completely the opposite of me in that regard. I don't like to drive, I don't even like to ride in cars. But he loved it, and as Kiarostami fans know there are a lot of scenes of driving in cars in his films, and for different reasons. Not only did he like it but being in a car in Iran, you're in something that's both a private and a public space. So one of my most vivid memories of him is of driving, driving, driving with him.

When I was doing these interviews there came a point where we realized that we didn't have the time left before he had to leave the country to finish the interviews at the pace that we had been doing them, so he suggested that he drive me up to the village in Koker to show me that, and that we could do the interviews as we drove, we'd continue them. Koker is like five hours from Tehran, so we had this long drive up there, we spent time there, and then we drove back.

So we talked all the way, but he told me when I was sitting in the passenger seat that in “Taste of Cherry,” where you have the main guy who's trying, hoping to commit suicide, talking to people that he wants to help him by disposing of his body after he does so, and there are three main people that he talks to through the movie – they're in the passenger seat, he's in the drivers' seat. And Kiarostami told me that those people were never in the car together: the two people that you see were never there together, that when the guy in the drivers' seat is talking to the other passengers, it was actually Kiarostami in the other seat that he was talking to. And likewise, when you saw the passengers, they weren't talking to the person that you saw who was driving.

And that really gave me a chill up my spine to think that that's the way that he did it, but it also says something about how personal all of this was to him, this film and really all of his films.

Source: Roger Ebert.com - MZS. A blog by Matt Zoller Seitz
Matt Zoller Seitz is the Editor at Large of RogerEbert.com, TV critic for *New York Magazine*, the creator of many video essays about film history and style, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in criticism, and the author of *The Wes Anderson Collection*. His writing on film and TV has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Salon*, *New York Press*, *The Star-Ledger* and *Dallas Observer*.

Mehregan FALL FÊTE



BALBOA PARK
THE SAN DIEGO MUSEUM OF ART



New in the Gallery: In August 2019 the gallery will include *Bizhan (or Bijan) Slays Human* by Mu'in Musavvir. Manuscript page from the *Shahnama*, Safavid Court, Isfahan Province, ca. 1665, Opaque watercolor on paper. Gift of Edwin Binney 3rd, 1971.67.

The San Diego Museum of Art's collection of Persian art, dating from the 9th to the 20th centuries, consists of close to 200 items. Built from around the 1950s to 1960s through gifts as well as Museum purchases with funding from individuals and The Asiatic Arts Committees of the Fine Arts Society—today's Asian Arts Council and South Asian Arts Council—the collection is now on view in the dedicated gallery space established in 2017.



Showcasing some of the best Persian art from the Museum's

permanent collection as well as 20 objects of the pre-Islamic time, ranging from the Near Eastern (ca. 2500 BC) to the Sasanian era (224–651 AD) on loan from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, this gallery illustrates the profound development of Persian civilization and art within a global context.



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Dr. Ladan Akbarnia

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British Museum in London for the past 10 years. Dr. Akbarnia will join the Museum in October.



Mehregan

FALL FÊTE



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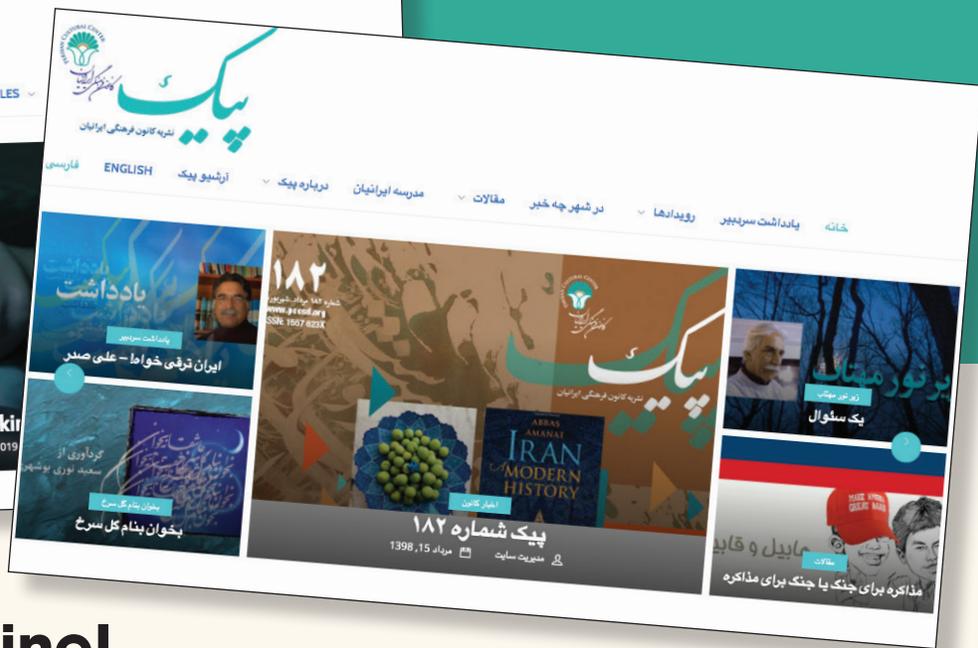
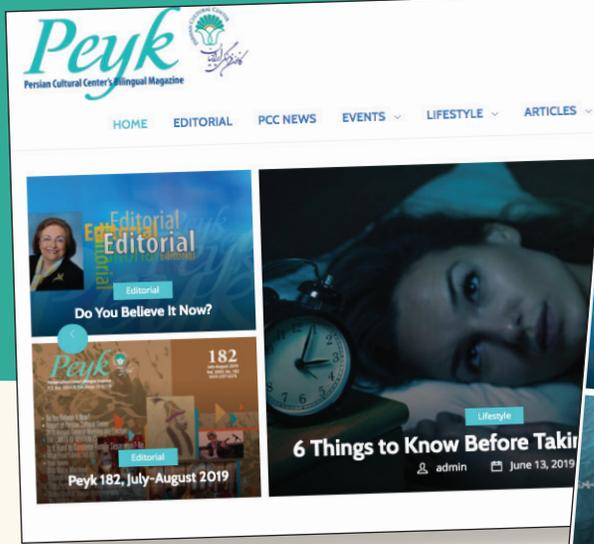
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