



# DĀNESH Newsletter

Spring 2007

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## President's Message

Greetings. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to wish a belated Happy Now-Rooz to all. Globally, and particularly in the Iranian culture, Spring is the time of hope and rejuvenation. Indeed, we have emerged from a long winter not only in terms of weather but also as it relates to the social and political landscape around the globe. Let's hope for better times for the rest of the year.

Looking back on 2006, the October Conference was the highlight of the year for the DĀNESH Institute. It was a very successful conference. I was personally delighted to see old friends and make new ones. I think that the conference exemplified a true example of scholarship, collegiality, and goodwill. A summary of the conference and other information are presented in this Newsletter. The following comment embodies the spirit of many other responses, "*I congratulate you all for such a successful program. Every year you do the best, keep doing the same.*"

This issue also focuses on current Institute activities plus a number of new initiatives. While it is hard to predict the future, we want to make sure that the Institute keeps current with its scholarly agenda and within the parameters of its bylaws. The Board of Directors would like to encourage increased membership participation, and we welcome programmatic suggestions that will further the mission of the Institute. We also welcome information about potential sources of income that can support our mission, future work, and scholastic agenda.

Thank you for your continued support of the Institute.

**Irene Queiro-Tajalli**

## New Members

It is with great pleasure to welcome the following new members of the DĀNESH Institute and to look forward to their participation in the Institute programs.

Lili Arabshahi  
Parvin Carter  
Khadija Khaja  
Michelle Komara  
Azin Lotfi  
Shamsi Mansoori  
Sandra Naeger  
Bassima Schbley  
Justine Sherwood  
Frances Trix  
Peyman Vahabzadeh

## Professional Activities of Members

In 2006, **M.J. Abdolmohammadi**, the John E. Rhodes Professor of Accounting at Bentley College, published three papers in Managerial Auditing Journal, one in Journal of Business Ethics, and one in Accounting Horizons. Dr. Abdolmohammadi is a member of the Americas Team that, along with other regional teams, is investigating the common body of knowledge in internal auditing world-wide. They are performing the project for the Institute of Internal Auditing.

From December 2005 to March 2006, **Mary Elaine Hegland** of Santa Clara University revisited the village of Aliabad near Shiraz, Iran, to study about aging and the elderly. She compared the situation of Iranians aging in the village with Iranian-Americans aging in Santa Clara. Based on this research, Dr. Hegland published "Großmutter lebt allein in ihrem Häushen: Alte Frauen in einem iranischen Dorf

(Grandmother Lives Alone in Her Little House in an Iranian Village)," in the on-line German Journal, February 2007. She is in the process of preparing other articles about Iranian-American elderly.

**Yahya R. Kamalipour** coedited (with L. Artz) The Media Globe: Trends in International Mass Media, 2007. The book is a multifaceted look at contemporary trends in media practices in regions beyond the United States, including Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and Australia. A diverse group of scholars has contributed articles to this book.

**Bruno Nettl** reports that his article entitled Music, which is a general overview of music in Iran with focus on traditional classical music, appeared in the latest section of the Encyclopedia Iranica. During the spring quarter of 2006, Dr. Nettl served as Visiting Professor of Music at the University of Chicago, teaching a full-term graduate seminar on Radif and Improvisation in Persian music.

**Irene Queiro-Tajalli** received the Outstanding Woman Faculty Leader award on March 28, 2007. In observation of Women's History Month, the 2007 Outstanding Women Leader awards and the 2007 Outstanding Women Student Leader awards were presented by the Indiana University-Purdue University Office for Women and Campus and Community Life.

**Frances Trix and John Walbridge** of Indiana University, Bloomington, attended the International Congress on Qutb al-Din Shirazi in Tehran and Shiraz in May 2006. At the Congress, Dr. Walbridge delivered a paper on medical theory in Shirazi's commentary on Ibn Sina's Canon of Medicine and was honored for his earlier work on Shirazi. Dr. Trix spoke at the Iranian Academy of Philosophy on the influence in Turkey and Albania of translations of Fuzuli's

epic poem on the sufferings of the Prophets and Imams. Dr. Walbridge also spoke there on the state of Islamic Studies in the United States. They were impressed by the quality of current scholarship in Iran as exemplified by the conference presentations and recently published scholarly work. They were also struck by the strong interest shown by Iranians of all walks of life in improving relations with the United States.

## **2006 CONFERENCE: SUMMARY**

The Institute's latest conference was held on October 20-22, 2006 at Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis. Members of the Conference Planning Committee were Cyrus Behroozi, Mahvash Hariri, Patricia Higgins, Mohammad Kaviani, Ali Akbar Mahdi, Irene Queiro-Tajalli, Nahid Shahnava, and John Walbridge.

The overall theme of the conference was *Bridging Cultures: Constructing Experiences of Iranians Living Abroad*. In relation to this theme, the conference included a seminar and several paper presentations. There was also a Poetry Night session, which is reported in this issue. Presentations at the conference were from across the United States, Canada, and Iran. Appearing in the Spring 2007 issue of *DĀNESH Bulletin*, the presentations are summarized as follows.

The conference seminar was entitled "Who Am I? Recognizing the Hidden Diversity of Youth Who Grow Up in Many Cultures." The seminar was led by Ruth Van Reken with a panel of Iranian youth, including Homa Hariri, Cyrus Hayat, Azin Lotfi, and Farbod Shafiei. In the context of a theoretical framework, the seminar and ensuing panel discussion explored the impact of the rapid cross-cultural experience on the youth and implications of the impact for their relationships with parents.

The first group of papers presented at the conference was related to promises and challenges facing Iranian immigrants. Themes of the papers ranged from an analysis of achievements of Iranians in America to mental health and other challenges that could face them. Papers in this group included *The Iranian Experience in America: Achievement and Challenges*, by Mehdi Bozorgmehr; *Bridging Cultures Post 9/11: Strengths, Stresses, and Coping Mechanisms of Those in the Diaspora*, by Khadija Khaja, Irene Queiro-Tajalli, and Bassima Schbley; *Peer-Led Intervention Model of Social Work with Asian and Iranian Immigrant Women*, by Manoj Pardasani; and *Mental Health and Older Adults: Challenges Faced by Iranian and Other Immigrant Families*, by Taher Zandi.

The second group of papers analyzed the experience of several populations of Iranian immigrants. The central theme emerging from these papers was the significance of ethnic identity for the adjustment of such immigrants. These papers included *Iranian Jews in the United States: Twenty-five Years After Immigration*, by Leah R. Baer; *Iranian Elders in Northern California*, by Mary E. Hegland; *Growing Up Iranian, American, and Female*, by Patricia J. Higgins; and *An Uncertain but Desired Life: Iranians in Dubai*, by Ali Akbar Mahdi.

The third group of papers focused on Persian literature abroad. These papers emphasized the contribution of literature, particularly immigrant poetry, to the experience of Iranians living abroad. Included in these papers were *Poetry Reading: An Iranian Contribution to the Community*, by Diane Tehrani and Kazem Tehrani; *Where is My Poetic Dwelling? The Vicissitudes of Diasporic Communities*, by Peyman Vahabzadeh; and *Persian Immigration Poetry: Rapture and Continuity in Millennium-Old Persian Poetry*.

The final paper was entitled Immigration and Cultural Changes in Iran, by Taghi Azadarmaki and Mehri Bahar from the University of Tehran. This paper concluded that Iranian immigrants abroad have a close tie with their homeland and exercise a significant influence on its economic, political, and cultural conditions. Since the authors could not be present, the paper was summarized and presented by Dr. Mahdi.

## **2006 CONFERENCE: POETRY NIGHT (SHAB-E SHE'AR)**

One of the most exciting sessions of the 2006 DĀNESH conference was its Poetry Night. Chaired by Homayoon Shidnia, the session featured Peyman Vahabzadeh and Ali Zarrin, who presented their poems in Persian and English. Adding considerably to the substance and process of the session was the interaction between the presenters and audience. We are pleased to include the following poems requested from Drs. Vahabzadeh and Zarrin:

### **"Untitled" by Peyman Vahabzadeh**

I've been touched by him  
I know how caring he can be  
or how trivial I upon arrival at his door  
lost for words  
I, who come from a world of poetry  
that sinks helplessly into noise  
when we no longer speak the ineffable  
I've been visited by him  
I know how blinding he can be  
or how inefficient these hands that can no longer  
shield my eyes  
as I try to see what's been kept hidden from us  
I, who have never seen my twin sibling  
or if I have  
no memory brings back to me  
what was left of me a thousand years ago  
somewhere along this curious path we call life

I've been chosen  
I've been enchanted  
crossed, sobered, mystified  
I've been taken by him  
and I know this one-time visitor  
the perfect stranger  
who's been pacing with me  
forever... ever...

### **"A Word with Majesty" by Ali Zarrin**

After we whipped the sea in a foreign land,  
our children wept every night for a piece of bread.  
What glories did you bring, Xerxes,  
beyond a silk coffin?  
What glories other than a golden tomb?  
Three thousand years of a blood bath!  
Three thousand years of wild poppies  
grown in the desert,  
three thousand years of the sound of a harp  
coming from an unknown cave or a grave!  
Who taught us to write poetry with our blood?  
Hafez must have understood Khayyam well.  
His wine is pouring from the same jug  
that was once filled with blood shed by the  
Tartars,  
and takes its daily-fill from Nishapur.  
When Mazdak spoke of equality  
he must have known we have the same blood color.  
After we lit the first fire to burn forever,  
after we endeared the sun,  
and took water for mirror,  
our hearts have gone ablaze.

## **2006 CONFERENCE: PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK**

We had 80 attendees at the conference. The venue was provided by Indiana University School of Social Work. The following information is a brief summary of responses provided by the attendees in their evaluation of the conference:

The main reasons for attending the conference centered around learning about Iranians in the United States. As one of the participants wrote, the conference was “*one of the few conferences of its kind on the Iranian American Experience.*”

All of the respondents but one who responded ‘somewhat’ stated that the conference fulfilled their expectations. One response read “*it is one of the finest conferences I’ve ever attended; it more than met my expectations.*”

Attendees’ responses to the question “What were the most beneficial aspects of the conference?” highlighted a combination of intellectual and social reasons that made this conference worth attending. Some of the reasons included: multiple discipline presentations; “*made me proud of being an Iranian*”; discussion of cultural concepts, traditions, and dynamics about the livelihood of Iranian-Americans; all of the information was extremely beneficial, bringing scholars and others of the community together; quality of presentations; the wonderful people – presenters and attendees; the good organization, delicious food; expansion of knowledge on various aspects of Iranians living abroad, and getting to know a lot of wonderful people.

Finally, the topics recommended for future conferences/workshops/presentations indicated a number of areas, such as, religion and Iranians in America; second generation Iranian Americans; transnationalism – Iran, the United States and Iranian-Americans; gender differences and similarities; impact of technology on Iranians and Iranian-American communication; disabilities in the Iranian-American community and service delivery; and advocacy, policy and how to build stronger communities.

We close this report with the following encouraging comments: “*This was superb! I liked the mix of topics....*” *But mostly the atmosphere and the people.*”

## **2006 CONFERENCE: STUDENT'S REFLECTIONS**

By Michelle Komara

I have heard that, as early as the final days of the 19th century, a young man migrated from Iran (then called Persia) to the United States. He attended Valparaiso University in Indiana. Then he completed his medical education and, later, moved to Pennsylvania for practice. He married there and had a son, who also became a physician.

Such early migration gives rise to several interesting questions. Was there any cultural exchange through generations? Did the young man mirror any patterns of modern Iranian migration? How did his son deal with being an Iranian-American at that time? Were any connections maintained with his homeland? These are some of the questions that I would like to answer in my future research following the latest DĀNESH conference.

The DĀNESH conference was a moving experience for me. It addressed issues relevant to the Persian heritage particularly in this country. It provided me an opportunity to connect my passion for research in genealogy with its application to the Iranian-American population. Indeed, the conference alerted me to the need to explore the journey of Iranian immigrants and their contributions to our country in more than 150 years.

## DĀNESH 2007 PROGRAMS

**2007 Conference.** The DĀNESH Institute Board of Directors is exploring several alternatives for this purpose, including a one-day conference. Further information will be made public as soon as possible.

**Update on Modules on Aging.** As reported in previous issues, one of the projects of the Institute is the development of teaching modules to assist human service providers to gain further cultural sensitivity about older Iranian adults. Based on the Life Course Perspective, with a focus on Iranian-Americans, the modules will primarily focus on tasks of adulthood as well as challenges and assets of older immigrant adults. Carolyn Fakouri, Mary Hegland, and Irene Queiro-Tajalli are conducting this project. Other colleagues are welcome. If you would like to participate, please send an email to Irene Queiro-Tajalli at itka100@iupui.edu.

**Research Project on Older Adults.** In the process of developing the modules on aging, a research project has emerged. Early this year, the Indiana University-Purdue University (IUPUI) Institutional Review Boards approved a proposal to collect data on the journey of older Iranians to the United States and their experiences in adapting to this culture. It will build on existing knowledge about Iranian immigrants with a focus on older adults. The study is expected to shed light on three main areas: 1) type of pre-departure arrangements to facilitate the journey to the United States; 2) types of adjustments to the host country; and 3) joys and struggles of adapting after the journey. The co-researchers will be Mary Hegland and Irene Queiro-Tajalli.

## SELECTED RECENT BOOKS

Periodically, books published in the United States that are relevant to the purpose of the Institute come to our attention. A selected list of such books published recently is as follows:

Tara Bahrapour. To See and See Again: A Life in Iran and America, 2000.

Andre Dubus III. House of Sand and Fog, 1999.

Firoozeh Dumas. Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up in America, 2003.

Persis M. Karim (Ed.). Let Me Tell You Where I've Been: New Writing by Women of Iranian Diaspora, 2006.

Persis M. Karim and Mehdi Khorrami. A World Between: Poems, Short Stories, and Essays by Iranian-Americans, 1999.

Abaas Milani. Tales of Two Cities: A Persian Mirror, 1996.

Azadeh Moaveni. Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran, 2005.

Taghi Modarressi. The Pilgrim's Rules of Etiquette, 1989.

Anne Tyler. Digging to America, 2006.

