

## Understanding Iran: Importance of Poetry (Part I)



By: Muhammad Ali Mojaradi\*

Poetry is ubiquitous in Iran: It is on tombstones, human skin, walls, cars, shirts and social media biographies. Carpet makers weave couplets into rugs, and artisans etch them into jewelry. Weddings, funerals and religious services would not be complete without a poetry recitation, and much of Iran's popular music is classical poetry set to traditional and modern instrumentals. Nearly every home has at least one *divān* (collection of poetry), placed next to the *Qur'an* to signal its significance. Iran lives and dies by poetry.

Notwithstanding their educational attainments, Iranians readily decorate their daily speech with aptly quoted poems. Frustrated by the economy, a taxi driver recites: "When the lord of a village is unjust / become a beggar, every farmer must" (*cho nākas beh deh kad khodāi konad / keshāvarz bāyad gedāi konad*). At the graveyard, a mourner eulogizes: "I'm not from this dirt world, I'm a divine bird that once flew / they made me a cage from my body for a day or two" (*morgh-e bāgh-e malakūtām, nīyam az ālam-e khāk / do seh rūzī qafasī sakhteh-ān az badanām*). Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, reminding listeners that Iran's success or failure against its adversaries is decided by God, quotes: "If they all draw their blades to kill / a vein's not cut without God's will" (*agar tūgh-e ālam bejonbad zeh jāy / naborad ragī tā nakhāhad khodāy*). Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei is a poet; he also hosts poetry readings, a tradition dating to the emergence of Islam in Iran. Imam Khomeini, the founder of Iran's Islamic Republic, was also a poet and left behind a large *divān*.

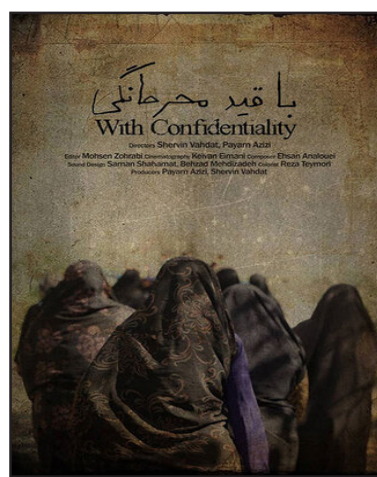
When Iran was threatened by Daesh, Iranians wrote war poetry: "We stand swords in hand and shields at our side / because this tribe has a leader and guide" (*īnkeh mā dast beh shamshūr o zereh īstādehīm / sabab īn ast keh īn tāyefeh rahbar dārad*). When the nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh was assassinated, Iran's foreign minister tweeted, "Tell the rock, we're a perfume vial" (*mā shīsheh-yeh 'atrīm, begūd beh sang*) — the glass of a vial of perfume is thick and sturdy. On the International Day of Peace, he tweeted verses from Rumi, "Don't say, 'What use is my call for peace when they fight?' / You are not one, but thousands, so ignite your light!" (*to magū 'hameh beh jangand o zeh solh-e man cheh āyad?' / to yeki nehīy, hezārī, to cherāgh-e khod barāfrūz*). In response, the United States State Department Persian-language Twitter account (@USAbehFarsi) replied with a Hafez couplet: "The preachers who in pulpits put on such a show / do other things when to a private place they go" (*va 'izān kīn jevleh dar mehrāb o menbar mikonand / chon beh khalvat mūrāvand ān kār-e digar mikonand*).

Even a casual observer could notice the importance of poetry in Iranian society, if only because a disproportionate number of tourist sites in Iran are the graves of medieval poets. When classical poetry has become a distant memory in so many cultures, it is clear that it is an integral part of the Iranian consciousness. But simply observing a cultural phenomenon is one thing; understanding it is another. Learning the story of Persian letters helps us better understand Iran as it is today and how it views itself, the world, and its future.

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Courtesy: New Lines Magazine

## German Festival to Debut Iranian Short Documentary



TEHRAN — The Iranian short documentary film "With Confidentiality" will be screened at the 70th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen in Germany.

"With Confidentiality" is directed by Shervin Vahdat and Payam Azizi and is scheduled to com-

pete in the main and international section of the 70th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen in Germany.

The film is about the women of a village who wrote a confidential letter to the government bodies.

After the film "This House is Black" directed by Forugh Farrokhzad, which was screened in the 11th edition of this festival and received the main prize, "With Confidentiality" is the only Iranian film that made it to the Oberhausen Festival.

The International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, founded in 1954, is considered the oldest short film festival in the world and is one of the largest international platforms for the short form.

Held in Oberhausen, it is one of the major international platforms for the short form.

# Iran Ready to Offer Scholarships to Students Expelled in West

TEHRAN — Deputy Minister of Science, Research, and Technology Hashem Dadashpour says Iran is ready to offer scholarships to American students who have been expelled due to protesting the crimes of the Zionist regime in Gaza.

The students who have expressed their anger and disgust at the atrocities of the Zionist regime in Gaza and been expelled could study at Iranian universities and higher education institutions, Dadashpour said.

Iranian universities enjoy a high position in the world ranking, he said, adding that students of U.S. universities who showed their solidarity with the Palestinians could continue their education in the Islamic Republic if they



wish to. Iran has always been the proponent of

the oppressed people in the world, he said.

American universities have become a scene of police crackdown against student protesters.

A number of Iranian universities have expressed readiness to grant scholarships to the students expelled for pro-Palestine demonstrations in the United States and Europe.

Shiraz University, Shahid Beheshti University, Razi University, Allameh Tabatabaee University, Ferdowsi University, and Elm-o Sanat-e Iran University (Iran University of Science and Technology) have already announced that they will provide scholarships for these students and fully cover the cost of education, dormitory, and accommodation.

## Azerbaijan, Iran Announce Project to Celebrate Nizami



TEHRAN -- Iran and Azerbaijan have announced a joint cinematic project to celebrate the legacy of the 12th-century Persian poet Hakim Nizami, in a bid to commemorate their shared cultural heritage.

During his visit to Baku for the 6th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Muhammad Mehdi Esmaili highlighted the importance of cultural figures like Nizami as bridges between

the nations.

He emphasized the role of such figures in fostering brotherhood and mutual understanding between Iran and Azerbaijan.

Esmaili expressed hope for the collaboration with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan in producing the film, recognizing the significance of Persian poetry and its enduring influence in both countries.

Hakim Nizami, also known as Nizami Ganjavi, is revered as one of the greatest romantic epic poets in Persian literature. His works, including the famed 'Khamseh' or 'Panj Ganj' (five treasures), continue to resonate across Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan.

Recognizing Nizami's enduring legacy, March 12 has been marked as Nizami Ganjavi Commemoration Day in the

Iranian calendar.

Statues of Nizami can be found not only in Iran and Azerbaijan, but also in other countries, including China and Italy.

Esmaili's visit to the National Museum of Azerbaijan Literature also sparked discussions on potential collaborative film projects with neighboring countries.

Similar initiatives are underway in Turkmenistan, focusing on poet Magtymguly Pyragy, and in Pakistan, honoring poet Iqbal Lahori.

Magtymguly Pyragy, a revered figure in Turkmen literary history, and Allama Muhammad Iqbal, known as Iqbal Lahori, a prominent figure in Urdu and Persian literature, are both celebrated for their profound contributions to literature and philosophy.

## VOD Platforms to Screen 'Loser, 'One Way Ticket'

TEHRAN -- Iranian video-on-demand (VOD) platforms are gearing up to unveil fresh content, promising audiences an array of compelling narratives and performances.

Among the forthcoming releases is a series titled 'Loser', directed and written by Amin Husseinpour and produced by Ehsan Zalipour, iFilm reported.

Currently in the final stages of editing, the series is to debut on VOD platforms in the coming months.

The cast list of 'Loser' includes Sara Bahrami, Alireza Kamali, Sadaf Espahbodi, Roya Javidnia, Muhammad Ali Mohammadi, Mehdi Rokni, and Peyman Qasemkhani.

The series is about Detective Kayani (played by Kamali), who becomes entangled in a complex case of significant family secrets.

Marked by its mystery and family-centric themes, 'Loser' is Husseinpour's second directorial venture in the realm of home-market series.

Husseinpour previously directed the crime and mystery short series 'Therapist' in 2022, also tailored for VOD platforms.

Another notable addition to the lineup is a series titled 'One Way Ticket', directed by Pouriya Heydari Ure.

Set in Turkey, the mystery police drama shows law

enforcement with various genres and features talented Iranian and international actors.

The cast list includes Iranian actors Ali Shadman, Hamed Komeili, and Mehrdad Seddiqian, along with Turkish actor Erkan Petekkaya and Lebanese actor Kida Khodr Ramadan. 'One Way Ticket' is made of 20 episodes, with each episode spanning 45 to 50 minutes in duration.



## Picture of the Day



Every year with the arrival of spring, rice growers of Mazandaran start preparing the land for planting rice in both traditional and mechanized ways.

Photo by IRNA