



# Saffron Sky: A Life between Iran and America

By Galareh Asayesh

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This lyrical memoir evinces the author's passion for constructing an American life with the spiritual fervor and deeply aesthetic rituals that were part of her childhood in Iran. Asayesh, who immigrated to North Carolina as a girl, writes too of her struggle to arrive at an acceptable sexuality in the face of parental panic, and tells of her frustration, during later trips to post-Shah Iran, with "the sisters," the Ayatollah's ubiquitous enforcers of female modesty.

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## Saffron Sky: A Life between Iran and America By Galareh Asayesh Bibliography

- Rank: #2223194 in Books
- Brand: Galareh Asayesh
- Published on: 2000-10-19
- Released on: 2000-10-19
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .50" w x 5.56" l, .67 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 240 pages

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## Editorial Review

From *Library Journal*

This lyrical memoir revisits still-important questions about immigration, race, and cultural assimilation. Asayesh, a journalist at the Miami Herald, emigrated from Iran to the United States as a young girl; now married and a parent, she finds herself mourning the loss of her old self and angry at Americans' anti-Iranian racism. Moving back and forth between past and present, she chronicles her life as a series of trips to and from Iran: as a child who spoke no English, on the eve of the 1992 Gulf War as a green card-holding adult, and as the parent of a young biracial American citizen. And in doing so, tells the story of both her family's and Iran's tumultuous recent history. This beautifully written narrative provides a rare, humanizing glimpse into the politics, culture, and geography of a place about which most Americans know shamefully little. Although slow-moving and seemingly plotless at times, this is for the most part a wonderful and timely tale. Recommended strongly for all libraries. Rachel Mattson, "Library Journal"

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From [Booklist](#)

To have the spiritual culture of the East and the material luxuries of the West may seem like paradise, but Asayesh has spent her life trying to acclimate herself to such a situation--to be accepted in St. Petersburg, Florida, and to retain the language, religion, rituals, and ceremonies of Iran. As a girl and young woman, Asayesh longed to be considered cultivated and Western as opposed to the Eastern stereotype of backward and primitive. Now, in her thirties and a mother of two, she has maintained an Iranian culture within an American home. Asayesh reveals not only the prejudice she has faced in the U.S., but she explains how Iranians view their culture as inferior to that of the West. Asayesh draws from her childhood during the Shah's reign to objectively compare life in Iran before and after the 1978 revolution. She is even critical of herself. This emotional biographical journey is Asayesh's reclaiming of her heritage, a part of herself that she abandoned years ago. It is politically and historically informative and will help bridge the gap between East and West for many readers. *Michelle Kaske*

From *Kirkus Reviews*

The vibrant, discerning memoir of a young newspaper journalist which depicts her immigration from Iran in 1977, her assimilation into American culture as a teenager, and her return to her native country in October 1990 as war loomed over the Persian Gulf. What makes this work particularly effective is the manner in which Asayesh weaves her keen reporter's eye for objective detail with her almost poetic ability to describe and analyze her own emotional connection to the story. Her first-hand accounts of post-revolution Iran are as meticulous and perceptive as they are rare. With equal fascination, she describes revolutionary graffiti demanding the destruction of Israel and the end of women dressing in violation of religious law, military recruiting propaganda clips shown before movies, and her young relatives' fascination with American superstars like Madonna and Kim Wild. She resolves the tension dividing the Iranian population between the religious government and modern cosmopolitan ways into women's daily, sometimes hourly choice of headgear (should they wear the more fashionable, modern-looking scarf, or the more traditional chador which will keep them from drawing attention from the religious police?). The heart of this memoir, however, is set in America, not Iran. Asayesh's depiction of growing up in Chapel Hill and her attempt to negotiate her sexuality while caught between two worlds evokes a familiar theme of many immigrants arriving here from "traditional" cultures. Co-workers' reactions to her ethnicity will not surprise the millions of Arab-Americans who have fallen under a cloud of suspicion since the fall of the Shah in the 1970s. Her ongoing attempt to forge a living connection between her home country and her new identity as an American is a well-crafted rearticulation of the central theme of immigrant literature the world over. An especially topical

read considering the ongoing tension between the United States and much of the Arab world. -- *Copyright*  
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