

Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from Her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution Study Guide

Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from Her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution by Sattareh Farmanfarmaian

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Plot Summary

This memoir intertwines two sagas, the political history of Iran and the personal history of the Farman Farmaian family as daughter Satti establishes the country's first college training social workers. Despite Satti's efforts to improve the lives of the poor villagers throughout Iran, when the Ayatollah Khomeini took power, she was arrested and almost executed. After she won her freedom, Satti had no choice but to leave her beloved Iran and the college she founded, to build a new life in the U.S.

Satti grew up in her mother's house within the harem of the family compound in Tehran, the capital city of Iran. Her father, Shazdeh, was over 60 when Satti was born. Each of his seven living wives has her own house, with four within the compound and one next door. The other wives were scattered throughout the countryside. Her father's well-appointed house dominated the compound, although it was far less sumptuous than the homes of his first wife and her sons, next door. Shazdeh's first wife was a royal princess, the daughter of the king. Shazdeh was a general and a politically progressive cousin of the royal family, supporting democracy, the Iranian constitution and education, even for women.

Satti earned a master's degree in Social Work from the University of Southern California. After working for the U.N. in Iraq a few years, she returned to Iran and opened the nation's first college training social workers. She devoted all of her efforts to building the school, which eventually graduated hundreds of students each year. Satti convinced the Shah's wife and government officials to support the school, which improved the lives of poor people by education on family planning, health care, childcare, nutrition, sanitation and disease prevention.

During the revolution that ousted the Shah of Iran and brought the Ayatollah Khomeini to power, Satti was arrested on fabricated charges. She proved herself innocent of all but one, traveling to Israel 20 years ago to present a paper at a conference. In an Iran controlled by conservative Muslims, that is enough to brand her a traitor. Satti found she must flee the country or face execution.

The personal drama is set against Iran's political turmoil. Although Satti's family were distant cousins of the Shah, they did not support his repressive regime. The Shah's father confiscated many of their houses and much of their land, considering the family his enemies. Satti's second cousin Dr. Mossadegh was Premier for a time, but a coup funded by the American CIA returned the young Shah of Iran to power. Despite his good reputation in the U.S., the Shah was a ruthless and corrupt dictator who controlled the country with his secret police. The entire Farman Farmaian family opposed him. Still, when the Ayatollah took power, everyone wealthy or educated in the west was considered a traitor. Despite her many years of helping the poorest citizens of Iran, Satti fled in fear for her life.



Chapters 1 & 2

Chapters 1 & 2 Summary and Analysis

Daughter of Persia is the heroic story of Sattareh Farman Farmaian, a sheltered girl who managed to win an education at a top university in the U.S. She returned home to Iran, opening a college for social workers, who will be hired by the government as respected professionals to help the desperately poor workers living in the villages and city slums. Despite the fact that Satti opposed everything the Shah of Iran stood for, when he was overthrown, she was arrested as a traitor and had to flee Iran to save her life.

In Chapter 1, Bread and Salt, author Sattareh Farman Farmaian paints an idyllic picture of her childhood in the extensive family complex in Tehran. Sattareh was born in Shiraz, Iran, the heart of the Persian Empire, to the young third wife of an Iranian general. Her father Shazdeh was a member of the ruling royal family, the Qajar dynasty. Despite his royal heritage, he is politically moderate and strongly supported Iran's democratic constitution. Her mother was the pious daughter of the general's steward Aghajun. Satti's mother was hand-picked by the general's first wife because her plain face and biddable personality offered little competition for the general's favors or wealth. Satti was her father's 15th child, her mother's third. Eventually Shazdeh would have 36 children by eight different wives.

Satti's life story is intimately entwined with the political history of Iran. She was born in 1921, the same year that the British engineered the overthrow of the Qajar dynasty establishing Reza Shah Pahlavi as ruler of Iran. Her father and his two oldest sons were arrested by the new ruler, or Shah. After three months, Shazdeh was released but required to live under house arrest in the family compound in Tehran for the rest of his life, where the secret service kept him under close observation. The family developed the code name "my cousin" for the Shah, so that they could discuss him without the servants' knowledge.

In the compound, Shazdeh's primary concern was his children's education to prepare them for Iran's uncertain future. Unlike most men in Iran, Shazdeh believed in education for girls, if only to make them better society hostesses and wives. Still, his wives lived isolated in their separate houses and walled gardens within the andarun or inner quarter, the harem. Shazdeh was progressive and required that everyone bathe weekly, learn to read and write, and get plenty of exercise. Satti's mother even allowed her to play with her half-brothers and male cousins outside the harem, because all the girls in the family were a few years older or younger. Khandom, Satti's mother, never left the harem unless she was wearing the Muslim full-body covering, the chador.

In Chapter 2, Stories from My Mother's Carpet, Satti learned as a child that Persians are not Arabs, they are descended from the ancient Aryan tribes. For 3,000 years the tiny land bridge between East and West was governed by the Qajar royal family. Satti's



father was a cousin of the Qajar royalty. In 1906, a group of moderates including many members of the royal family and other educated Persians, convinced the King to adopt a constitutional monarchy with a parliament. Satti's father Shazdeh was one of the supporters of the constitution, who worked tirelessly to make a better world for the country's poor citizens.

At 30, Shazdeh married 13-year-old Ezzatdoleh, a royal princess. Out of respect for her status, Shazdeh took no other wives for 20 years, until Ezzatdoleh's health no longer permitted them to share a bed. As one of the wealthiest and most powerful members of the Qajar clan, Shazdeh was assigned to govern various provinces, keeping peace with his private army. He took another wife at Ezzatdoleh's suggestion. Ezzatdoleh's two oldest sons were furious at their father for diminishing their inheritance by having more children. After a confrontation with his sons, Shazdeh simply walked out of his house, leaving the entire complex with its priceless antiques, jewels and rugs for his first wife and her six sons. He built a new complex of homes, very simply furnished, for Satti's mother and his other wives. Back in Tehran, Shazdeh was appointed war minister and then prime minister for a few months. England and Russia were fighting for dominance of oil-rich Iran. The only defense that Shazdeh could envision was to give his sons a good education, so they could provide for themselves.



Chapters 3 & 4

Chapters 3 & 4 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 3, The American School, opens in 1933 when Satti was 12 and Reza Shah closed her school, which was run by members of the peaceful Bahai religion. Poor Iranians regarded the Bahai as godless heretics, a prejudice that some mullahs or religious leaders encouraged. Satti began attending the American School for Girls, run by Presbyterian missionaries headed by Dr. Samuel Jordan. Family finances played a part in this decision, as Shazdeh can no longer afford a French governess or to send his younger children to expensive boarding schools in England and France.

Like many Iranians of her generation, Satti was immensely impressed by the Americans, who seemed decisive, self-confident and unselfishly interested in improving Iran for all its citizens. They genuinely seemed to want the fledgling Iranian democracy to stand on its own two feet., free of Russian or British influence. Satti loved the new school and the freedom of picnics and hikes in the mountains, unexpected delights for a girl in Iran. Shazdeh also ignored tradition and taught his daughters to swim, ride and hike in the mountains.

One day in the bazaar, Satti and her mother encountered a beggar woman who opened her chador to reveal her nakedness, begging for money to buy clothes. Khanom immediately rushed home to gather beautiful garments and money for the impoverished woman. The next day, Satti was shocked to see the same beggar woman with her children, tricking other wealthy women with her ruse. It was a lesson in the duplicity of poor Iranians that Satti would remember only after she had been betrayed by her students.

In Chapter 4, Zaifeh, Reza Shah had begun confiscating the jewels, gold, land and furniture of middle-class merchants and mullahs, as well as the wealthy royal family. He also imposed taxes on tea and sugar, which hurt the poorest people the most. With the money, he built himself lavish palaces and paid huge salaries to his courtiers. After World War II, Iran was desperately poor. Shazdeh's oldest son Nosratdoleh negotiated a loan from Britain, in return for oil concessions. When Reza Shah refused to act as a pawn for the British government, they were angry. The Shah had Nosratdoleh arrested on trumped-up bribery charges. Eventually he was released to house arrest, but refused to curb his lavish lifestyle. Meanwhile, Reza Shah was defying the British. Specifically, he was disputing the old Anglo-Persian Oil Company contract, which gave Iranians just ten percent of the profits from their own oil.

The title of this chapter, Zaifeh, refers to the Muslim belief that girls were the fragile weaker sex. Unrelated men and women could not encounter each other, even by chance on the street. The assumption was that women were given to uncontrollable emotions and lust, and must be governed by a strong husband or father. Women were also considered mentally inferior, unable to make decisions or succeed academically.



Women were valuable only as wives and mothers. At sixteen, Satti's older half-sister Mahssy fulfilled this destiny by getting married. Despite the festivities, Satti thought that she could not tolerate living the rest of her life isolated in a harem, even if somebody were to give her five diamond rings.

In 1935, Satti's oldest brother Dadash, a 23-year-old medical student, returned from France for the summer. It was the first time he has been home for 12 years, and the first time 14-year-old Satti remembered meeting him. Listening to Dadash and her half-brothers, Satti passionately wanted to be sent abroad to study, in England, France or America. She knew that she was more intelligent than many of her older brothers. Shazdeh denied her request, saying that a girl will never be anything except a wife. Satti decided to make the most of the education she would receive in Iran.



Chapters 5 & 6

Chapters 5 & 6 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 5, The End of Childhood, a year later, Satti's older sister Jaby was married to Abbas Parkhideh, a petroleum engineer with the AIOC, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Like all Muslim brides, Jaby never set eyes on her husband until their wedding day. Jaby was 20 years old, almost an old maid by Iranian standards. At the wedding, Shazdeh had a photo taken with his eldest son, Nosratdoleh on one side and his youngest son, only four years old, on the other. It was the last time they would all be together.

Two weeks later, Nosratdoleh, in his mid-forties, was arrested again. Eventually, he was beaten and strangled to death under the supervision of a doctor. The family was forbidden from having a funeral or mourning. Even the children were cautioned not to talk about the death at school, because it could be interpreted as opposition to Reza Shah. The ruler was given the powers of a dictator.

Soon, Reza Shah confiscated half of Shazdeh's compound for a highway. Khanom was left with just half of her house, a long narrow space the family called the railroad house, because it resembled a train car. During the construction, the family moved to their summer home in Reswanieh for a year. To distract herself, Satti began volunteering with the school's service organization. They usually helped at an American medical dispensary in the poor neighborhood of South Tehran. For the first time, Satti saw the poverty, malnutrition, ignorance, overcrowding and disease that afflicted most Iranians.

Eager for Iran to appear to be a modern and western country, Reza Shah had already opened schools and universities to women. He also required that cafes, hotels and theaters allow women as well as men. Most of all, he outlawed the veil in public places. For devout Muslims like Satti's mother, this was like being required to go naked in the market. All of these changes were a sham, since women were not allowed to vote, divorce or have custody of their children. Even the strongest-minded, most educated Iranian woman was not permitted to live alone. Fortunately for Satti, all her father's attempts to find her a husband failed, so her education could continue, including an unprecedented senior trip to Shiraz, Isfahan, and Persepolis. In 1939, just before World War II, Shazdeh, who was more than 80 years old, died of a stroke. Satti's eldest brother Dadash returned from France shortly before their father's death. As women, Satti, her sisters, her mother and stepmothers were not allowed to enter the mosque, even for the funeral. If Satti could have spoken at the funeral, she would have said that Shazdeh was a prince who believed in the constitution for the common people, who taught his children the importance of education, serving the country and humanity.

In Chapter 6, The Fall of Reza Shah, in 1940 Satti enrolled at Sage College for women in Iran, but all schools operated by foreigners were soon closed by Reza Shah. With most of her friends married and having babies, Satti felt compelled to continue her



education and eventually help poor women like the ones in South Tehran. By 1941 the Allies invaded Iran. After just 3 days, the Iranian soldiers threw down their guns and deserted, allowing England an easy victory. Tehran was in chaos and the English encouraged Reza Shah, a Hitler sympathizer, to leave. He abdicated in favor of his son and fled the country.

Within a year or two, both Satti's grandfather Aghajen and her beloved Mashti died. A Qajar cousin in France suggested that Satti marry her brother, a prince. Satti's mother refused, saying that all Persian princes are rich, spoiled and take a new wife whenever they feel like it, just as Satti's father did. After several years at a local college, Satti sent for catalogs from colleges in the U.S. Khandom refused to consider allowing her 21-year-old daughter to attend school in a foreign country, but Satti mentioned it at every opportunity.



Chapters 7 & 8

Chapters 7 & 8 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 7, *Setting Out*, Satti's older cousin Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh was elected to parliament. Dadash and Joby's husband were strong supporters and friends of Mossadegh's son Gholam.

Satti was accepted to Heidelberg College in Ohio in 1943. By the time she was able to arrange a visa a year later, Khanom gave her tacit approval for the journey and even contributed a few thousand dollars to Satti's own inheritance from her father. Dadash took her to a public cafe for coffee and pastry, and told Satti that she could not be a shy girl from a harem anymore like other Iranian women. After Satti hugged and kissed everyone, an elderly servant held the Koran over her head as she stepped through the door and into the street. "Be in God's care and protection," she wept, "and may you come back someday to us who love you." She also sprinkled water on the threshold to ensure that someday Satti would return home.

Due to the war, no passage to Europe was available. Instead, Satti had to travel East to get to the West. In a combination of trains and cars, she traveled through Iran and India. Since single women were not allowed in hotels, she stayed with friends and distant cousins along the way. Finally, she found passage on a huge ship bound for Los Angeles. When the ship arrived, she was bitterly disappointed to learn that Los Angeles was far from the Statue of Liberty, a sight she had longed for since she was a young girl.

In Chapter 8, *The Land at the End of the Earth*, Satti arrived in the U.S. for the first time on July 4, 1944. She was dismayed to find that she was still thousands of miles away from her college in Ohio. However, by good fortune her former school principal Dr. Jordan lived near Los Angeles, in Pasadena. He insisted that Satti stay with his family, and got her registered at the prestigious University of Southern California. She was the first Iranian to attend USC. Lonely and depressed in the dormitory, for the first semester Satti had trouble understanding the classes in English and adjusting to sitting in a classroom with men.

Satti was shocked by couples kissing in public and by the waste of food, clothes and other items. The other students had never heard of Islam and asked rude questions about her father's many wives and children. Yet, she was impressed at the freedom, decisiveness and initiative of the Americans. During the second semester, she moved into an apartment with other foreign students and American coeds who had served in the armed forces abroad. Together, they organized an international students' club. Among the international students Satti had several suitors, including Arun, a Hindu from India studying film-making.



Best of all, Satti had cleared the way for other family members to study abroad. Her 19-year-old brother Farough sent a letter from New York, where he was attending school. Her brothers Ghaffar and Rashid, sister Homy and niece Nahid were all sent to school in England. Satti decided to join USC's noted school of social work rather than study sociology, to learn to help the poor people of Iran. In just four years, Satti completed six years of college and was awarded an MSW, a Master of Social Work degree. She was now a fully trained professional.

With her international group of friends breaking up, Satti accepted a job as social worker in East Los Angeles. Arun proposed to her and because they respected one another and were fond of each other, she agreed. She wrote Dadash and Khanom that she would be married, hoping that one day she and her Indian husband could live in Iran. Arun's family was disappointed and asked their embassy to check Satti's background, an insult she never forgave. The next year their daughter Mitra was born. Unable to find film work in the Hollywood film industry, Arun soon returned to India, seeking work with his father, a film director. When Arun was still not able to find work, he vanished from Satti's life. A year later, he sent Satti power of attorney with permission to divorce him if she liked. She never saw him again.

In Iran, Dr. Mossadegh had become a leader of the National Front and an advocate for the impoverished common people against the tyranny of the Shahs. Like his father before him, Mohammad Reza Shah had made himself head of the army and was becoming a dictator, rigging elections to pack the parliament with his conservative sympathizers. Dr. Mossadegh was calling for the government to control the Iranian oil monopoly as the only way to get the British-controlled company to give more than ten percent of oil profits to Iran. In 1951 the Iranian oil industry was nationalized and the Shah made Mossadegh the prime minister. Satti's brother Dadash was head of the health ministry and her brother-in-law Abbas assumed an executive position in the Iranian oil company. England fought back in a time-honored Iranian method, by hiring impoverished youths to protest in the bazaar.

Satti naively assumed that the powerful U.S. would support the fledgling democracy and Iran's right to self-government. Despite the personal entreaties of Abbas all the major American oil companies refused to transport petroleum from Iran in the face of a boycott by England. Still, after an impassioned speech by Mossadegh to the U.N. in New York, Satti felt confident that the U.S. would always side with the underdog and support international justice and national self-determination. Satti was offered a job in social work with the U.N, but decided that she was needed more in Iran.



Chapters 9 & 10

Chapters 9 & 10 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 9, *The Fall of the Lion of God*, Satti finally traveled to New York in 1952, planning to return to Iran. She was delayed by bureaucratic problems involving a passport for her daughter Mitra. At the Iranian consulate, she met an executive from the American Cities Service Oil Company. It was one of the few American petroleum companies that considered doing business with the newly nationalized Iranian oil industry. She was introduced to company owner Alton Jones, who hired her to brief his men on the culture of Iran, and monitor coverage by the news media. The American and British petroleum companies have prevailed upon their governments to place an embargo on Iranian oil, since the nationalization has essentially stolen the oil and refineries from the petroleum companies. The Iranians thought this action was justified, because most of its citizens were living in extreme poverty, and Iran was receiving only five percent of the profits on the oil that was sold. Dr. Mossadegh rejected a joint proposal by the British and American government, and Mohammed Reza Shah fled the country. A mob with Communist ties rioted, toppling statues of the Shah. Mossadegh had little choice but to restore order by calling the army on his own supporters. They turn on Mossadegh, overthrowing the government and demanding that the Shah be returned. Two days later, Mohammed Reza Shah triumphantly returned to Iran to form a government with Prim Minister Zahedi. The Shah's return to power was financed by the American Central Intelligence Agency.

Three hundred people were killed in the rioting. Satti was especially concerned about her family's safety in the violence, since they were related to Mossadegh. They were uninjured but her brother Dadash, the former Minister of Health, must find a new job for an international agency. The Zahedi government quickly signed the oil deal rejected by Mossadegh, giving Iran 50 percent of the oil profits. Satti decided to return home where she was offered a job by the U.N, developing a social welfare program in neighboring Iraq. She accepted the job, even though it meant being separated from her five-year-old daughter most of the year. Before she left the U.S., Satti finalized her divorce from Arun.

In Chapter 10, *Twenty People Who Believe in Something*, in 1958, with government backing, Satti opened the first college training social workers in Iran. Dr. Mossadegh, released from prison after many years, was still under house arrest. Mohammed Reza Shah controlled the country through his fearsome secret police, the SAVAK. While Satti still hoped for democracy in Iran, she admired many of the modern changes the Shah introduced, including women's rights and education. The two-year school was free to those who qualify, with guaranteed employment as a respected professional after graduation. Two of her half-brothers with doctorates from Stanford agreed to teach part-time for free. She wrote to everyone she had met through the U.N, asking them to donate books so the college would have a library.



During the first year, Satti hand-picked the twenty top candidates. Then, as later, the students were rough, scruffy young men from poor families and cultured, intelligent young women from wealthy backgrounds. She hoped to teach social workers who could see beyond their own economic future, who believed in working to make Iran better for all the people. She ran the school on the honor system, trusting the students with a petty cash fund for expenses and clients' emergencies. Simply teaching men and women in the same classroom was considered a Western innovation. Together, Satti and her students took on a number of projects including working at clinics, and improving the deplorable conditions they found at an asylum for mentally ill women and an orphanage. At graduation, because of Satti's pride in her students, she made sure the focus was on the new social workers and not herself, the college, or the government.



Chapters 11 & 12

Chapters 11 & 12 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 11, for the following eight years the college of social work continued to educate students, fund research programs and grow. Queen Farah, the 22-year-old wife of the Shah, donated money for buildings to benefit the poor. In return, Satti invited her to all the graduation ceremonies. Satti moved into a two-story house with garden and pool in the old family estate at Reswanieh. She enjoyed an active social life although she never married again. She walked a fine line, bowing to the Shah to continue funding for the school and being careful not to criticize his repressive policies, even when they created the problems her social workers solved.

The Shah continued to imprison anyone who uttered the slightest criticism of him or his government. However, to silence critics, he introduced a rudimentary reform movement to combat illiteracy and implement profit-sharing for factory workers. The only people who have the courage to stand up to the Shah are the clergy. In May 1963, Satti heard of a mullah or holy man named Khomeini, who was railing against the Shah's corruption and western reforms like allowing women to vote. In a tactical error, the Shah's secret police arrested Khomeini and deported him to neighboring Iraq, sparking riots in the streets of Iran. Citizens are outraged when the Shah orders the army to fire at the crowds. In exile, the elderly cleric is considered a martyr by most Iranians, who oppose the Shah's dictatorship.

Satti's school, the Tehran School for Social Service, was asked to dole out government reparations for the rioters killed. The school was given a regular budget from the government, and moved into a more modern, three-story facility, where they could train hundreds of new social workers at a time. Satti considered many of her graduates family members, and invited them to hike near her home every Saturday. A number of individuals and groups began donating money to the school, or to the social workers' petty cash fund to aid poor families.

In Chapter 12, *The Bridge Over Nothing*, by 1970 the Shah had made great strides in modernizing Iran and introducing western culture. He has built factories, roads, airports and dams. New hospitals offered improved health care services, and infant mortality was greatly reduced. People use the phrase "western-stricken" to indicate the corruption, moral decay, promiscuity and repressive political climate of the government. Even some of Satti's closest, best educated friends suggested that the only solution was to completely destroy all the Shah's improvements. Satti's family feared for her safety because she chose to make few speeches, rather than praise the Shah in glowing terms.

With government assistance, the Tehran School for Social Work continued to grow. Many of the students were now more interested in earning a high salary than in helping the poor people of Iran. Satti was shocked when students she sent to the U.S. to earn



an advanced degree refused to accept a position when they returned to Iraq because they wanted to "be somebody" — meaning, somebody wealthy. She saw it as the ultimate act of disloyalty. Part of this was classism. In Satti's mind, only those who were born into wealthy, powerful royal families such as her own have the right to "be somebody." Meanwhile, Satti's daughter Mitra has graduated from an English boarding school and been accepted to a college in Indiana. Satti longed for her daughter to live near her in Iran, but instead Mitra married an American graduate student and stayed in the U.S.

In 1973, the Shah and OPEC announced huge price increases on oil. The billions of dollars pouring into the country created a whole new generation of aides to the Shah. They ate in French restaurants and gambled in Monte Carlo on the lavish salaries the Shah provided, while illiteracy and squalor dominated the rural villages. The Shah's response to murmurs of discontent was to abolish the two-party political system. Instead, everyone was forced to join a single political party. The Shah continued arresting all dissenters, until nearly every family had a cousin or brother in jail. Still, the government claimed that there were only 1,400 people in all of Iran who opposed the Shah. Despite the political unrest, Satti loved her country and wanted to live there forever. She bought a three-bedroom apartment in North Tehran, in case Mitra and her husband Mike ever decided to move back home.



Chapters 13 & 14

Chapters 13 & 14 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 12, *The Man with the Microphone*, American president Jimmy Carter said that if a government deprived its citizens of human rights, the U.S. would no longer provide weapons or foreign aid. Both the Shah and the citizens of Iran took that as a warning, that unless the Shah stopped persecuting opponents, he could lose control of the government. For the first time in decades, the Iran press is permitted to criticize the government ministers. However, criticizing the Shah was still off-limits. The policy simply creates more political unrest, with people calling for the return of Ayatollah Khomeini. That fall, Satti was shocked to see a young woman in traditional Muslim dress in her classroom, a style that had not been worn since Satti was a child. Satti saw it as an announcement that this young girl, and others like her, were rejecting both the good and the bad that western culture had to offer. During President Carter's visit in December, 1977, he seemed to endorse the repressive Shah's regime and praised Iran as an island of stability in the Middle East. Satti could not help but wonder how bad things are in other countries, if the riots and persecution in Iran are "stability."

In January, there was rioting in the streets. The police shoot dozens of people. This set off a cycle of mourning and violence. Under the Muslim religion, any death must be memorialized after 40 days. In this case, the memorial took the form of new riots, with more people killed by the police. The Shah introduced a few reforms, and promised fair elections, but denounced the National Front as traitors. Ayatollah Khomeini was the only one speaking for the humble, uneducated majority of Iranians. Unlike Iran's other leaders, Khomeini spoke in simple language the laborers could understand — and he was absolutely incorruptible. Because so many villagers and servants were illiterate, Khomeini's speeches were distributed on tapes, passed from hand to hand in the bazaar. By spring, Satti is forced to shut the school down early because of the riots.

That summer there were more massacres, including one in Isfahan. In the town of Abadan, 400 women and children were burned alive in a theater where the doors had been mysteriously locked. Both sides blame the other for the atrocity but most people believed the secret police are responsible. The Shah convinced Saddam Hussein of Iraq to deport the Ayatollah Khomeini to France, where his message is spread throughout the Islamic world. Satti worried that this reclusive cleric had no real plan to provide the free houses and public transportation that he promised the poor people. Most of Satti's students became sympathetic to the rioters' cause, even though the students were not religious.

Satti and her social workers assist wounded rioters whenever possible. The Ghaleh was a walled section of town known for prostitution. When the rioters threaten to set fire to the entire area, killing all the women and children trapped inside, Satti intervenes and her social workers douse the fire. Finally, shamed by the social workers' actions, reluctant police and firemen arrive to help. Later, one of the Muslim clerics called to



thank Satti for doing the right thing by sparing the women's and children's lives. Satti's actions have ironic consequences. Only an atrocity of this magnitude, committed by the rioters would have turned the majority of Iranians against the rigidly religious Ayatollah. By preventing the fire, she saved many lives and contributed to the downfall of the Shah's cruel, corrupt dictatorship. However, she also enabled the Ayatollah Khomeini and the violent radical Mojahedin to take power. If Khomeini's followers had killed so many innocent people, the public sentiment might have turned against them, altering the course of Iran's history.

On November fourth, hundreds of thousands of people rioted in Tehran, burning hotels, bars and cinemas as symbols of western imperialism, moral decay, oppression and government corruption. Satti believed that if the Shah gave up his throne, and appointed a leader from the Nationalist Front, the crowds would be appeased. However, the Shah was concerned only with his own wealth and power, and refused to abdicate. Instead, leaders of the National Front met with Khomeini in Paris, forging an alliance. Many of Satti's wealthy friends sold their houses and moved out of Iran. Because they went to university in Europe or the U.S., they were regarded as "western-stricken." Satti refused to leave, protesting that she had done nothing wrong. Not long afterward, Satti's mother died after a long illness.

In Chapter 14, Black Fog and Fire, the violence continued. Gangs of young masked men roamed the streets with automatic weapons, attacking army patrols and shooting wealthy citizens. There were rumors that these masked men are joined by terrorist groups including the PLO and Hezbollah. Mobs looted the stores. When a few of the guerrillas with machine guns invaded the school, Satti realized it would be unwise to confront them. Many of the students and even her trusted gardener Zabi supported Khomeini's cause.

Finally, in January, the Shah left the country. Satti lunching at a restaurant with her eldest brother Dadash when they heard the news. Another diner, a middle-aged woman Satti has never met, rushed to congratulate Satti. The woman claimed that now Iran would be perfect, and all of Satti's efforts on behalf of the poor would be rewarded. The woman assumed that the Ayatollah would support Satti's school and relief efforts for the poor, bringing peace and charity to the country.

In the following weeks, the country was in chaos. Soldiers abandoned their posts. The Prime Minister stepped down, leaving the country without a leader. People were afraid to leave their homes and army bases were looted by poor villagers. When Ayatollah Khomeini finally returned in February, even Satti began to believe that he would fix all Iran's problems and make them into better people.

The Ayatollah appointed Mehdi Bazargan as his prime minister. He decreed that on February 17, shops and schools would reopen. However, the mullah urged the Mojahedin to keep a close eye on the American Embassy, for fear that the CIA would try to reinstall the Shah. Meanwhile, the radical student groups tortured and killed a number of the Shah's ministers. Upper middle-class citizens were imprisoned as non-Muslims or for drinking wine. Most were betrayed by trusted servants, or even falsely accused. In

the climate of the times, no one would trust a rich man. All of the college board members were arrested, dead or had fled the country. Still, Satti was eager to get back to work reopening the college and community centers.



Chapters 15 &16

Chapters 15 &16 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 15, The Party of the Wind, Satti left in the bitter cold predawn of February 18 to return to work. Because she was still in mourning for her mother, she was dressed head-to-toe in black, her hair covered by a black headscarf. Outside the school she was met by Zabi, her trusted gardener. He warned her that there were students inside with guns, planning to kill her. Satti had difficulty believing that her own social work students wanted to shoot her, but it was true. She marched inside to speak to the students. The students felt oppressed by Satti. They believed she was an imperialist because she was educated in the U.S., and adopted many western customs. They plan to arrest her and take her to Ayatollah Khomeini, to be executed.

Suddenly afraid, Satti bolted to her office and shut the door. She called her cousin, the son of former prime minister Mossadegh, a friend of Premier Bazargan. He told her the students could not arrest her without a warrant. Outside, when Satti asked the students for a warrant they motioned to their guns, the only authority they needed. By now staff and faculty members had started to arrive. Satti was shocked that none of them tried to negotiate with the students for her release.

The armed students take Satti in a car to the local police station, along with several other faculty members they have arrested. Satti was shocked that the driver is a man she hired out of pity, because his family was starving. Instead of being grateful, he was now joyous to be taking the "traitors" to the police station. After waiting for hours, the faculty members were released. The police captian tells Satti she will be taken to the Ayatollah Khomeini. In custody of a bearded young man, Satti was taken to the walled compound where Khomeini was staying. She was forced to wait in the courtyard all day and long into the night, in frigid cold, without anything to eat. She had to use the bathroom, but there was no toilet available. She was not permitted into the building, because there was no room set aside for female prisoners. Throughout this ordeal, her only companion was the uneducated elderly guard, who was listening to Khomeini's speeches on tape.

While waiting, Satti saw two male prisoners executed on the rooftop. Blindfolded, they knelt and were shot by the guards. Although she was terrified of being shot, Satti was also worried that she would freeze to death. Finally, long after dark, she sees a mullah walking through the courtyard and asks her to tell the Ayatollah that she was here. Finally, three men come to question her. They find seats on crates inside a tent filled with looted goods.

In Chapter 16, The True Believer, the three men question Satti about the eleven charges against her. It becomes clear that most of the charges are based on her student's immaturity or naivety. For example, she is accused of enriching herself at public expense, by erecting the school buildings on her own land. However, the land the



school is on does not belong to her, it is school property. Asked to write her beliefs about the revolution, Satti writes that although she believes in democracy and justice, she cannot condone the violence or arrest of innocent people who have worked all their lives to make Iran a better place. Still, Satti is shocked to realize that her students must have been planning her arrest for weeks, perhaps months. She pointed out that while she was guilty of sending students to the U.S. for training, she had also sent them to many other countries, such as India and the Philippines. One of the most ridiculous charges was making the everyday lives of poor people more tolerable under the Shah, so that they were less likely to revolt.

In the end, the only crime Satti is convicted of is visiting Israel more than 20 years ago, at the Shah's order, to present a paper at a conference. That is enough. Although Satti was commended for her work with the poor and in saving the women and children in Ghaleh, she is still found guilty. Her captors released her, and told her that she could return to her position heading the college. However, one of the investigators relays a message from a mullah to her. Satti's students were rabble. If she returns to the college, her life will be in danger. As an Iranian educated in the U.S., she should leave the country for her own safety. Stumbling out of the complex in the predawn darkness, Satti found a phone booth and called her family to pick her up.



Chapters 17 & Epilogue

Chapters 17 & Epilogue Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 17, Harj-o-marj, Satti returned to her family. Knowing that she had been arrested, they had been up all night. After stopping to let them see she is okay, she went to stay with her youngest sister in Reswanieh. Soon she learned that her gardener had taken her house and all of her possessions for himself. Over the next few weeks, a few servants and faculty members from the school came to visit her, but she found that she had lost all trust in humanity. Three of her half brothers were arrested and imprisoned.

The social work school that Satti founded was in chaos. The students elected a timid faculty member to be the new director. They abolish Satti's pension. She is vindicated when a complete audit shows that she did not embezzle a penny of school funds. In March, one of the faculty members warned Satti that he had overheard the students' plotting to kill her. Terrified, she spent the next two months hiding in the homes of various friends, afraid to go out during the day. She contacted mullah Taleqani and asked for a visa to leave Iran. When it finally arrived, after weeks of waiting, she was told that she must depart within 24 hours. The only plane ticket available was to Karachi. Once again, Satti would reach the west by traveling east. She was allowed to take only a few simple belongings in a single suitcase, and \$500 in cash.

In the Epilogue, a few days later, Satti flew from Karachi to London where she stayed in an apartment with her two sisters their five daughters. Dreams of returning to Iran were crushed when she learned that the government had confiscated all the houses, money, bank accounts and possessions belonging to her entire family. She found some consulting work, but soon realized that she would not be able to support herself in London. She went to the U.S., to stay with her daughter Mitra, her two grandchildren and Mitra's husband Mike. In November, she learned on the news that a horde of militant Iranian students had swarmed the U.S. embassy, taking 52 Americans hostage. Most Iranians saw it as an act of rage against the oppressive superpowers that had deprived them of a voice. The next day, the Ayatollah condoned the act of terrorism. Eventually the hostages were released after more than a year, only when a new American president was elected.

Satti found a job helping women and children in the U.S. and built a new life for herself. The school for social work that she founded in Iran languished. A new director, the man Satti suspected of engineering her arrest, was killed by a bomb. Eventually, the school closed and no more social workers were trained in Iran. Later, Satti received a letter from some former students who told her that she was an inspiration to them, and they continued to uphold the professional standards she had taught them.



Characters

Sattareh

Sattareh's father gave her an unusual name which meant "star" but was spelled more like the Persian word for measuring stick. She was called Satti by her friends and family throughout her life. Because she had no sisters or half-sisters near her age, Satti was allowed to play outside the harem, running and climbing trees with her step-brothers and cousins, which was very unusual. Satti was a leader among the children, which imbued her with the lifelong knowledge that she was as intelligent and capable as any male.

Later, as a young teen, Satti longed to study abroad like her older brothers instead of having a French governess like her sisters. However, her father can afford neither. Instead, he sent her to the American School for Girls in Tehran, where she developed an affection for the generous, energetic, independent Americans who seemed to want independence for Iran. After her father's death, Satti gradually convinced her mother to allow her to attend college in the U.S. She was proud of the fact that this opened the door for her younger siblings, many of whom also studied in the U.S., England or Europe.

As an idealistic young adult, Satti studied Social Work as a way of developing the skills to help the poorest residents of Iran. She believed that only if the standard of living was higher and people had access to education, hygiene, nutritious food and birth control would the Iran be truly independent. Satti did not lose her idealism as an adult, which sparked her desire to open the first (and only) college for social workers in Iran.

Satti believed that her biggest mistake was in trusting people outside the family, those not related to her by the bonds of "bread and salt." As a social workers, Satti decided to treat everyone she encountered as if they were honest, unless they proved themselves untrustworthy. She extended this policy to her college students, many of whom were from Tehran's poorest neighborhoods. For this reason, she never locked up the school records — documents that were eventually used to indict her on trumped-up charges.

Massumeh

Satti's mother was the third of her father's 8 wives, married at the age of 12 to a man in his mid-fifties, her father's employer. She was called Khanom or Lady by everyone in the family, as a sign of respect. Later, Satti's students called her by the same title. Despite her husband's lofty status and the family's many servants, Khanom spent the days in unending toil cooking, cleaning, sewing clothes for herself, the children, servants and her husband, and preserving food for winter. Shortly after her marriage, Massumeh's mother died. Her father put two younger sisters, just 6 and 9, in Khanom's care. She soon found herself pregnant, with no adult woman around to advise her what



to expect. Finally Shazdeh's first wife Ezzatdoleh took pity on the girl and allowed her to move into the family home temporarily. Returning from a year-long military assignment, Shazdeh brought Massumeh a gift of yet another wife, just a year or two older. Massumeh and Batul quickly became best friends.

Massumeh was a paradox, an extremely religious woman who allowed her second daughter to run around outside the harem with the boys, and allowed all her girls to be educated. She was so devout that when the Shah ordered women to appear in public without the chador or full-body veil, she felt naked. Still, she finally gave in to pressure from her daughter Satti to allow the girl to study in the U.S. As a good Muslim wife, Massumeh was always obedient to her husband, whom she greatly respected. Yet, her real attitude may have been revealed when she turned down a marriage proposal for Satti from a wealthy distant cousin by noting that all the Persian princes were spoiled men who took another wife whenever it pleased them.

Shazdeh

Satti's father was the beloved Shazdeh, regarded by his 8 wives and 36 children as the wisest man on earth. He kept peace in his large family by always being fair. Each wife lived in her own house, and each except the first has an appointed day to visit Shazdeh at his larger, more luxurious home. Shazdeh was a distant cousin of the Qajar royal family and of the Shah of Iran. In a long and distinguished career he was a general at a time when all power in Iran was controlled by private armies. Because of his success as a military leader, he was appointed governor of several different provinces and even served as the country's prime minister for a few months.

Shazdeh was virile, domineering, and handsome with a cleft chin, full white mustache, and light green eyes. He was hawk-like and one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the huge royal family. Shazdeh was 60 when Satti was born and despite his royal status was a moderate, supporting the democratic Iran constitution. His first wife was a true royal princess, sister to the King.

Everyone in the compound calls Satti's father Shazdeh, a title that means prince. His given name is Abdol Hossein Mirza Shahzadeh Hazrat Aghdas Vala Farman-Farma, meaning His Highness, Prince Abdol Hossein, the Eminent and Exalted One, the Greatest of All Commanders. When Reza Shah Pahlavi requires all Iranians to take a last name, Shazdeh chooses the last of his titles, Farman-Farma, meaning the greatest of all commanders. Humility was not highly prized in imperial Iran.

Shazdeh was so progressive that he required his wives to learn to read and write, even the royal princess. He sent all his children and even servant's children to school. In Shiraz, Shazdeh organized the country's first famine relief effort. During his brief reign as the prime minister, Shazdeh was primarily concerned with holding the country together in chaotic times. However, he did establish a ministry of health and donate land for the Pasteur Institute of Iran, a public health organization to provide children with the



smallpox vaccination. Shazdeh's progressive views on hygiene, education, nutrition, child-rearing, public health, and exercise sparked Satti's passion for social work.

Mashti

Kanhom's gatekeeper was Satti's beloved Mashti. The strong brawny peasant functioned as a babysitter, errand boy, escort, and general protector. In many ways the young Satti was closer to him than to her father. He partly fulfilled her need to have a father living in her home, that she can hug and see on a daily basis. Mashti was a terrible shopper, often returning from the bazaar with rotten fruit. He complained that since he was not inside the watermelon, he could not possibly have known it was spoiled. Satti remembered Mashti's words when she realizes that the college she founded has students and even faculty members who would accuse her of crimes, merely for their own advantage.

Mashti became part of the family when Shazdeh was in prison. Then an ignorant, strong country boy, the nineteen-year-old Mashti smuggled a message out of the jail for Shezdeh, proving his undying loyalty. Following the custom of the time, Shazdeh gave the boy a permanent job and supported his family in a very modest way for the rest of his life.

Reza Shah Pahlavi

In February, 1921 a revolt instigated by the British ousted the royal Qajar family, including Satti's father, and made Reza Shah Pavlevi the ruler of Iran. Shazdeh actually gave Reza his start when the future ruler was in Shazdeh's private army. Needing someone to carry a heavy machine gun, Shazdeh promoted tall, hefty, illiterate Reza. When the British were looking for a puppet leader of Iran, they selected Reza from a photograph of officers, apparently because of his imposing height.

Reza quickly assumed control of the army, outlawed all newspapers and press, and became a dictator. He also appropriated a great deal of land from members of the royal family for public roads or for his own use. He took a portion of Shazdeh's garden to build his marble palace on, and later took a section of land to build a new road, effectively cutting the house that belonged to Satt's mother in half. Although he was a despot, Reza brought peace and stability to Iran, and built many roads and public works projects. He was determined to bring modern conveniences and Western culture to Iran, and to minimize the influence of all religions. However, he failed to address the basic needs of most residents, who were desperately poor and illiterate. He was the father of the man most Americans know as the Shah of Iran, Shapour Mohammed Reza Shah Pavlevi.



Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh

Mossadegh was Shazdah's nephew and close friend, a good man who was the only son of Shazdah's beloved sister Najmeh-Saltaneh. When Shazdeh was ordered back to Tehran, Mossadegh replaced him as governor of the region. A few years later, while Satti was studying in the U.S., Mossadegh represented the Nationalist Front party as the prime minister. He was a frail elderly man who often conducted important meetings in his pajamas. Like most Iranian politicians, Mossadegh was dramatic, often speaking so passionately that he passed out on stage. Although he was widely ridiculed in the international press, Satti saw Mossadegh as Iran's best hope for an independent government. His days were numbered, however, when he demanded a higher share of oil profits for Iran. When the U.S. brought the Shah back to rule Iran, Mossadegh was imprisoned and tortured. He lived the last years of his life under house arrest and eventually died of complications of the injuries he suffered in prison.

Shapour Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi

Commonly known in the west as the Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza was Reza Shah's son, the first crown prince of the Pahlavi dynasty. Restored to power by the American CIA, the Shah reigns as if no one can stop him. He was determined to be known as the man who modernized Iran. To that purpose, he built modern highways, buildings, houses and bridges. The Shah also introduced other reforms including allowing women in the cafes and cinemas, and banning the chador in public. Unfortunately, these reforms are not as far-reaching as they could be, because the Shah was woefully ignorant of the plight of the people in the poorest areas. The Shah was not good at delegating, and required that every decision at all levels of government be made by him. This resulted in little being done, and many inefficiencies.

The Shah was corrupt, buying himself lavish golden gifts, lavishing huge salaries on members of his court and buying elaborate palaces while most people in the country starved. The people associated the corruption, greed and moral decay with the U.S and the Shah's modern reforms. They began to hate everything modern or western, and even coined the term "western-stricken" to describe it. The Shah's enemies were tracked by the secret police, tortured and killed. The only people who had the courage to speak up against the Shah were clerics, who apparently believed that God would protect them. When the clerics came to power, their followers rejected everything western or modern.

Nosratdoleh

Shazdeh's oldest son, the arrogant, generous, spoiled Nosratdoleh should have become the patriarch of the family when his father died. However, Nosratdoleh insisted on voicing criticisms of some of the Shah's policies, and in flaunting his personal wealth, despite many warnings from family members. The Shah found both of these actions



intolerable. He had Noratdoleh arrested and tortured. Eventually Satti's eldest half-brother was choked to death in prison, under the direction of a doctor.

Dadash

Dadash is Satti's oldest brother, the eldest child of Shazdeh and Khanom. After her father's death, he assumes authority over her branch of the family, although he is still subject to the authority of his older half-brothers, especially Nosratdoleh. A single or divorced woman could not live alone in Iran, so even as head of the college, Satti lived in her own house within the family compound and consulted Dadash about every decision.

Dr. Jordan

Satti's unfortunate friendship with Dr. Jordan changed the course of her life. Dr. Jordan ran the American School for Girls in Tehran until Reva Shah ordered it closed. As a young girl, Satti was impressed with the decisiveness, altruism and initiative of all her American teachers, and determined to study in the U.S. some day. When Satti finally arrives in the U.S., she is far away from her college in Ohio but near Dr. Jordan's home in Pasadena, California. Dr. Jordan insists upon enrolling her in the University of Southern California, a much more prestigious school. There, Satti quickly finishes a master's degree in social work and founds a group of international students.

Alton Jones

Alton Jones was a self-made millionaire, the dapper, 60-year-old owner of Cities Service Oil Company, and a close personal friend of President Eisenhower. He hoped to persuade the U.S. to allow his company to import oil from the Iranians. He was ultimately unsuccessful, but gave Satti her first real job after college.

Ayatollah Khomeini

Khomeini was a mullah or Muslim clergyman from a small town who had the courage to speak out against the Shah. Later, he earned the honorary title of Ayatollah. While most Persian politicians speak in intricate language that can only be understood by the well-educated, Khomeini spoke in simple words that the poorest workers could understand. His sermons against the Shah warning about the dangers of immoral western culture were widely distributed on audio tape, available to the majority of Iranians, who were illiterate.

The Shah found the cleric so troublesome that he had him deported to nearby Iraq, where Khomeini sparked another group of Muslim conservatives. When Khomeini still preached against him, the Shah had him deported to France, which gave the Ayatollah access to an international audience. When rioting in the streets finally brought down the

Shah, the majority of followers would insist that their leader must be this simple, poorly educated clergyman from a small town who preached the most conservative beliefs of Islam.



Objects/Places

Shiraz

Satti was born in Shiraz, the ancient heart of the Persian empire, a region known for its roses, wine, and poets. However, as an infant she was moved to Tehran, where she spent most of her life.

The Family Compound on Sepah Avenue in Tehran

Satti spend an idyllic childhood in the family compound her father built on Sepah Avenue in Tehran. There, her father built a large house for himself, run by his housekeeper. Surrounding the courtyard, he built houses for three of his younger wives. The tranquil, beautiful walled compound containing 1,000 people was like a small city, with carpenter shops, a dairy, greenhouse, blacksmith shop, pools, gardens, and many servants. Despite this luxury, the compound has no telephone or electricity outside Shazdeh's home, and no central heat or hot water.

Reswanieh

Shazdeh's summer home was in the cool mountains of Reswanieh, where he takes his many children on long hikes. Later, Satti settles into her own house in the family compound. When the Ayatollah took power, the house was taken from her and her gardener, along with all his relatives from the country, moved into it.

The Statue of Liberty

As a girl, Satti sees a photo of the Statue of Liberty in a magazine and longs to go to America. She was bitterly disappointed when she arrived in Los Angeles to find that she is still very far away from the statue and New York.

University of Southern California

Satti was accepted to a college in Ohio, but a chance meeting with her old headmaster results in her enrolling in the well-respected University of Southern California or USC.

New York

After graduation, Satti lived in New York for several months while working for a petroleum company owned by millionaire Alton Jones. When her cousin Dr. Mossxx is thrown out of office, she realized that she must return home to Iran.



Iraq

Satti spent several years as a social worker for the U.N in Iraq, first among the Bedouin in the desert, and then in Baghdad.

The Tehran School of Social Work

Satti returned to Tehran to found the country's first college to train social workers. She trained hundreds of students and got many of them scholarships for advanced study abroad. All of her students were given government jobs helping the poor upon graduation.

Karachi

When Satti finally received permission to leave Iran, she was required to depart within 24 hours. The only available flight was to Karachi, in the opposite direction from the U.S. and Europe.

London

Satti initially traveled from Karachi to London, where she lived for months with a group of her female relatives. Eventually, when the Ayatollah confiscated all of her extended family's remaining property and bank accounts, she realized that it would be impossible to return to Iran in her lifetime. She traveled to the U.S. to live near her daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren.

The Railroad House

When the Reza Shah took power, he made a continuing practice of confiscating land from members of the extended Qajar royal family, including Satti's father. First, the Reza Shah took a large portion of their land to build his marble palace. Then, he took even more to build a sumptuous garden for himself. Finally, the Reza Shah divided the entire complex in two, taking one half for a modern highway. This action actually cut the house Satti grew up in into two. One half was demolished, leaving a long, narrow set of rooms that the family called "the railroad house." This awkward half-house symbolized the greed and repression of the dictator's rule, and his greed. Satti's mother lived in the railroad house until her death.



Themes

The Political History of Iran

The memoir traces the sweeping political history of Iran in the 19th and 20th century. Despite his noble birth, Sattareh's father supports democracy and the Iranian constitution introduced in 1906. He was a general and governor of several provinces in Iran before her birth and later serves as the country's Premiere for several months. In 1921, the British orchestrated the overthrow of the independent Qajar government and put a puppet leader on the throne, Reza Shah Pahlavi. The elder Shah was a dictator who had his political enemies tortured, including Satti's father.

Reza Shahs' greed was ultimately his downfall. By refusing to be a British pawn, he alienated the superpower that kept him in control. Satt's older cousin, Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh, was elected to parliament and eventually became the prime minister. Mossadegh passionately believed that Iranians deserved more than ten percent of the profits from their oil wells. In 1951 he nationalized the Iranian oil industry, effectively stealing back the oil the Iranians had been cheated out of. When he refused to capitulate to the oil companies' demands, the American Central Intelligence Agency or CIA finances a coup, reestablishing Reza Shah's son Mohammed Reza Shah as king. The new Shah of Iran ruled with an iron hand. Anyone who voices the slightest disagreement with him, even in the privacy of their own family, is arrested and tortured by his secret police. No one except a few Muslim clergymen have the courage to stand up to the Shah and his powerful American allies.

Finally in 1978, mobs supporting the conservative Muslim Ayatollah Khomeini riot in the streets for more than a year. After the revolution, anyone educated in the U.S. or Europe is considered "western-stricken," afflicted with permanent greed, corruption, and immorality. The mobs destroy bridges, hotels, roads, businesses and theaters, all symbols in their minds of the corrupt and immoral Shah who has forced the majority of people into poverty and hopelessness.

Family

The primary lesson that Satti learned in her lifetime was that one can never really trust anyone outside his or her own family. Satti includes old family servants in that group. Her childhood in her father's compound in Tehran was idyllic. She felt protected by the courtyard, her father's respected position and her mother's love. Satti called this the bond of bread and salt. Yet, even as a child Satti was aware that they cannot speak openly in front of some servants, who might betray them to the secret police.

Satti's family included her father's seven other wives, whom she called her step-mothers. It also included her father's other 35 children. She is just as close to her step-mothers as to her own mother. As a child, it seemed to Satti that she had three or four



mothers living nearby to care for her at any moment. She is as close to her half-brothers and half-sisters as to her full siblings, who live in her own house and share her mother. Satti's definition of family even stretches to include Qajar cousins and relations, although it definitely does not include the Reza Shah and his son, both distant cousins. In fact, Satti's mother invents the code phrase "my cousin" to mean the Shah so the family can criticize the dictator in front of the servants.

Satti was reminded of this lesson when the students she has worked so hard to help falsely accuse her of embezzlement and treason, and have her arrested. She managed to escape with her life, but must start a new life with the remaining members of her extended family in London and the U.S.

Social Work

As a girl, Satti was impressed by the American teachers at her school in Tehran. They are compassionate and utterly selfless, and want only to improve the lives of uneducated girls in Iran. When she is a little older, the teachers take Satti and other girls to volunteer at a local clinic. There, Satti saw the terrible poverty and ignorance that most Iranians live in. She was inspired to get an education so that she could help other people, too.

At the University of Southern California, Satti switches from a Sociology major to Social Work, so she can make a profession of helping the poor. She passionately believed that Iran would not be a great nation until citizens were willing to work together for the common good, not merely considering their own financial interests. This was an ideal that Satti strove to instill in each of her students when she opened the first college to train social workers in Iran. There was not even a word for social workers, so Satti had to invent one. Under Satti's guidance, her students learned to educate poor families on hygiene, health care, childcare, and nutrition while giving them access to better jobs and clean water. She was devastated when the school ultimately closed after she left the country.

Education

At the time of Satti's birth, 95% of all Iranians and virtually all women were illiterate. Her father was considered progressive because he hired a tutor to teach his first wife, a royal princess, to read. He insisted that his subsequent seven wives also learn to read, at least well enough to read the Muslim holy book, the Koran. Satti's father even paid for his female children to go to school, an act that was almost unheard of in Iran. Yet, his progressive attitudes did not extend to sending his female children abroad to study. He saw no point in spending thousands of dollars on a college education, when all his daughters were destined to merely become society hostesses.

Satti was well aware that she was smarter than many of her brothers, who were being given expensive educations in boarding schools in Europe and the U.S. Refused the opportunity to follow them, Satti determined to get the best secondary education she

possibly could in Iran. After her father's death, with the support of her brother Dadash, she convinced her mother to allow her to go to college in the U.S.

Satti passionately believed that only through education could Iran compete in the western world and improve the lives of the average Iranian. That is why she chose to start a college for social workers, instead of merely working for the U.N. Her dedication paid off, and Satti proved that an educated woman could do just as much for her country as any man, despite her father's prejudices.

Style

Perspective

Sattareh brings her own opinions to the memoir, with no attempt to be objective or impartial. She recounts an idyllic view of her childhood in Iran and describes her father in glowing terms, using the word domineering as a compliment. She presents her life with 8 mothers and 35 siblings as completely normal.

Satti retains her prejudices in other ways as well. She regards long-time and trusted servants as members of the family and assumes that the pittance they are paid is enough to ensure unending devotion. Because they earn enough to keep their families from starving, she assumes that they love her and will care for her as if she were a member of their own family. When her father provides a hut to an elderly servant with a terminal illness, Satti sees that as a sign of his great generosity and not as a sign of a corrupt feudal system where the wealthy exploit the poor. She never wonders why this man who has worked hard all his life does not deserve even the tiniest plot of land to call his own, but must beg her father for charity. After the Ayatollah Khomeini takes power, Satti is shocked to discover that her students and some of her servants harbor resentments simply because she is wealthy, and no matter how hard they work, they will always be poor under her system of government.

Satti also shows partiality in her view of property rights. When the Iranian government nationalized the oil industry, Satti saw it as only fair, because most of the Iranians were so poor. She did not stop to think that in effect, the government was stealing oilfields and refineries from their rightful owners, the American and British oil companies. This action seems completely justified to Satti. Yet, when her gardener takes her house from her a decade or two later, Satti is shocked. She thinks this is an unlawful theft of private property. In fact, the two are very similar. In both cases, one could argue that the moral imperative overcomes property rights.

Tone

Satti takes a partisan view of Iranian politics, even in writing about them years later. Whenever there are riots supporting the Shah, she claims the rioters were paid by American or British interests, and do not actually support the dictator. However, she claims that all the riots opposing the Shah are genuine. In particular, when the Shah or Ayatollah acts in a negative way, she attributes it to greed or fanaticism. When Dr. Mossadegh dissolves the parliament, she thinks that he has been driven to desperate action by his intense desire to save the country.

She denigrates other Iranians' beliefs, referring to them as "the party of the wind." This suggests that the poor support Ayatollah Khomeini only because they believe they will be better off financially if he comes to power. She also believes that the middle-class



Iranians begin to support Khomeini out of expedience, only when it is obvious that he will win and dissenters will be shot as traitors. Satti does a disservice to her fellow Iranians, many of whom genuinely seem to believe that the Ayatollah offers the best hope for an independent Iran free of repression and corruption where the average worker can have a decent life. This belief that the other side in the political debate does not hold sincere beliefs denigrates the intelligence and ideals of the Iranian people.

Structure

The memoir, coauthored with Dona Munker, is divided into four parts, with two to seven chapters in each part. These unequal parts each contain the account of an important portion of Satti's life.

Part One, *In Shazdeh's Realm*, recounts Satti's early life including her childhood and education in Tehran. This section is seven chapters long and at 158 pages, contains a third of the book's length. Part Two: *Yengeh Donya* contains just two chapters. They recount Satti's college education in the U.S., her brief marriage to an Indian film student, the birth of her only daughter, and her sojourn in New York working as liason for an American oil company that hopes to help the Iranians sell their petroleum. This section contains just 46 pages in two chapters.

Part Three: *Khanom* tells the story of Satti founding the first college to train social workers in Iran, and the political unrest that preceded the xx revolution. It contains 106 pages divided into four chapters. Finally, Part Four: *Earthquake*, includes the story of the Ayatollah Khomeini coming to power, Satti's arrest for treason, the inquiry, and her flight from the country in four chapters containing 79 pages. In just five pages, the Epilogue recounts her life in London and the U.S. after fleeing from Iran.



Quotes

"In those days, about ninety-five percent of Persian adults and nearly all women, were still illiterate. But my father, who always did exactly what he wanted to do, and did it with total and magnificent indifference to everyone else's opinion, had long entertained the highly unorthodox notion that education made women better wives" (pg. 12.)

"My father was extremely self-centered, and it never occurred to him to consider how I or my mother might feel about my having such a strange name. Shazdeh's perfect egotism was a great cause of aggravation to our mothers" (pg. 13.)

"Like nearly every other Iranian women of childbearing age, when she was not nursing one child she was usually pregnant with another, and by the time I was sixteen and she was about thirty-nine, she had not only me and Jaby, but my brothers Farough, Ghaffar and Rashid and my sisters Homy, Sory, and Khorshid so that together with our eldest brother Sabbar, who was studying in Paris, there were nine of us in all" (pg. 17.)

"once, when I was perhaps eight years old, one of these freaks forms caught us far up on the trail, the hail slashing at us and the wind whipping out faces so that everything became a gray blur and it seemed that we could go neither forward nor back. In horror I suddenly understood that we were lost and I opened my mouth to scream. Just at that moment, Shazdeh's voice floated back on the wind from the head of our line — not loud, but firm, clear, and confident:"Forward, children, march! Keep going. This is a splendid lesson for you. Remember, when you get caught in a storm, always move straight forward. Don't stop; always move ahead. Never falter in a storm!" (pg. 61.)

"Indeed, a whole generation of educated Iranians now growing up felt that "Amrika" was the only Western country that was sincere and selfless, and that had truly supported our aspirations to be strong and respected by the rest of the world" (pg. 73.)

"We Iranians, who value the family above all else and spend our whole lives within its hot, protective walls, know that from it we derive our very being, our deepest and most meaningful sense of self. Through it we define who we are, to the world and to ourselves. As long as the family is intact, secure and complete, we know that we are somebody instead of nobody" (pg. 93.)

"I was filled with admiration for the Americans' little dispensary. Here, I marveled, were people who tried to do something about the problems they saw—not like us Persians, who just sat down like Mashti with his watermelon and waited for somebody else to fix the problem!" (pg. 104.)

"But if I had been permitted to be there and praise his life and character, I would have said that he was a man who was able to change when he saw the need for change. He saw the necessity of a constitution,. He respected the people's voice and willingly accepted the sacrifice of his dynasty's power for their sake" (pg. 117.)



"I've lived among the Qajars all my life," she said flatly, "and every one of those big, rich, spoiled shazdehs is just like your father, peace be upon hi. They marry some new woman whenever they feel like it, and they don't care how much pain or inconvenience it causes. A girl like you would be miserable. Id didn't take the trouble of raising you all those years just to see you go and marry a prince" (pg. 131.)

"Yet surely, I told myself, if we have "initiative" and could learn to trust and work with one another as people did here, we could become a great, strong nation. And if we could learn to speak openly about our problems, as Americans did, we, too, would come to believe in ourselves" (pg. 165.)

"I was certain taht America would be on our side int he coming crisis. When the Russians had refused to pull out in 1946, President Truman had demanded that they do so. The American government, I told Arun joyfully, believed in our right to self-determination. The most powerful democratic country in the world would not allow the British to use gunboat diplomacy as they had in 1932" (pg. 175.)

"I agreed that Dr. Mossadegh was being extremely stubborn. But I added that Iranian politics weren't the same as American politics. In my country, we slandered each other and thought only of our own interests, and didn't care that such destructiveness injured the entire nation" (pg. 187.)

"In one of the dormitories, which were actually old farm storehouses, we had found dozens of silent, emaciated babies and tiny children sprawling on the floor. Thanks to the ignorance or indifference of their "nurses" and the orphanage administrator, they were so stunted from malnutrition and neglect that instead of walking they could only crawl" (pg. 218.)

"Social work stood for giving people a chance to do something with their lives, and Mohammed Reza Shah had decided to give social work that same chance. I felt happy, relieved , and grateful" (pg. 248.)

"What, I wondered bitterly, did the Shah have left ot worry about? No tonly was Dr. Mossadegh himself dead, but in the fourteen years since his overthrow it had become clear that all this sacrifices on behalf of our independence and the Iranian constitution had been for nothing. Anyone who showed evidence of leadership was jailed, banished, or silenced and not even the Shah's most trusted advisers dared to contradict him" (pg. 261.)

"I wanted my grandchildren to learn about the country whose history and culture would be their Persian grantdmother's legacy to them. I wanted them to know its past and feel assured of a place in its future. I was certain that I would never leave my country. I wanted only to live and die in Iran" (pg. 285.)

"here was a man like them who was simple, stern, and incorruptible, and whose basic message everyone could understand: the nobodies of Iran had been deprived of their fair share for too long. And this old man, who in all those years ahd never flinched or



wavered in his purpose for a single moment, was demanding that they overthrow their oppressor, and take their fair share" (pg. 295.)

"Finally, after about four hours all the fires the mob had set had been put out and I drove the exhausted students back to the School. I had a feeling that they knew the political group the rioters belonged to, for all of them were South Tehran boys. But by now so many of our students idolized Khomeini, even those I knew weren't religious, that I didn't think it would be prudent to ask if these thugs were his followers" (pg. 302.)

"The Ayatollah is going to come back! Corruption will no longer exist, we will have compassion and justice, the poor and destitute will be taken care of — we will be a new people, a truly Islamic society!" (pg. 321.)

"When all was said and done, Mohammed Reza Shah, who had styled himself "the father of the nation," had simply gone off and left his children holding the bag" (pg. 323.)

"He had not toyed with me, but had been a fair and honest investigator. he had given me the chance to clear myself, and I was grateful to him and to Agha for sparing my life" (pg. 367.)

"The harj-o-marj was the ultimate fruit of that. It had happened because we, who should have been teachers of the ignorant, did not set an example. of leadership, did not sacrifice ourselves, our careers, our cherished dreams, to protest what the Shah was doing to us. We did not speak out against his injustices and his lack of respect for the people's voice" (pg. 383.)

"Sometimes I think that America's leaders have lost all compassion for human beings. yet I can never forget for a moment what it means to live in a country where one is free to say what one likes and read what one pleases, to protest injustice, and above all, to try to do something about the problems one sees" (pg. 393.)



Topics for Discussion

What is Sattareh Farman Farmaian's nickname among her family members?

How does Sattareh feel about her father's 7 other wives and 35 other children? Why does she accept them?

Why does Sattareh want to be educated in Europe or the U.S.?

When Satti asks her father to send her to school in England or the U.S., what is his response?

After earning a masters degree at USC, why does Satti return to Iran to open a college for social workers?

Satti was impressed by the compassion and initiative of her American teachers in Tehran. How does her attitude towards the U.S. change when she learns that the CIA had a role in bringing the Shah of Iran to power? Why does she feel that way?

Why is Satti arrested when the Ayatollah gains power? Why must she leave her beloved Iran?

Satti is wealthy and comes from a prestigious family with many advantages that most poor Iranians do not have. Why does she want to work so hard to make life better for the poor people who live in villages and slums?