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ANGELLA NAZARIAN AND HER WONDEROUS LIFE JOURNEY

LIFE AS A VISITOR

“Unlike the sun rises and sets your presence is everlasting” Poems by Sa’adi

Angella Nazarian, like many other Iranian Americans, was born on one side of the world, and has spent her adulthood on the other side in America. Although she has spent part of her life in the East and part on the West, she is one of the few who brings a depth and perceptiveness to her life journey.

Angella Nazarian’s book, *Life as a Visitor* (published by Assouline), is a joining of her deep sensitivity to life and her poignant observations. Although *Life as a Visitor* has a beautiful visual and decorative component, it also documents many historical and pictorial depictions of Iran along with her personal memoir. Her story shows that life is strung by a series of interconnected incidents-- some happy and some sad. But in the end, this is inherent in life itself.

Angella Nazarian, who has a graduate degree in psychology and teaches psychology in local universities, knows all too well that a positive and optimistic view on life can propel us in a positive direction. And the inevitable struggles of life can bring a sense of resilience and growth as well.

Angella defines herself as a visitor of this world and this journey still continues. Her story covers one of the most

the span of these thirty years. No doubt, a homeland that is in the midst of such turmoil has deeply affected Angella’s life, even in exile.

subtlety of emotions, which in many respects reflects her feminine nature and her training in the field of psychology.

It was on one summer day that I met the author and poet, Angella Nazarian. Her family and friends had organized a reception at a home in Beverly Hills for the celebration of her published memoir.

The garden setting of this beautiful home took me back to the early years in Tehran when I would often get together with friends and pass the afternoon sipping tea under the willow trees, discussing books, music, film, and art.

Much was discussed about Angella’s character--her affinity and closeness to her family and culture, and the country in which she lived the first 11 years of her life.

The immigrant story and struggle is not a new one. It seems to be the collective experience of many who have lived through this turbulent century. So in many ways her experiences resonate with many. But this story also highlights the hardships of her particular community of Iranians in exile. As much as they yearn for their country of birth, their absence



turbulent times in Iranian history where political and religious ideology came to a clash. This tension has not only continued but has worsened in

In her book, Angella explores and brings clarity to such issues with keen analysis and insight and sensitivity to

is also felt deeply in their homeland-- A homeland with a rich and ancient civilization.

Many Iranian exiles too have penned memoirs in the past 30 years. But, *Life as a Visitor* sets itself apart from other books in this genre, because of the manner in which the author recounts her story. Although she shares her the hardships she and her family experienced, she bares no animosity or prejudice, and shies away from stereotypical depictions.

Angella's life story continues until the present time and she manages to weave a storied tale while she gives accounts of her varied travels throughout the world. In this book you will find a form of storytelling that brings together different times, places, and art work in one book.

Her poetry, in simplicity in language and affecting at the same time is also a part of this book. She pays homage to several great Iranian poets as well. She quotes Rumi's poem:

"We are not of here nor there, We are placeless and to the placeless we go."

She also quotes Hafez, one the greatest Iranian poets:

"We have come to this door, not for pomp and position, But because of ill fortune, we have sought shelter here."

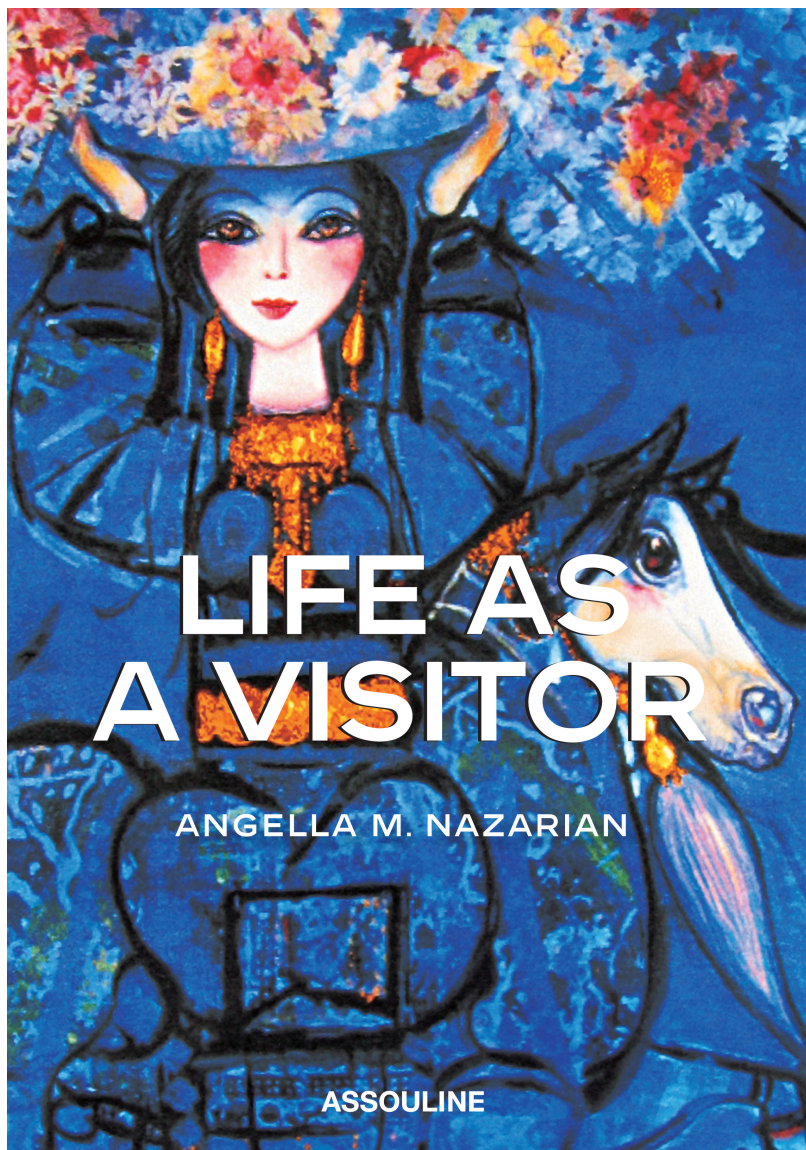
And finally she has published a verse from a celebrated 13th century writer, Sa'adi, whose poetry graces the entrance to the Hall of Nations of the U.N. building in New York:

"Unlike the sun that rises and sets
Your presence is everlasting."

I had an interview with Angella at a local Hotel in the Valley that was also hosting a Iranian Women's Conference. We soon got to talking about our shared belief that this world is truly what is commonly referred to as a "global village." And more than any other time, we need to connect and create dialogue between various cultures. The basic philosophy is that humanity has much more in common than we realize, even putting into consideration differences of race, religion, and ethnicity. And if this diversity did not

exist, this world would have been far less vibrant and interesting. As it is said, there would be no beauty in a garden if there is no variety of flowers.

In our discussion she talked about her travels to Spain and I hinted at the fact that she has resemblances to people of that region. She confided that her roots go back to Spain many centuries ago. It appears that at the time of the inquisition many fled and made their way eastward into Iran. And this movement to the East was also countered by the Islamic influence of East and its movement toward the West. The Eastern influence can be seen in the Baroque and European music of the west as well. Of course this again shows the interconnectedness of life and varied cultures, the East and the West.



This brings me to recite one of Joseph Campbell's sayings, which is also quoted in *Life as a Visitor*: "Where we thought to travel outward, we will come to the center of our existence. And where we had thought to be alone, we will be with all the world."