

A Memoir of Two Worlds: The "Dickensian" Arc of Hassan Nemazee

The Unlikely Odyssey In the crowded genre of political memoirs, the **Hassan Nemazee book**, *Persia, Politics & Prison*, stands out not for its policy wonkery, but for its sheer, cinematic scope. Described by *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius as having a "Dickensian arc," the memoir traverses a path rarely walked by a single individual: from the sun-drenched aristocracy of pre-revolutionary Iran to the concrete gloom of a U.S. federal penitentiary.

Nemazee's story begins with a legacy of immense weight. Born in Washington D.C. in 1950, he was the son of Mohammed Nemazee, a figure of almost mythic proportions in Shiraz, Iran. The elder Nemazee was a philanthropist and industrialist who brought modern waterworks and the renowned Nemazee Hospital to his home city. Hassan was raised in a world of "noblesse oblige," where wealth was inextricably linked to civic duty. After graduating from Harvard in 1972, he took the reins of this empire, seemingly destined to be a bridge between the West and the Middle East.

The Rupture of Revolution The book vividly recounts the trauma of 1979. The Islamic Revolution was not merely a political shift for the Nemazee family; it was a total erasure of their world. The new regime, viewing the family's Western ties and secular wealth with hostility, nationalized their assets. The hospital, the schools, and the businesses were seized. Nemazee writes of fleeing the country with his life but leaving behind 90% of his family's fortune.

This section of the Hassan Nemazee book serves as a powerful testament to the immigrant experience of reinvention. Arriving in the United States as an exile, Nemazee was driven by a ferocious need to rebuild. He did not merely want to survive; he wanted to regain the "Prince of Shiraz" status he felt was his birthright. This drive propelled him into the high-octane world of New York investment banking. It is a classic American success story, but one that Nemazee admits was fueled by a dangerous mix of ambition and insecurity—a need to prove that his success was innate, not just inherited.

The Shadow of the Past Throughout the memoir, the shadow of Iran looms large. Nemazee reflects on how the loss of his homeland shaped his psychology. The trauma of the revolution instilled in him a fear of powerlessness, which paradoxically led him to seek proximity to the most powerful people on earth. He became a "bundler" for the Democratic Party, raising millions for Clintons, Kerry, and Obama, trying to secure a place in history that couldn't be confiscated by a revolution.

However, the book suggests that this frantic climb was built on a fragile foundation. The pressure to maintain the façade of the billionaire philanthropist—even when his business deals faltered—eventually pushed him toward the catastrophic decisions that would define his later years. *Persia, Politics & Prison* is, at its heart, a tragedy about a man running from his past, only to run straight into a prison cell. It is a cautionary tale that explores how the trauma of displacement can curdle into the hubris of destruction.