



Located in Tehran city center, the historical Ardeshir Yeganegi Library is a sanctuary for unique materials on the Zoroastrian Religion. With its rich repository of rare books and manuscripts, it is the country's unparalleled, leading information center and the research arm on subjects pertaining to the Religion. Founded more than 60 years ago, the variety of the Library's sources has attracted western scholars and researchers, many of whom have visited the place and offered their works to its depository. Zoroastrians have had a long history in Iran reaching back thousands of years, and is the oldest religious community of Iran that has survived to the present-day. Prior to the Advent of Islam and the entry of Muslim Arabs into Persia (Iran), Zoroastrianism had been the primary religion of Iranians. Zoroastrians mainly are ethnic Persians and are mostly concentrated in the cities of Tehran, Kerman, and Yazd.

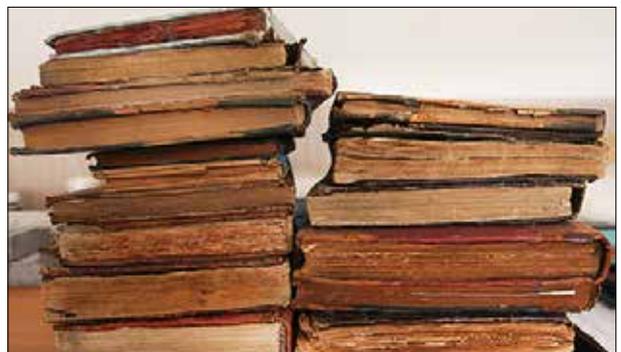
Throughout the history, Iranians have shown great tolerance towards other religious beliefs and creeds. The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran recognizes Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism as official religions. Article 13 of the Iranian Constitution, recognizes them as People of the Book and they are granted the right to exercise religious freedom in Iran.

They are also represented at the Majlis (parliament) which has currently 290 representatives, fourteen of whom represent non-Muslim religious minorities including Armenians, Assyrian and Chaldean (Catholic), Jews and Zoroastrians and are popularly elected for four-year terms.



Ardeshir Yeganegi Library

Symbol of Religious Tolerance in Iran





Ardeshir Yeganegi Library was founded in 1958 by Farangis Shahrokh, wife of Dr. Ardeshir Yeganegi and daughter of Keykhosrow Shahrokh known as Arbab Keykhosrow to nurture the culture of book reading and cater for the research needs of scholars.

Arbab Keykhosrow Shahrokh is one of the most celebrated contemporary Zoroastrian figures, whom was the Zoroastrian's representative at the National Assembly for 1909 - 1940 (i.e from the 2nd to the 11th term of the Assembly).

Farangis Shahrokh constructed the library on her own cost in an area of sqm 250 in Jomhuri St. of Tehran and then having enriched it through the donation of some 2500 collections by herself and Ms. Khorshid Banoo Houmaji, she then offered it to Tehran's Zoroastrian's Association.

Although the initial resources of the Library mostly included books on the ancient Iranian cultural heritage and Zoroastrian Religion, but the founder insisted on providing easy access to the whole public.

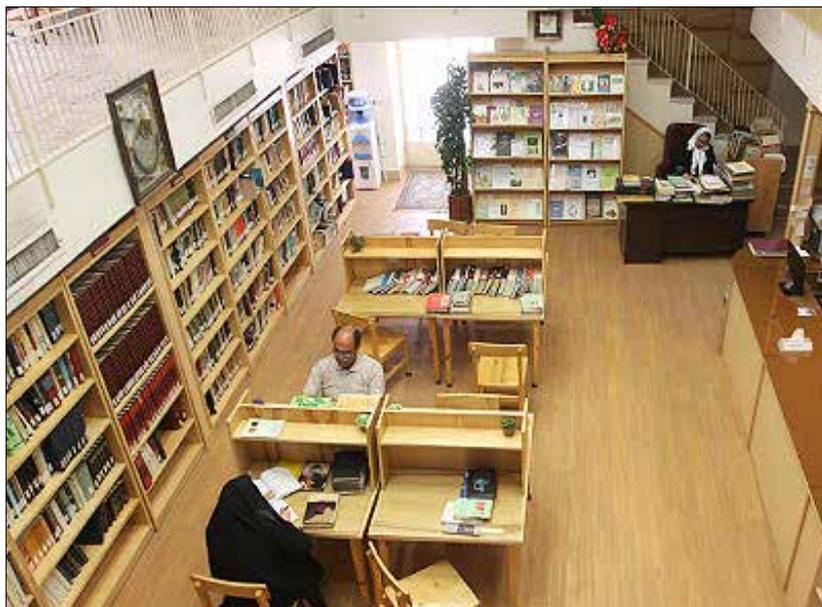
The number of Library items, which were mostly donated by Zoroastrians

or other notable authors, had raised to 6000 volumes by 2003 when Ms. Nooshin Faramarzian, then a member of board of directors of Tehran's Zoroastrian's Association, was appointed as the honorary head of the Library.

Born in 1953 in Kerman Province of Iran, Nooshin Faramarzian is a Zoroastrian cultural activist who has been the Head of Library for 11 years.

"With the responsibility of collecting materials, comes the challenge of preserving them. In 2003, when I took charge of the Library, materials were not maintained in a physically proper environment, and the Library lacked basic preservation facilities. Thus, some fundamental renovation was needed to ensure the proper care and handling of the collections which took two years to accomplish. The building officially reopened to the public in 2005 following some 2 years of renovation. Farangis Shahrokh's children appropriated the equipment costs and renovation charges were undertaken by Tehran's Zoroastrian's Association", Faramarzian says.

"The books have been catalogued in the Library of Congress Classification



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The Library also enjoys a notable status among prolific western researchers and authors many of whom have visited the place and donated their works to its depository including the German Avestan researcher, Niebling, and the author of “History of Zoroastiran Religion”, Mary Boyce

system. An index of the articles on Zoroastrianism including their titles, authors and the place of publication, is also available in a digital format and has been made accessible to the public”, Faramarzian added.

Presently, the library is home to some 14,000 to 15,000 materials, has 400 members and three staff members. Besides materials on subjects pertaining to Zoroastrian Religion and ancient Iranian cultural heritage, the depository contains manuscripts, Hawza materials; lithographic books with some printed in Bombay, non-Zoroastrian religious books on Islam (the Holy Quran and works of Mortaza Motahhari), the Bible, main reference religious books plus Zoroastrian periodicals such as “Mah Nameh” (1977-1980) and “Hukht” (1950-1984) magazines, copies of which may only be found at the Iran Parliament’s Library. Fravahr Press has recently resumed publication of Hukht under the same title. On the other hand, printed editions of the now out-of-print “Chista” magazine, once published under the supervision of Parviz Shahryari for 20 years, are available only at Yeganegi

Library. Due to the need for the revival of most of the rare books, a preservation and restoration laboratory was added to the Library three years ago where students of respective majors work on hourly basis.

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The Library serves 20 people on daily basis but due to the books’ antiquity, no outdoor services are rendered but copies and reproductions of one third of the content of the materials may be available to the public in digital or print format for a fee. However, duplication services do not provide copies of rare items that are no longer available in the market to protect the author’s copyright.

Translated by: Parisa Firouzkouhi



All through her life, Farangis rendered great services for the Zoroastrian community. She was also one of the founders of the Association of Ancient Iranian Culture for which she built a Library in 1958, named it after her late husband, Ardeshir Yeganegi, and donated it to Tehran Zoroastrian Association



Farangis Kaykhosrow Shahrokh

Farangis, daughter of Arbab Kaykhosrow Shahrokh and Firoozeh Farrahi, was born in 1916, in Tehran. She received her primary education in Iraj Zoroastrian School, graduated from Sage American College in Tehran and received her BA from the College of Literature, Tehran University. She continued her studies in Social Work in USC California and in 1933, Farangis Shahrokh married Ardeshir Yeganegi, and bore three children named Firoozeh, Parviz and Kambiz.

All through her life, Farangis rendered great services for the Zoroastrian community. She was also one of the founders of the Association of Ancient Iranian Culture for which she built a Library in 1958, named it after her late husband, Ardeshir Yeganegi, and donated it to Tehran Zoroastrian Association.

She also established the Zoroastrian Women Organization to which she was first appointed as the honorary chairperson and then the honorary president.

During her stay in Iran, Farangis did great services for improving the standard of living of Iranian women. Among these, her efforts to improve the condition of women's prisons are noteworthy. Through training and educating the social workers of the prisons, she helped improve the standard of living of the female prisoners. Farangis Yeganegi was one of the founders and the first chairperson of "The High Council of Iranian Women" and one of the four ladies selected as members of the respective board.

Farangis had earned special respect among the learned and genius society of Iran. She fought against discrimination and injustice and was always a pro-women's right activist.

Farangis Shahrokh can also be called as the reviver of Iranian art and handicraft. She should rightly be named 'the mother of Iranian handicraft'. She was the initiator, planner and the first executive manager of Iranian Handicrafts Organization, affiliated to the Ministry of Economy. She traveled to the villages for 6 months, collected samples of handicrafts and artifacts and brought them all under the umbrella of the Ministry of Economy.

It is a matter of pride for the Zoroastrian community that a Zoroastrian lady was leading a huge organization.

After departing Iran and taking residence in USA, Farangis Shahrokh was selected as the President and member of Board of Trustees of South California Zoroastrian Center.

In 1986, Farangis initiated establishing a Zoroastrian marriage office in California Fire Temple and from then onwards, marriages of Zoroastrians are officially registered in this office. The marriage certificates issued by this office are recognized as official documents by California State.

She also established the renowned library named "Yeganegi-Kaykhosrow Shahrokh Library" in California Zoroastrian Center.

In commemoration of the services of Farangis Shahrokh rendered in the course of her life, Farangis was once selected as the Woman of the Year and was commended in UCLA Los Angeles during an official ceremony. In 1996, she was presented the Medal of Honor by FEZANA.

Farangis Shahrokh (Yeganegi) died on 13 February 2010 in Los Angeles.

Translated by Rowshan Lohraspou