

? [PDF / Epub] ★ Jewels of Allah: The Untold Story of Women in Iran By Nina Ansary

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Posted on 11 December 2017 By Nina Ansary

The Popular Narrative About Women S Lives In Iran Over The Last Forty Years Goes Something Like This During The Pahlavi Monarchy, Women Were On An Upward Trajectory In A Nation On The Cusp Of Modernity, Women Actively Participated They Were Given The Right To Vote And Were Free To Be In Public Without Veils They Wore Miniskirts On University Campuses Then Came The Islamic Revolution In , With Ayatollah Khomeini At The Helm The Burgeoning Freedoms For Women Were Extinguished The Veil Was Required And Institutions Were Segregated By Gender The Islamic Republic Had Thus Achieved Its Goal Of Resurrecting The Image Of The Traditional Muslim Woman The Problem With Popular Narratives Is That, Despite Their Convenient Half Truths, The Real Story Is Complicated, Unexpected, And Less Tidy Inspired By Author Nina Ansary S Scholarly Journey, Jewels Of Allah Is A Provocative Roller Coaster Ride That Shatters The Stereotypical Assumptions And The Often Misunderstood Story Of Women In Iran Today Highlighting Many Courageous Female Leaders And Advocates Throughout Iran S History, The Book Illuminates The Unanticipated Consequences Of The Islamic Revolution And The Unexpected Twists And Turns Leading To A Full Blown Feminist Movement Within A Post Revolutionary Patriarchal Society Jewels Of Allah Is Dedicated To Every Individual Oppressed By Discriminatory Ideology % Of All Proceeds For

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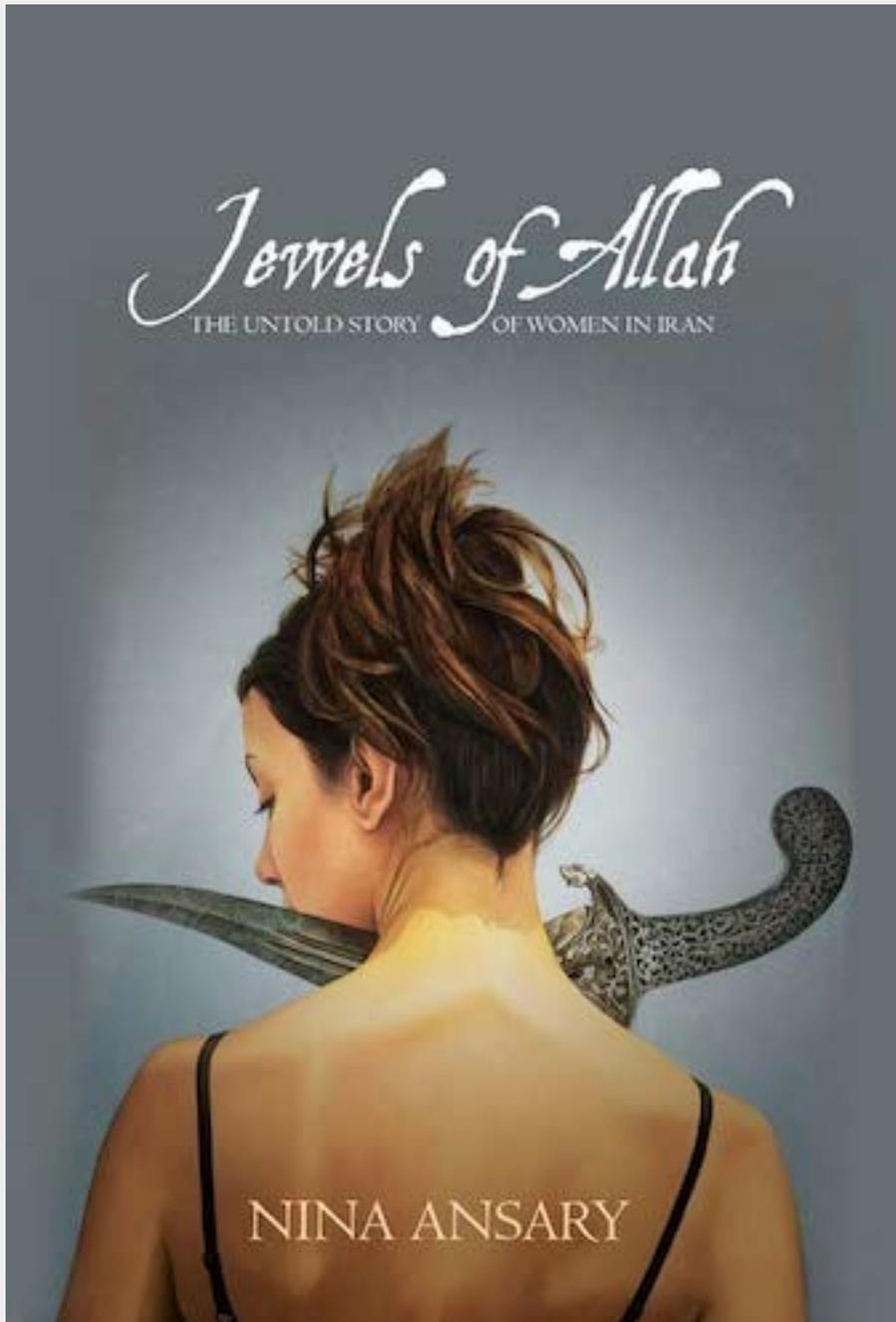
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The Book Will Go To Charities And Organizations That Empower Disadvantaged Young Women In Iran



10 thoughts on “Jewels of Allah: The Untold Story of Women in Iran”

Goddess

Pride and Prejudice

Remember Me?

Summer Sisters

The Help

One for the Money

Something Blue

Good in Bed

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The Devil Wears Prada

Eat, Pray, Love

Shopaholic Takes
Manhattan

Water for Elephants

P.S. I Love You

The Sisterhood of the
Traveling Pants

The Other Boleyn Girl



Best Eggs Best Eggs says:

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This is wonderful I had no idea that the Shah and his twin sister, Princess Ashraf were together such strong feminists, as had their father been before them Nor did I know that the Ayatollah Khomeini got the women on his side by promising in well publicised speeches that in the new Islamic Republic they would be equal to men and could wear what they chose, be educated and choose their own careers Lying pig A prominent female judge, Shirin Ebadi voted for him Khomeini removed her from that position and said that he opposed the emancipation of women on the grounds that it was anti Islamic.

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Michael Arnett Michael Arnett says:

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Review first published in *San Francisco Book Review* Is there any subject of which the average Westerner harbors misconceptions and false assumptions than the role of the Middle Eastern woman Dr Nina Ansary tackles these misconceptions directly in her book *Jewels of Allah*, explaining that the history of women s rights in Iran isn t as simple as we assume In fact, what is surprising is how women have found methods of liberation through their oppression Two prominent examples are the mandated wearing of the hijab, and the institution of single sex education Ansary explains that with the institutionalization of both the hijab and single sex education, many conservative Muslim families felt comfortable sending

I've Got Your Number

The Joy Luck Club

The Boy Next Door

their daughters to school. Additionally, girls attending an all-girl school flourished, were comfortable voicing their opinions, than they had been in the co-educational schools of the Pahlavi monarchy. The Pahlavi era was one of rapid social progress. Too rapid, perhaps. Centuries of custom and tradition were ousted almost overnight, including the equal role of women. During the Persian centuries, women played a subordinate role, but with the advent of the Pahlavi era, women were allowed to hold political office, become lawyers, obtain divorces, and dress how they pleased. The hijab, however, was outlawed, and many Iranians believed the Pahlavis were mere puppets of the western powers. In 1979 the pendulum of progress swung back with a vengeance, as the revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini ousted the Pahlavi regime and the era's hard-won social progress. Women were once again forced to play a subordinate role. Yet as Ansary shows, there was and continues to be a thriving women's rights movement despite the oppressive patriarchal laws and regulations. During the Iran-Iraq war from 1980-1988, for instance, women filled many of the jobs left vacant by men fighting in the war, not unlike women during WWII. Ansary also cites the numerous women's magazines and periodicals in post-revolutionary Iran as an impetus and outlet for women's concerns, and devotes an entire chapter to the women's magazine *Zanan* and its founder Shahla Sherkat. One of the most important revelations of the book is that there is not just one type of Iranian woman. Even within the progressive women's movement there are differences. There are devout Muslim women who seek to reconcile and reinterpret the Koran favorably for women, and there are also secular women who believe no such reconciliation is possible and work for a complete break with tradition. Yet despite their differences both camps work together for the advancement of women's rights. Nina Ansary's book is a must-read for anyone hoping for a fuller understanding of the role of women and the women's rights movement in

Iran It is a much needed antidote to Western misconceptions.

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MissUnderstoodGenius

MissUnderstoodGenius says:

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A nuanced look at the role women have played in Iran in the 20th and 21st centuries I learnt how the pendulum of progress swung back with a vengeance, as the revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini ousted the Pahlavi era For anyone hoping for a fuller understanding of the role of women and the women s rights movement in Iran, this is a must read.Would I recommend it A good book to educate those uninformed of the magnitude of problem in a society they judge yet know nothing about.

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Roya Roy says:

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Biased Informative.

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Boosh Boosh says:

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Overall, this book provided an insightful, concise, and easy to follow narrative of the story of Iran from Ancient Persia, to the Pahlavi Regime, and into and beyond the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The author does a fantastic job of explaining the history and concepts simply and clearly; the book is neither too short nor too long. She possesses a coveted writing ability to provide all of the details necessary without adding in fluff or allowing the book to become dry and over saturated with facts. She has a clean, pleasant writing style that is both academic and personal, so the book is both easy to read and take seriously. Further, it is clear that Dr Ansary has a brilliant mind with a penchant for recognizing patterns and underlying meanings, and so her interpretation of facts and events seems reliable and thorough. And finally, I enjoyed the subtle, for lack of a better way to put it, herstory element to the book that is, this book, although telling the story of all of Iran over centuries, is told from the feminine perspective. It examines history and women's roles in it from the perspective of women, with women at the core. I have read/watched many historical works ABOUT women which did NOT pull this off and still seem to be written from a male perspective and a patriarchal center. I have also read books which are clearly written from a herstory perspective, but accomplish it in such a gaudy, overblown way that it is distracting. Dr Ansary did it JUST RIGHT. To expand my thoughts on this book beyond a simple "Would I recommend it?" A resounding YES, I want to delve into some of the deeper arguments in the book. To start, I learned A LOT from this book. And not just facts, but perspectives, concepts, ideas, viewpoints. Despite extensive research into anthropology, religion, politics, and women's studies, I have to admit that my knowledge about Iran and Islam are both sorely lacking, and so I decided to read this book in hopes of filling in some of those egregious gaps. I finished the book with a sense that the knowledge I gained was sound and accurate, and I want to praise Dr Ansary for her mostly

unbiased presentation of a story with many, MANY sides. I found her explanation of Islamic feminism especially helpful as it filled in gaps in understanding this concept I have encountered Islamic feminism in the Western world quite a bit in recent years, but never fully understood its premise and ideas. That being said, there were also several aspects of the book and her positions that I found troublesome. The most appropriate place to start, not just because it is the beginning of the book, but also because I feel it does, unfortunately, set the stage for an issue I encountered throughout her analysis, is the title *Jewels of Allah*. In the beginning she explains that the title is meant to convey that women, who have been ordained as inferior, are in fact the jewels of the Creator. This just reeks of 1990s style, 2-dimensional, Girl power feminism. This worldview raises women up from the trenches and onto a pedestal, keeping all the gender normative baggage right in tact. It tackles the obvious issues: violence against women, equal pay for equal work, representation in government without ever dismantling the continued cultural policing of women's appropriate gender roles, association with motherhood, expectation to accommodate men, and the continued costuming of self to placate society, whether it is high heels or a hijab. I feared immediately that the author's philosophical understandings on the subject of gender and society would be lacking, but fortunately her in-depth analysis of history was largely unaffected. Ultimately, I trust her to talk intelligently about history, but doubt I'd enjoy any works regarding current social analysis or calls to action. She is an expert at weaving the 2-dimensional environments of the historical pages, but I fear she loses her footing when she steps off the page into the 3-dimensional world and all its additional layers. Another early on and fundamental issue I have with the book is the premise statement, which can be found on the back of the book and the introduction. The popular narrative about women's lives in Iran. She makes it sound as if

there is some grand conspiracy, some unknown truth hidden from the Western world that renders our whole viewpoint false. Yes, the reality is, as she said complicated, unexpected, and less tidy, but not really. I mean, yes, the popular narrative is a boiled down, simplified version of history, but it is, basically, accurate. She seems to be under the impression, I think, that the very fact that there is a robust women's rights movement in Iran renders the narrative of oppressed Iranian women null and void, and I disagree. Yes, there is a much robust history and modern feminist movement than I thought, but the fact that women in Iran are subject to horrendous human rights abuses, dangerous psychological conditioning, and a second class existence does not disappear just because of a relatively small yet plucky group of women fighting to better their conditions. The women she highlights in this book do not erase the suffering and oppressive conditions of the rest of the women in the country any more than their suffering should erase the hard work and dedication of these Iranian feminists fighting for equality. For the most part, I feel she does a good job of not falling into that trap, but there are points where I feel she's dancing dangerously close to the edge. Also, there were several points where I started getting some awkward hints of sexism apologetics, specifically regarding her personal stance on head coverings and same sex education. While she makes amazing points about the reality of how these things unfolded, it also seems she is advocating for an apologetics approach in the future, though she never DIRECTLY states as such. She fails to address the underlying sexism of both of these concepts, fails to address the long term impact of them on society. Since her account is almost entirely historical and explanatory of historical events and perceptions, this doesn't get in the way, but I was left with an icky feeling. She does get direct when discussing research about co education in the US, an entire section of the book not devoted to Iran.

at all, but rather an infuriating apologetics style avocation for sex segregation in the US that utterly neglects the moral, social, philosophical, etc aspects of the issue and reads a lot like a Fox News excerpt trying to blind you with a series of numbers and studies taken out of context and massaged somewhat eloquently into their desired message It was a disturbing departure from her usually unbiased tone While she makes many good points regarding same sex vs co ed education, she fails to address the root cause of the issues and instead is placing the burden of fixing or rather avoiding the problem on women Women are to accept segregation because it provides them better quality education Why does it provide better quality education Because of inherent social sexism But she never seems interested in addressing the root cause of that cultural sexism, but instead advocates for the educational equivalent of giving a girl a rape whistle to prevent rape I GET that the book is a comparison between two radically different regimes, and her analysis is appropriate in THAT context, but it was the hint of modern social prescription she wants for THIS time and place that bothered me. And finally, it is clear in several areas of the book that the author leans her interpretation heavily into her own perception, beliefs, and desires Overall she felt trustworthy and unbiased, but occasional sections flipped a switch and set my Bias Alarms blaring On the one hand she provides names, dates, facts, and so on to support the majority of her interpretation On the other, she presents them, at times, according to her own desires For example, there is a section where she discusses three primary forms of feminism that have evolved in modern Iran Islamic feminism, Secular feminism, and Indigenous feminism She gives a brief and awkward nod to secular feminism and barely touches indigenous feminism I still am unsure what it is , then spends the remaining time presenting Islamic feminism On the one had, that makes some sense since secular feminism is a concept familiar in the

West The concept of Islamic feminism was new to me, and learning that the premise is to encourage reinterpretation of Koranic passages was enlightening and vital to understanding the role of feminism, and how this, as she calls it, essentially Western concept can fit into Islamic society However, I have two concerns herewhile it is certainly fair and essential to discuss the religious form of feminism in a country in which religion is so primary, it does a great disservice to sweep under the rug the secular feminists in the society As an atheist myself I was very irritated by the religion washing I want to know about the growing secular movement I am a western woman with a Christian background who feels strongly that the primary monotheistic religions of the world are incompatible with feminist values I feel this as a member of the society and Christian religion in which I grew up and would be incredibly upset if I learned that an Eastern author was discussing feminism in the USA almost solely under the category of Christian women Clearly, Islam is an important part of many Iranian women s lives, clearly it is an important part of the author s life, and that is fine but it is incredibly irresponsible to neglect the women in Iran who have rejected Islam in search of an identity that has not be preordained and defined If anything, I think acknowledgement of these secular feminists is even MORE vital in Iran given the social and political atmosphere and the strict religious rule enforced by the government in which they live These women are even braver than their secular counterparts in the West and their religious counterparts in Iran for their decision to shed their religious upbringing in their fight towards equality The author and many other religious women may find that is not the path for them, and that is fine, but it is NOT fine for them to ignore and undersell these women, especially in a section which prides Iran on the cooperation and mutual respect the secular and Islamic feminism movements are supposed to feel for each other Where is this respect I didn t feel it in reading

this section And clearly Dr Ansary does not feel it since she felt just fine writing off the entire movement as a mere afterthought, and that was an enormous disappointment. So all that being said, I still think this book is an absolute must read Someone going into the book without my personal and educational experiences, and without my admittedly high expectations, will probably barely notice the relatively minor road bumps in what is otherwise a smooth, unbroken road paved with the history, analysis, and viewpoints you need to arrive at a greater understanding of the struggle of our sisters in Iran.

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Nancy Nancy says:

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This is an incredible book should be required reading for all feminists regardless of where you are from Ansary takes us through the history of women in Iran including surprising counter intuitive consequences for women due to overthrows by extremist governments But most of all she shows us the braver and courage of Iranian women who defy odds and thrive in all areas, despite the limitations and sanctions imposed on them by the regime
BRAVA

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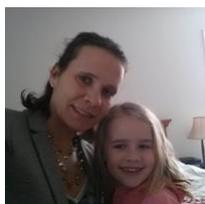
Dan Dan says:

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This book is a must for Western readers It s extremely

well researched, engaging, and not only shatters longheld stereotypes about women in Iran and the Middle East, but highlights fascinating stories about leading women s rights figures in Iran going back 3000 years to an Iran that is a completely different country from what we associate it with today These women are positively inspiring, smart, and bold and deserve their voices to be heard.

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Anna Townsend Anna Townsend says:

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This is a fascinating book, though because it has been adapted from an academic thesis, in places it was quite a difficult read Chapter two was quite a slog Having said that though, I was completely absorbed by the story of women in Iran, the book is inspiring I now long to visit Iran.

[Reply](#)



Candace Candace says:

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I really enjoyed the insight, which helped scratch away at the rose tint view I have of Iran since my travel there in April Many well documented and varied of accounts of injustice and detriment to women, no matter the swing in Iran s political or traditional climate And people question why women are angry.

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Firoozeh Firoozeh says:

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A good source for those who want to know about Iranian women s right movement evolution through history It also contains lots of other great references that can be read to dive deeper in this matter.

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