

The Valley of Quest

By Farideddin Attar

When you enter the valley of quest  
Misfortunes will deprive you of all rest.

Each moment some new trouble terrifies,  
And parrots there are panic-stricken flies.

There, years must vanish while you strive and grieve;  
There is the heart of all you will achieve.

Renounce the world, your power and all you own,  
And in your heart's blood journey on alone.

When once your hands are empty, then your heart  
Must purify itself and move apart.

From everything that is--when this is done,  
The Lord's light blazes brighter than the sun,

Your heart is bathed in splendor and the quest  
Expands a thousand fold within your breast.

Though fire flares up across the path, and though  
A hundred monsters peer out from its glow.

The pilgrim driven on by his desire  
Will like a moth rush gladly on the fire.

When love inspires his heart, he begs for win,  
One drop to be vouchsafed him as a sign.

And when he drinks this drop, both worlds are gone;  
Dry-lipped, he founders in oblivion.

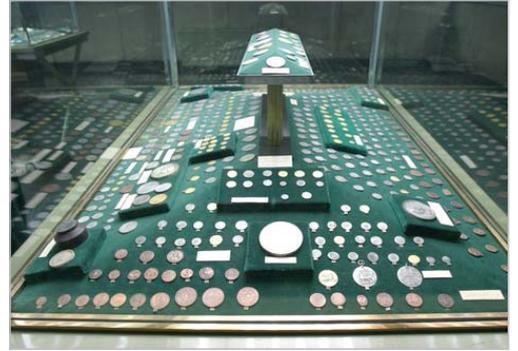
His zeal to know faith's mysteries will make  
Him fight with dragons for salvation's sake.

Though blasphemy and curses crowd the gate,  
Until it opens, he will calmly wait.

And then where is this faith? This blasphemy?  
Both vanish into vacancy.



# Iranian Coinage



In ancient times, coins were minted primarily as a means of manifesting governmental or religious rule and secondarily as a means of doing business. Gradually, people realized money's economic importance, as they increasingly exchanged goods and services, and used it to measure their value in the market. Later, money minting was undertaken by central governments to facilitate trade and development, DestinationIran reported.

**> Earliest Coins**

At about 515 BC in Iran, the first Iranian coins were ordered to be minted by Darius I, the Achaemenian emperor. The front side of the coins depicted a warrior holding a bow and a quadrangular sign on the back. The Achaemenian gold coins were called darick that equaled 20 silver coins. This lasted for 200 years.

Parthian kings, as a result of Hellenization, minted 4.25-gram silver coins called drachmas. They also minted copper coins. Most governments had a typical original pattern for coins and later implemented other modifications.

The minting of Sassanian coins dates back to 499 AD. These coins were innovative and authentic in that they did not follow or imitate their predecessors.

For the first time in the history of coinage, these coins were thin, flat and circular. These coins showed the profile of the king, as he looked toward the left.

The back of coins has always been used to highlight religious or national themes, which trend continues in present-day Iran.

On Sassanian coins, a fire altar in the middle with flames patterned this side. There were often two fireguards on both sides as well. Coins were used later in Arab regions, Byzantine Empire and Europe.

**> In Post-Islam Period**

Coins minted during the long reigns of Khosrow II and Yazdgerd III were widely used even after the invasion of Arabs, especially those minted during the reign of Khosrow II. The latter was in use with little modifications till the end of 7th century as the main model for silver coins.

In post-Islam period, some coins, called Arab-Sassanian, were in use till around 650-700 AD. The name and title of Arab rulers replaced the Iranian king's in Pahlavi and a religious word or prayer formed the Arabic lettering on coins.

The dates on the coins were from three calendars: a lunar calendar and two Yazdgerd calendars--one beginning with the date of his coronation and the other with his death.

Around 100 years after the Arab invasion, the Muslim world started to mint coins experimentally.

Between 696 and 699 AD, Abdolmalek, an Arab caliph, made a radical change in coins and introduced Islamic doctrine in coinage by saying no to idols, banning the picture of living beings and prohibiting luxury.

Instead, religious words filled the whole surface of coins except for the date and place of coinage. Arabic measurement standard were used for gold dinars and silver drachmas. The Arabic language was also constantly used for lettering.

**> Changes**

Another major change happened during the third century. Gold dinars minted in Iran, Iraq and Egypt mentioned the place of coinage.

The Muslim world used a single economic currency that was creditworthy even in very remote areas of the empire.

Tahirid, Saffarid and Samanid governors as well as other dynasties in Iran minted a great deal of coins and used them in their trade with North Europe.

Admiring titles started to appear on coins to the extent that three or four titles were used on Buwayhid coins or the Achaemenian title of "King of Kings" was used on Daylamites' coins.

Seljuks minted precise and well-decorated gold coins for some time, but later the precision, uniformity and even credibility of coins began to undergo drastic decline.

During 130 years after the death of Sanjar in 1156, no coins were minted even in very active mint houses of Isfahan or Rey. After the invasion of Mongols, some pictorial and non-pictorial coins were minted in silver. In addition, the language and writing system of Mongols were used beside Arabic ones.

During the Timurid rule and afterwards, the date of coinage was mentioned not in words, but in numbers.

The Safavid government minted gold Ashrafi and silver Abbasi coins in compliance with the duka currency used in Venice. Later, Nader Shah, the Afsharid king, ordered gold mohr and silver rupee coins to be minted on the basis of India's monetary system.

There were no pictures on early Qajar coins, but they added them later. After more than half a century, Reza Shah's profile appeared with an aigrette hat on gold coins in 1926. A few years before him, during the rule of the last Qajar king, Mohammad Shah, the national emblem of "Red Lion and Sun" appeared on coins for the first time.

In the Pahlavid Dynasty, this pattern was combined either with the king's face or an inscription commemorating the first coinage of Persian Empire.

In February 1979, the Islamic Revolution took place and in March 1979, Pahlavi gold coins were replaced with Bahar-e Azadi (meaning Spring of Liberty) and the style of coins in Iran changed completely. They depicted national landmarks and monuments.

Iranian Recipe  
Lima Beans Balls

Ingredients

- Rice, 1 cup (rinsed but not soaked)
- Ground lamb or beef, 400 grams
- Baby lima bean (green baqela), 400 grams
- Dill, 2 bunches (wash, remove the hard stems and chop)
- Onion, 3 medium (grate one onion for the mixture and the other two are thinly sliced)
- Eggs, 3
- Flour, 2 tablespoons
- Garlic, 2 cloves (finely minced)
- Turmeric, 1 teaspoon
- Salt and pepper to taste



Filling

Raisins, chopped walnuts, barberries, fried onions

Direction

Place rice in a medium-size pan, add two cups of water and a tablespoon of salt, cook for ten minutes on medium heat, drain and rinse. Set aside. Cook the beans for seven minutes or until soft on medium heat with two cups of water and a dash of salt. Drain and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, combine rice, meat, Lima beans, dill, eggs, flour, a grated onion, finely minced garlic cloves, 1/2 teaspoon of turmeric, salt and pepper. Mix thoroughly yet gently.

Take about 1/3 of a cup of the mixture and shape into a ball. Place about 1/2 teaspoon of the filling of your choice in the middle and close. The mixture should make about 18 balls. Set aside.

In the meantime, in a wide bottom pot, saute sliced onions in oil over medium heat until transparent. Add 1/2 teaspoon turmeric, four cups of water, bring to a gentle boil and place the balls in the pot one by one. Add more water, if needed. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and cook for an hour on medium to low heat. Taste and adjust the seasoning.

You can also bake this in a 350-degree Celsius, preheated oven for an hour. Serve warm with bread, yogurt, salad or pickles.

Health Benefits of Lamb

Lamb is a good source of high quality protein and supplies the body with 60.3 percent of the daily requirement for protein.

The meat is a good source of selenium, a mineral whose deficiency can lead to asthma attacks. Lamb is rich in iron, which is an integral component of hemoglobin and aids the formation of red blood cells in the body. Iron in lamb is easily absorbed by the body.

The meat contains a high amount of zinc, which is required by every living cell in the body for healthy immune function, cell division and overall growth. It is a good source of vitamin B12, necessary to prevent a dangerous molecule called homocysteine from harming the body.

It also promotes a healthy nervous system, supports the formation of red blood cells and prevents anemia.

Moreover, vitamin B12 is found naturally only in animal foods.

The niacin (vitamin B3) present in lamb provides protection against Alzheimer's disease, promotes healthy skin and keeps age-related cognitive decline at bay. It retards the risk of developing osteoarthritis by as much as half.

## Caravanserais Ancient Rest-Houses

For hundreds of years, Iranians accommodated foreign and domestic merchants as well as pilgrims at elaborate rest-houses called caravanserais, which were built along major roads and in cities.

The word "caravanserai" is a combination of caravan and the Persian word 'Sara', which means dwelling, palace or enclosed courts, Press TV reported.

The development of Iran's road system increased export to Europe, China and India, which in turn gave rise to the need for more trade routes and caravanserais. Caravanserais also facilitated the flow of commerce and information across the Silk Road and other trade routes running through Asia, North Africa and southeastern Europe.

Apart from the numerous roadside caravanserais, there were also many city caravanserais where travelers could rest and recover from the day's journey. The urban caravanserais also served as marketplaces, an example of which can be seen around Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Square. Some continue their commercial activities to this day. Although geographical location played an important role in the appearance of caravanserais, they were mainly multi-roomed structures elaborately decorated with breathtaking tilework.

Most caravanserais were square or rectangular buildings with a single, high and wide gate,

which allowed the entrance of heavily-laden camels and other animals.

The open-roofed courtyard of the structure was surrounded by chambers, stalls and storage bays to accommodate travelers along with their servants, animals and merchandise.

Some caravanserais had elaborate baths where travelers could wash away the dust from the road.

Merchants could feed their mounts, sell their products and stock up on supplies for the rest of their journey. The Achaemenid kings were the first to build caravanserais for foreign merchants traveling the 2,500-kilometer distance between

the cities of Susa. Parthians continued the tradition by constructing similar buildings along the Silk Road to serve travelers on their way to China and the Mediterranean Sea. Caravanserais flourished during the Safavid Era when Iran's economy was at its peak and newly-constructed roads, connecting the eastern and western parts of the country, attracted a large number of pilgrims to visit religious sites, especially Imam Reza's (AS) shrine in Mashhad.

Today, many of the old Iranian caravanserais have been restored and some have been converted into modern hotels as is the case with the Abbasi Hotel in Isfahan.



Sudoku

No. 358

Sudoku was inspired by the table devised by Iranian mathematician Al-Kharazmi. Fill 9x9 grid with digits so that each column, each row and each of the nine 3x3 sub-grids that compose the grid, contains all of the digits from 1 to 9.

			2					
	1							8
6	3	9		8	1			5
8		1	2					9
5	2	4	6		3	8		
9		7	5					1
7		6	2	3	9			4
	9							1
			5					

9	7	3	6	5	8	2	4	1
2	1	8	4	7	9	5	6	3
4	5	6	3	1	2	9	8	7
1	9	2	5	8	7	4	3	6
8	3	7	9	6	4	1	2	5
6	4	5	2	3	1	7	8	9
5	2	1	8	4	6	3	7	9
3	8	7	4	9	5	6	1	2
7	9	6	1	2	3	8	5	4