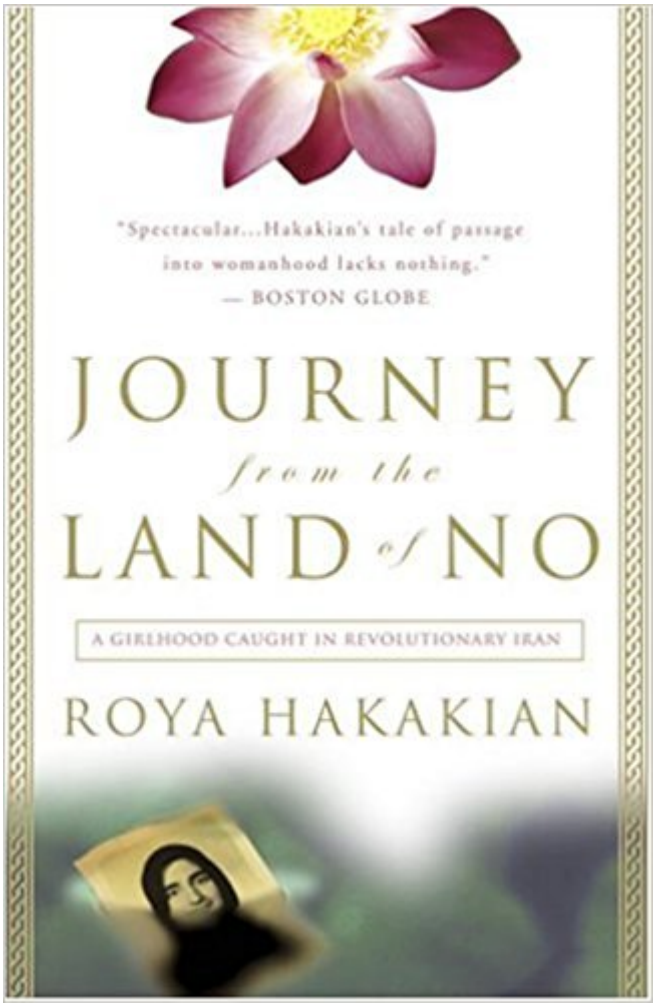
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Journey From The Land Of No: A Girlhood Caught In Revolutionary Iran



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Synopsis

From the HardcoverÃ¢â ¬Å“We stormed every classroom, inscribed our slogans on the blackboard . . . Never had mayhem brought more peace. All our lives we had been taught the virtues of behaving, and now we were discovering the importance of misbehaving. Too much fear had tainted our days. Too many afternoons had passed in silence, listening to a fanaticÃ¢â ¬â„¢s diatribes. We were rebelling because we were not evil, we had not sinned, and we knew nothing of the apocalypse. . . . This was 1979, the year that showed us we could make our own destinies. We were rebelling because rebelling was all we could do to quell the rage in our teenage veins. Together as girls we found the courage we had been told was not in us.Ã¢â ¬Â•In Journey from the Land of No Roya Hakakian recalls her childhood and adolescence in prerevolutionary Iran with candor and verve. The result is a beautifully written coming-of-age story about one deeply intelligent and perceptive girlÃ¢â ¬â„¢s attempt to Ãƒ Â Ã Â¬?nd an authentic voice of her own at a time of cultural closing and repression. Remarkably, she manages to re-create a time and place dominated by religious fanaticism, violence, and fear with an open heart and often with great humor.Hakakian was twelve years old in 1979 when the revolution swept through Tehran. The daughter of an esteemed poet, she grew up in a household that hummed with intellectual life. Family gatherings were punctuated by witty, satirical exchanges and spontaneous recitations of poetry. But the Hakakians were also part of the very small Jewish population in Iran who witnessed the iron fist of the Islamic fundamentalists increasingly tightening its grip. It is with the innocent confusion of youth that Roya describes her discovery of a swastikaÃ¢â ¬â •Ã¢â ¬Å“a plus sign gone awry, a dark reptile with four hungry clawsÃ¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •painted on the wall near her home. As a schoolgirl she watched as friends accused of reading blasphemous books were escorted from class by Islamic Society guards, never to return. Only much later did Roya learn that she was spared a similar fate because her teacher admired her writing.Hakakian relates in the most poignant, and at times painful, ways what life was like for women after the country fell into the hands of Islamic fundamentalists who had declared an insidious war against them, but we see it all through the eyes of a strong, youthful optimist who somehow came up in the world believing that she was different, knowing she was special. At her loneliest, Roya discovers the consolations of writing while sitting on the rooftop of her house late at night. There, Ã¢â ¬Å“pen in hand, I led my own chorus of words, with a melody of my own making.Ã¢â ¬Â• And she discovers the craft that would ultimately enable her to find her own voice and become her own person.A wonderfully evocative story, Journey from the Land of No reveals an Iran most readers have not encountered and marks the debut of a stunning new talent.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Political upheavals like the fall of the Shah of Iran and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism may be analyzed endlessly by scholars, but eyewitness accounts like Hakakian's help us understand what it was like to experience such a revolution firsthand. The documentary filmmaker and poet was born to a prominent Tehran Jewish family in 1966, two years after the Shah had exiled Islamic fundamentalist leader Ayatollah Khomeini. As Jews in a largely Muslim world, the family knew how to live respectfully with their neighbors. With powerful illustrations, Hakakian relates how, in 1979, when the Shah fled and Khomeini returned triumphant, she joined the cheering crowds. Khomeini's revolution seemed liberating, but before long, the grip of the Islamic extremists tightened. Women were put under strict surveillance; books and speech were censored. Anti-Jewish graffiti appeared. As the targeting became more visibleÃ¢â ¬â •being made to use separate toilets and drinking fountains, being required to identify their businesses as non-MuslimÃ¢â ¬â •many Jews emigrated. After Hakakian describes the teacher who risked her job to give her high marks on a "subversive" paper or grips readers with the tale of how she and her teen buddies barely evaded the morality police, readers just want her to leave, too, which her family did, in 1984. Hakakian's storyÃ¢â ¬â •so reminiscent of the experiences of Jews in Nazi GermanyÃ¢â ¬â •is haunting. Maps. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Adult/High SchoolÃ¢â ¬â œHakakian recounts her past as a girl growing up in the second largest

Jewish community in the Middle EastÃ¢â ¬â œTehranÃ¢â ¬â œduring the takeover of the Ayatollah Khomeini. She paints pictures of a changing Iran, from a land that was immersed in the poetry of life and discovery to one that spoke of militaristic prayer and repression, where Jewish people were once again subject to anti-Semitism and where women were stripped of many of their rights. Hakakian's story is that of an individual changing from innocent child into disillusioned, rebellious teenager. As revolutionary fever overtook her country, she was swept up in, and then engulfed by it. Hakakian's poetic prose is lovely, lyrical, and wry, full of metaphor as well as humor and pain. Teens who are interested in history, poetry, different cultures, or biography should enjoy her memoir.Ã¢â ¬â œCharli Osborne, Oxford Public Library, MI Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This book is a treasure for those interested in enhancing their understanding of religious minorities' "Nationalist" mindset in Iran, particularly during the Pahlavi period. One has to take into cosideration that a large number of Jews in Iran converted to Islam for pragmatic reasons prior to the Pahlavi dynasty. The brand of pre-Islamic nationanist secularism promoted by the Pahlavi shahs in Iran is ever present throughout this book. The author does, to some degree, have an understanding of an "Iranian consciousness" regardless of religious inclination. She is very sympathetic toward "martyrs" of Iran-Iraq war, to the extend to which she modestly discredits herself as a moral authority on the subject due to the fact that she did not pay a physical price for defending Iran. Many Iranian Jews consider themselves Iranians first and then perhaps Jewish, quite similar to many secular Muslim Iranians.

Every American should educate themselves about the country of Iran, which was Persia, and the history of the U.S. and that country. This story is the autobiographical account of a young girl, born into the idyllic place Iran was at that time (beautiful, peaceful, later tensions then unheard of) and coming of age at the end of the Shah's reign and the in-between years before hard-line Islamists turned Iran into the hell it is today. Anything was possible and they believed freedom would be theirs at last: little did they know. A beautiful, harrowing read ...

This book opened my eyes like nothing I've read since "Midnight's Children." And it is all the more powerful for being a woman's story. Do we have many books like this? I don't think so. It's the story of the convergence of the peak, rapid-fire events of the writer's dawning adolescence with the

historically definitive crises of her country of Iran, her city of Tehran. I agree with Salman Rushdie that the health of a culture can be measured by its treatment of women. JOURNEY follows a trail of blood--the blood of the lamb slaughtered for a wedding feast, the blood of a disgraced female cousin's questioned virginity, and finally the blood of the martrys of the revolution. And then there is the writer's own blood--her first menstrual blood at 13. On the threshold of womanhood, she wonders at the shame assigned to women, the glory to the martyr's sacrifice: "No matter how young or old, that bleeding head was venerated. And not my blood?" A wonderful thing in this book is the chapter about the character of Mrs. Arman. The female schoolteacher, mother and muse of women writers. (Like a Eudora Welty schoolteacher heroine.) She gives her students a sense of solidarity in their exile under the Muslim regime; her touch restores them to their bodies. And it's the moment when Mrs. Arman proclaims--you're a writer! you're a writer! Don't ever forget it! Don't let me down!--that is the decisive one in the author's story, that baptizes her and sanctifies her coming journey out into the world. Because the story's about her emergence as a writer as well. It's only when the map of her beloved city (which her writing traces) is no longer recognizable and the notebooks she's filled with her poetry have been burnt, that her journey from the land of No is inescapable. The writing is breaktaking. The metaphors flow effortlessly. I think this is a major book by an important writer.

Loved this story. Take you beautifully through a time of hopes, accomplishments. Struggles and heartache. A must read for lol Iranian and non-Iranians.

Roya Hakakian is a tremendous writer and in the "Journey from the Land of No", Roya beautifully brings forth her personal experience growing up in Iran during the horrendous events of the revolution and its aftermath. Roya is more than a writer, she is a poet. And in this work she exemplifies this and writes so beautifully and elegantly. I highly recommend this book for those wanting to understand the events that led to the revolution and the horrendous aftermath that resulted. Roya beautifully guides the reader through her elegant prose and masterpiece to the events themselves so that the reader feels that they were actually a part of the scene. Highly recommended!

The beginning of the story leads skillfully from the author's memories of an untroubled childhood that gradually faded and became a troubled time during her teenaged years when the Iranian revolt took place and the ayatollah took over. The descriptions are vivid and troubling that this took place

after Hitler's time. It is troubling and difficult to understand that once again the world stood and watched events that mirrored Hitler's persecutions and nothing was done to stop the ayatollah and his followers.

The author revealed a great deal of her feelings that we as Westerners were not aware of how it is to grow up in and leave the land you were born in within the Middle East. We know very little about the culture and various practices that exist within Iran at present and it's past. The author's descriptions were very informative for me and allowed me the opportunity to perhaps feel how it was like to have her experiences.

Roya Hakakian comes from a secular Jewish family who identifies with Iran. The family is integrated into Iranian life and Roya looks forward to the wonderful changes that will come with the Revolution. This is the story about the changes that came to the ordinary people of Iran. The dying of hope, the hopelessness of change. The story covers the lives of the Hakakian family, singled out for being Jewish, and the lives of the Moslem and Jewish families they know and who are their friends. This is not a happy story. It brings down to the indiviual level the failure of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

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