

# Mainstream Media Depictions Clash with Reality: “Iran Was Not What We Had Thought”

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Although the relentless and incessant spates of mainstream media’s psychological warfare have turned Iran into a hazardous and insecure region in the eyes of global public opinions, thousands of Western tourists “take the risk” of traveling to Iran each year to behold in person the concealed and withheld realities of the peaceful and magnificent Iran which a hawkish leader had idiotically categorized as a part of the so-called “Axis of Evil”.

The American, French, German, British and Australian citizens who voluntarily travel to Iran to discover the veiled face of this ancient land usually confess identically that Iran had not been what they had thought. The interesting similarity in the viewpoints and statements of the Western citizens who find their preconceptions and prejudgments about Iran absolutely unfounded and erroneous upon visiting the country clearly reveals the fact that the Western corporate media are portraying Iran antagonistically and this is simply a misleading indoctrination to the global audiences who don’t have sufficient information about Iran, its ancient civilization, history and contemporary developments.

The foreign tourists, specially the western journalists and artists who come to Iran to examine the veracity of their countries’ media propaganda, usually get surprised and astonished by arriving at the splendor of Iran, its cultural heritage, industrial advancements and natural beauties.

The Western mainstream media’s dominant trajectory with regard to Iran is mere demonization and nothing else. They never run a documentary about the ancient buildings of Iran. They never show the glorious mosques and palaces of Iran. They never introduce the young geniuses and talents of Iran. They never allow anything about the scientific and artistic breakthroughs of Iranians to be disclosed and discussed. They never allow their audiences to know that Iran has been historically the land of architecture, carpet, saffron and pistachio. Their only agendum is to shrewdly withhold from the public what exalts Iran and maliciously exaggerate what chips away at Iran.

However, those who have come to Iran and touched the distorted truths about the country can best evaluate the authenticity of what their media tell them of Iran.

In April 2009, a group of 9 American movie stars and directors headed by Sid Ganis, the former President of Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, traveled to Iran to share experiences with the Iranian cinema activists and filmmakers. Upon returning to the U.S., Sid Ganis gave an interview to the Foreign Policy Journal and confessed that Iran was entirely different than what he had imagined: “We were met with an incredibly warm and hospitable welcome by the filmmakers of Iran, and the people in general. Everywhere we

went, people approached us to talk and take pictures with us... Iranians are very sophisticated, educated and culturally literate people and they have access to far more western media and technology than any of us had realized.”

“Iran has been so difficult to visit for Americans, and there are so many preconceptions about it, that it’s hard to get an accurate picture without actually going there yourself. Every day, and virtually every hour, we encountered something that was interesting, extraordinary or surprising about Iran,” said Ganis.

Earlier, a group of New Zealander tourists, headed by the New Zealand Herald journalist Jill Worrall had traveled to Iran in January 2009 and visited its large, attractive cities, including Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz and Kish island.

In an interview with the Finland’s Ovi Magazine, Jill Worrall described her feelings about Iran and the psychological warfare which is targeted toward its people: “I have never believed the “axis of evil” label, specially given that the phrase was coined by someone for whom I have absolutely no respect and certainly no confidence in terms of his opinions. I’ve spent more than 20 years as a journalist and realized long ago that what is portrayed in the media and what is reality is often very different. I also believe that before you make any comment about a country, or for that matter any person, you should visit it first, see it for yourself and talk to the people there.”

“I absolutely agree that Iran is the most misunderstood country in the world - in my experience at least but I suspect even among the countries I haven’t visited none gets quite as much bad press as Iran. It’s true that even many New Zealanders, who are legendary for being well-traveled, often think I’m going to Iraq and I’m afraid as you well know many people often mistakenly refer to it as an Arab country,” she added.

The same statements and declarations have been made by a number of other Western figures several times. The American author and TV personality Rick Steves who traveled to Iran in November 2009 writes in his personal website: “Esfahan, Iran’s “second city” with 3.5 million people, is a showcase of ancient Persian splendor. One of the finest cities in Islam, and famous for its dazzling blue-tiled domes and romantic bridges, the city is also just plain enjoyable. I’m not surprised that in Iran, this is the number-one honeymoon destination.”

Another notable American who weighed in on Iran and his experience of traveling to this marvelous land was Shannon Kelley, the independent movie consultant and the Director of Programming of the Morelia International Film Festival in Morelia who attended the first edition of Cinema Verite International Documentary Film Festival in Tehran as a guest. Kelley believes that Iran is a wonderful country: “I expected that some conversations might be impossible, or that I might be viewed with hostility. I attribute this to the excesses of the international press; but in the contrary, I found a community of like-minded, hospitable, curious people, including complete strangers who approached me with great energy and kindness. I spent a woefully short amount of time in Iran, but my point of view on what is possible between us has dramatically shifted, for the better!”

Anyway, the people whom we just cited were only few among the thousands of those who come to Iran and find their expectations to be totally wrong. The stream of black propaganda and demonization may continue; however, the conscience and morality are the values which will be perpetuated by those who are seeking truth, and the truth of Iran needs

ceaseless endeavor to be demonstrated.

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