



# ATUSA

| The Daughter of Cyrus the Great |  
| A Summary |  
By Helen Afshar

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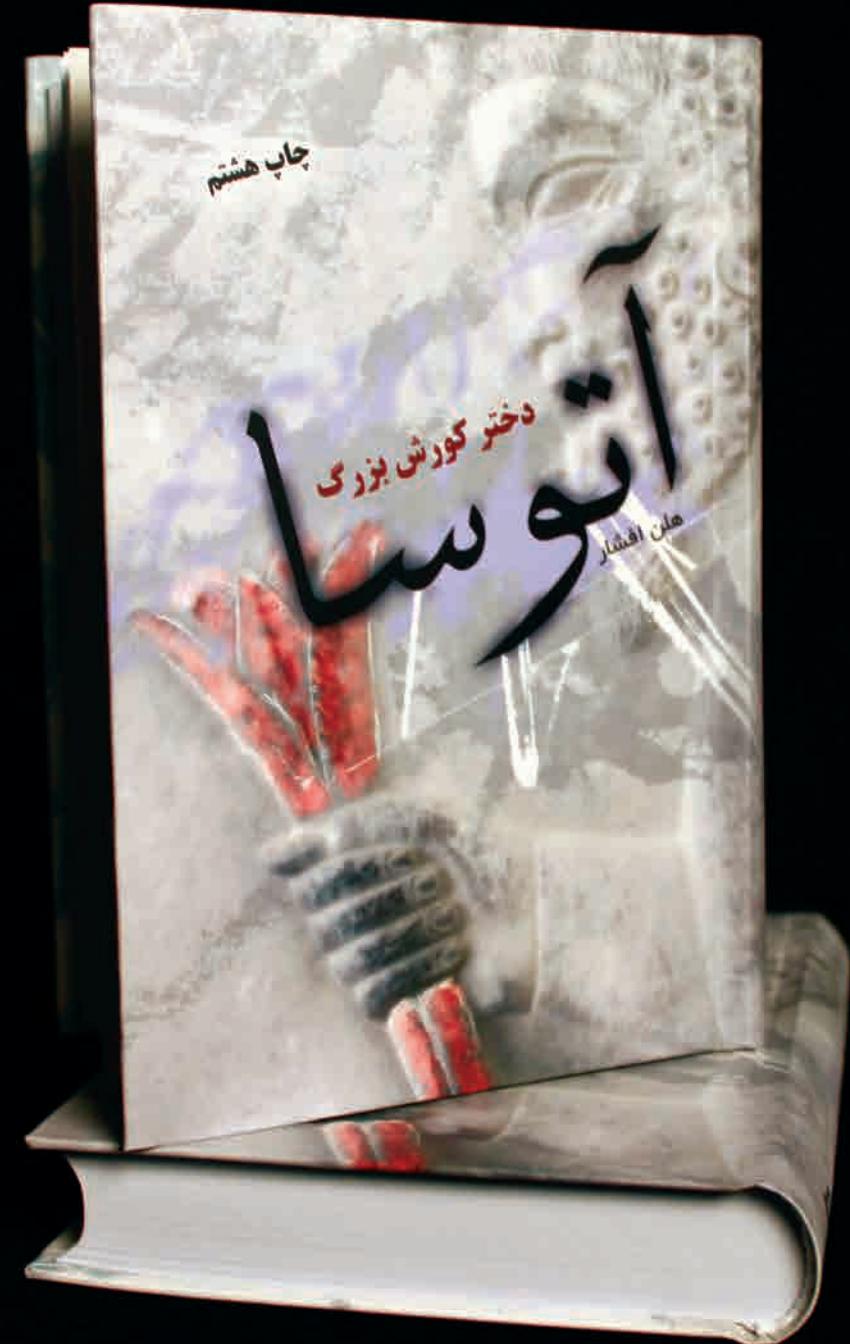
## ATUSA

| The Daughter of Cyrus the Great |

| A Summary |

By Helen Afshar

Many of us have a partial knowledge of the political history of ancient Iran, but we have very little information about the social history of Iran. Atusa (the daughter of Cyrus the Great) written by Helen Afshar is an attempt to quench historical novel readers' thirsts. This novel draws upon reliable historic resources to create an authentic image of the social history of its era through the eye of its heroes. Thus, readers of Atusa, without having to read dozens of books in the field of social history of ancient Iran, gain an authoritative understanding of the era which they can use to further their quests.



The story begins at the time of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire. Cyrus the Great is a very important personality in Iran's history and his life's history is steeped with legends. This is because the adventure of Iran has been transformed from prehistoric darkness to modernity with the proceedings of Cyrus the Great. These narratives represent the ancient people's public impression of the emergence of this great personage 2500 years ago.

Cyrus the Great conquered three sovereignties of the ancient world: Median, Lidi and Babel. He ousted Astiag, Korzous and Nebounid from their thrones and did not kill any of them. For him it was enough to curtail their power. The world did not forget the story of Cyrus the Great, but the rulers did. He is one of the first leaders whose commitment to human rights has well documented in forty five lines imprinted on the Cyrus Cylinder (a cylinder of ceramic that was found in 1879 and is kept in a museum in England today).





This book however, is not a history book. This is a novel about the life of Cyrus the Great's daughter Atusa. She is a lady who has been kept in memories well through ancient times; a mighty woman whose footprint from past millennia was surprisingly well known outside the borders of Iran. Achilles - one of the greatest playwrights of Greek (525-456 BC) that fought in the war between Iran and Greek-remembered her as a patriot, a conscientious person, a sympathetic mother and a unique woman. These are the traits that have been attributed to her by many other ancient countries as well.

This novel includes 24 chapters and begins on a spring day in 530 BC when the royal family is making preparations for the wedding ceremony of Prince Cambodia. At this time, Amitis is the Queen of Iran, and Cyrus the Great has five children. Cambodia, the oldest son of Cyrus who has been appointed as his successor, is from Cyrus's first wife Kasandan who died many years ago.

During the conquest of Babel by Iran, Cambodia rules over Babel by the order of his father for eight months. At this time Iranian borders are expanded to the legendary country of Egypt. This provides an opportunity for Cambodia to learn about Egypt's culture, accomplishments and its mysterious treasures. Following this awareness, Cambodia sends Persian representatives to the court of Pharaoh Amasis (the famous Pharaoh of Egypt) to ask his daughter's hand. When Amasis says «Yes» to the Iranian representatives, the Persians awaited the arrival of the Egyptian bride's caravan.

After the Egyptian caravan's arrival and the wedding ceremony, it becomes apparent that the Princess Nitetis is not the real daughter of Amasis. Amasis, the Pharaoh of Egypt who had killed and took the place of Pharaoh Apries, deceives Cambodia by sending Nitetis, the daughter of Apries to Persia instead of his own daughter knowing that Nitetis is twice older than the Persian Prince. Cambodia feeling angry and betrayed at these actions, swears to revenge against Amasis for his misdeeds.

“Tell this woman and her companions that woe to those of them who appear before my eyes ever again. Before I return to Pasargadae, I want her companions gone out of the city; otherwise they will be buried alive.”

Then he leaves the room. Yet his furious voice could be heard saying:

“I will send such an army to Egypt that remains in memories. I will find Amasis's daughter and I will make her to dress as a bondmaid before Egyptian grandees and I will sell her for a paltry sum

It is in the midst of these events and ceremonies that Atusa, Cyrus's fifteen years old daughter, falls in love with her father's brave commander Darius and a love story begins between them.

After the marriage of Cambodia, Bardia, the other son of Cyrus, who is well known for his affability and bravery among the Persian people, marries Faidim, the daughter of a great Persian man and rules over Karamani by the order of his father. Bardia and Faidim bring a female child called Apakish into the world and have a great life together.

After the wedding ceremonies of the two Princes, the Northern borders of the country are attacked by Scythians. Cyrus the Great with his famous commander Darius – who enjoyed a loving relationship with Atusa – take their troops to the land of Scythians in order to secure the border. Cyrus appoints Cambodia as his successor in the capital. Cyrus is killed in a battle during the winter of that year. His lifeless body is then taken to the capital, while Darius stays and continues to fight.

In the Capital, Cambodia ascends the throne after his father's death. However, his irascible demeanor and mistrust of those around him cause him to make destructive decisions. His first action is to personally marry two of his own sisters, Roxana and Atusa against their will. As a reaction, Queen Amitis - Cyrus the Great's wife - commits suicide by taking in poison so that her children's innocence and oppression is never forgotten. Cambodia's second decision is to make preparations for sending his armed forces to Egypt.

“The following day, with the sun shining over the city, Queen's companion ran to the residence of Princesses weeping. She informed them of an overwhelming sorrow; Queen Amitis, their mother, was dead. The girls rushed to the mother's palace and found her delicate body, alone and cold. A letter was found on her bedside. Roxana picked up the letter and began to read it slowly: oh you who pass by my tomb, my death is a testimony of my children's innocence. Atusa caressed her mother's face fondly and kissed her eyelids. Then she said goodbye to the great woman who ended her life to perpetuate the message of her children's innocence and deliver it to the future generations. The sun was not yet on the horizon, when all of the citizens knew of Cambodia's cruelty to his family after his father's death.”

In 523 BC, the Iranian army ready for war moves towards Egypt. Cambodia goes to the war accompanied by one of his wives, Roxana, and his brother, Bardia. After conquering Egypt, unlike his father, Cambodia does not treat the defeated Egyptians kindly. He kills some the Persian noblemen that protest his behavior, and arranges the murder of his brother Bardia. Then he appoints a person who looks like Bardia to take his place thus deceiving Persians and preventing a rebellion by Persian people.

Roxana learns the truth regarding her brother's death and protests while watching an Egyptian show staged for the Persians. Two puppies fight a lion cub working as a team to defeat the cub. Watching this scene Roxana loses patience and angrily states to Cambodia, "You see, even dogs of the same litter know not to fight each other!" Cambodia unable to tolerate even the smallest of criticisms draws out his dagger and stabs Roxana – both his sister and his wife - to death in Anger. In her dying moments she whispers in her maid ear: "Bardia".

Roxana's maid returns to Iran to inform Atusa of Princess Roxana's death. She describes how Roxana called Bardia's name at her death. Yet, no one knows that Bardia has been killed yet. Atusa cannot easily forget the death of Roxana. Her heart suffers with the tragic death of her sister. This news is so tragic that she tries to assuage her grief by slaughtering a hen. She attempts to kill a hen with her dagger, but it runs quickly here and there clucking frantically. Frustrated, Atusa feels that if she cannot catch this hen, then she too deserves to be killed by her brother. She finally traps the hen in a goat's pen. As she draws back her dagger to strike, she imagines her sister held captive in Memphis Palace, unable to escape. She is a Princess with a delicate body who is being held in the brutal grasp of a madman. No one can hear her crying for help. Roxana is wearing her pink robe, her tiara has fallen from her head, her tresses in disarray and her face covered in tears: "you are more villainous than the dogs that were fighting the lion cubs." Atusa unconsciously releases the hen which quickly disappears from sight. She plunges her dagger into the soil.

While Cambodia is in Egypt Bardia's impersonator takes advantage of Cambodia's absence in Iran. Aware of Cambodia's unpopularity with the Persian people he begins to rebel against the King. Atusa, and many Persian noblemen who do not know that Bardia is really an imposter, support his campaign.

In response Cambodia appoints a governor to Egypt and returns with Darius towards Iran. He confesses to Darius the killing of Bardia and the appointment of the imposter. Upon hearing this, Darius immediately murders Cambodia. He then announces that the King has committed suicide. Darius being an extremely intelligent man

understands that the Bardia's impersonator should not discover his knowledge of the truth. He therefore declares that he is going to support 'Bardia', and brings his personal troops back to Iran.

When Darius arrives he quickly disposes of Bardia's imposter with the help of Princess Atusa and seven Persian noblemen after a short deliberation. After the impersonator's death the problem of succession arises because Cyrus has no remaining heirs. Cambodia never had children, and Bardia had a little daughter. It was decided by the noblemen that one of them would be elected as the King's successor, by the others. Darius goes to the palace under the darkness of night to see Princess Atusa in secret.

"She pulled her shoulders back and held her head high. She approached the door dismissing her maids to their chambers. The swaying of her long gown on the brilliant cobblestones was the only accompaniment to her steady steps. Cyrus the Great's daughter went to receive her father's sardar (commander). On her shoulders rests the fate of the Kiani (Royal) Crown of the dynasty, which she places in hands of the most valuable Paladin of Iran."

The day after, Darius is elected as the king of Persian Empire defeating rival candidates through the support of Princess Atusa, his new wife. Although, this marriage has many positive outcomes for the country, but there are many challenges in the beginning. Anarchy has prevailed in the country during the reign of Cambodia, and is on the brink of collapse. The ruler of each district has declared his independence and Iran is burning in the fire of civil wars. The new King has to leave the capital quickly to begin the process of establishing peace in the country.

During the years that Atusa was the wife of Cambodia, Darius got married and his wife, Arte Bameh, more beautiful than Atusa, bore him a son named Arteh Baz. Darius marries all of the remaining female blood relatives of Cyrus (i.e. Artistiuneh and Bardia's daughter, Apakish) so that there are not any claimers for the kingdom. While Atusa is a politically astute woman, and is aware of her time, place and

circumstances, she is in the end a woman and cannot bear sharing her Darius with the others.

“She remembers her duties and royal functions withholding her personal feelings. It was the hardest job to write a letter to Arte Bameh. She remembers that Bardia, Roxana and her father after saying good-byes never returned. She lost patience, putting her face in her hands, tears running down her eyes. It is so painful to share her lover with the others. The thought that he may never return was very painful. Yes, she hated the ‘farewell’.”

Different stages of Atusa’s love story are described in several sections of the book. Finally she comes to feel peace that allows her soar higher than the earthly loves and obtain a boundless love. The ups and the downs of her journey burnish the jewel that is her essence. She is the oldest person who remains of Cyrus the Great’s family and her responsibility lies in unifying the few remaining members of the family. Not must she marry her sister, Artistouneh, to Darius but she must raise Bardia’s daughter until she is of age to also get married with her husband in the future. She does not want strife in her family, but she cannot easily accept the painful circumstances either.

“Have you ever swum across honey? Darius is like a lagoon full of honey. When you enter his world of love, you will be so amorous and amative that it is unbelievable. When you float in it, you find that there is no swimming and no returning. You cannot ride the roaring waves or be released from its captivity. His sweetness attracts the other women and these encounters bring me to pain.”

“When I lose my hope, he brings me relief but before I can breathe deep again I find myself alone once more. And, God knows where in the kingdom he is to be found. During these times I drown myself in the sweet reservoir of memories. What other choice do I have? I am the lonely person that dies in the lagoon becoming part of it. And people who pass by the side of it never know that the roots of the water lilies are found in that lost person’s existence.”

She has to meet Arte Bameh and Darius’s relatives. According to the historical documents, Arte Bameh’s father finds a special place at the court and he retains wealth second only to the Empire’s. Atusa has to accept their presence at the royal court. Nevertheless, the concinnity and beauty of her story is that in her burning pain she attains great achievements that make her worthy of being a legend.

In the first year of their matrimony and among the upheavals occurring in the kingdom the capital is attacked. Darius the Great is fighting far away near the empire’s borders. Not only must Atusa defend the capital from attack she must keep her and Arte Bameh families safe, all the while carrying the unborn child of Darius the Great. Darius the Great in turn defeats many enemies in that same year. The souvenir of the first year of his reign as king is the world’s largest inscribed stone which can be found on a remote mountain top in Iran that is considered a world heritage site.

Atusa’s first child born is a son named Xerxes who has the blood of Cyrus the Great and Darius the Great. After the childbirth, Atusa does not want to play the role of a princess in the palace that is amused with her clothes and jewels. She begins a variety of social projects with the help of her advisors that result in her being remembered for her goodness in the future.

After battling to keep the country together, Darius comes back to the capital and starts construction of different palaces that takes several years to complete. He placed each of his wives in separate palaces, and assigns them different social roles based on their personal characteristics. Darius has high ambitions for development and pays attention to the social affairs but he is also a serious man and he follows his plans with more rigor than Cyrus the Great. He even rules to execute one of his commanders named Vindfarnah who had supported him in overthrowing of Bardia’s impersonator because of his wrongdoing.

Atusa decides to protest this brutality and invite him to be more benevolent. Looking for Darius Atusa enters her younger sister’s palace, Artistone.

“Artistoneh had sat behind the vanity-table with a white silky garment which revealed her naked arms and shoulders. The perfume of musk and ambergris had filled the room seducing any newcomer. The young lady turned to the door with coquetry and paused surprisingly as it was clear that she was awaiting somebody else. Atusa stood still on the doorway, confused for a short period of time, then finally remembered the reason she was there for.”

Yet discussion with Darius does not bring any results and he insists on executing the offender. He believes that in order to control the insurgences he has to lead the army himself, and it's better for others not to interfere in such affairs. In response, Atousa reminds him of her father (Cyrus) who was also a man of war, but kind and forgiving towards his enemies at the same time. These discussions make Darius irate and he feels that while Atusa compares him to her father, she tends to minimize the extend of her father's bloodshed as much as possible. So for the first time their relationship tended to be cool until the Autumn of 519 BC. Darius falls from his horse while riding injuring his leg.

The king's injury required his foot be reset. But his pain was so great that no one, not even Artistoneh wanted to attempt try for fear of receiving his wrath. Still when Atusa arrived at Susa (Shoosh) and heard of his injury, she immediately went to his chambers.

“I am aware that you just arrived at Susa. Do not tell me that you came directly to see me because you missed me so much because I wouldn't believe you.” said Darius jokingly.

“Did I say that?”

“I would be surprised if you did.” he replied.

“I have heard that the nearer the church, the further the grace. What happened to Darius the Great that he fell down the horse?» Atusa asked.

Then she went closer, moving around the table to have a better look at his feet. She sees that he still has his boot on the injured leg. She tells him that she wants to

prepare the instruments and she will come back soon, so that Darius the Great can order to the hatchet-men to sharpen their axes. She will take the boot off his foot, if she still has her head!

“Your punishment is that I will order the cutting out of your tongue. I shall see how you will be without a tongue” said Darius.

“It wouldn't have any benefit for you, because I can do my works without my tongue, so it's better to think about using the gallows” said Atusa with a smile as she left the room.

Then Atusa feeds her husband the anesthetic and calls the doctors of the court to his bedside to complete setting his foot. When it is finished Darius the Great remained in such deep sleep that he cannot hear even the calling of his name. There are not any footsteps of anger or splendor or dignity when he is asleep. He is the familiar old love whom she could die and come to life for over and again. She kisses her husband's forehead softly like a shadow and leave the room like a mild breeze inside the halls of the palace.

After successful treatment of Darius leg, their relationship improves and the Emperor begins to act more charitably.

“We become losers of the battle field of life when we sully love - the reason of being and a divine gift – by pouring it into the small cup of our banal affairs.”

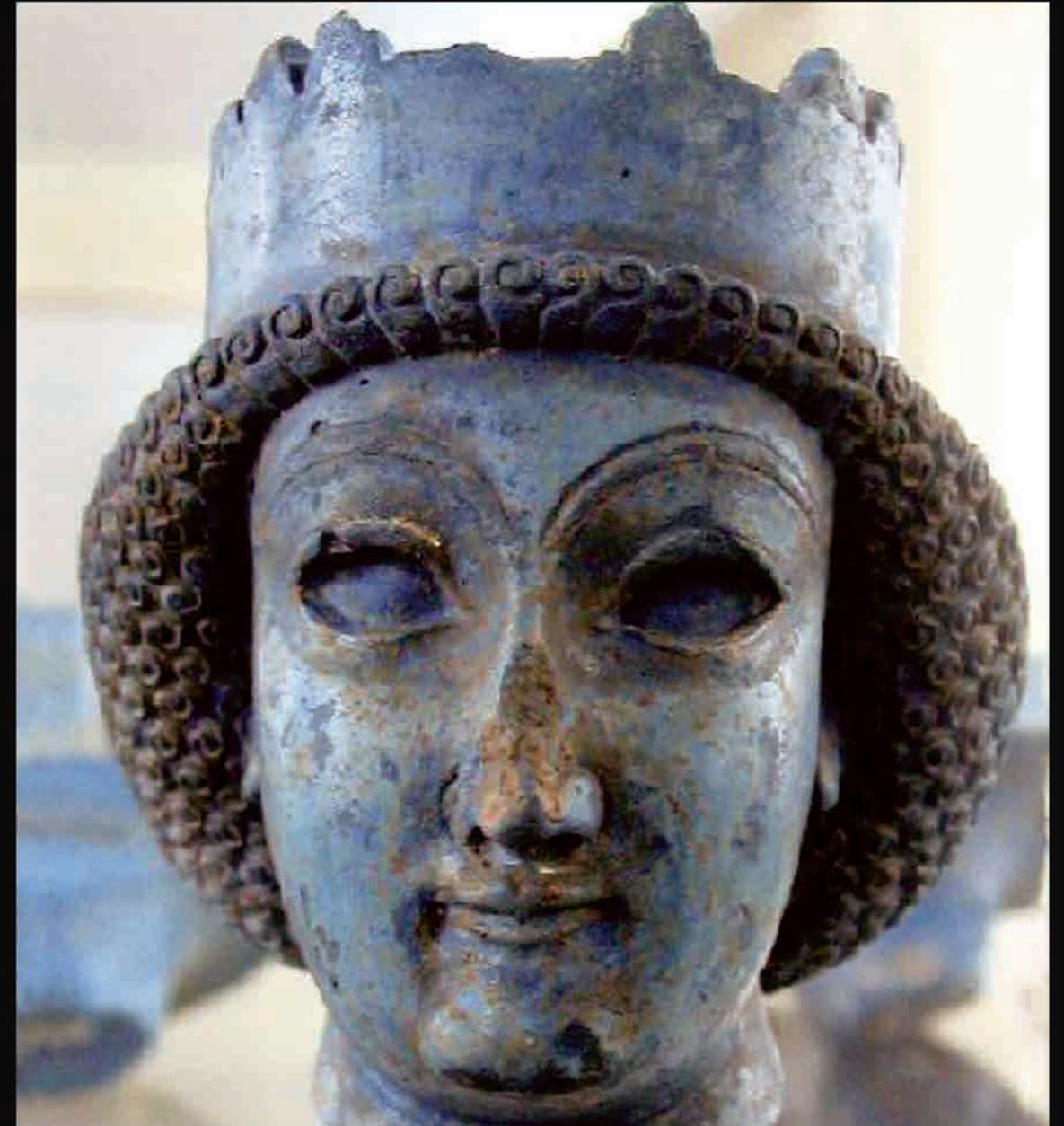
“In that night, which was brighter than day, she found that after twelve years of affection she just now entered the land of true love. For a long time she has admired Darius the Great for his abilities and masculine attractiveness, while suffering from his intimacy with other women. Among all these passionate ups and downs, she remembered him for his fighting abilities, loving embrace and generosity towards her. For the longest time she desired him as a man, and that night she recognized him as a personage that desired to make heaven from the chaos of the world.”

“If the curtain between man and woman drops, would she want him with all her body and soul? “Yes”. It is now her turn and she would not surrender to fear and concern of losing him anymore. She had marched among tears and happiness in order to gain the capacity to put aside her earthy shell and pass through that fire inside of Darius without being burned to ashes. She doesn’t fear anymore because she’d found warmth and light.”

At this same time, Darius decides to construct the Suez Canal of the ancient world and talks to his wife about the great ambitions in his mind and proposes his plans to her. At the end of the journey, when Atusa wants to come back to Pars (the capital), her husband gives her free reign over the capital. Atusa is the first woman who held such a powerful position.

“We are living in a world where men consider themselves more eminent than women and do not like to be obedient to them. So your own responsibility will be more complex than that of others. There are always some people who will overstate your failures, and stone your endeavors. Their behavior will make you irate, however I do not want you to struggle with them, and be seen as easily flustered. You will perform your duties in the Emperor’s court. Whenever it was necessary, punish the guilty. Utilize the Queen’s official seal and court for family affairs, said Darius.”

Atusa’s capabilities make her the most competent, but humble governor of Iran. During her life, she tried to develop the state and for this reason, her name has been remembered as the ‘Lady of Power’ among the legends.



Statue of Atusa

In these productive years, Iran attained many great developments. For example, they constructed protected highways which joined the larger cities of their territories. Just one of the highways, one which connected Susa to Saard was 2684 kilometers in length, having one hundred eleven mounted-messenger stations to protect travelers. Likewise, the first map demonstrating the relationship of Europe to Asia to Africa was drawn, the first Iranian gold coin was minted, and the Achaemenid cuneiform script was developed. Also a unified weighing measuring system was established for mercantile goods.

Atousa birthed two other sons named Haxamanesh and Mahisat. She maintains her gubernatorial affairs in parallel with the household responsibilities of a mother. Her children are growing up gradually and she faces the different periods of their growing up.

“In that feast (party), Xerxes (Atusa’s first born son) stands behind the chair of his father, his eyes roam the hall. However, his gaze always rests in the same spot, on genteel maiden, who was enfolded in a white garment, talking to her same-aged friends. She had made up her black tresses beautifully and their twists fell down to her waist. The young maiden feels the gaze of someone, and purposely turns towards the king’s throne, laughs revealing cute dimples on her face. Atusa who was watching this scene, thought to herself with a smile: Well done son! You are such a skillful archer!”

When her sons become young men, they expect her to give them high ranks in the court, because she has a great influence there. Atusa will teach them the secrets of politics and helps them to achieve their goals.

This story includes 648 pages and is finished when the family has been gathered for the ceremony of New Year in the great Persepolis citadel. Before going to see the military parade from the royal stage, Darius the Great told Atusa that he has appointed her oldest son, Xerxes, as his successor. The family will stand on the stage. Atusa stands a few steps behind the great men, where she cannot be seen by the crowds.

While the roar of the marching warriors fills the air, the woman who is always standing strong and constant, but not always seen, prays for the people of the world.

“I praise the life giving God,  
And I pray,  
For strength and ability for all creatures  
Protection and Honor for all creatures  
Shelter and nourishment for all  
Works and endeavors for all,  
So the Grace of God be abundant for all  
His Splendor and Dignity.”

Verahram-Yasht.  
A praise of the book of Ancient Iran

## 530 BC

The spring sunshine was peeping through open windows as a refulgent cobblestone floor began to emerge in the princesses' royal residence, displaying exquisitely designed lacy-red Persian rugs. The Princesses' residence was divided into two chambers connected by a few short steps. The lower sleeping chamber housed three beds for the three princesses and the upper chamber contained beautiful chairs and tables. Amethyst colored drapes were swaying in a gentle breeze, spreading a pleasant scent of lily and pussy-willow blossoms from the gardens surrounding the royal palace. The gold and silver trays of pomegranates, bergamot oranges, and apples as well as the vases of scented flowers invited admiration.

Messengers and couriers arrived at the royal palace with the news that the caravan of the future wife of Prince Cambodia had arrived in Pars province. Citizens of Pasargadae were all so delighted to hear the news. The Princesses' residence was in exuberant preparation upon receiving the message.

The seamstresses and companions with their silk garments, cosmetics, elegant gems and jewelry were attiring Princess Atusa. The pleated turquoise gown on the tall Princess had a magical beauty. Atusa's devoted companion, Alougouneh, with the help of others tied a golden shawl around her narrow waist in such a manner that its fringes were almost sweeping the floor. Then they wrapped her shoulders in a second shawl hiding her delicate white arms. Finally they straightened the pleats and creases of the gown. The row of lions embroidered with golden strings on the gown's margin revealed her royal position.

At the age of fifteen, Atusa was tall and slender, measuring a few fingers higher than her mother and her older sister. Her tall stature caused people to assume that she was the oldest daughter of the three Princesses when in fact she was the middle daughter. Her arc-shaped eyebrows, black-colored eyes that seemed navy blue through reflecting the sunshine in her turquoise dress, and her prominent cheeks gave her an indomitable face. Her luxuriant black musky hair that flowed to her waist embraced her figure. Her inquiring demeanor and her conscious towards life were well-known among the courtiers and royal family. Therefore some of the noble ladies believed that she is a young girl with masculine tendencies. She liked to learn everything- from making a drink to the method of preparing a war Chariot. People tended to answer the questions relating to the kitchen easily, but be surprised when she asked about civil and military matters. Altogether, she had a compassionate heart and a wholesome sprit.

Alougouneh put three strings of large white pearls on her lady's neck. Atusa looked at her sister inquiringly. Her sister's raised eyebrow was the answer. Having a kind sister in life can be one of the greatest mercies of Ahura Mazda and Atusa was surely blessed with the sweet love of her older sister Roxana.

"My turquoise pendant is more coordinates better with my sister's dress. Bring it!" Roxana said to Kaboutarak. Kaboutarak was Roxana's devoted companion. These two skillful young ladies -Kaboutarak and Alougouneh - were commissioned to serve the princesses a few years ago.

Kaboutarak went hastily after her lady's command. Since the turquoise necklace was shorter than the pearl strings, it hung higher and above the V-Neck of Atusa's dress with its V-shaped pendent that matched the dress. The gemstones scintillation and coloration on Atusa's white long neck put a smile on her older sister's face.

The oldest daughter of the royal family, Princess Roxana, was a petite girl with a sweet beautiful face. Her almond-shaped eyes, delicate thin nose, beautiful dimples and always smiling lips made her round porcelain visage sweeter.

At the time it was customary for Iranian girls to choose an appropriate mate when they reach the age of fifteen, but Roxana - privileged by her charming beauty and her family status - had not said "yes" to any of her elite suitors and was still looking for one among grandees and noblemen.

Her face, figure and manners resembled her mother, Queen Amitis, and her world was centered on arranging flowers and pleasant scents. From her viewpoint civil and military matters were only men's concerns that she did not feel the need to be engaged in. It did not cross her imagination though that providing for her interests and affluent lifestyle required a great fortune. Roxana was accustomed to exquisite garments, precious jewelry and tall pillars of the palaces she knew. The greatest change that she could anticipate was to move from this palace to another mansion once she gets married to a handsome illustrious knight; the same way that her mother did.

The companions tried to gather Atusa's long and thick hair under her diadem. Roxana didn't like this hair style again. She stood up and joined the other ladies. First she untied the hair and let it to fall freely; then, she styled them with scented oil. She wrapped the rebellion strand of young Shahdokht's hair around her fingers and released them slowly in the right places. Finally, she put the diadem on Shahdokht's head smoothly and said to Alougouneh:

«Never pull back a lady's hair tightly. Flowing hair makes every woman far more attractive.»

Roxana stepped away and asked her sister:»Please take a few steps and turn»

Atusa did exactly what she asked.

“No!” said Roxana with subtlety. “That was not proper. You are not the corps commander and here is not a garrison. Why did you hit your legs on the cobblestone? Imagine that you are walking on the clouds, softly and gently, first your toes and then your heels slower than before. It is helpful to play a melody in your mind and harmonize your steps with its tunes. Your arms were also arid and stiff like a tree branch in winter. It seems that they were ready to snatch a dirk. This is neither a camp nor a hunting ground. In the halls of this palace, if there is any hunt, it is done by the arrow of eyelashes and the spear of love.”

“Another point is that you are standing so straight with your head raised as though our father's troops are standing before you. Are you looking for a wrestling opponent? Instead, imagine that your beloved young man is hiding in this room. Now, step and speak tenderly.» said Roxana.

“But I do not know such a man!” said Atusa naively.

Roxana frustrated with her apprentice, sighed and said: “I didn't say this man is hidden behind the curtains right now. I just said imagine it!”

At this time the guard standing at watch at the door of Princesses' residence announced the arrival of Prince Bardia. Bardia, the older brother, cheerful and agile, entered the room. His delightful effulgence made the sun's rays seem dim in comparison. Prince Bardia, with his hazel colored eyes and sandy blond hair had the lightest complexion of all of his siblings. His aquiline nose gave him a masculine glory. His strapping physique, muscular arms, and equestrian outfit seemed to beckon other young men to challenge him.

Bardia greeted his sisters and received their greetings in return. He looked around the room at his sisters readying themselves, and said, “The caravan of Cambodia's wife must travel a long way to come to Pasargadae. I think it is too soon to wear the garments of the wedding ceremony.”

Roxana looked at the seamstresses and companions cheerfully, nodding her head dismissing them from her chambers. Once they were gone, Roxana turned to her brother expressing her concerns about Atusa. "If Atusa spent more time learning our mores and the proper behavior of a young lady instead of exploring mountain tops and plains on her horseback, there wouldn't be a need for my advice today. You have treated her like a boy. When I tell her that she should be more tender, shy and retiring, she holds her head up and returns my gaze as if challenging me, objecting "Why should I behave in this way?"

Bardia was sitting on a chair and was playing with a string of pearls on the table. «She is right. Why she should she behave like that!?» Bardia replied. Bardia commended his younger sister's sobriety and cleverness. He was proud of training such a femme fatale.

From a young age Atusa showed interest in exploring the lands around the palace. Her Father, Cyrus the Great, not wishing to see her daughter looked after by strangers asked her brother, Bardia, to accompany her. Their father entrusted him to impart his knowledge in horse riding being careful not to be overbearing and rough with her. He also wanted him to let her win occasionally. Their father believed that a heroic disposition did not require a steely personality. He believed that a hero is well-trained, patient and humble. He also directed him to mind the companies he kept and words he spoke in her presence.

Roxana's voice brought Bardia back to the present. "When you meet a young lady, would you like her to be a gentle and kind person or an experienced jockey and expert archer?" asked Roxana.

"First, whatever comes from a woman is good. And secondly, why don't you teach me these tricks of affection?" replied Bardia. As always Bardia's clever words filled his sister with glee.

"You do not need this kind of training. You have shot the arrow through the target already." She said.

Yet, I still need help from my sisters." He replied. «Can you settle affairs in a way that Faidim accompanies us in the hunting grounds?» Bardia added when he saw the Princess' inquiring look.

Faidim was the beautiful daughter of the Persian genteel, Houtan. Many of their friends and relatives were aware of the love between them. Nevertheless, the two families - out of respect to the king - adjourned their wedding plans for after Prince Cambodia's wedding to Pharaoh's daughter. Faidim's father, Houtan, was one of Kasandan's (Cyrus the Great's first wife) close relatives. Accordingly, Cambodia and Bardia who were Kasandan's sons called him uncle Houtan. Roxana, Atusa and Artistouneh were born after Cyrus the Great and Amitis's (Cyrus's second wife) marriage. Although Amitis was not one of the relatives of Houtan, the Princesses called him «uncle Houtan» following their two older brothers' example.

Roxana sent for Kaboutarak in response to her brother's request. «Ride to uncle Houtan's residence in a carriage with the palace's special watchman and ask dear Faidim to come to the hunting ground with me and the Princess Atusa.»

When Kaboutarak left the room, Bardia thanked Roxana with a nod of his head. The three siblings then continued conversing about the day's planned hunt and the forthcoming wedding ceremonies to be held. They were awaiting these ceremonies for a long time and all of these traditions and customs regarding the marriage of Cambodia. Cambodia, the oldest child, was their father's successor. He had ruled Babel for eight years when their father conquered the city. When the Iranian borders expanded to the legendary country of Egypt, Cambodia personally got accustomed to Egyptian culture and knowledge and his mind overflowed with thoughts of the ancient land's mysterious treasures. Following his ambitions, Prince Cambodia sent the Persian representatives to the Pharaoh Amasis' court to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage. Upon receiving Pharaoh's permission, Persians started preparing for the Egyptian bride's caravan.

«Faidim and I have known each other for a long time, still, there are so many times

when I found myself unable to express my thoughts and emotions. I wonder how Cambodia is planning to express his love. For example, it is understandable that an interpreter needs to stand beside the feast and translates their words from Persian to Demoti. However, when they are to talk intimately, where should the interpreter sit so that she/he can hear but not see them!» said Bardia. The Princesses' roar of laughter filled the room.

«In my opinion, our daughter-in-law doesn't need to learn all of the Persian language grammar. A few short words may be helpful for the first meeting,» Atusa said.

“Is it true, the story of Cambodia and the beautiful village girl that everybody gossips about? Have you ever seen her?» Roxana asked. “Believe me! I do not know anything more than you. Cambodia's behavior and actions are more complicated that I can understand” Bardia said.

“You are right. He is the owner of complicated thoughts since his heart is fluttering between an unknown lady and the Pharaoh's daughter,» Atusa replied.

The watchman informed the Princesses of the arrival of Alougouneh. She entered and delivered Queen Amitis's message to the Princesses. Their mother had said that they needed to get ready to go to the Izad Baran<sup>1</sup> Ceremony, and the carriages will arrive at the palace to fetch them soon. Bardia got up and thanked them again for their assistance by inviting Faidim. Then he leaped like a nimble panther landing on the ledge of the window before jumping down into the garden. He always thought the palace's corridors and passageways meandrous, thus his unusual exit from the room.

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1) The 13th day of Farvardin (The Persian month that coincides with April) is called «Tir» or «Tashtar». On this date Izad Baran ceremony was held. Predecessors and ancient Iranians believed that the people should praise Izad Baran (Goddess of rain) by giving thanks for her defeating Draught Demon (Div-e-Khosksali). In ancient Iran (Persia), after holding Nowruz (new year) ceremony when green grasses, wheat and pulses grew, people went into the plains and along streams and begun dancing and rejoicing on the 13th day. In ancient Iranian myths, a white horse is one of the symbols of Izad Baran.

“Shall I call the seamstresses back to continue preparing the dresses?” Alougouneh asked her ladies.

«It is nearly noon and we have a little time to prepare and get to the hunting ground. So, they should leave their work for another day” the girls replied.

The youngest child of the royal family, Artistouneh, entered the room with her governess. As usual she went directly to the food arranged on the tables. Her governess was trying to dress her for the occasion but she was uncooperative. She was a little plump for a girl nine years of age. She was also disobedient, not listening to anyone since everybody around her treated her as a small child. Cambodia was the only person who could discipline her with a brief glance. Thus, Aristouneh was afraid of her older brother who was not interested in children at all.

The girls got ready in a hurry. Atusa admired the garments that did not inhibit her movements. She chose a brown long sleeve dress, stockings and a leopard-skin mantle which was a birthday gift. The mantle was decorated by some pieces of lateritious leather on the shoulders. It was fastened by two golden lions' heads. She asked that her hair be braided with a golden bead at the end of each braid. In such a way a magical sound would be created when the beads hit each other with shaking of her head.

She put the precious poniard on her leather sheath and tied it to her right thigh with a textured leather strap to avoid hitting the sheath with her foot. The three-lace blucher elevated her body's splendor and magnificence. On the other side, the older sister was looking at her garments. Although she wore a garment that was inappropriate for trick riding, it added to her beauty for its eye-catching colors. She also did not feel the need to secure her hair tightly. She just wrapped it with a thin fabric.

Finally, the two girls left the room and came to the porch. On the gentle and sweet day of spring and under the turquoise cupola of sky, Pasargadae was so eye-catching as though Heaven had sent down Farvahars.<sup>2</sup>

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2) Ancient Iranians believed that in the final days before New Year, a ceremony should be held for when their dead relatives' Farvahar (souls) come down from the heaven to visit them. Thus they cleaned their houses, wore new garments and prepared proper foods and sweets so that their pasted away relatives see them in happiness and go back to heaven content.



Statue of Farvahar

## **ATUSA**

### **| The Daughter of Cyrus the Great |**

### **| Synopsis |**

This book is a gift of the religions and customs of ancient Iranians to those who desire to read of them in a historical novel rather than some historical report. The readers can quench their thirst for knowledge of the social life of the peoples of 500 BC as well as the cultural affairs (such as Zoroastrianism) of the era. This book offers the opportunity to become familiar with the story of a mighty woman who did live indeed in the palaces of Persepolis.

Atusa, the middle daughter of Cyrus the Great, is herself a great woman, so well-known in the ancient world that a play of her life was staged in ancient Greek theaters. She is a person who from walking on earth rose to reside in Iranian legends becoming Homa in Ferdowsi's epic poems (Shahnameh).