

Iranology

A Course of English for the Students of
History



Abbas Ali Zarei (PhD)
Mohammad Reza Giasian

Zarei, Abbas Ali

زارعی، عباسعلی

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E-mail: sayegostar _ pub @ yahoo. Com

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Preface

But why study history at all? Why concern ourselves with anything beyond the range of our own time and place? At the present day there is a practical reason for taking a wider view. Within the last five hundred years, the whole face of the globe, together with its air-envelope has been knit together physically by the amazing advance of technology, but mankind has not yet been united politically, and we are still strangers to each other in our local ways of life, which we have inherited from the time before the recent 'annihilation of distance'. This is a terribly dangerous situation. The two World Wars and the present worldwide anxiety, frustration, tension, and violence tell the tale. Mankind is surely going to destroy itself unless it succeeds in growing together into something like a single family. For this, we must become familiar with each other, and this means becoming familiar with each other's history, since man does not live just in the immediate present. We live in a mental time-stream, remembering the past and looking forward- with hope or with fear- to an oncoming future. This present-day practical reason for studying history comprehensively is obvious and cogent. But, even if we were not moved to study history by a concern for self-preservation, we should be moved by curiosity; for curiosity is one of the distinctive faculties of human nature. We should still feel curiosity about the universe in which we find ourselves, even if we were completely prosperous and secure- and no human society, at any time or anywhere, has yet come within sight of attaining these two ideal goals.