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An Intimate Look at Afghan-Canadian Love Story

The title, *Jeegareh Ma*, means “My love” in Farsi. *Jeegareh Ma*, is an autobiographical novel which serves as a family archive, gift, and testimony. The book is about memory, voice, pain, love, ghosts, haunting, forgetting, ruination, and healing. *Jeegareh Ma* is an interrogation of the past and how it affects the whole family. As an archive, this book is a compilation of memories, mainly forgotten memories.

Jeegareh Ma will take its readers on a journey which calls upon different emotions. Readers will find themselves crying, laughing, and smiling, simultaneously. The novel explores closely social issues and politics such as the discrimination Hazaras face in Afghanistan, the discrimination Afghans face in Iran, and the hardships Afghan immigrants face in Canada. Furthermore, *Jeegareh Ma* brings its readers closer in understanding of the Afghani culture and its people in Canada.

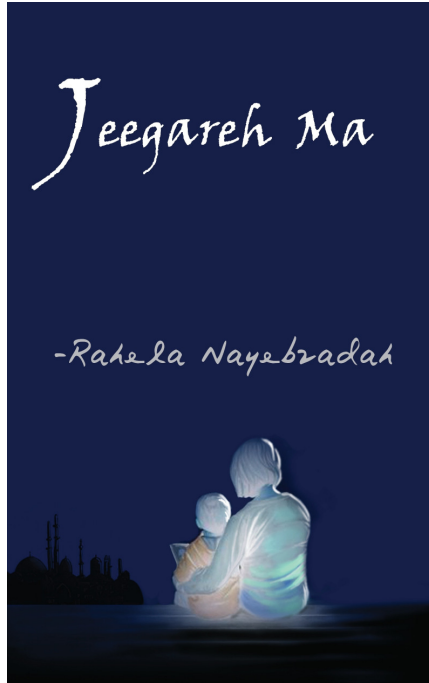
In a testament of courage and love, Rahela Nayebzadah shares intimate details and weaves eloquently her story to show us the best and complicated of family relations. A very fine first novel.

Author is available for appearances and interviews and can be reached through The Key Publicity, Heather Smith, e-mail: media@thekeypublish.com, Tel: 416-935-1790

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Synopsis

Based on a true story, *Jeegareh Ma* is a testament to the power of love in the face of struggle and hardship. Ghulam and Firishta, a wealthy couple, move to Kabul, Afghanistan, to begin a new chapter in their lives. Firishta is diagnosed with meningitis and passes away, leaving their six young children motherless. Moving back to Herat, Ghulam and his family discover that their motherland is no longer the same: the Soviet Union has invaded, causing them to seek refuge in Iran. In Iran, Ali, an impoverished, dark-skinned, and plumpish man asks for Maryam's hand in marriage. As Afghans living in Iran, Ali and his family are denied identity, worth, and value. Ali's prayers are answered when he and his family are accepted by Canada as refugees. *Jeegareh Ma* is a story of courage where love, family, and God are put to the test.

About the Author

Rahela Nayebzadah is an Afghan Canadian who lives in British Columbia. She is currently attending the University of British Columbia as a PhD student in the faculty of arts. *Jeegareh Ma* is her first book. Writing is her passion. Currently, she is working on her second novel, *Monster Child*. However, her ultimate dream is to become a scriptwriter.



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Author's Q & A

1. What inspired you to write *Jeegareh Ma*?

My mother's voice inspired me to write *Jeegareh Ma*. My mother was the storyteller, not I. Every time I would stare into my mother's eyes, I would see pain and hurt. I took it as my responsibility as her daughter to share (and bring to life) her stories.

2. What surprised you most while writing this book?

My role as a writer took me by surprise. I occupied both the position of power and powerlessness. My power was illustrated in deciding what was to be voiced and what was to be silenced. However, my powerlessness prevailed when I could not bring myself to reveal certain family secrets. Protecting my family was something I constantly struggled with, which at times, I translated as weakness in my character.

3. What were the challenges in bringing this book to life?

I wrote *Jeegareh Ma* with the mindset that it would be therapeutic and therefore serve as a healing process. However, as memories of the past were dug up and brought to life, scars were reopened, leaving me torn to pieces. There were moments where I felt I could no longer continue. I was reliving the past. I was re-remembering things which I tried very hard to never remember again.

4. What are the most important points that you would like readers to have gained and appreciate after reading your book?

I wish for my readers to walk alongside my mother as they read her story. I wish for readers to feel so close to my mother as though they can almost touch her. Furthermore, I want readers to greatly appreciate the stories of Rasool.

5. Why is this story unique?

Jeegareh Ma is a testament to the power of love in the face of struggle and hardship. *Jeegareh Ma* ends with a realistic ending rather than a fairytale ending.

6. What advice would you offer your readers so they can make the best of the out of the book?

The advice I wish to offer readers is the following: Even though *Jeegareh Ma* speaks of a journey of struggle and hardship, particularly the difficult journey of leaving one's home country and coming to another, hardships and struggles of an immigrant do not end upon arrival to Canada—or in other words, any other haven-like society—; instead, for many immigrants, hardship and struggle are the only things immigrants face.