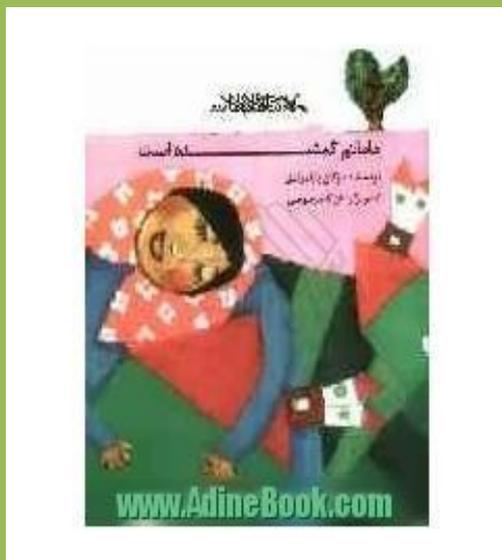


# *My mother is lost*



**By: Mozghan  
Babamarandi**



📖 **Sample English text is available.**



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## I Lost my Mom

I'm older now. But I long for things which would sound funny to whoever hears about them. It's crowded, everywhere you look. I'm holding my camera. But I am not in the mood of pressing the shutter. I'd like to get myself lost. Everyone is mourning and calling "Ya Hussein". There is a child crying loudly. I wish I knew how to cry loudly, too. I hold the baby's hand. I can tell by its earrings that it is a girl. Through her crying, I find out that she is looking for her dad. But she is talking about her mom whose *chador* is black. (She is wearing a black *chador*). She's also wearing a black blouse and a black skirt under her *chador*. The name of the girl, Fatima, appears on her necklace . I'm thinking about how I should check all the necklaces under the *chadors*. There are processions passing by with big chandeliers. Everywhere is filled with the chandeliers and the noise of drums. When the chandeliers of the processions appear, everywhere turns as bright as daylight. But when they go away everywhere gets dark again. The little girl's hand is in mine. There's no room to go through. We sit together. Next to the ditch of water on the sidewalk. Together, we keep

watching the procession. The girl's hand is small and warm.

I am a child - like Fatima. We are taking a break. Everyone is making noise. Everyone is running. The school principal calls out. Mourning is heard from the radio in the office. The principal and Naghma Khanoom - Negin's mom - and Aunt Mithra - Nushin's mom are serving *halva*. Nushin and Negin are not in talking terms as they had a fight over the idea of whose mom can cook better. The principal is making sure that each kid will take just one spoon of *halvah* so there is enough for everybody. But I eat from both of them. There is no difference. Dad is supposed to cook *halvah* for me in the afternoon. But these Halvahs are different. Both of them have been cooked by Mom. The principal orders: "I want everyone in the prayer room".

I love the prayer room. It's warm. I rush to sit next to a heater, I stretch my legs. Not yet crowded. Mr. Rohani comes in. I'm sitting politely. He looks at me. Says:

"What a polite mourner Imam Hussein has" I laugh. He asks: "What's your name, my daughter?" I answer: "Leyla".

He says: "In the desert of Karbala, Leyla was a mother of strangers. God willing, Imam Hussein will help you stay with your children."

I think to myself "I will surely be a mommy. A mommy that does not get lost.

The kids gradually come in. He talks about Imam Hussein, *Hazrat* Abu al-Fazl, *Hazrat* Zaynab and *Hazrat* Roghieh but he does not mention Leyla. My seat is warm, my eyes are heavy. I hear him saying: "All the missing will be found on Ashura. Everybody will help you to find the one you lost."

I am wide awake now. I make my decision.

It's tomorrow. I've come to the mosque. Daddy does not know I'm alone here. If he finds out there will be beating. I'll go with a procession everywhere. I join one procession at the start of a street, and then I join another one at the end of the street.

No one knows that I want to get lost so that my lost mother would find me. I do not know if I am the one who is missing or my mom. But whoever is lost, that gentleman said that today she or he will be found. I'm going to go to the mosque at our place, wherever I go. I do not know why I'm not lost. Our mosque with those beautiful green domes with its gold minarets - why not get lost next to this mosque, so that mom can

find me? I wish you could only get lost in familiar places.

A taxi seems stuck opposite the mosque. The driver wants to go ahead, but there is no way (he cannot). I suddenly get anxious. Maybe it is Ali with mom (sitting in the cab) coming to take me. The procession gives him the way. There's a woman with a black chador sitting in the cab. Zari doesn't wear a chador. But I wish she did. Chador-wearing ladies are kinder. For example, Mrs. Naghmeh is nicer than Mrs. Mithra. She always addresses me (with kindness) "my daughter", or "Dear Leyla", but Mithra Khanoom calls me either "Hey you", or just "Leyla".

The black-clad woman tries to look all over the procession. I cannot see her very well. The driver drives slowly forward and the people in the procession complain: "Drive away quickly!"

But it seems he is looking for someone. I don't know the driver. He has a beard. But Ali has no beard. Ali's eyes like dad are green. But I cannot see the driver's eyes. I feel like hiding behind a tree.

But this is not mommy. Even if she was, I wouldn't go with her. I do not like Ali. I don't need another dad with green eyes.

The taxi leaves. I stay. I want a mommy. I want to get lost. I burst into tears. Someone holds my hand. I look up. It's a mother with a black chador. She asks:

- What's up to Lady of Ladies?

- I keep trying to get lost. But no luck.

- Are you lost?

I wipe my tears so according to my dad I can talk like a human being when I cry. I say:

No. I want to be lost. But I want my mom to find me.

Out of this group of ladies which one is your mom?

I look at her. I want to say: "I do not have one. I do not know when and where she went. One who, in my mind, is far away, named Uncle Ali has taken her away. He owns a taxi cab.

- Tell me. Which of these ladies is it? Tell me so that I can call her. So she can come to find the lovely missing lady of ladies.

I am thinking perhaps my mom is among them. I wish everybody could choose her own mom. Although I like my mom's face. I absolutely do not feel comfortable of seeing her go out with another green-eyed man. According to our teacher, he doesn't know how to think. I step forward. I look at the faces of

each one of the moms. They all have kids. Even if I choose them they wouldn't need me.

I know that the lady is standing right behind me. Quickly I walk through the crowd. I get away. But I change my mind. I wish I had stayed with that kind-hearted chador-clad lady a little longer. I turn back. But she has lost me, too. Just like my mom: I don't know which is which? Has she lost me or have I lost her?

I return home. My father is home. I keep praying: "Oh Lord! I hope he won't beat me up". "Oh Imam Hussein, make my father kind-hearted today."

As soon as his eyes catch mine he asks: "I hope you didn't talk to anybody. Did you?"

I don't understand what he's saying. He holds me in his arms. I am surprised. He adds: "She was here to see you. But it seems the Lord and Imam Hussein doesn't like this to happen."

The space around us is now less crowded. I say: "Dear Fatimajoon, would you like us to take a walk looking for your mom? Maybe we can find her."

She looks at me. I feel hungry. I long for donation food, *Gheimeh*<sup>1</sup>.

Somebody hands us two dishes of *Gheymeh*. Another guy hands us two cups of *sherbet*. Fatima and I starting eating our lunch. I wish I was in the mood of photography. But why should I shoot any photos (what's the use of it)?

The street has gradually turned empty of the crowd. Fatima and I are left alone. I know dad is now worried (about my delay). I hold her hand to report to the neighboring Mosque. If they let me I will take her home to stay overnight. She would sleep next to me. I would tell her a (bed-time) story. But what would dad say about it? Would he give me the permission?

Suddenly someone calls: "Fatima!" it's a black chador-clad lady. She approaches us. (Steps forward). She kneels before her and holds her in her arms, bursts into tears. I envy Fatima. Somebody has found her. But there is no one to find me. The woman says:

- Her dad left one night and promised her to come back. Since then she has been looking for him.

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<sup>1</sup>. *Gheimeh* (Persian: *قچمه*) is an Iranian stew (*khoresh*) consisting of mutton, tomatoes, split peas, onion and dried lime.

I feel anxious in my heart. I kiss Fatima and get away. I keep hearing the echo of Fatima's mom in my head: "God willing you will become a mom." I pray silently in my heart: "Oh Lord, Oh Imam Hussein, help us."

Shortly I arrive home. Dad is waiting at the window. He shuts the window as soon as he sees me. Again I pray "Oh Lord, Oh Imam Hussein, help me."

### **Even Crows are from the Moon**

I lay on my bed. I am waiting for Mehrdad to pick me up and give me a ride to mommy. I was forced to leave the hospital. But I saw them use electro-shock on mommy.

I know that tonight there will be a full moon. I look up at the sky. It is still daylight. The moon is out. But the house is totally dark. I don't remember the name of the story in which a girl kisses the moon thinking how cool the kiss is. I think hard. But I cannot remember. Somebody has wiped my mind. In it, the wind blows and brings mom. She is on the bed. She is restless as if an invisible someone has entered her body. Although her arms and legs have been fastened (with straps) she moves violently and is shaking. While lying she moves as if her wings are moving like she is flying. "Azhideh" remarks nurse. I hate the words having the letter "j"/ "zh". They remind me of dragon and Azhidehak. I think the snakes on

Azhidehak's shoulders are invisible, too, while trying to/insisting on biting every live person in this era. Come to think of it, I even hate my own name. I whisper: "Mojdeh, Mojdeh". I hate the letter "j". I try to become *Azhideh* like mom. But I will get tired. How can a mom not get tired and remain restless (How come she ....) What does she think about that makes her shake like that.

I hear the noise of *Charshanbeh Soori* explosions (firecrackers, squibs, cigarettes, Waterfalls, and capsules).

Mommy had asked me: "What if people had sick people at home?"

In reply, I had laughed while saying: "Boro Baba"

There is a power-cut. There is firework everywhere for *Charshanbeh Soori*.

You can see the people watching from their windows. Just like in the movies, their faces are half dark and half-lit. The house is also half dark and half lit. But it is more dark than light. I turn on the lamp. I climb the couch so that I can reach the lamp (which is hanging from the ceiling).

Last year was linked to this year, too soon. When did this year arrive? I wish last year would never come to cause this year to arrive subsequently. I wish we

would get stuck in our favorite year. But who knows. How could one know when is one's favorite time? Will a better year arrive, or not? At this time, last year, the house was filled with the scent of happiness (we felt the fragrance of happiness all over the house). Nobody knows. But I know that the scent of *sabzi-polo* with fish was the scent of happiness and the fact that everybody had gathered around the tablecloth was happiness itself.

I said:

- Mom. This lamp is very different from those of other people. It looks like a magic lamp.
- That's why I bought it. A peddler sold it to me. At first, I didn't think it could run on gas (we would be able to make it an LPG-gas operated lamp). Your dad fixed it.

I am squeezing lots of paper napkins in my hand. They are all soaked with tears. The glass on the lamp is dirty. I wipe it with the napkins. People are making a lot of noise on the street outside. Before trying to strike the matchstick on its matchbox yet, I notice the alley being suddenly lit. I don't know what caused the light to bring so much smoke. Our house is full of smoke, too. Through the window I notice a young girl being afraid of crossing our adjacent intersection (the crossroad in our vicinity). The boys in the neighborhood laugh at her and boo her. From

distance, I can see the people setting the municipality trash bin/garbage can on fire. From now on, there is no place to put our trash. This fire is no longer similar to *Charshanbeh Soori's firework and fire playing*. *It is horrible. Somebody from inside the house laughs. His laughter is weird. A laughter is heard. I am scared. I turn back. Smoke is still coming out of the lit area. It is a genie. He laughs. He is standing before me. His arms are folded on his chest. "Your wish is my command", he utters. I sit squatting on the couch from fear.*

The shadow of flames is seen on the wall inside the house as if the American Indians are having a ceremony (celebrating a traditional ceremony). The noise of another explosion is heard. I don't know what people are up to, and why they do what they do. The genie is unconscious now.

Mehrdad, his friends, and mommy are astonished. They were staring at the car (Pride) as if they were watching a slow-motion film. Mommy calls:

- Oh. Imam Hussein. Have mercy on my child.

I murmur:

- Oh. Lord. Have mercy on people and their laughter, and forgive me. God, I made a mistake.

It seems like ages for the car to drive over the capsule. According to Einstein (time is relative), the passing of time is different for different individuals.

The driver and his family are laughing. They pass by the capsule. Then it explodes. Mehrdad and mommy approach me. They are looking at me. I want to puke.

The genie says:

- Excuse me. I don't feel good.

Now it is the Genie's turn to try to puke. With a gesture, I point to the toilet. The toilet door is too small for him to pass through. He cannot go through. Mommy says:

- Oh. Imam Hussein. I want to throw up.

I call the emergency Number and an ambulance pulls over. I need to call and summon another ambulance for the genie. No lamp is needed, as the house is filled with flames of fire. The genie comes out of the toilet and sits down on the floor near me. I am sitting on a couch. He is taller than me even when sitting down on the floor. He says:

- Your wish is my command (if you need anything I am at your service).

I say:

- I want you to bring back the time. I want to return to last year, exactly this time of the year. No. A little further in time. After fire-playing was over when we were all sitting at the dining table to have dinner. No. When my mother was healthy.
- I cannot do it. Time is out of my power.

He holds my hand. It's cool. I am hot. He asks:

- Which hospital?
- Alvand

He laughs:

- It is the name of a hospital, not the mountain.

I can tell from his look that he does not know the way.

- After you set out I will guide you.

He holds me in his arm. He is big. We fly in the sky. The earth underneath is full of fire and smoke. Rockets approach us. He covers me (to protect me against the rockets). We arrive. He is wounded. Nobody sees us. We enter the ICU. I hold mommy's hand. I tell him to cure her.

- Heal her!

He puts his hand on his wounded shoulder and says:

- I am unable to do that. Such things are decided in advance.

He has a grave wound on his shoulder.

Mommy trembles restlessly. I tell genie:

- Then make her calm.

He puts his big cool hand on Mommy's forehead. The ICU room is half dark. Mommy opens her eyes for a moment. He looks at the genie. She is not scared. Perhaps she does not see him, as there are many lamps in the ceiling above her head. Mommy smiles for one moment, No. much less than a moment. Then she closes her eyes again. I say:

- Remove the god damned word "Azhideh" from her vocabulary.

It is very noisy outside. Still, explosions happen.

There is a loud noise similar to the explosion of war movies. The genie brings his head near mom's heart. Mom's linen is bloody. The genie's shoulder is bleeding. He says:

Sorry. I can't make this one either. She is reviewing her unpleasant memories and wants to reduce pressure on herself, but noises outside are annoying her. "So ...?" I say and look at him. "Do we go?" he says. "Do something at least", I say. "I can't. Give me

rational commands! For instance... Ask me to take you to the moon, but don't ask me this!"

The moon is visible through the window. It's a full moon. "OK. Take my mom and me to the moon so that it becomes quiet." I say. He looks at me. The noise of explosions has become more intense. It seems that they are all gathered under ICU window playing fireworks.

My mom and I are in his arms. We reach the moon. Everywhere is full of silver light. Everywhere is covered with clouds. "I wish I could have found you sooner, and mom could have been well and could have seen this place."

He laughs bitterly while saying: "This is the time, neither sooner nor later". Mom is sleeping. She moves but a little. The genie's clothes are full of blood. I lie down beside my mom. The genie brings me a cup of tea, a white blanket for mom and a navy blue blanket, full of stars, for me. I take his hand. It's cool. I long for a chocolate bar with a whole hazelnut in it. The genie hands me a pack of chocolate bars and I eat it. It's delicious.

My wish is that my mom would read a story to me. Mom gets up. Her dress is the one I used to love a lot, green, full of flowers with a lot of little frills around its collar and sleeves. She puts her hand through my

hair. People's voice is not heard but we can see them. Everything is ablaze.

My mom and I stand at an intersection. She is scared of crossing the road. But I was laughing. I loved fireworks. It's visible from the moon that people have put a picnic gas capsule on fire. Mehrdad came to pick us up. We got in his car and he gave us a ride home. We played fireworks outside our home, exactly where and when I had regretted.

I look at the genie. He lay in bed. There are a lot of birds around him including sparrows and crows. "Where will the birds which are on trees go?" mom asked at the dinner. The genie who had noticed my surprise replies: "The birds that have been left behind from their migration together with sparrows and crows, who have been scared, migrate to this place. None of them has a nest. All their nests have been ruined. They are lucky that it isn't springtime, otherwise, all their eggs would be lost"

Mehrdad comes to pick us up and helps me to get ready. He drags me. When we go downstairs he almost has hugged me.

I say: "We are now on the moon. Do you see how beautiful it is?! It's not at all comparable to the earth" I say. "You have to face the reality", he says few times in a row. "I heard it. How many times do you

say it? Do you think I am deaf?" I yelled. I don't want to get in his car. He forces me in and fastens my seatbelt. Why would I need a seatbelt after mom is gone? It's good there are no cars on the moon. I lean my head into the seat. I don't listen to Mehrdad's words.

I look around. The moon is full of fountains. "I wish you could get up to walk around the fountains together," I say to mom. The genie helps her to get up. The genie is holding my mother's hand and mine. His hand is not cool anymore. Mom gestures toward the largest fountain. I think to myself: "Why doesn't mom speak? I just remembered that she has told me a story but not with words. There is a waterfall at the end of the fountain which mom likes. It's not clear that the waterfall is made of light or water?!" "It's the most beautiful fountain of the Milky Way and throughout the universe", the genie says.

We are at the top of the mother's bed. The sound of explosion and laughter, from outside, can be heard. I wish they wouldn't play fireworks under the hospital window. I hear Mehrdad's voice but from a far away. "Let your mom go dear Mojdeh. She has been staying because of all your tears. Go, mom. Don't worry. We are here.

It's time for mother's migration. It will be our turn someday, too. Believe me. We will see her again. It's

only a matter of time.” My knees shake. I’m close to fainting. He hugs me. My shoulders shake. So does his. We both weep.

The sound of the explosion is heard again. Squibs and firecrackers turn into seven colors when they go up and waterfalls go up too. Firecrackers keep spinning and explode seven times. Now I think why people and neither care nor have ever been concerned with the nests of birds that are lagging behind their migration and sparrows and crows?

We approach the fountain. Mom goes inside the fountain, so does the genie. I take off my shoes and socks but the further I approach, the further the fountain moves away. Mom and the genie go into the waves near the waterfall. I rub my eyes. Together, they go under the waterfall and then behind it. Then I remember that plenty of birds lagging behind their migration together with crows and sparrows had left with them. I don’t see them anymore.

I open my eyes. It's dark. The sound of mourning and weeping are heard. Mehrdad on the phone is ordering funeral banners and tracks to be printed (to notify people of mom's demise). I don't know who they are for. "Mother, the genie, and birds lagging behind migration together with sparrows and crows are now from the moon," I say.

You can smell the smoke in the air. You can still hear the firing of very few firecrackers and cigarettes. Mehrdad has cried so much that his voice is hoarse.

I look at the moon. Mom is in the largest fountain of it, behind the most beautiful waterfall all over the Milky Way and she is not alone. The genie provides everything for her and perhaps birds sing. I think I envy the crows because they are from the moon now. Then I think there, even they sing beautifully.



**Mozghan Babamarandi** has started writing for children since ۱۹۹۰ focusing mostly on teenagers. She is a well-known figure in Iranian children & teenagers' literature and her books are published by famous Iranian publishers. Her stories reflect her own childhood. Her books contain ethical and social themes. She is fond of short-story format and this is the prominent format of her books which are published in Iran.. At the time being, she lives in Tehran. She is the author of more than ۷۸ books of novel

and collection of stories for children and young Adults  
.Among her books are:

### **Children & Young Adults Stories:**

١. **The news presenter was silent**, Rowzaneh  
Publication, ٢٠١٨
٢. **I was my grandma's mom**, Peidayesh  
Publication, ٢٠١٨
٣. **Daddy's Laugh Paint**, Monadi Tarbiat  
Publication, ٢٠١٧
٤. **In the name of god, Raise exam sheets**, Monadi  
Tarbiat Publication, ٢٠١٧
٥. **The yard was full of bird and song**, Monadi  
Tarbiat Publication, ٢٠١٧
٦. **Ghelghelak's cocoon was beside grandma**, Amir  
Kabir Publication, ٢٠١٦
٧. **Whish under the all snow was viola**, Soroosh  
Publication, ٢٠١٥
٨. **The Story of Situation and Wishes of an Ass**,  
Peidayesh Publication, ٢٠١٥
٩. **The aunt oldwoman liked storytelling**, Elmi-  
Farhangi Publication, ٢٠١٥
١٠. **The Seven Steps**, Soroosh Publication, ٢٠١٢
١١. **My mother is lost**, Institute for the Intellectual  
Development of Children and Young Adults  
Publication, ٢٠١٢
١٢. **I will become a Spiderman like Rostam**,  
Institute for the Intellectual Development of  
Children and Young Adults Publication, ٢٠١٢

۱۳. **Even the Sun Cried**, Amir Kabir Publication,  
۲۰۱۲
۱۴. **My Indian Name**, Soroosh Publication, ۲۰۱۲
۱۵. **Lady Poetess and Mr. Beethoven**, Peidayesh  
Publication, ۲۰۱۱
۱۶. **Let's go paint the sky**, Madrese Publication,  
۲۰۱۱
۱۷. **Every Year Before the First Bell**, Beh Nashr  
Publication, ۲۰۱۱
۱۸. **What is the taste of secret?**, Elmi-Farhangi  
Publication, ۲۰۱۰
۱۹. **A Shying Guest**, Elmi-Farhangi Publication,  
۲۰۱۰
۲۰. **Only the father can awakening me from sleep**,  
Institute for the Intellectual Development of  
Children and Young Adults Publication, ۲۰۱۰
۲۱. **Sun Passed Me and Moonlight**, Amir Kabir  
Publication (Shokoofe), ۲۰۰۹
۲۲. **Hi Grandpa**, Madrese Publication, ۲۰۰۸
۲۳. **Even Men Sometimes Crying**, Madrese  
Publication, ۲۰۰۸
۲۴. **The Butterfly Was My First Word**, Soroosh  
Publication, ۲۰۰۸
۲۵. **All Stars for You**, Madine Publication, ۲۰۰۱
۲۶. **Gold Fountain Pen**, Madrese Publication, ۲۰۰۱
۲۷. **A Gift for Narges**, Farhang Eslami Publication,  
۱۹۹۶
- And ۸ story books in print.

- She has more than ۱۰۰ **published stories** at prestigious magazines for children and young adults in Iran like Doost, Salam Bacheha, Roshd, Soroosh, Docharkhe, Baran, etc from ۱۹۹۰ to present.

Babamarabdi was awarded many literary prize including:

- Winner of Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults ۱۶<sup>th</sup> Festival for novel “I will become a Spiderman like Rostam”, ۲۰۱۳
- Winner of Salam Bacheha Festival for book “Hi Grandp”, ۲۰۰۹
- Appreciation of the book ” Gold Fountain Pen” at Roshd Educational Festival, ۲۰۰۳
- First Prize in story for “Hi Grandpa” at Press Festival, ۲۰۰۱

### **Other Career Successes:**

- Top Trainer Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in Tehran Province, ۲۰۰۹
- First Prize in Drama for the Play “I Miss the Sun” at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults ۵<sup>th</sup> Puppet Show Festival in Tehran Province, ۲۰۰۳
- Third Prize in Music Selection for the Play “I Miss the Sun” at the Institute for the Intellectual

- Development of Children and Young Adults ۰<sup>th</sup>  
Puppet Show Festival in Tehran Province, ۲۰۰۳
- First Prize in Directing for the Play “The Man Had No Lips” at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults ۴<sup>th</sup>  
Puppet Show Festival in Tehran Province, ۲۰۰۲
  - Top Trainer Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in the country, ۲۰۰۱
  - Top Trainer Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in Tehran Province, ۱۹۹۹
  - First Prize in Stage Design for the Play “Aunt Cockroach” at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults First  
Puppet Show Festival in the country, ۱۹۹۹
  - Storytelling Festival Winner of Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in Tehran Province, ۱۹۹۸
  - The use of the my novel **Only the father can awakening me from sleep** as one of the references in the book **Fatherhood in contemporary discourse** by Anna Pilinska, Cambridge

## Other artistic activities:

- Jury member in Drama Festival The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in Tehran province, ۲۰۱۶
- Jury member in Razavi Festival stories and memories The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, ۲۰۱۴
- Jury member in Drama Festival trainers of The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in the country, ۲۰۱۰
- Jury member in Drama Festival trainers of The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in the country, ۲۰۰۶
- Jury member in torytelling competition The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in the country, ۲۰۰۵
- Jury member in Theatre Festival Ministry of Education in Karaj, ۲۰۰۱
- Designer scene in the play “Sabr e Zard” in Chahar Soo Hall at the City Theatre, ۲۰۰۱