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Persian Heritage

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* From the editor's desk	Shahrokh Ahkami	6
* Letters to the editor		7
* News briefs		8
* Do you know . . .		9
* Past events		11
* Commentary		14
* It is Persian gulf	Shahrokh Ahkami	14
* A moment of innocence	Haydar Adel	16
* Iran a country with . . .	Prof. K. Pakbaz	20
* Taste of cherry		22
* U.S.A. wrestling team . . .		24
* Church's collection		25
* My autobiography	Farhad Farzanegan	27
* Noe Rouz glory of . . .	F.A. Sadeghpour	28
* Sabzi polow ba mahi	Najmieh Batmanghlij	30
* An Iranian icon	David Yazdan	32
* Donors Honored		33
* Persian influence . . .	F.A. Sadeghpour	34
* Photographic works . . .		35
* The sad story of love	Muniru Ravanipur	36
* My last lesson	Farideh Shahidi	38
* The ruffed pigeon	Hassan Behzadi	39
* Poem the first . . .	David A. Yeagley	40
* Stories and storyteller	F. Dowlatshahi	44
* Poetry		46
* An interview with F. Moshiri	Shahrokh Ahkami	50
* The Alley	F. Moshiri	51
* Born to entertain		56
* Outside your heritage		62

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همین امروز برای اشتراک میراث ایران اقدام کنید

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From the Editor's Desk

Dear Readers:

On behalf of Persian Heritage, I would like to extend to our readers, and to the community, best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year. We are now entering our third year of publishing Persian Heritage. It is my hope that this magazine will continue to bring individuals, who love their country and heritage, together in peace and harmony.

Engaging people in conversation has always been important to me. As I got older the most enjoyable of these discussions have been with people 20, 30, 40 years my junior. Their views on events, (past, present and future), on the arts, sciences, and music, always lead to friendly and serious debates. Make no mistake their ideas, concerns and opinions must be taken seriously.

Recently, I engaged in a conversation with a very bright, highly educated young woman. Her parents are both Iranian born. She was born and educated in Ivy League schools and now practices law in a prestigious law firm. She related the following event to me: the young woman had written a letter to another individual. Her letter ended with "Should you have any questions, get back to me". A few days later her secretary, with a funny expression on her face, informed her that she received a telephone call from the person she had written to. Her secretary continued by saying that the individual wanted to know if this woman, with a Persian last name, was able to speak English!

Listening to this young woman tell this story, sparked my memory. It was during the crisis between Iran and the United States, when the downing of an Iranian airliner, left so many innocent men, women and children dead. During this crisis an Iranian friend of mine, a physician by profession, was involved in malpractice litigation. He

is a US citizen, highly educated, with a command of the English language, but, speaks with an accent. (This situation is sure to grab at your emotions, so I ask you not to reach a conclusion until the end). His case was just beginning. As a defendant in a lawsuit he often felt like a puppet loosing control of his every movement. What was worse was having to depend on someone you do not know to defend your position. There is little time for the attorney and client to know each other's personal views on life. As professionals, personal views should not come into play during the course of a defense. But they are human and it happens. Likewise, a jury should be able to separate their personal views from the truth, yet we know this is often not the case.

In his opening statement to the jury his attorney stated that they must consider the cultural and educational background of his client. Because he was foreign born and educated they should apply a different standard of care. There was complete silence in the courtroom. This statement coupled with the crisis left little reason to continue with the defense. My friend requested a settlement. His insurance company, however, felt the allegations against him were false. They were certain that the jury would decide in his (their) favor. That did not happen and my friend walked away, a victim of the system.

After the fact, he questioned his young attorney on the opening statement. He was curious to know how much research he did on foreign education prior to making that opening statement. Where did he get this ridiculous notion that he was less trained than those physicians who graduated from US schools? Did he think that foreign graduates were just given a license? If anything, he along with other foreign graduates, was held to a higher, not lesser standard. He

told the young man that an accent and a difference in religion or traditions is not a license to practice bad medicine, nor should it be. For *certain* it should never have been brought to the attention of the jury. After this brief but powerful lecture, the young man visibly shaken, apologized. He admitted that his statements were obviously the result of his lack of education and his understanding of the Iranian people and its culture. Of course his apology could not mend the damage. Trying to find some good from this situation, my friend walked away believing that just maybe he educated one more young American on who and what is an Iranian/Persian.

I suddenly heard the young woman's voice "Are you listening to me. What should I do? How should I respond?" Looking at her I knew my words had to be precise. I wanted her to understand that to respond, would probably have an adverse effect. On the other hand, to ignore it could result in this young woman losing a sense of herself and her heritage. And so... I suggested that she continue to put forth her best efforts. The results of her hard work would automatically erase the baseless accusation. As she walked away, a part of me wanted to call her back and tell her to respond to the letter with a letter written in the four languages that she fluently reads and writes and add a final PS., "should you have any questions get back to me in????!!!"

As this New Year begins I hope that it will be the year that your worth is measured by your contribution to society, rather than your accent, ethnicity, religion or figure of speech.

Best wishes
Happy New Year

Shahrokh Alavi



F.A. SADEGHPOUR

In the fall 1996 issue of Persian Heritage, an article appeared entitled "Mehr'gaun". In this article, I briefly touched upon "Noe Rouz" which celebrates the coming of spring by nations of Aryan heritage or Iranians. (When we speak of Iranian nations, we include nations who have a common foundation, language and history). We can safely mention countries from east to west beginning with Tajikistan, the land of Keepers of the Crown, to Azerbaijan (Aran) Republic. Those of Aryan heritage include Kurds, in any country in which they reside, Afghans, Belouch, whether in present Iran or Pakistan, and the multitude of Parsees in India.

Before the four seasons became part of the present calendar, there were two seasons which ancient Iranians celebrated. These were "Zayana" or winter, of which Mehr'gaun was its festival, and "Hama", summer, celebrated by the festival of Noe Rouz to announce its coming.

In order to understand why Noe Rouz and Mehr'gaun have held their status as the two most important festivals of the vast Iranian nations, we must first go back to prehistoric centuries. In ancient times, the climate of our northern hemisphere was not as it is today, therefore, our forebears had only two major seasons. Spring and summer only lasted two to three months, and the rest of the year was winter. Gradually the climate became more temperate. Noe Rouz occurs exactly when the length of night and the length of day are equal. Of course here, we must mention that the most correct calendar is the Iranian calendar which calculates the days and months in the solar calendar. A real year is 365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 64 seconds. "Noe" in the Persian language means "new". In the old Persian language this was pronounced "nov". "Rouz" means "day", and in old Persian was pronounced "rouzh", then "rouch" and now "rouz". Hence, "Noe Rouz" means "new day" or "new year". In the Christian calendar, Noe Rouz falls

NOE ROUZ

Glory Of Spring



either on March 20th or 21st which is the very first day of the spring season.

During the Sassanid Dynasty (226-652 A.D.), the first days of Noe Rouz, the king would be attentive to the nobles and army personnel. The second five days, he would attend to all the people. The king would pardon prisoners, and give presents and new clothing to the poor and needy. On the third five days the governors, "satraps", would present gifts to the king. On the first day of Noe Rouz, the king would don new raiment made of silk, and alone would sit upon the throne in the receiving hall or throne room. The chief magus would enter with novitiates carrying a tray. Upon the tray, were a gold chalice of red wine, a bejeweled ring, one gold sovereign, a bunch of myrtle, a sword, a bow and arrow, a pen and an inkwell. Waiting in the palace, there would also be a white horse with a groom. The chief magus would then begin to sing a Noe Rouz hymn.

Before the hymn, the army commanders, and the senior members of government would enter the throne room to present the king with their good wishes. The chief magus would then, on behalf of all the well wishers, recite the following soliloquy:

"O king, our prayers are with you on this auspicious Noe Rouz. Defend freedom as your forebears. Their ethos witness today's celebration, and have brought songs of sight and savvy. Live long with the spirit of glory. Drink from the chalice of Jamshyd for wisdom. Stay green and young always as the myrtle. May you reign always straight as an arrow. May your blade stay keen against our foes. May your steed be strong and fast upon the enemy. May your treasury always be filled with gold and

gems. May your pen serve the writ of justice."

The chief magus would then hand the gifts one by one to the great king while the nobles and senior knights witnessed the event.

After the advent of Islam in Iran, the first four caliphs, "senior caliphs", paid neither attention to Noe Rouz nor to Mehr'gaun. After the senior caliphs, the Ommiads (Omayyads), took over the caliphate 661-750 A.D.. They discovered that it was financially advantageous to lift the ban for these festivities. By allowing the Iranians to celebrate their feast, instead of expecting simple gifts such as myrtle, a chalice of wine, a single ring or solitary gold coin, the Ommiad caliphs demanded exorbitant gifts from the Iranians. The Iranians submitted to these demands because they desired to keep the customs and traditions of their forebears alive, and these traditions represented their independence as a nation which are continuing to this day.

Finally, between 747 and 750 A.D., an Iranian champion from the province of Khorasan by the name of Beh'zaudan, also known as Abu Moslem, overthrew the Ommiad Dynasty and selected a caliph from the house of Abbass. Thus began the Abbasside Dynasty. This Dynasty lasted from 750 to 1258 A.D. The capital of this Dynasty was the city of Bagdad.* The Abbassides also allowed the Iranians to celebrate their important feasts and were active participants. We, in turn, with our outmost perservance and fortitude continue to hold onto these traditions of our rich culture. We pass them on to future generations, no matter where they reside, as though these traditions were written with a diamond pen upon golden pages of history.

On this occasion of Noe Rouz, Persian Heritage Magazine extends its good wishes to all the peoples of the world, and especially to all Iranians. **PH**

* Bagdad is constructed from two Persian words, "Bag", God, and "dad" (daud), given, hence Bagdad means

Godgiven. Before the advent of Islam Bagdad was the winter residence of the Sassanid, Kings of "Persia", Iran.

Present day Iraq was always known as the first province of 27 Satrappi-Province of Persian Empire.



From left: Delkash, Ash Movaghar and standing, Sohail, her son.

An Iranian Icon

David Yazdan, M.D., F.A.C.S.

It was I believe in the winter or spring of 1947 that a young artist came from the north to Teheran. I believe that was also the first time that we bought our first radio and I was in the seventh grade. My mother, God bless her soul, screamed "Yazdan". I answered "yes, Mom?", come here and listen to the nightingale. I was a little young boy, starting my first year of "high school", a very big and rough transition. She was singing "Robabeh-Jon" part of the song had a local northern dialect, which to this day is beautiful to listen to. Never in the annals of human endeavour, are there so many Persians who owed so much to one person for their memories and enjoyment. Since then this unique individual took the town by storm. She had enough juice to light up the town on any given day at any moment.

When you look at the life stories of the great composers, musicians and

artists, there is always some sadness involved in it. Most of you if not all, saw Amadeus which was a somewhat edited version of Mozart's life and the more recent movie of the beloved Beethoven which did not make the same impression upon people as Amadeus did. But, to me they were both excellent. There are similarities between their lives. In any event, when I look back among all the musicians, composers and singers in history there were only very few who could direct, compose and sing at the same time. Mozart eventually could play, compose and direct. On several occasions Beethoven did direct, also very, very few actors, actresses, artists, composers and directors you would find that are able to do all of these things. There are many songs that she has sung, and composed the lyrics, sang and also directed the orchestra. By now, of course you have guessed correctly, the name of this outstanding artist is Delkash.

It is impossible to put it in words the influence that this artist has had in

the cultural and the classic Persian music. There is practically no one who has lived through those years that can possibly forget the beautiful memories that this lady has created for us. Most of the weddings, birthday's and celebrations whether it was the new year, whether it was private, Provincial or Federal, she was in it.

Last year, I received a copy of an article that a colleague of mine, Dr. A.S.M. had written about her in one of the Philadelphia newspapers that was not only quite poignant but somewhat sad. I have had the privilege to correspond with this lovely lady. Even though her health is not quite the way it should be still she manages to get around to do her daily activities. It is sad to say that the lack of care, and work pressure plus alcoholism killed Mozart at the age of thirty-four. Our beautiful nightingale has not song for almost twenty years. By that, millions and millions of Iranians, both at home and abroad were deprived of the enjoyment to cherish the voice and the lyrics of this lovely individual.

She has also played in several movies which were fantastic but we can not find them. Her influence, in at least my life, was so profound that, when I was in medical school, I began to like Havez and even look at the Deevon because many songs that she sang were from Havez. Now that I am much older I even enjoy it more when I listen to it.

Several years ago at the request of my close friends and family she honored me with a picture of her which I have enclosed. It is not a very pretty picture but the beauty in this individual is not external it is deeply seeded in our heart. The very fact that she is still alive is a miracle. For the past ten to fifteen years every time I see my colleagues they all state that they love her and they would like to see her come here at least once to honor us before she leaves us forever. I hope I live to see that in our New Years Eve, she comes in and lights up the entire town as she did fifty years ago.

To do this it requires an

orchestrated effort on everyone's part, just the word of mouth is not going to do it, just a show of interest is not going to do it. We have got to make a real effort, which is going to be relatively costly if only a few participate but if every one participates, it will not be. We can then prepare for her to come, not this year, hopefully next year. To prepare and get her ready for the big gala event of our New Years Eve, which will be March of 1999.

How about it friends? Do we have enough courage and guts to pull this off? I have spoken with everyone and practically everyone says that they are ready. Of course we will see when it comes for them to spend a few dollars if they are still that anxious. I for one will do everything in my power to do this if I can, it is one of my very, very special wishes. From what I know, she is not really that old, only seventy-four to seventy-five years old.

The other outstanding talent of this individual is that she could sing all the notes of the Persian classics. In the history there are very, very few who could sing all the notes correctly, none as beautifully as her. I am going to ask the Editor to put my office number and of course you know his office number, I would like to see a real effort by everyone to call and make the effort to help pull this off. Now, here is the best anti-depressant prescription for Spring: Listen to the "Dance of Gypsies," Raghserh Koleeha," by Delkash. Spring symphony, Robert Schuman, Pastoral Symphony by Beethoven, Egyptian 5th Conceto by Camil San Sens. No Prozac, but a cocktail would be fine.

Thank You!

PH

Donors Honored



On December third students and faculty of the University of Pennsylvania gathered with members of the Iranian Cultural Society of America ("Shabahang") and other local Iranian cultural organizations at a reception held at the Van Pelt Library. The reception honored the Society and its outgoing President, Dr. Ezzy Vermian, for their donation of an annual prize of \$1,000 to the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. The prize is to be awarded each year to the most promising student studying Persian language and literature.

Dr. L. Clarke, Lecturer in Persian in the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, opened the meeting with remarks on the long tradition of teaching and scholarship in Persian and Iranian studies at Penn. She noted that, since courses were first offered in Old Persian and Avestan nearly a century ago, Penn has instituted a program in classical and modern Persian language and literature; played an important role in Iranian archeology through the University Museum; enjoyed a "sister" relationship with the former Pahlavi University, now the University of Shiraz; served as one of the U.S. bases of the American Institute of Iranian Studies founded in 1967; and presently has one of the most extensive set of Iranian courses offered in of any university in North America.

Addressing the audience in Persian and English, Dr. Yermian stated that "as the bearers of Persian culture, Iranian-Americans bear an important responsibility. Our precious Persian heritage is a heritage for the world, not just as ourselves. No truly great university can dispense with the study of Persian. We hope that this will be the beginning of a wider cooperation in stimulating interest

in Persian studies among young scholars, whether of Iranian or non-Iranian origin. Dr. Everett Rowson, Director of the Middle East Center, in turn presented to Dr. Yermian a desk set bearing the University of Pennsylvania logo, acknowledging his key role in the award and long service to the Iranian-American community. Both expressed hopes for further cooperation between the Center and Shabahang and other Iranian cultural organizations; Dr. Kamelia Pourrezai, incoming president, added that the award would also perpetuate Persian language and culture "among the next generation, our future hope."

In addition to the persons named above and past and present members of the Board of the Iranian Cultural Society of America (Shabahang), some of those present were Ms. Sima Haddadzadeh, President of the Omar Khayyam Society; Ms. Mary Martin, Assistant Director of the Penn Persian Society; Ms. Mary Martin, Assistant Director of the Middle East Center; Prof. Brian Spooner, Professor of Anthropology; Ms. Shiva Vakili and Mr. Farooq Hamid, Instructors in Persian; Prof. Ezzat Nigahban, former Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Sciences, University of Tehran and present Guest Curator, Near East Section, University Museum; Dr. Wilma Heston, instructor in Old Persian and Avestan; Prof. Holly Pittmann, Associate Professor of the History of Art and Director of the Center of Ancient Studies; and Dr. Akbar Torsunzad, former head of the Institute of Oriental Studies in the Tajikistan Academy of Sciences and present Visiting Curator for Central Asian Ethnology, Near East Section of the University Museum.

PH

New Music From An Ancient Land

Persian Influence In Modern Music



By: F. A. Sadeghpour

On Friday, February 13, 1998, Jordan Hall at the New England conservatory in Boston, MA, a brilliant concert was witnessed by many concertgoers. Persian music and its essence, not only was heard but felt like an electric current surging throughout the soul of the listener. The Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP) was under the baton of Gil Rose, Music Director. The performance was luminous and the atmosphere numinous in which the audience was spellbound.

The concert opened to the strains of Henry Cowell's (1897-1965) Persian set. Composed between November 1956 and February 1957, Persian Set is the musical culmination of the composer's three month visit to Iran at

the invitation of the Iranian government. Cowell wrote in 1957 that he was struck by the qualities of Iranian folk and classical music, which were unique to anything that he had heard in Western music. Although the sounds were different, Cowell found that conceptually, there were similarities between Western and Iranian music, including the use of canon. With these thoughts in mind, Cowell's intent in composing Persian Set was not to imitate the Iranian music with which he had become familiar, but to explore this music from a Western point of view in the hope of illuminating the common musical elements of Iranian and Western cultures.

Cowell includes in his four-movement set the tar, a three-stringed instrument with a sound similar to

that of the mandolin; in fact, the mandolin is often used as a replacement for the tar when one is not available. The mandolin was used in the BMOP performance. The tar, clarinet, and piccolo enjoy prominent roles in each movement. In the Moderato, Cowell uses a sinuous main theme to capture a Persian feel; the clarinet is particularly effective in this area. The tar part serves as a refrain of sorts, framed by the main cadenzalike melody that is traded among the winds. This theme has an improvisational quality to it; as the movement continues, the main theme seems to extend and grow out of itself.

Persian Set received its premiere under the direction of Antal Dorati in Teheran on September 17, 1957. Cowell dedicated the work to "His Excellency Mohamed Hejazi."

The performance of Reza Vali's flute concerto had its world premiere. Commissioned by the BMOP, Vali composed this concerto specifically with the Chilean flutist, Alberto Amarza, in mind.

At the Teheran Conservatory in his native Iran, Vali first studied music in the Western European tradition, and was not educated in the history and techniques of Persian music. His interest in Persian music extends back to his teenage years, however, he began a formal study about ten years ago. Vali was inspired by Bela Bartok who wrote folk music of peasants in Hungary. Fascinated by Bartok and his methods of transcribing folk music Vali began collecting and transcribing the folk music he heard in Iran. When he left Iran, Vali continued transcribing music, electronically. When he began to study Persian classical music, which he describes as "unbelievably rich and extremely complex," he programmed a computer to recreate the interval system that is unique to Persian music.

Vali's flute concerto creates the structure of Persian music aesthetically. The two movements of the work have as their main influences both Persian classical and folk music. The first movement is designed like a Persian carpet, and uses flute, strings, percussion, and harp in the mode of Dashti. The flutiest involves a technique of singing and playing simultaneously which brings out the overtones and alters the timbre of the instrument. Vali states that this technique is used to imitate the sound of the Nay, a vertical Persian flute.

The very fast second movement uses rhythmic cycles which represent cycles called "dore" in medieval Persian music. The underlying structure contains an ostinato sustained by the two Persian drums, dabarabuka and the daf. This upbeat movement, which is based more on Persian folk music than classical music, has a great deal of dance character to it. In the final cadenza, the concerto comes full circle as the flutist returns to the technique of singing and playing at the same time.

Vali studied in Vienna before

coming to the United States, where he earned a Ph.D. in theory and composition from the University of Pittsburgh in 1985. He is a member of the faculty at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. In addition to the BMOP, he has been commissioned by the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic, and the Kronos Quartet.

Alan Hovhaness's interest in Oriental music and philosophies lends an air of mysticism to his works, and *The Rubiyat* is one such work.

He chose the words of the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam, to relate this narrative work. A soft mellifluous introduction precedes Khayyam's evocative narration. Hovhaness has the ability to make the spoken word adopt the qualities of a musical instrument. The instruments of the orchestra are joined by the accordion and create the sounds that he most likely imagined would have been heard in settings which are described.

The solo accordion is the prominent instrument throughout the work imitating Azeri folk music. During the interludes which occur between the verses of the poem, the accordion plays variations on the main theme that begins the work. Hovhaness uses more and more word painting as the work progresses, beautiful in its simplicity, to provide an aural version of the words being recited. Hovhaness conveys an endless searching for something or someone, and it is thus that the work ends as it began, with the main theme in the accordion leading to a grand finale.

Behzad Ranjbaran composed his *Symphony No. 1* in 1992, during a period in his life when he was preoccupied with the never ending question of the meaning of life. He considers this piece to be a celebration of life. The thematic material of the first movement is the basis of the entire symphony. The first movement is, according to Ranjbaran, "a mixture of purposefulness and ambiguity." It refuses to go in a single direction, which results in a rather unsettled character. The second movement, with a somber, elegiac tone, is marked

by a resonance that is sometimes suggestive and sometimes direct.

The final movement, a spirited finale, is built on harmonic and melodic material which is directly linked to the opening of the symphony. This energetic movement follows the logical and emotional development of its musical material. Ranjbaran states that the finale is not meant to imply any philosophical conclusion, with the possible exception of his general optimism about life.

Ranjbaran entered the conservatory in his native Teheran at the age of nine. He commenced studies at Indiana University upon his arrival to the United States in 1974, and later earned a doctorate from The Juilliard School, where he currently serves on the faculty. He is much-celebrated as a composer, and his works have been performed throughout the world. He has received commissions from the Long Beach Symphony and Nashville Ballet, and performers from whom he has composed include soprano Renee Fleming, cellist Paul Tobias, and violinist Joshua Bell.

The staff and contributors of *Persian Heritage* wish these brilliant young shining stars continued success in the future. They are a credit to Iranians worldwide, and a true representation of our Persian culture. PH

PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKS BY 10 IRANIAN ARTISTS

On Sunday March 22 to 30, 10 Iranian male and female, in accomplished professionals, fine art, photographers gathered together for the first time from across the United States, to present their diverse photographic works. This was a sensational demonstration of talent offering an original vision it was held at the Photogenic Studio, Los Angeles.

PH



My Last Lesson

By: Farideh Shahidi

My father was a public official who had the power to decide questions brought before a court of law. Through his hard work and sense of fairness, my Father was appointed to the position of the Supreme Court of Justice. With all the challenges my Father faced, he still helped me discover my personality, shape my life, and learn essential ideas. For instance, in response to my question about wrong doers he replied:

"It is obvious that society must be protected from the bad and criminals. But most of the wrong doers are psychologically maladjusted and are really ill. They are despairing and hopeless people who are suffering

from mental sickness or other misfortune. The government of a civilized society with its wealth and capabilities should help these people. This help will prevent considerable maleficence, suicide, and other disasters."

Another day, without setting forth an introduction, my Father said, "Do you know that happiness lies in being healthy? If one really wants to be healthy, happy, and full of life he (she) must be careful about his (her) eating and drinking habits and particularly avoid taking artificial nutrients, meat, and sugar products."

I accepted his ideas because I trusted his judgement. We had many discussions about different subjects. I

enjoyed my companionship with my Father and he gave me valuable lessons about morality. Let me share my last lesson:

It was during the summer season and on a weekend day. I was nine years old. As my Father and I were walking in a park, we met a man who bowed to my Father several times. I was surprised and questioned my answer. When I repeated my question about the man he murmured, "What a strange world this is?"

"What do you mean? I asked. My Father looked at me and continued: "The man who you met just now is a very rich man. He was convicted of a crime sometime ago. Then he wanted me to exculpate him. In return, he would grant me a lot of money! But I didn't accept his bribe."

Impatiently I asked my Father to tell me what happened afterwards and why the man still respected him? My Father smiled and replied, "It is simple and clear and my dear daughter. You must understand that throughout history, under every circumstance the noble conscience has been respected by human beings, even by guilty people and wrong doers. Had I considered his offer or others like him, I could have accumulated a lot of wealth. But I always refused to do so because I believe that moral values are actual deeds, which must be worked for, hoped for, and died for. In the case of your own fortune, if you wish to have a peaceful and happy life, valuing morality is the surest way to achieve it.

I was overwhelmed with this experience. My father's words touched me so deeply that I have treasured that memory, which was my last lesson from him about moral values. A short time later my Father was killed in an automobile accident.

Nowadays, when I think about my Father who was also my best friend, I remember his great thoughts and tears roll down my cheeks. I can't bring back those precious times with my father. But I won't forget my last lesson and I always remember his kindness and how anyone, including his young daughter, bowed and respected him.

PH



An Interview with

Fereidoun Moshiri

A Gift from Iran

By: Shahrokh Ahkami

Translated by: F.A. Sadeghpour

PH. Hello, Mr. Moshiri and thank you for granting Persian Heritage the following interview. Please tell us about yourself in your own words.

FM. I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

PH. Were you born in Teheran?

FM. My birth certificate has my birthdate as September 23, 1927 in Teheran. I lived in Teheran until I was 8 years old. At that time my father worked at the Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone, and then we went to live in Mashad. We stayed in Mashad until December 1942. My father was sent back to Teheran. I am still living in Teheran.

PH. Do you have brothers and sisters?

FM. I have two brothers and one sister. My brothers were named Mansour and Manoucher, and my sister, Forough. Unfortunately, two years ago Forough passed away in Iran, and Mansour, who was living in Texas in the U.S., has also passed away.



PH. Did an interest in writing run in your family?

FM. Our family was involved with literature and art. My maternal grandfather, Mirza Javaud Khan-e-Moetaman-ol-Mamaulek, was mentioned in the book of "Dr. Mosadegh's Sorrows". My grandfather was an elegist. Unfortunately, there is no tome of his works printed. My mother occasionally would write either couplets or epigrams. My father was a friend and companion of Eshghi in Bagdad, and a good friend of Aurif in Teheran. The poetry Divans (books) of Ferdosi, Nizami, Khayyam, Sa'di, and Hafiz were always within our reach, as well as many other poets.

PH. When did you become interested?

FM. Since I was 4 or 5 years old, I have read Shahnameh, Hafiz and Sa'di. I have an exceptional memory, and I would remember them as if they were etched in stone. I would try to



memorize the works of all these great poets. Fortunately, my memory is still strong at the age of 70. Not only do I remember my own poems and past poets' works, I can also recite the works by contemporary good poets. Since I was 21 years old, I have been earning a living and studying. I was employed by the government, and also became a reporter and writer for the media. I was in charge of a few pages for two or three magazines in Teheran, but my literary base was in "Sokhan Magazine" whose editor was the great Dr. Khanlary. My poems really developed in that surrounding. In 1995 I became acquainted with a student who was an art major named Egbal Akhavan. Shortly thereafter, we were married. We became parents of a daughter named Bahaur, and sometime later a son named Bobak. Both studied architecture and, with their spouses and children, live happily in Iran. In 1979 I retired from Iran Communication Company. I have had twelve tomes of my poetry printed and a book relating to the life and

THE ALLEY

Fereydoon Moshiri

Translated by:
Faranak Moshiri

On a moonlit night, once again,
Through the alley, I wandered, without you.
My body, and eyes gazing in search of you,
My soul, a cup teeming with anticipation,
Of seeing you,
Now, I became the mad lover, anew!
Deep in my soul's treasure-chest,
A flower, your memory, gleaming.
The garden of a thousand memories, smiling.
The scent of a thousand memories, beaming.
That night, I recalled,
Through the alley, we wandered, side by side,
Wings wide-open, in cherished solitude, soaring,
For a time, by the brook, resting.
You, all the world's secrets in your black eyes,
I, by your glances, mesmerized,
Clear skies, quiet night,
Faith smiling, time tame.
Moonlight, grapes pouring down into the water.
Tree branches, fingers reaching up to the moon.
The night, the meadow, flowers and rocks,
Silently charmed by the nightingale's song.
Your words of warning, I recalled,
Avoid this love!
Behold this brook for a while!
Water mirrors timid love.
Today, you care for a glance of your lover,
But, tomorrow, your heart will belong to another.
Leave this town,
Forget this love.

"How would I avoid this love,
I do not know how, I said.
How would I leave your side,
I can not now, nor ever, I said".
That first day, my heart became a bird of desire.
Like a dove, I perched on your roof,
Rocks, you cast at me,
I did not fly away.
I did not fall apart.
A prairie deer am I, you're the hunter,
Round your traps I wander and wander,
For to be captured by you, to surrender.
How would I avoid this love,
I do not know how, I said.
How would I leave your side,
I can not now, nor ever, I said.
From a branch, a teardrop, falling.
A bitter moan, an owl, flying.
Tears in your eyes, gleaming.
Moon, at your love, beaming.
You fell silent, I recall.
Covered by a blanket of gloom,
I did not fly away.
I did not fall apart.
Many a night have passed in melancholy darkness.
You have abandoned your tormented lover.
You would not set foot in that alley again.
Oh, but how, but how,
Through the alley, I wandered, without you.

Moshiri

adventures of the great Sufi, Abu Said Abil Khair. I really have no idea if I have forgotten to say anything else about myself.

PH. When did you start publishing your poems?

FM. When I was almost 18 years old and I was writing for the media, my poems were sporadically published. My first book was published was titled, *"Eager for Storm"* with an introduction by the late Ali Dashti and Mohammed Hossain Shahryar. Until that time, I had never met Shahryar, but he had read my poems and from Tabriz sent me a very kind letter addressed to my "talented and unseen friend, Feraidoun Moshiri". The late Mr. Dashti wrote an article about modern poetry in *"Kauvian Magazine"* which referenced a few lines of my poetry. He said, "reading your poetry I became optimistic that our poetry has reached a new age." Within two or three years of each other the following poems were printed, *"Eager for Storm"*, *"Sin of the Sea"*, *"Cloud and Alley"*, *"Don't Believe the Spring"*. An anthology of the four books, and a pocket edition called *"Chosen One"* were published shortly thereafter. In 1978 the book, *"From Silence"* was published and from 1988 to the present the *"Pearl of Love"*, *Anthology of Poems*, *"Whisper of Rain"*, *"From the Realm of Reconciliation"*, *"Moments and Sentiment"*, *"The Song of That Forlorn Bird"* were published. In Los Angeles recently, an anthology of my twelve books called *"The Sky full of Birds"* has been published and is available.

PH. Why is it that the poem, "Alley", remains so popular?

FM. I think it best that you ask the people. However since it was published 35 years ago, I believe the attention to faith and the feelings of the people has made it popular. I have twelve anthologies and over 600 titled poems including *"A Tear For the Passing of History"*, and when I attend



the literary gatherings in lecture halls at universities, invariably they ask me to read the poem *"Alley"*. Although *"Alley"* and *"A Tear For the Passing of History"* were printed together, *"Alley"* has broken the record for popularity. I have an anecdote that happened recently in one of the states in the U.S. that I would like to share with you. At one of the poetry readings, a learned gentleman, in order to introduce me began with a reading of my poem, *"Alley"*, and then proceeded to give my biography. He then immediately called me to the podium. When I appeared on the stage, the audience in unison chanted *"Alley... Alley"*. I said that *"Alley"* was read a few moments ago by the host, but the audience again in unison demanded to hear it again recited by me. They would not be quiet until I read it.

PH. Apparently the poet Forough Farrokh Zaud began her career at "Roshan'fekar Magazine" when you were editor of the literary section of that magazine. Are there any recollections you can share with us?

FM. That's right. Her first poem and many thereafter have been published

in *"Roshan'fekar"*. In those days Forough just arrived with her husband from Aubadan. One day as I was sitting in my office, a shy lady with a single sheet of paper rolled in her hand, and ink stains on her fingers entered my office. I asked her to sit down, and after an introduction, I ordered some tea in order to make her feel comfortable. She said she had a poem she wanted me to read, and if it was good, she wanted me to publish it. I read the poem, and I liked it. I promised her that I would publish it. She seemed very happy, and every week thereafter there were poems written by her that were published in the magazine. Her first poem was the very same famous poem titled *"I Sinned, A Sin Full of Pleasure"* which created a tremendous amount of noise. There were many who were pro and many who were anti to the publication of the poem, but it was too late, the poem was published.

PH. One thing surprised me more than anything else. It is the basis of my admiration for you: In spite of all the literary cacophony I observed you never got involved with these arguments. Was that due to your indifference?

FM. No, not at all. I was not indifferent. I also heard and read the arguments; useless arguments I tried to avoid. In my opinion, one can have a dialogue and reach a satisfactory result, but to argue and make noise is not correct and generally the truth gets lost in the argument.

PH. I see and feel these days that besides poetry you also have an interest in music. Would you mind expanding further on this?

FM. Of course. When I was young, I used to play the mandolin. Even now I won't allow my mandolin to stay silent. I like music very much whether Western classic or Persian music. I am fascinated and have enough knowledge of both. For years I was a member of the poets, association on Radio Iran, and I participated in 150 programs of "Fresh Flowers". This was produced by Mr. Houshan Ebtehaj. (H.A. Sauyeh).

There were also weekly musical digests on the radio. Some composers had put my poems to music, and I also had written poems to music including "Fill Up My Cup", and "Memory of My Kind Beloved", "Ode to Spring", "Melody for Desire", and "For My Daughter, Bahaur", etc. It behooves me to explain something about the poem "Memory of My Kind Beloved". This poem was published in the book *WHISPER OF RAIN* exactly at the time that Maestro Banaun passed away. The music to this poem was sung by Kauveh Daylami, and each section was composed in ascending and descending modes. I remember that afterwards Maestro Shahidi commented, "I have associated with Persian Classical music for over 50 years, and I have never heard such a pleasant, melodious work.

PH. Please tell me about the direction that your verse and poetry has taken up to the present time?

FM. Like many other poets, in my youth I began to write poetry when I was in love, such as my first book *"Eager for Storm"*. This book was a passionate narration. Some time later



when I entered into society, most of my poems were written about society. Now I may say that I am comfortably in my third stage. I mostly think and write about humanity, social justice, goodness and loving.

PH. You have written so much in your poetry about the mother country, Iran, and you are still living there. What is your opinion about immigrants who have lived in various countries of the West for many years?

FM. Frankly, I do not like to see this, especially professionals such as doctors. I hear these days that approximately 7,000 Persian doctors live in the U.S. Believe me the poor people of Iran have invested a great deal to educate you, yet they are not receiving any benefit for their investment. You doctors seem to be like, as the saying goes, "like a candle lighting the temple, but the house is in darkness". In one of my verses, I have written,

"Love to perigrinate but not migrate.

Cutting ties never, from Iran never separate."

I believe the country, Iran, and the

Iranians are in need of doctors. You doctors who live in the U.S. like your colleagues in Iran, could serve the people and make a fairly comfortable living. Whenever I think of the German doctor, Albert Schweitzer, who lived in the heart of Africa for more than 50 years serving poor people, and didn't receive a single penny, I think of you doctors and your responsibility toward humanity, especially those poor humans in Iran who need you. On the other hand, I am not judging you. On the contrary, I'm quite aware of your pain and the limitations you faced in Iran which caused you to immigrate. I always remember the verse from the great Sa' di:

"O Sa'di, though the love of country is an honored passion, I can't abide dying gradually where I was born".

I asked an Iranian doctor, who is a laser specialist in Dubai, why he wasn't practicing in Iran, and he answered that he had started with the same machine in Iran, but every time he needed a spare part, he had to leave his practice and for months wander in the bureaucratic halls to get a permit to order the needed part. "Here in Dubai I can order parts from any part



of the world and have it within several hours." He said.

PH. You also have written a poem for the late Mr. Golnaraughi who sang "Kiss Me". Why did this song effect the people so much?

FM. If you recall, people made queues to purchase this record because of the lovely melody and socio-romantic message that the poem conveyed.

PH. Please tell us about the change in poetry, and the writer of contemporary poetry, Nima Yushge?

FM. Perhaps, I can briefly summarize this for you. During the constitutional revolution, different windows opened wide toward Europe. The translations of poets and writers of Europe, particularly France, and their publications in literary magazines, our poets and writers in Iran became familiar with the new style of literature. This became so effective that Mirzadeh Eshghi became the first to compose a poem for opera. The opera was Shirin Dokht, and the poem was written in long and short hemistich, thusly,

"The moment love of country rose in my heart I saw a lady rising from a grave. She first lifted her head and looked about.

I don't know what happened next

She suddenly lamented from her soul "This ruined cemetery is not our Iran. This ruin isn't Iran! Where is Iran?"

One of Esghi's contemporaries, A. Lauhouti, also wrote with the same style and free verse. Afterward it was Nima. Nima began to expand on free verse which was continued until this time. Nima Yushge has many works that haven't been published. I recall him telling me "that I wrote works in pencil on small pieces of paper, and I have many bags full at home."

I believe this is a bitter reality, and it is painful, and for the very same reason, we have foregone many successful endeavors.

PH. Do you have any message for the present generation who live outside of the country?

FM. Why yes. "Think of Iran. Think more about her and think about her hard. Think about Iran". PH

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