

Be a leader, not a follower

by K. Navi

If we were all leaders with no followers what a chaotic state the world would be in.
So let us give recognition to the followers, who carefully choose their leaders,
For it is the true leader who guides us to success without denying us of ourselves.

Letter

by Ali Zarrin

I look at the three
small dolls across from my desk,
the two little bears and the duckling.
The smaller bear, black and white,
wearing black shorts, face-down
on the floor against the wall.
The larger bear, a bride
with white hat,
inside the musical vase
we brought from your grandmother's house.
The duckling is sideways
inside the other vase.

I look at the framed picture
of the three of us
in the boy's bedroom,
where he hasn't slept yet,
and the damaged pictures
I picked up with a new roll of film
free of charge as compensation from the drugstore.

I walk the hills and around the lake
and return to a warm bath and a cold shower,
and sleep in the wide white bed,
half-conscious not to roll over our little boy.

In the Gardens of Spring

by Hooshang Rahnama

In the gardens of spring,
The flowers are blossoming.
The Cypress asks the West wind:
For whom the nightingales sing?
For the Lilacs dressed in purple?
Or the jasmines serene in repose?
Adorned with gold from toe to head;
Or perhaps they sing for the Rose,
Renowned as 'the lady in red'?
With every move in every song
That every nightingale does sing,
The seeds of love get scattered
In the gardens of spring.

Aurash the Archer (Kamaun-geer)

by F. A. Sadeghpour

According to the Zoroastrian holy book, Avesta, Aurash-e-Kamaungeer, (Aurash the Archer), an Iranian hero, by his patriotic sacrifice saved his country and prevented much bloodshed. Aurash climbed the Elburz Mountain to shoot his arrow thereby determining the disputed board variance. This event happened on Wednesday the 13th of the Iranian month of Teer (June 22-July 22). Hence, this month is the celebration of Teergaun. The following epic poem describes the event:*

** Before the advent of Islam, the majority of Iranian nations believed in Zoroastrianism.*

Once upon a forgotten time
There was a wise old warrior
Of youthful mien and mind,
Named Aurash the archer.
Crowned with white mane
That secured by a leathern snood;
His age and wisdom of genial mood.
Valor shown in the pride he bore,
And the experience of three score.
Faithful to his king and country,
True and wise in every quandary.
Stagskin quiver at his back,
Longbow in hand, revealing no slack

In his countenance; sunburned face
Toward rising Mithra,—would intone
His heartfelt woe and grace;
Then bestride is roam
Into the battle zone.

'Tween Iranians and their enemy
Had been a long-drawn battle.
The combatants were worn and weary;
Ready and willing to settle
The bloody conflict:—a dreary
Predicament for the country!
The boarder and bourn at variance
Had started the prolonged strife.
Amiable could not settle the difference
Hence, many a fine man lost his life!

Aurash approached—,spoke to the king.
"No longer can we continue like this
Sire,—We are facing a darker abyss!
We must break the foe's ring:—
Thus, one fine archer of each side
Will be chosen to let fly an arrow
Into the mead vast and wide,
Where it lands—, ends this sorrow."
Received the consent of his sire,
The warriors built an immense pyre,
Ablaze with consecrated fire.
Alarmed the foe, though tired—
Was prepared yet re renew combat
But, more than willing to achieve
An honorable peace threat!
And such message the foe did receive!

From Love Poems (1980)

By SAID

SAID was born in Tehran in 1947 and came to Munich Germany in 1965 as a student. There he combined his literary interests with political-democratic engagement, thus making his return to Iran possible. After the fall of the Shah in 1979, SAID visited Iran. Seeing no chance for a new beginning in his home country, he once again returned into his exile in Germany.

During the course of his literary career, SAID has been honored with several awards, including: 1986 Literaturpreis der Stadt Munchen (City of Munich Literary Award); 1990 scholarship from Stuttgarter Schriftstellerhaus (House of Authors); 1991 Förderpreis zum Adelbert-von-Chamisso-Preis (award for the advancement of literature); 1992 Civis-Horfunkpreis (radio award); 1993 scholarship from Robert Bosch Stiftung; 1993 reading tour through Japan sponsored by Goethe-Institut; 1994 Premio Letterario Internazionale Jean Monnet; and the 1995 award "Literature in Exile" (City of Hamburg).

SAID is a member of the PEN-Club of Germany.

Following are excerpts from SAID's 1980 published poems, "From Love Poems."

After all the tides
over the years
and the rains,

become wise.
I play the piano
wearing gloves,
write my poems
in foreign languages,
and kiss my love
through frosted glass

For Lola Jakobowsky Horowitz

Your smile;
warming sun
in the diaspora.

Your eyes,
unjustly punished children,
calm my nomad's hands.

Your hands,
large and willing,
caress my edges.

how alike we are.
Two cast-out wolves
from different packs.
We are all
wandering jews.

I am homesick
for
your embrace.

One wolf
lay next to another
and they did not
gnaw at one another
neither did they burrow
into one another
nor
love one another
nor
fight with one another
and they were gentle one with the other,
the wolves.

The color of love is blue,
I know.
albeit this earth—
scarred by our kisses—
with its broken colors
weighs heavily upon us.
the captive ballon
carries the roots in its trouser pocket.
I mistook you
for a cloud.

Translated from German into English by Michael Moohan

On our wedding day

by K. Navi

Today we will be united through marriage,
Today we pledge ourselves to each other,
Today we create WE

I have been fearful of this day,
Because until now I was not sure
I could give myself to one person.
I then met you.

In you I find happiness,
In you I find commitment and understanding.

I pray our life will be without difficulties,
But I am not naive.
In your eyes, however, I find
the willingness to try and in your heart
the determination to succeed.

Our love and understanding will allow us
to survive disagreements, disappointments
and regrets.

I now ask you to be the love of my life,
my best friend, my very best friend.

I pray that I will never give you a reason
to doubt the strength behind our love and
commitment

I give you my heart and extend to you
my hand to hold
through the journey of our new life.

Poem from Hafiz

Translation by Massih Hakami

A nightingale with mental anguish and
drops of his heart's blood
nourished the red rose; The envious
wind of destiny blew and
perturbed the nightingale's condition
hundred times over.

By the thought of a sugar cube the parrot
was happy-hearted;
suddenly the flood of calamity swept
his wishes away.

The light of my eyes, the harvest of
my heart, that may he be
always remembered; he easily departed
and made my life burdensome.

Oh camel driver my load fell off, for
God's sake succor
and assist me with my burdens; that
my hope in invested the
magnanimity of my fellow traveler
Contempt not, disdain not my wet and

dusty face;
the turquoise sky and house of joy
(heaven) is made of this clay.
Lament and bitter sigh to envious
moon and celestial sphere;
my handsome arched eyebrowed child
is entombed in that grave.
On chess board the king did not
assault, attacked rook, and
Hafiz lost opportunity; what should
have I done the game of life took me by
surprise.

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Listen,

It's the Voice of a Black Angel

by Massoud Noghrekar
Translated by P. Omidvar

The crows take off from the branches of the trees join, and fly away together. He takes his eyes off the sky. His glance settles on the tall, brick walls behind the huge trunks of thickly foliated poplars and sycamores. The bricks are old and dull and their tips have fallen off. The other side of the wall enclosing a spacious courtyard can be seen through the gaps in the wall. The entwined and foliated trees at the other side of the wall tower above the walls. The brown, partly rusty steel gate is closed. A deep breath, rain-soaked and mixed with the fragrance of the lawn, leaves, and the soil fills the chest, an anxious, distressed chest.

He enters the courtyard through the walk-door on the gate. The ceaseless cackling of crows and the chirping of swallows heightens. The squeaking of the gate, however, is even louder than the birds.

Five big, strong guards have lined up by the gate at attention. He wants to turn his look at them, but something like the strong glare from the sun strikes his eyes. He has to hold his hand over his eyes to see them. They all wear blue gowns and pants and white cotton shoes. Their hair is close cropped and their short mustaches and beards are hennaed. When they see him they bend their heads with respect and he acknowledges them by smiling.

He has before him a garden full of

poplars, sycamores and weeping willows. Men by tens, young and old, are walking about among trees or along the pathways in the garden. Some just stroll, as if walking high on the clouds. Some seem in a hurry, almost running. Some mutter things to themselves, laugh, frown, and move their heads and hands about. Some sit along the pebble covered pathways or under the trees, all in blue gowns and pants.

He pauses, walks back and looks at the guards who are still at attention. He has seen them before, they are the most true-believer soldiers of the Twelfth Imam in charge of flogging the prisoners at Eeven. He walks on a bit. All the blue-uniformed turn around and watch him in awe, stunned, fearful. From among them a young man with fair skin smiles at him, walks towards the tallest weeping willow, unhurriedly, gracefully, his head held high. The fair-skinned man is like a swan on a still pond, proud, dignified gliding towards the bamboos at the embankment of the pond. He closes his eyes.

"Why was this sight invoked in my mind? Swan? Pond? Bamboos?"

After the fair-skinned man is gone, a big, frowning man walks up to him from among those sitting under a weeping willow. The frowner walks sluggishly, not unlike a statue. It is as if the frowner had no joints in his legs—neck, arms, and eyes are motionless, the eyes do not blink. The frowner stops before him, staring at him with his large, black eyes. He is spellbound by the stare of the frowner. The frowner mutters a few things, swiftly, incoherently, and goes

away. He only understands these few words.

"Go take off your white gown, you crazy guy! You are crazier than all of us here, you dimwit!"

After the frowner goes away, the rest take their eyes off him and carry on with what they had been doing before. He walks on a bit further. Faintheartedly, he sets foot on one of the pathways of the garden. The tree branches and their foliage have made a tunnel, and sun rays plunge through them like spears into the damp pathway. From behind a thick weeping willow trunk he hears a familiar voice, like Omeed's, calling:

"Massoud, Caadda. Massoud!"

And he is goes towards the voice. But there is no one behind the tree. He hears the call again. Again he goes towards the voice. He walks around the tree, round and round, his pace getting brisker. Now he is running around the tree as fast as he can. Finally he gets giddy, and he hits the ground...waking up.

The sun shines on the broad-leafed, beautiful green tree, unknown to him. The leaves of the tree have covered the



Massoud Noghrekar

Continued on next page

window panes. The wind makes the leaves dance.

Since yesterday morning, when he was told that his chances for getting a job at La Amistad Center for Psychiatry and Rehabilitation are high, repeatedly, in his sleep and his wakefulness, his student days and his work in the mental hospitals of Amin-abad, Roozbeh, and the Psychiatric Ward of Firoozgar Hospital have been parading before his eyes. Amin-abad mental hospital and Foroogh had plagued him the most. Particularly Foroogh; the most beautiful woman he has seen in his life. The day she first came to his office, her face was smeared with human excrement, one of her large, white breasts was visible out of her ripped dress, and she wore a red sock on one foot and a white shoe on the other.

"What have you done to yourself? Why do you do these things to yourself?"

"Why not doctor? What makes me less illustrious than Picasso?"

He looks at his watch. He gets up at once and rushes to the bathroom. By the time he is done shaving, the sun is not shining on the leaves any more. A dark cloud has covered the sun. And a strong wind is now agitating the leaves. Here the weather changes by the second.

He picks up his umbrella. And before leaving his house, he fixes his tie one more time. He is wearing his interview clothes. To interviews he wears these: a white dress shirt, a dark red tie, a navy blue suit, and a pair of black, dress shoes. He hears his wife Shideh's voice when he is in the doorway to their yard:

"Hey man! Don't forget to wear cologne!"

"Actually I am wearing so much of it that it's making me dizzy."



It is Barbara (that would like to be called Babs) who is supposed to interview him. She is the head nurse. She comes. She is modest, unaffected. And

before entering the building, she puts off her cigarette against the wall. She looks at his resume.

"Oh, You're also a writer?"

"Yes."

"And you have written a lot of books. I love to write too."

Then she calls George. George is in charge of planning, he is the program director, and he has to give his opinion.

"Oh great. You have successfully passed the Board exams too?"

"Yes."

"You know. Our job here is tough. Dealing with children is not easy. Is that going to be a problem?"

"In fact I like to work with children."

No, George does not know that for years he has lived with children with injuries from burning, suffering from cancer, or with mental problems. That he has assimilated grief, wept with the pains of his patients, died with their deaths. Again and Again. George does not know that before Ardeshir -the cancer patient he liked- was taken to the morgue, he, by closing the eyes of the corpse, has closed the window to life and its beauties. George did not know...

It is pouring like crazy. He opens his umbrella, and after listening to a thunder, runs to his car. Before he pulls away, he casts a look at the administrative building. A single-story brick building, newly built. From beyond the play of rain drops on the car window, it looks crooked, dancing.

Barbara has stepped out of her office, and is now lighting a cigarette under the vault of the office. She puffs the smoke into sky, into the rain. She leans to the brick column there. George walks towards her. They both

wave to him. He feels he will be hired. He has a good feeling, and now he is free from the anxiety he had until a few minutes ago.

Before closing the door behind him, he hears his wife, Shideh:

"How did it go?"

"Not too bad. I think they'll hire me."

"Well with all that regalia and all the cologne you were wearing, what did you expect?"

Omeed is sleeping. He lies by the boy's side, tenderly brushes

"And from that night on increasingly he gets to learn about the innocent, heartrending faces; sexual abuse, drug addiction, theft, battering and violence, depression, schizophrenia, truancy."

away Omeed's hair from his forehead, kisses his forehead and cheeks, and rests his head by Omeed's. He stares at the ceiling and is taken by sleep.

It is Omeed who is coming, in blue gown and pants, and in a pair of white cotton shoes. His face is pale, and his hands and feet skin on bones are in chains. The sound of Omeed's chains is louder than the birds. He hides behind the thick trunk of a poplar. Omeed stealthily looks from behind the tree and laughs. Omeed's teeth are all black. He goes to catch Omeed, but he is not there; no one is behind the tree. He has lost Omeed. He calls Omeed, but there is no answer. He calls him loudly, several times, but nothing happens. He shouts:

"Omeed! Omeed, where are you?"

Omeed's tiny hands pinching his cheeks rouse him:

"Omeed is here daddy."

The sun has settled on the broad, green leaves that seem naked and peaceful.

Continued on next page

They all set out for the lake at the end of the street. It is a beautiful evening on this wooded, quiet street, made even more pleasant by the fragrance of the rain and the lawn. Earlier he did not enjoy evening walks very much. After the interview, however, everything seems more pleasant and more beautiful.

"Damn joblessness!"

"What did you say?"

"Nothing."

"God please have mercy upon us, you have not started your job yet and you are already talking to yourself. What is going to happen to us when you do start?"

Omeed, holding his bread bag, begins throwing the ducks some crumbs. The day before a duck had chased him.

"I want to give the ducks bread. I won't give any to the bad duck, it was going to bite me."

Omeed runs in front of them. They are both quiet.

"What is it? You are brooding again. Why don't you say anything? What are you thinking about?"

"Oh, nothing."

He turns his head towards a beautiful, blue sky. Rain drops are still on the leaves of the trees lining the street. The cawing of the crows and chirping of the swallows echo in his ears, annoying him.

"Why is it that there are so few birds in here? Have you ever seen any crows on this street

"No."

"Don't you want to tell me what you are thinking about?"

"Oh, to the evenings at Amin-abad mental institute. It was very gloomy and depressing."

"Where?"

"Amin-abad asylum."

They get to the lake. The ducks swim toward Omeed. Everything assumes the color of blue, even the ducks. At night the sky seems blue also.



The following day a different Barbara, this one in charge of Human Resources, puts the final touches on his record.

She has keen, penetrating eyes that seem to want to crash her eye-glasses. She gives him some papers. After he is done signing them, two intelligent, beautiful eyes approach him; she is the key person in the institute:

"Who has recommended you? Dr. Najafi or Dr. Kashefi?"

"Both."

Barbara calls a Carlos to give him a tour of various sections of the institute.

"I'm from Puerto Rico, and I've been working here for thirty years. I used to work in New York. I'm fifty five. What did you do for a living?"

"I, too, have sixteen years of experience, working at various hospitals."

Carlos nods, measures him up, approvingly, musing. Seems like an amiable, unaffected person. Takes his eye-glasses off and rubs his eyes with the thumb and the index of his right hand. After they pass a flower bed where the ferns have enveloped the thick trunk of a tree, Carlos points to what looks like an office building:

"This is the cafeteria. And behind it is the school of the kids."

To the right, a building with white walls and various sized and shaped windows rises high into the sky. Near the roof, the wall becomes turreted, like a fortress. From a window of one of the rooms, two pained faces, a young couple stare at him—in a divine way.

"They used to be patients here."

They walk around this same building and they step on to the open space, a courtyard.

The courtyard and the buildings seem unusual to him; the rock boundaries of the flower beds, the two thick, foliaged trees, the peculiar building.

"Those are the buildings for the kids. That one is for the girls, and that one is for the boys."

The children's buildings are square and detached from the rest. The teenage boys and girls buildings, however, are attached; two polygons with different wall and column shapes and colors, with dissimilar windows, and several flights of stairs; a prism and a cone rolled in one.

"Here all the doors are locked, and must remain locked."

He unlocks a door, and they enter the boys' building.

Everything looks odd, but he is mostly concentrating on Carlos. They have a quick tour of the building, Carlos showing him the various parts. Now they go to where the children are.

When the door opens the eyes of an eight-to-nine-year-old boy squatting at a corner of the hallway captivates him.

They look like Omeed's. The boy nods and smiles at him. Carlos chatters on, but he is not listening. It was never like that before; for quite a while now, whenever he sees a boy, he is reminded of Omeed,

with the rush of a sorrowful feeling he had not experienced before. His mother's voice echoes in his mind:

"You'll know what being a parent means when you are one yourself."



It is the night of the first day of January, 1996. He is experiencing the anxiety of the first night at work. When he gets out of the car he casts a glance at the headquarters buildings. The light of some of the rooms are on. He steps on to the courtyard-like open space. The tiny red light beside each door indicates that it is locked. He gets depressed, and he is reminded of the prison. He does not have a key, so he knocks at the roundish window of the nurse station. They open the door for him.

The boys are asleep. There are a few brown armchairs, a table covered with all sorts of games and magazines, and there is an ancient television in the recess below the stairs. The walls are built of a frame of three rows of red bricks and filled in with concrete blocks. The ceiling looks like that of an unfinished building, decorated with wood, water pipes, cables, air conditioner ducts, etc. Other things add to the peculiarity of the room, too: pieces of wood and glass in various shapes, burgundy cabinets whose rusty hinges make an unbearable squeaking sound, windows of various shapes and sizes, two huge air conditioner ducts with their mouths open toward the ceiling.

"You know? This building has been designed by a nut."

And from that night on increasingly he gets to learn about the innocent, heartrending faces; sexual abuse, drug addiction, theft, battering and violence, depression, schizophrenia, truancy. He sees the faces mostly in the light of his tiny flashlight.

"Hey, turn it off. We are trying to sleep."

"All right. Sorry."

He looks up the boy's record. He is Fourteen. His parents divorced when he was eight. His mother marries another man who, after a while, sexually abuses the boy. Sometimes he gets beaten, too. He hates school and home alike. His life is theft, violence, and drugs.

"What long and beautiful hair Edward has!"

Continued on next page

"Yes, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

And the young, new nurse yawns.



t is the February of 1996.

One of those hateful, depressing nights. This is the first night he is working in the boys section. The previous night he worked in the girls section, and he still feels the fatigue from climbing up and down the binding stairwell connecting the hallway of the girls living quarters to the second level, where their bedrooms are.

Before he leaves home Omeed wraps his arms around his legs, and will not let go: "Don't go daddy. It is dark outside, and the sky makes noises."

This makes him even more uneasy and depressed. He has to leave anyway, but the tiny drops of rapidly falling rain calms him down.

One of the cats in the institution shakes itself near him. The water thus sprayed settles on his new, grey pants. He opens his umbrella and tries to push the cat aside with the tip of his umbrella - or his foot - but the cat knows that the door will be opened, and refuses to go away. It does finally get inside before he does. He tries hard to push the cat out by foot but he fails. He does not want the kids to know a cat is inside and wake them up. His colleague Victor wants to help him get the cat out, but the cat crawls under a desk and stays put. Steve, sleepy and rubbing his eyes, steps out of his room.

"Are you still awake, Steve? You know what time it is? Go to bed."

"Yes, I know what time it is. Okay, I'll go to bed. But do you want me to let the cat out?"

And Steve does not wait for an answer. He pulls the cat out of the desk, softly pushes it to his chest, caresses it, takes it out to the courtyard, and sets it under the vault where it is safe from the rain.

"Thanks Steve. Now go wash your hands and go to bed."

Steve washes his hands and

goes to his room. Steve turns up his radio slightly; he likes to go to sleep while his radio is on. Victor says good night and leaves. Before the door gets shut behind Victor, he notices the cat playing under the vault.

He checks the rooms. Tony is still awake. The same two Omed-like eyes that had smiled to him at their first meeting from a corner of the hallway. Tony is lying down on the floor under the bed, his head sticking out.

"Tony, why are you there? Come on out of there and get into your bed. That is no place to sleep."

"Leave the room and let me alone."

"Come on out of there Tony. You must sleep in your bed. There you may hit the bed legs and hurt your head."

"I said leave me alone. Don't disturb me."

He hears Scott and John from the next room:

"Shut up. We are trying to sleep."

Tony sticks his head from under the bed.

"You shut up, too Massoud. And turn off your flashlight. Let me sleep."

"You must come out of there, understand?"

"I said I won't, understand?"

"Do you want me to report you to your doctor?"

"I said I'm not coming out. I don't care if you report me or not. Just leave me alone."

Now he is mad and he slaps the floor. Then he hits his head to the box spring of the bed, real hard, and stops fretting. They are both quiet now. Scott can be heard rolling. He is sleeping on the upper-level bed, and each time he rolls, the bed squeaks. He passes the room where John and Scott are sleeping and steps into the small hallway between the rooms and the bathroom. He hears a noise from Tony's bed; Tony is shifting in his bed. The tiny fish swims around in Mike's aquarium

under his flashlight. The tiny, exposed and listless turtles, however, lie motionless at the bottom of the aquarium. One of them straightens its neck slightly. And Christopher's lizard briskly moves its head; it is a newcomer. One or two days ago Christopher set his grasshoppers free, covered the bottom of the bottle where he kept them with twigs, leaves and pebbles, and put in the new guest. His room is a mess as usual.

When he returns, he finds Tony fast asleep; he falls asleep real fast. He picks up Tony's room:



hangs his clothes that are lying on the floor, puts his shoes in the shoe rack, picks and puts away his wet towel. Tony's room is always messy, like Christopher's. He puts away the painting stuff: the brushes, the water color box, and the papers in the cardboard box.

Before leaving the room he casts the light on Tony's face. A sweet smile brightens his face.

"Wow! What likeness this boy has to Omeed!"

He moves away his flashlight to turn it off. But before doing so its light falls on the walls, on the pictures. He looks at them. Two rows of pictures are on the wall. A cat and a dog are playing. In one of the pictures, the cat is get-

Continued on next page

ting a piggyback from the dog. The other two pictures must be those of his parents that he has put beside the pictures of the pets. There is a big picture of his stepfather with a parakeet perching on his shoulder. Tony stirs. He turns off his flashlight and walks to his desk.

He straightens the records and papers on his desk, and begins to fill out the log: Tony, ten. Scott, eleven. John, nine. Christopher, eight. Mike, twelve. George, ten. Then he initials the log: 11:30 p.m., February 1, 1996, Massoud.

He rubs his eyes. Through the triple-glazed, dirty window pane bearing a number of notices and directives here and there he looks at the trees and the low, wood fence separating the walkway from the flower bed. The flower bed is messy and dirty. Apparently no one has been attending to it lately. An armadillo crosses the flower bed, lingeringly. It looks like a mythological animal, except miniaturized. A huge shell covers its entire body except for its head, tail, and legs. It has short legs. It stops, turns around and looks at him. The leprous Fatemeh's voice echoes in his mind from behind the door of his room at Tehran Lepers Sanatorium:

"Hey doctor! Tell this cop, Doulat-abadi, to let me in. I don't feel well. I had never seen a cop this stupid. For God's sake tell this officer to let me in to your room."

He is startled by Tony's voice who has noiselessly come behind him.

"Can I get some water?"

Tony sits in the armchair, drinks the water, and leaves.

And he turns around in his swivel chair. Now he is facing the large mural; the entire wall has been painted: large and small fish with large, staring eyes. A huge shark drifting among the fish and the turtles. It is an oil mural, and blue is the dominant color. The eyes of the largest fish in the mural is staring at him.

Tony's voice echoes in the room and the hallway:

"Hey, Edward. Don't go. If you do they'll kill me. don't go!"

They all have dreams. Every night. But none of them scream so loudly in their sleeps. Nightmares do not leave Tony alone. He goes and checks Tony. He is sleeping.

He strolls in the hallway. Children parade before him: children from the Emergency Ward, children from the Cancer Ward of Central Hospital, children with car and other accident injuries from Firoozgar Hospital.

He stands at the window and looks out: "Leave me alone! The lot of you, leave me alone!"

The courtyard and the buildings are familiar to him now, and they do not have the peculiarity they used to have any more. The cats are napping by the trash cans opposite from the girls section. One of the cats goes towards a tree in the middle of the courtyard, the tree in which a nest like structure has been built from assorted wood. It lies down on one of the brick columns in the courtyard, columns made of red bricks and concrete blocks, like the building walls. The lights at the boys and girls sections are on, and the light from fluorescent fixtures spread out of dissimilar windows. He wants to count the windows and the poles protruding from the edges of the roofs the columns in the courtyard and the stairs, but he loses interest. He notices John behind the long, narrow pane of the entrance to the boys section; standing there cold, motionless, like a statue. John is seventeen. Every two to three hours he comes and gets himself a glass of water or juice, looks out the window, mutters to himself sometimes laughs out loud, and then goes away. He knows that, later, John will go to the rest room, and will talk to himself in the mirror while pissing.

The train that goes by twice a night passes and shakes the building. Its noise and the shaking of the building make the children roll and move in their beds.

Daybreak tiptoes in. He checks the children's rooms. They are still dim. The volleyball court behind the boys building seems brighter because of the white sand covering it. Scott and John are snoring. The freckles on their faces reminds him of his own in his childhood and the fights he had with his playmates who teased him on account of his freckles.

"If you want those fly poop spots go, you have to mix dog poop and cat poop and buff it on your face."

"Okay. Can you get me a bit of your own, your younger sister's and your older one's then?" And he would burst into laughter.

The birds are heard singing. Tony is the first to wake up. He takes his shower in the evenings so he will not have to get up early in the morning. He swiftly comes and sits in front of the television, quickly sets up the games and starts playing. With one hand he grabs the joy stick, and with the other he holds his penis very tight so his urine does not flow. His passion to play the game does not let him go to the restroom. Scott and, later, John

come, too. Scott teases Tony.

"Why don't you go piss first and then come play?" "It's none of your business. Shut up."

After the game is over, he darts towards the rest room. The sound of his urinating reverberates in the building. Scott teases him some more.

"Hey, sit to piss!"

"Shut up."

Tony returns from the rest room, sits by Scott who is now preoccupied by the game and is at once mesmerized by TV. Tony turns around for a moment, glances, and waves at him.

"Oh, my God. How his glances look like Omeed's!"

Tony taps on Scott's shoulder.

"Enough! Move away now! It's my turn."

And Scott knows he should not make Tony mad. Scott knows Tony is the quarreling type, and that if he gets mad no one can calm him down. Yet he probably does not know that, when mad, Tony had attacked his mother, sister, and brother—once almost killing his sister and that several times he had tried to set their house on fire. No, it is not easy to believe what bundle of nerves is tormenting this innocent-looking, quiet boy.

Neither Scott nor any of the children knows that Tony's life has been coupled to death and separation. He lost his twin brother immediately after they were born. If he could remember when he was younger than three, he would not remember anything but his parents' constant fighting.

And he was only three years old when his parents divorced. After a while a kindly stepfather took the place of his father. Tony adored this stepfather, and loved him even more than he loved his own mother. But after a few months of living with Tony's mother, the stepfather committed suicide. Tony was devastated, crushed. He began playing hooky. He completely lost interest in school and studying. Tony's mother took to addiction, letting Tony's grandmother look after him. Finally his father's efforts paid off and he gained custody of Tony. Both his parents want him, and he is caught between the two. Tony, this anguished soul, ends up in La Amistad Institute and he keeps repeating the first thing he told his doctor here:

"I have come here for you to help me do something. I don't know what to do."

Continued on next page

Tony brushes aside his blond, straight hair, and begins staring at him with his large piercing eyes. Then he says, with a smile: "You know. I liked Edward a lot. Even more than my own father. I don't know why he killed himself. I don't know."

He pulls up his pants which are about to slide down his bottom. He never fastens his belt.

"Have you seen his picture?" Tony asks.

"Yes, I have."

Then he goes sits at a corner of the hallway, the same corner he was the first night of his work here. He had noticed in earlier instances too how easily Tony's eyes well and his tears flow.

"Come listen! Listen! This is his voice."

"Whose voice?"

"Edward's. The voice of a black angel. Have you seen any black angels? Edward used to say that in the Holy Book, in children's stories, in the movies, everywhere, angels are white. Why?" And I would reply: "I don't know Edward."

But he himself was an angel. A black one. Listen! This is his voice. Listen! He tells me, Tony, Tony, I'll come back. I'll come back.

Tony wipes his eyes with the back of his hands, gets up, pulls up his pants, and walks up to his room, but his voice still rings in the hallway:

"Tony, Tony, I'll come back. I'll come back."

The sun rays spread on the branches of the tree at the other side of the window. The crows take off from the branches, join, and fly away together. He closes his eyes, and rests his forehead on his desk.



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Orlando, LaAmistad October, 1996.
(All characters in this story are fictional. Any resemblance to an actual person is coincidental.)

By Farideh Shahidi
from the Gentle Griffin Book

It was speech day at a British school. The speeches were made by students in the presence of their parents. In her turn, Parisa, who was just ten years old looked straight at the audience and bowed to them. Then in a loud clear voice, she recited:

*All Adam's race are members of one frame:
Since all, at first, from the same essence came.
When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed,
the other members lose their wanted rest.
If thou feel'st not for other's misery,
a son of Adam is no name for thee.*

Continued on next page

At the end of the poem, Parisa added: "Those worthy words which are full of sense of the brotherhood of mankind were written by one of the great Iranian poets—Sa'adi in the thirteenth century. And it is adorning the entrance to the United Nations' headquarters in Geneva. Now, I am glad and proud of Sa'adi's words which provided me the inspiration for my first poem—"Doesn't Matter." Then she recited her own original composition:

*Doesn't matter if the lands aren't on a par.
Doesn't matter if men aren't the same so far.
Doesn't matter how old or beautiful you are.
Doesn't matter which philosopher, who, you are.
Just everyone who meets you, should love you.
For, you are human, humanity does care for you.*

Parisa finished her poem, bowed again to the audience. After a few seconds, she paused for breath and added, "Thank you for joining me and caring for the good of all mankind."

A short silence invaded the Lecture Hall. It was as if the people were dumfounded by the words of the little girl. But the hush didn't last long. Suddenly, excitement and cheerfulness replaced the quiet in the hall. Everybody was filled with joy at the thought of such an understanding young student. Their loud applause expressed their approval of her speech. Parisa was selected as a gifted child and received special care and prizes.

With her big black eyes and long shiny hair, Parisa is very beautiful. She is a girl from Persia. Although ten years old, her thoughts and behavior are those of a fourteen-year-old child.

Feelings of admiration are inevitable when Parisa is giving a lecture or is expressing ideas. She is very serious about her homework. She hardly ever wastes time. Even at night, just before turning off the lights, she reviews her school books, or reads a novel or a history book.

Parisa's favorite hobbies are studying the library, playing the piano, drawing sketches, and working on her computer. Among other things, Parisa loves to help her younger brother with his school assignments. Her brother, Parsa, is now six years old.

If Parisa has problems that she wants to talk about, she doesn't hesitate to discuss it with her Mom or Dad. When her school is over at 3:30 p.m., Parisa goes straight home to her family. However, she is very sociable and spends her spare



time playing with other children.

Parisa doesn't speak to strangers, because she reads about small children who are kidnapped by strangers; she doesn't want that to happen to her. Also, she helps her Mother with the housework. As a whole, any kind of work seems to come easy to her. With just a little effort, she is able to get very good grades or to set a pretty dinner table.

Moreover, Parisa is very sensitive. Once, her whole family was supposed to go on a vacation for a few days, except for Parisa's dad. Everybody was excited and ready to go.

When they were getting into the car, Parisa suddenly declared: "I won't leave my daddy alone in the house. He might get sick and might need me. He has done a lot of things to comfort me, and he deserves to be treated the same. In fact, I wouldn't be happy without him. So, I won't come with you." Then, she paused for a few seconds and added, "I hope you understand me. I am going to stay with him, you can go if you want to."

"Don't be ridiculous," said her mother. "You can't stay here. It wouldn't be a wise decision. Your Father goes to work everyday, and he can't take you with him or leave you here by yourself."

Parisa replied, "If you think so, you can stay with me, Mom!" Parisa's answer made her Mother laugh and convinced her. Her father blinked back a few tears and gave his sensitive daughter a warm hug. As a result, that was one vacation trip that was canceled.

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**Iranians who have not
been out of their country,
and have not seen the
famous gardens of the
world, still think of Shiraz as
city of flowers and nightin-
gales. All the cities of the
world have their unique
beauty and hidden charms.
The saying; "beauty is in the
eye of the beholder," most
assuredly is true concerning
one's hometown.**

Shiraz

Growing up in the Capital City

by Cyrus Farahmandi

On the north edge of the city, the road through the mountains, brought one to the Koran Gate, a tile veneered open arch structure. In our home every time any one of us was going to an important task, our mother held a Koran high above and we kissed it and passed under it. The Koran gate also was built for the same purpose. Everyone who passed under it, had a chance to pass under Koran for a safe journey. The opening at the middle, was large enough to allow cars to pass through it in both directions. The rest of the wall, on both sides, was covered with holy Koranic verses. When a bus would pass through the gate, all the passengers in the bus, in unison, would shout: "Allah-o- Akbar" (God is Great). When I happened to be in the bus when it passed through the Koran Gate, I always felt a sense of safety. The road then, cutting through the hills, would curve and descend to the center of town, a distance of several miles. Often in the distance, one could see the signs of farming by local farmers.

In late spring or early fall the Ghashghaie tribes, in their semi-yearly migration, would set up their dark colored tents for a few weeks in the outskirts of the city. During this time they would exchange their milk, extra cattle, wool, and their brightly colored hand carved spinning tops for whatever they needed

for their long stay in the pastures.

During the summer nights the skies of Shiraz were unforgettable. People slept in their open court yards. All homes had a solid brick wall, perhaps eight feet tall, around the court yard which provided the privacy for sleeping outside. On cloudless nights, often I would go under my blanket, lay on my back, and gaze at the stars above. The sky was pitch dark and studded with countless bright stars. Some were blinking. Lack of any obstruction made the heaven appear as a bowl turned upside down covering everything. I would try to focus my sharp eyes through a cluster of stars to pick smaller and dimmer stars. It seemed that the harder I focused, the more stars I would discover. If there were clouds in the sky, they would move silently covering and revealing patches of stars. They would take strange and sometimes familiar figures and then quietly transform into new shapes. The moon, if it was not full, was pasted in one corner of dark heaven in the midst of stars. When the moon was full, it cast its light on the ground and created a soft shadow of anything on its way. Sometimes when I gazed at stars and played the discover-a-new-star game, suddenly there would be a shooting light from one point in the heaven to another point some distance away. Sometimes we saw more than one shooting star in one

Continued on next page

night. Each time we saw a shooting star we made a wish. The stars seemed alive, moving and blinking in the sky. Hafez, in one of his memorable poems, said:

"when I saw the green meadow of the universe, with a new moon as a sickle in one corner, it made me think of what I have sowed and what I will reap at the time of my harvest!" The skies of Shiraz, no doubt, were exactly what Hafez had looked at some six hundred years earlier.

Sometimes at the middle of night in the summer, I would wake up to the pleasant singing of a young man, who was passing by in the street in front of our house, minding only his songs. It was like Frank Sinatra singing and walking toward your home. As he would get closer to the house, his sound became sharper until he was in front of the house, and then gradually his voice would fade away in the opposite direction, and soon it would disappear in the silence of the night. Those who were softly awoken with his songs, were lulled back to sleep, while trying to hear more verses. The songs that the stranger sang, were usually from Hafez and they were love songs with spiritual meaning. So it was pleasant to the ears of young and old. The singing would wake up everyone in the voice range as the stranger went about his business. It seemed that no one minded it. We all welcomed it. Our ears were not blasted by the sound of radio and television whether we wanted it or not, so it was a novelty to hear someone sing. We would talk about it the next day. "Were you awakened last night? Did you hear it? What a nice voice?" It was an interruption much more intoxicating to the soul than the sleep. I would like to translate a poem from Hafez a stranger might croon to us in the middle of night:

"Lost Joseph will return to Canaan again, worry not,

Dry orchards will blossom again, worry not.

Your saddened heart will be happy again,

Your troubled mind will be at ease again, worry not.

When you get a second chance at spring of life,

Like a nightingale under a flowering branch, you will sing again, worry not.

If for few days, the universe doesn't turn as you wish,

Condition of the universe will change again, worry not.

Do not lose faith, if you don't understand the hidden secrets,

Behind the curtain, there are hidden players, worry not.

When you see the flood of life overturning all,

Thru God you have Noah in your ship, worry not.

If you begin your journey thru the desert, hoping to see Kaabeh,

When your feet are pricked by thorns, worry not.

The road ahead is filled with danger, and your goal is far away,

There is no road that does not end, worry not.

If it seems that you are surrounded by enemies, and no friends,

God who turns the universe—cnows all, worry not.

Oh Hafez, poor and alone in the darkness of night,

If you are praying and learning from The Koran, worry not."

There was a series of mountain ranges on the north of the city. Shiraz was locat-

we would stop at the cave and visit the old man. He would tell the visitors' fortune by reading the Hafez and people would donate small change in the pot next to the cave. My father always said that the true "Baba-kohi" had died long ago, and that the present man is a phony "Baba!" In 1974. Several members of our family took Helga and me to the cave to see the old man. I noticed that the old man of my youth had died, and a new Baba had taken his place.

Years later I learned that originally in twelfth century a dervish (a Moslem monk and philosopher), by the name Ibneh-Koyeh had taken refuge in this cave and had spent his entire life meditating and studying. He had written several religious dissertations on various topics. He was revered by the Shirazis who called him Baba-Kohi. When he had died, people buried him there. They built a small shrine over his tomb in the cave, and named the mountain "Baba-Kohi" in his honor. Ever since, there has been a



The east facade of The Gate of All Nations, Persepolis, Fars

ed at the foothill of these mountains. On the face of the mountain, half-way up, there was a cave facing the city. The cave was the home to a hermit who was known as "Baba-Kohi," which means "the old man of the mountain." He was a man with white, unkempt, wavy hair and a long beard. He lived there year round. Once a week, he would make the journey to town and buy, or get his staples from the town's people and return to his cave. Sometimes at night, there was a tiny flicker of light from his cave. Sometimes in the summertime my friends, my brother, and I would scale the mountain. Often

new "Baba-Kohi" who spends his life there as keeper of the original monk's tomb.

Memories...

Another of my unforgettable memories of growing up in Shiraz, was when the holy month of Ramathan would fall in the summer time. This is the time that devout Moslems would fast from sunup to sunset. The entire lunar month, the city would be teeming with religious activities. In those time, because there wasn't much traffic, any noise would

travel a long way. There were mesmerizing calls of the muezzins from the mosques' minarets. In the early hours of the night, when the city was still teeming and alive, I could hear their noises. If I would listen intently, I could recognize a few faint familiar chants. Crowds in some far away mosque roaring: La- el aha- ell-allah (There is no other god but God, meaning that we should only worship God above), or Allah-o-Akbar (God is Great). I could even hear and feel the movement and chanting of the faithful, like hearing my own heart beats. Nearby, Mother and Naneh, and whoever wanted to fast for the next day; were up and getting ready to begin their fast. Sometimes I would join and try to fast. The fasters hurried thru their rituals. The rest of the family; the sleepers, slept soundly near by, each with their own reason for not wanting to fast. As the tirpe passed, the fasters hurried to finish their meals before the canon sounded. It was a canon roar that would signal the beginning of the day's fast. While I was gazing at stars, I would hear them going about in the darkness, I would see their shadows cast about by a dancing light of a candle, burning inside a glass shield. I still hear the soft sound of my mother saying her prayers!

The "Massjedeh Shah Cheragh," which mean "The Light Mosque," is a beautiful mosque of Shiraz. All the walls and the domed shaped ceiling, are covered with tiny pieces of mirror placed side by side in a mosaic pattern. These pieces of mirror, catch and reflect back the lights of the chandeliers and throw them to each other. Under the ceiling, which is supported on numerous columns, is where the faithful pray. The floor is covered by expensive Persian Carpets. During the hours between the mass praying, if one happened to look inside, one would see here and there, people praying. Each would be doing his own thing. Everyone was focusing on God and his own earthly problems. Some stand while praying. Some sit and chant and ask. God to help them. Some bend down and kiss the ground while they chant some Koranic verses. Some ladies wail under their chador. The lack of restrictions in The House of God is a unique Islamic custom. At times, there are no preachers or guards to be seen. There are no chairs, and no paintings on the walls. There are no locks on the doors. No one is ever self conscious of his appearance or his manner. It is as though everyone is welcomed to the presence of God, as they are. After

getting used to the environment of the mosque, and this method of praying, one begins to appreciate the lack of outside stress and pressure. When a need arises one goes to mosque to talk to his God. From there on it is him and his God. There is no outside intermediary.

The sights of Shiraz also included the peddlers who tried to supplement their income by going door to door and selling their products. There were peasants who loaded the back of their donkeys with cucumber, tomatoes, apples, or grapes and would enter the street in front of our home with the shouts of "cucumbers!", or "tomatoes!", or "apples!"...etc. If Mother needed any of these, she gave us money and asked us to buy some. The peddlers were hard-working individuals whose weather beaten faces and strong hands showed a lifetime of hard work. Both sides of their donkey were loaded with goods. On one side of their loads there were usually three rocks. The large one about a size of a cantaloup signified one "rock" measurement, the smaller one was a half rock, and the smallest one was a quarter rock. When we asked for a "rock" worth of his product, the peasant would grab his home made scale which was a stick with a piece of string attached at the middle and two plates at the ends. He would load up one plate with the goods and another with the stone. Then while holding the shaky scale by the middle string for a second, making sure that the scale is tipped in our favor, he would hurry and unload the produce in our container before something happened to his scale!

The snow sellers

There were "snow sellers" who tried to earn a living by selling packed snow in the summer time. The snow was brought from the mountains of Shiraz. If Mother wanted to have "snow," usually when she had guests and wanted to serve them a cool drink, she would ask someone to go and buy packed snow. The piece of snow



Eram Garden, Shiraz

was wrapped with a piece of felt material to reduce the melting. It seemed when the snow would reach home, Mother always complained that the snow was too small! I remember once when I was about six, or seven years old, my dad came home in one hot summer afternoon and gave me some money and asked me to hurry and get him some snow. Knowing that they always complained that there wasn't much left of the snow, I used my own money to buy Dad twice as much snow that he had asked. To my dismay when I brought the snow home no one mentioned if the size was satisfactory or not! Several years later, in the late 1940's, Shiraz had an ice making factory. My Dad had arranged for daily delivery of a large block of ice during the summer months. The ice was kept in an "Ice-Box," which was placed in a cool spot in our home. The ice was used throughout the hot days of summer for cooling purposes. In 1974 on my return home, I saw that the Ice-Box was replaced by a refrigerator.

The Bakery stores were another interesting sight etched in my mind. The smell of freshly baked bread captured the passers by, who often could not resist stopping and ordering bread. The bread was made from start to finish, one by one, in the full view of the customers. The bread was baked in a large clay oven. The oven was a dome-shaped clay structure, perhaps six to eight feet wide. The dome raised some five feet. There

Continued on next page

was an opening in front of the dome, about three feet by three feet. Through this hole the glow and the flames could be seen. The bottom of the oven was covered with pebbles. In the early years, the oven was heated with coal, some years later it was heated with heating fuel. Inside the store there were several workers always working. One was kneading and making a ball of dough. The dough was passed to another worker who would use a roller to spread the dough into its shape, which was about half inches in thickness and about two feet by six inches in size. The flour used in this bread was from barley grain. The bread was called "Sangack" bread. When the dough was made into its shape, another worker who had a long stick, perhaps ten feet long, with a flat end, scooped the dough off the board, and quickly carried it into the oven and slammed it against the roof of the stove. The dough stuck to the top of the oven for a while and then fell on the hot pebbles. Next there was another worker with a long stick, of the same length, which had a hook at the end, whose job was to turn the bread inside the hot oven on its sides until it was done. Always there were several breads at a time in the oven. The heat of the oven was so intense that the bread was done in fifteen to twenty minutes. Once the bread was done, the worker in charge with the hook tossed it to the cashier, who would sell it to the customers. Always there was a long line of customers waiting for their breads. During World War II, when I was a boy of five or six, there was ration for bread in Iran. An adult member of the family, and I stood in these lines for many hours to get our ration.

Once and forever a Capital City

In 1750 AD, Shiraz again became the capital of Iran as we know it today. "Kareem Khan Zand," who preferred to be called "Vakeel," meaning Regent instead of "King," became the ruler of Iran. Iranians loved their Vakeel. He ruled Iran for twenty-nine years. Kareem Khan was a just ruler. He is often called "Just Kreem Khan." He was in close touch with the people, and lived very modestly. When I was a young boy, I remember passing by a house which had stained glass doors and windows. It had stone stairs in front leading to a circular pool. There was wrought iron gate around it. I was told that it was Kareem

Khan's home. It was a very simple structure.

Kareem Khan also liked to build other fine structures, some of which still stand. Among the ones which I remember seeing were "Masjed Vakeer" (Vakeel mosque) and "Ark-eh Zand" (Fort of Zand). The mosque was a brick mosque with tall arched openings which is typical of the Islamic Mosques. The mosque had forty columns which supported the roof. The Ark is a large brick building with four circular fort towers on the four corners. During his reign, this building was used for military purposes. When I was growing up in Shiraz, the building was turned into a jail. Fortunately I did not get to see the inside!

Kareem, whose name in Persian means "provider," is said to have liked to smoke his water-pipe and watch the construction of his buildings. Once while watching and smoking, he noticed a brick layer who suddenly stopped his work and raised his hands toward the sky, and whispered a few words. Kareem Khan became curious, and asked the laborer what he had said. The laborer whose name was also Kareem answered: "Oh Vakeel, I was complaining to God telling him that He is a Kareem, you are a Kareem, and I am also a Kareem. And among all three of us I am the only one who is working!". The Just Kareem Khan was so touched by what the laborer had said, that he rewarded the laborer his personal water-pipe and some cash.

The Bazaars of Shiraz were also very interesting places. They were built during the reign of Kareem Khan. They were the hub of all the commercial activities. There was the main Bazaar. It was a brick building about a quarter mile long, with a narrow passageway in the middle. The high arched ceiling in the middle had intermittent openings for passage of daylight and circulation of fresh air. The light through these openings was the only natural light that existed inside. At first, when entering the Bazaar, the inside

appeared dark. After a few seconds, when the eye became adjusted, you could see on both sides a series of identical arched openings. Each opening was a store. The floors of these stores were higher, perhaps by three feet, than the floor of the bazaar where customers walked. The goods were in the back, and each owner sat in front of his goods, anxious to make a sale. The buying and selling in these bazaars were quite an experience. There were a lot of interactions between the store owner and customer. If you wanted to buy a piece of cloth for instance, you told the owner what you wanted. The owner told his helper to get

a certain bolt. If you were not satisfied with the color or texture, again the helper was sent to get a different bolt. Soon there were tens of rolls of material opened specifically for you to choose from. The more bolts opened the more you felt guilty. After all the available material was brought and, opened for you, if you still didn't want to make a purchase, the owner tried to change your mind by lowering the

price. If there was a slightest indication that you had fallen for a material, the price would not have come down easily. If you left the store because you didn't like anything, the owner may have called you back to make you interested, sometimes to the point of sending his helper after you. If you liked something and left the store acting as though you didn't like anything, hoping the owner will call you back, you may have been sorely disappointed because the experienced merchant knew your bluff! So now it was your turn to go back and haggle for a lower price!

Zand Avenue in Shiraz which was also planned by Kareem Khan Zand was one of my favorite avenues of Shiraz. The street was wide. It could easily accommodate three to four lanes of traffic in each direction. There were two rows of trees planted between the street and the sidewalks. My favorite pastime activity in the evenings, as that of many other Shirazis, was to walk along the sidewalk



Tomb of Sa'adi, Shiraz

of Zand Street whenever we had a chance. Zand Avenue was a couple miles long. It began from the town's center and ended at the west edge of the city where there was a big circular intersection with a pool in the middle. The block which was adjacent to town was lighted and had stores on both side of the street. As we walked toward the west end, it became less populated and darker. Close to the west end, on the north sidewalk, there were always several young men who had set up a barbeque cart. They sold barbequed pieces of lamb's liver on "Sangak" bread. The price of one "sikh-kabob" on a piece of bread was about five rials, equivalent to about ten cents. When we ordered a sikh-kabob, the young man would put the skewered meat on the fire. His helper began to fan the burning coal under the kabob. Soon the flame would engulf the meat and began to roast the kabob. The smell of the kabob in those cool Shiraz evenings were unforgettable!

Our family members were all Shiite Moslems. My maternal Grandmother was a direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammad. Her father was Ayat-o-lah Abtahi, a direct descendent of Prophet, who was at his time a leading Shiite cleric of Shiraz. Some members of the family were very devout, who followed all the rules, and some were only believers of Islam's main teaching: to have, at all times, God in your mind. This was the norm for all of the families in Iran.

If Kareem Khan Zand was the revered builder of past years, Haji Muhammad Nemazi of Shiraz was a philanthropist and a humanitarian of my time. In Islam, one pillar of the religion, if one can afford it, is to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. The men and women who make this pilgrimage will be called thereafter "Haji," or "Hajieh" respectively. Mr. Namazi, being a devout Moslem, had acquired this title. Haji Namazi at his own expense gave to the people of Shiraz three important contributions that I am aware of.

In the 1940's, he financed and completed, at his own expense, the modern culinary piped water system for all of Shiraz. Before that time, Shirazis had to draw their water from a well, located inside each house. Namazi's ambitious project not only brought the piped water to all the homes in Shiraz, but it also eliminated many diseases caused by unsanitary water. Shiraz became the first Iranian city with a running water system. Soon after other towns, with the help of

government and/or private sectors, began to build piped water system.

Namazi's second and equally important project was to build the biggest modern hospital in the Middle East, which had a medical college and a school of nursing. When the hospital, staffed by Iranian and American doctors, was completed in 1950's, and became operational, it brought patients from all the countries of the Middle East seeking cures for their illnesses. In 1953, the Namazi Nursing College began enrolling its first students. My sister Hamdam was among the first students who were accepted in this college.

Namazi's third project was to build the Namazi High School which at the time was the most modern High School of Shiraz. It had large and spacious class rooms with new furnishings. It had all the modern sports facilities of the time. The halls, stairways, and the columns were all from marble. Hundreds of thousand of the children of Shiraz attended this high school. In 1953 I began my high school years in Namazi School, and graduated from it in 1956.

I remember once I was playing in the school ground between classes, and I saw Haji Namazi with several other men around him who were touring the school. He stood on the grounds overlooking our volleyball court, where we were playing, and looked at the kids for a while. He had a faint smile on his face and seemed happy seeing the children playing in his school. After a moment he turned around and left. In 1974 when I visited Shiraz, I inquired of him and learned that he had died and he was buried next to Namazi Hospital. I drove there, and next to his grave marker, in his memory and in the appreciation of his benevolent deeds, I recited the Al-Fatiha, the opening chapter of Holy Koran:

"In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful Thou art the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds. Thou art the Master of the day of Judgment. Thee we worship, and Thine aid we seek. Show us the right way, The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace." I bear witness that there is no other deity than Allah (God). I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

May his good name live forever, and may his soul be happy. Saidi of Shiraz says "A good name left behind, is better than leaving behind golden palaces." Haji Namazi lived to this legacy!

