



BAHĀR, MOḤAMMAD-TAQĪ I. LIFE AND WORK

i. Life and Work

Bahār may have taken his *takalloṣ* Bahār after the poet Mīrzā Naṣr-Allāh Bahār Šīrvānī, who had died on a visit to the house of Moḥammad-Taqī's father in 1300/1882-83 ('Erfānī, p. 36; Āryanpūr, II, p. 124). Bahār himself does not comment upon his pen-name in his autobiographical note ("Maktūb," *Ārmān*, quoted in M. Golbon, ed., *Bahār wa adab-e fārsī*, Tehran, 2535 = 1355 Š./1976, II, pp. 195-96). His father, Mīrzā Moḥammad Kāẓem Ṣabūrī, was the official poet-laureate (Malek-al-Šo'arā') at the shrine in Mašhad.

Life. Bahār's father was his first teacher. By the time he started formal education at the age of six he was already proficient in reading Persian and the Qur'ān, and he wrote his first poem at the age of ten. Among his later teachers was Adīb Nīšāpūrī (q.v.), a traditional poet and scholar in literary sciences (Kāvarī, pp. 40ff., 234ff.), who cultivated the style of the ancient poets of Khorasan in the tradition of the *bāzgašt-e adabī*.

Bahār's studies were interrupted at fifteen when his father apprenticed him to his uncle, a glass seller ('Erfānī, pp. 41, 94 n.). Ṣabūrī died in 1322/1904, and Bahār returned to his studies, particularly Arabic which led him to recent books and periodicals from Egypt and eventually drew his attention towards Western ideas of science and progress ('Erfānī, p. 43; Āryanpūr, p. 124). Having



sent a congratulatory *qaṣīda* to Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah on his accession (*Dīvān* I, p. 3), he was rewarded with his father's title of Malek-al-Šo'arā', and thus became a government employee at the shrine of Mašhad. For his stipend he wrote and recited poems on official occasions ('Erfānī, p. 45). Already familiar with the ideas of freedom and constitution, he joined the constitutionalists in Mašhad at the age of twenty when the constitution was granted in 1324/1906. Later he joined Anjoman-e Sa'adat in Mašhad. During the period known as Estebdād-e Şaġīr (Jomādā I 1326-Rajab 1327/June 1908-August 1909) he helped publish the clandestine paper *Ķorāsān* under the pseudonym Ra'īs al-Ṭollāb; there, his first political poems were printed (Bahār, *Tārīk-emoḵtaşar-e aḥzāb-e sīāsī* I, Tehran, 1357 Š./1978, p. b; Browne, p. 21; Āryanpūr, pp. 124, 128-30). He also began writing articles for *Ḥabl al-matīn* of Calcutta for which he had to develop a new prose style suitable for modern needs (*Tārīk-emoḵtaşar* I, pp. d-h; 'Erfānī, pp. 191-92).

In 1328/1910, Bahār helped organize the Democratic Party of Mašhad, assisted by Ḥaydar Khan 'Am(ū)oġlī. He began his own publication *Now-bahār*, but his anti-Russian policy led to a series of suppressions which included the closing down of *Now-bahār*; Bahār was ordered to Tehran just as the Majles was closed (1330/1911) by troops (*Tārīk-emoḵtaşar*, pp. h, 11-12; Browne, p. 334). On his way he met Ḥaydar Khan 'Amoġlī for the last time ('Erfānī, pp. 63-64). After a listless year in Tehran, spent in writing for *Ḥabl al-matīn* and some literary articles, he returned to Mašhad. Politics were dangerous, but he was able to publish articles on female emancipation, the evils of polygamy, and superstition among the 'olamā' in a revived *Now-bahār* (*Tārīk-emoḵtaşar* I, p. z). Having been elected to the third Majles in 1332/1914 he moved to Tehran where he published *Now-bahār* (*Tārīk-emoḵtaşar* I, p. z; Āryanpūr, p. 332). In Ḍu'l-ḥejja, 1333/November, 1915, the advance of a Russian force from Qazvīn to Tehran provoked a "migration" to Qom, during which, returning from a mission, he suffered a broken arm in an accident (*Tārīk-emoḵtaşar* I, pp. 17-20, 22). He was returned to Tehran for treatment and banished to Bojnūrd in 1334/May, 1916. The revolution in Russia removed the pressure on Persia, and Bahār cooperated in reorganizing the Democratic Party. Now his attention was claimed more by literature; he founded a literary society, *Dānēşkada*, and a journal of the same name was published between April, 1918 and April, 1919 (Şadr Hāşemī, II, pp. 270-72).

Bahār was elected to the fourth Majles, which, however, did not convene until Tīr, 1300 Š./June, 1921. In the meantime a coup d'état took place in Esfand,



1299 Š./February, 1921, and its leader Sayyed Żiā'-'al-Dīn became the prime minister. Though acquainted with Sayyed Żiā'-'al-Dīn, he was surprised by the coup and declined an offer from him to cooperate. He was soon arrested and detained until the fall of Sayyed Żiā'-'al-Dīn three months after the coup (*Tārīk-emoktašar*, pp. 91-92, 116-17). Finally released, he took up his Majles seat, but declined to resume the editorship of the paper *Īrān*, which he had been editing before his arrest, and avoided political journalism (*Tārīk-emoktašar* I, p. 129).

As a member of the fifth Majles, Bahār opposed the movement of Reżā Khan (the military leader of the coup and the future Reżā Shah) towards dictatorship and despite threats sided with Sayyed Ḥasan Modarres, the leading figure of the opposition (*Dīvān* I, p. 398). He actually became the target of an assassination attempt following a debate in the Majles (8 Ābān 1304 Š./30 October 1925) but instead of Bahār, Wā'eż Qazvīnī, a journalist who had a striking resemblance to him but who had nothing to do with the issues involved, was brutally murdered in front of the Majles (*Tārīk-emoktašar* II, Tehran, 1363 Š./1984 [a detailed account of Bahār's political activities during the period], pp. 299ff.). Afterwards he took no part in the debates. He was elected from Tehran to the sixth Majles (1305 Š./1926), but avoided politics and occupied himself with scholarship. In 1927, he studied Pahlavi with the German archeologist E. Herzfeld, then visiting Tehran.

In 1308 Š./1929, he was suddenly imprisoned for a year. On release, his attempt to publish his *dīvān* was censored, and on Nowrūz 1312 Š./1933 he was again imprisoned until the summer, then exiled to Isfahan. His enforced leisure enabled him to study and write a great deal. On his return to Tehran, he was appointed to the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tehran. He took part in the Ferdowsī millenary celebrations in 1313 Š./1934, and managed to live and work in peace till Reżā Shah's abdication in 1320 Š./1941.

The Anglo-Russian invasion of 1941 awakened his political conscience. He republished *Now-bahār* and in 1323 Š./1945 published the first volume of his history of political parties (*Tārīk-emoktašar-e aḥzāb-e sīāsī*). In 1945 he was invited to Baku for the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Soviet Azarbaijan and elected to the 14th Majles on his return. He was appointed as minister of education when Qawām-al-Salṭana formed his cabinet in January, 1946, but resigned after a few months. He headed the Democrats in the 15th Majles but was already ill. In 1947 he went to the hospital in Leysin, Switzerland. By April, 1949, consumption was confirmed and he returned home to die in April, 1951. He was buried in the Żahīr-al-Dawla cemetery in



Šemīrān.

Works. Bahār’s literary production was prodigious. Both in his own mind and in the recognition of his countrymen he was first and last a poet. His *dīvān* was published posthumously by his brother Moḥammad Malekzāda in two volumes (I, Tehran, 1335 Š./1956, 2nd ed. 1344 Š./1965; II, Tehran, 1336 Š./1957). Though delicate considerations kept a few poems out of the printed *dīvān*, these two volumes present a complete sweep of the poet’s production from his youth to his death-bed. Malekzāda’s annotations are very helpful if sometimes inaccurate in details.

Bahār’s earliest poems are the threnodies for his father, which demonstrate a craft already well learned. His position as poet of the Mašhad shrine led to panegyrics both religious and personal. He owes much to his father’s example in his religious poems, while most of his poems are exercises in traditional forms modeled after classical masters. One *mosammaʿ* (*Dīvān* I, p. 12), modeled on one by Manūčehrī, may be Bahār’s earliest use of a form he exploited later in his political verse. His poetry charts his growing awareness of social and political ideas. His first important political poem, which won him recognition, was a *mostazād* (*Dīvān* I, p. 145; *Tārīk-emoktašar* I, pp. *b-j*), modeled on one by Ašraf Gīlānī and published in the newspaper *Ḳorāsān* in Jomādā I, 1327/May-June, 1909 (Browne, pp. 185-86, 260-61). While still in Mašhad, he had to consider the different elements of local society in his public poems, but in Tehran the pressure on him to write formal poems decreased. His poetry now recorded his personal reactions to political events, his style ranging from emulations (*esteqbāl*) of the old masters (e.g., *Dīvān* I, p. 284), to the use of colloquial language (*Dīvān* I, p. 285).

Bahār’s literary education advanced with his association in the *Dāneškada* group with writers familiar with European languages. Bahār was able to make Persian versions of their translations from European poetry (e.g., *Dīvān* II, p. 317, from La Fontaine, *Fables*, book 5, IX). These and original poems in a similar vein contributed to the growing number of the poet’s “private” poems. At the same time, Bahār continued to write “public” poetry, attacking many aspects of life and politics as well as his political enemies. Such poems reached a climax with the events of 1925, after which the public poems were addressed to the suspicious new monarch, while the private poems became increasingly intimate, restricted to the ears of the poet’s immediate circle. Bahār’s experiences, in prison and exile, as a teacher of literature, were all inspiration for his poetry. The scholarship that was his refuge in the difficult years



between 1925 and 1941 is manifest in his verse of the period. Reżā Shah's abdication is barely mentioned, but other events inspired poems for the rest of Bahār's life. Several, including some beautiful *gāzals*, express his pain and isolation during his illness; one *qaṣīda*, written in his Swiss hospital bed (*Dīvān* I, p. 774), is an excellent example of Bahār's use of tradition for contemporary, personal purposes.

Throughout his life, Bahār wrote poems in all the traditional forms; he experimented a few times with stanza forms of foreign type, but he rejected totally new forms of verse and returned, even at the end of his life, to the old tradition. Yet his subjects, and often his diction, are unmistakably modern.

Bahār's scholarly works include: *Sabk-šenāsī* (3 vols., Tehran, 1321 Š./1942, repr. 1337 Š./1958), a detailed standard history of Persian prose illustrated by many examples; *Tārīk-emoktaṣar-e aḥzāb-e siāsī* (I, Tehran, 1323 Š./1944, 1337 Š./1958; II, Tehran, 1363 Š./1984), a personal view of political developments of the time, important both as a primary historical source and for Bahār's biography; and *Tārīk-etatawwor-e šer-e fārsī* (ed. M.-T. Bīneš, Mašhad, 1334 Š./1955, ed. A. Maḥmūdī Baḳtīārī, Tehran, 1342 Š./1963), a work on poetry originally intended to be similar to his *Sabk-šenāsī*; only a few sections of this book were written before illness prevented him from working. His papers and miscellaneous works have been published by M. Golbon in *Ferdowsī-nāma-ye Bahār* (Tehran, 1345 Š./1966), *Tarjama-ye čand matn-e pahlavī* (Tehran, 1347 Š./1968), and *Bahār o adab-e fārsī* (2 vols., Tehran, 1351 Š./1972 with the third volume in preparation). Bahār also composed a number of songs (*tašnīfs*), some of which are still quite popular (e.g., N. Ḥaddādī, *Čehel o do tarāna-ye qadīmī*, Tehran, 2536 = 1356 Š./1977, pp. 26-40, 108-13). He published scholarly editions of *Tārīk-eSīstān* (Tehran, 1314 Š./1935), *Mojmal al-tawārīk wa'l-qeṣaṣ* (Tehran, 1318 Š./1939), part of 'Awfī's *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt wa lawāme' al-rewāyāt* (Tehran, 1324 Š./1945), and Baḷ'amī's *Tārīk* (published posthumously by M. Parvīn Gonābādī, vol. I, Tehran, 1341 Š./1962).

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