



## DĀŠ ĀKOL

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“DĀŠ ĀKOL” (translated as “Dash Akol” by Richard Arnt and Mansur Ekhtiar, 1979), one of the eleven stories in *Se qaṭra kun* (Three drops of blood, Tehran, 1932), the first collection of short stories by the eminent fiction writer Sadeq Hedayat ([HEDAYAT, SADEQ](#), 1903-1951).

‘Kol’ evokes association with ‘kolu,’ a respected local luṭi (see [LUṬI](#)) group in Shiraz that adhered to the virtues of [JAVĀNMARDI](#) (Maḥjub, pp. 121-23) an ethical system dominated by bravery, and moral and spiritual nobility. The word in combination with ‘Ā,’ short for āqā (see [AQA](#)), and ‘Dāš,’ a word of Turkish origin meaning brother, offers an apt title for a story that tells the tale of a gallant and respected luṭi who lived in Shiraz in early 20th century.

The story opens with an encounter between Dash Akol and his rival, Kaka Rostam (Kākā Rostam). Over the years Dash Akol has tangled with and has put his nemesis firmly in his place on more than one occasion, and hence is pursued by Kaka Rostam who yearns for revenge. Just as Kaka Rostam extends a challenge to settle accounts once and for all, an individual arrives to inform them that Hajji Šamad, a wealthy merchant, has died and has appointed Dash Akol executor of his estate. Dash Akol proceeds to the dead man’s house to extend his sympathies to the mourning widow. There, from between the curtains, he happens to see Hajji Šamad’s young daughter, Marjan (Marjān), who has come to catch a glimpse of the famous luṭi. Dash Akol is transfixed. “Her eyes had done their work. Dash Akol’s state of mind was changed; he cast down his eyes and blushed” (“Dash Akol”, p. 44).



Convinced that he is too old, scarred, and ugly to presume to ask for Marjan's hand in marriage, he forgets all else and devotes himself to the deceased Hajj Šamad's affairs. He organizes the assets, increases returns, and takes care of the family's every need at his own expense. Paying no attention to the taunts of old habitués, he forsakes his old haunts, and effectively removes himself from his previous life.

His only companion and confidante in nights of drunken loneliness is an old parrot. Every night, "when Shiraz with its twisting streets...and purple wines, was going to sleep...the real Dash Akol, unashamed of his desires and passions, came out of the shell that society had wrapped around him." ("Dash Akol", p. 47) It is to the parrot that he confesses his love of Marjan, reciting amorous poems, and confiding his sorrows.

The motif of an old man falling in love with a young inaccessible girl, recurrent in Hedayat's stories, acquires a socio-ethical overtone in "Dash Akol" (Fischer, p. 196). The protagonist of the story, like the title characters of "Ābji k̄ānom" (The Spinster), and "Dāvud-e guž-pošt" (Dāvud the Hunchback), faces rejection in part because of physical limitations (Hillmann, p. 127). After seven years a suitor, "older and uglier than Dash Akol himself" ("Dash Akol", p.48) arrives for Marjan. Acting according to the society's codes of honor and conduct, he makes the arrangements for the wedding, hands over his accounts in the presence of all, and walks out. Heartbroken, he proceeds to an old haunt, drinks to forget his sorrows, and recites lines of poetry:

*Delam divāna šod, ey 'āqelān, ārid zanjiri*

*Ke nabvad čāra-ye divāna joz zanjir tadbiri*

("Dāš Ākol", p. 146)

"My heart has become mad, O wise men fetch me a chain.

There is no remedy for a mad man but a chain ("Dash Akol", p. 50)

Just then, Kaka Rostam arrives and the two proceed to settle their old feud. Dash Akol places his dagger aside in an act of manliness, and it is with this very dagger that he is mortally wounded. He succumbs to his wounds the following day, but not before entrusting his parrot to Marjan.

In the final scene of the story, with Marjan staring at its colorful wings and

hooked beak, the parrot recites, in its best imitation of Dash Akol's voice, "Marjan ... Marjan ... you killed me ... To whom can I speak ... Marjan ... my love for you ... killed me" ("Dash Akol", p. 52). Tears flow down Marjan's face.

"Dash Akol," like most of the short stories Hedayat wrote from the late 1920s to the mid-1930s, is full of local color, and depicts a traditional social setting. It weaves the tragic life and death of a man with the accounts of a fast disappearing era (Etteḥād, p. 214; Naficy, p. 244). Told by an omnipresent, third-person narrator, "Dash Akol" is recognized as a coherent, well-structured short story (Golširi, p. 661; Miršādeqi, p. 99), and "a minor masterpiece in its own way" (Katouzian, p. 127), in which dialogues are "well constructed and convincing" and the "colorful idiom of ordinary people" is captured remarkably (Yarshater, pp. 321-22).

Hedayat's use of the formal written word that occasionally turns poetic and romantic, on the one hand, and the colloquial phrases and idioms, especially terms and expressions common among the luṭi groups, on the other (Yusofi, p. 353, Bahārlu, p. 4; Zarrinkub, p. 755), is established in the opening sentence of the story: "Hama-ye ahl-e Shiraz midānestand ke Dāš ākol o Kākā Rostam sāya-e yek digar rā bā tir mizadand" ("Dāš Ākol", p. 146). Everybody in Shiraz knew that Dash Akol and Kaka Rostam ... would have shot each other's shadow" (Dash Akol, p. 41). Such usage recurs throughout the narrative. The utilization of this technique, along with deft characterization that extends to clothing and the descriptions of actions and mannerisms, lends a certain harmony to the text. Dash Akol's clothes are as dated as his loyalty to his old value system; the same code of honor that, like his dagger, can only kill him (Kāzemzāda, pp. 66-68).

The repetition of allegories, phrases, and expressions, like rhymes in poetry, creates a rhythm in the text. At the same time, the final ambiguity of the story implies a suspension of judgement, leaving the reader with uncertainty, and a choice. Was Marjan aware of Dash Akol's affections before the parrot's confession? Were the tears she shed tears of sympathy and sorrow, or love and affection?

In 1971 Mas'ud Kimā'i produced a film based on this story to great acclaim. He skillfully transformed into images some of the descriptive passages of the story, and recreated the ambiance of turn-of-the-century Iran (Naficy, p. 246). It featured many leading actors in the Iranian cinema, including Behruz Voṭuqi and Bahman Mofid, who played the roles of Dash Akol and Kaka



Rostam, respectively.

*Translations.* “Dash Akol” is translated into English by Richard Arnt and Mansur Ekhtiar (*Sadeq Hedayat: An Anthology*, Modern Persian Literature Series 2, USA, 1979, Ehsan Yarshater, ed., USA, 1979, pp. 41-52); by Kimberly A. Brown and Iraj Bashiri in 1995; by Siavosh Danesh (*Sadeq’s Omnibus: A Collection of short Stories by Sadeq Hedayat*, Tehran, 1971); and also by Kambiz Parsai (available at the official website of Sadeq Hedayat Foundation, <http://en.sadeghedayat.info/article.aspx?id=69>). A bilingual collection of Hedayat’s short stories, translated in Korean by Gyoseob Shin, is published in two volumes. The first volume of the collection includes “Dash Akol” and several other short stories. The story is also translated in French by Derayeh Derakhshesh in *L’abîme et autres récits*, Paris, 1987.

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