



DEHĀODĀ, MĪRZĀ 'ALĪ-AKBAR QAZVĪNĪ

DEHĀODĀ, MĪRZĀ 'ALĪ-AKBAR QAZVĪNĪ (دِه‌آودا میرزا علی‌اکبر قزوینی) (also known as Daḵow داکو; b. Tehran, ca. 1297/1879, d. Tehran, 7 Esfand 1334 Š./26 February 1956; Ḥājj Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Amīn-al-Žarb as interpreter for the French engineers who were building the highway between Khorasan and Tehran (“Do yādgar,” p. 178). After the promulgation of the constitutional decree in 1324/1906 Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khan Šīrāzī and Mīrzā Qāsem Khan Tabrīzī conceived the idea of publishing the newspaper *Šūr-e Esrāfīl* and hired Dehāodā as editorial secretary and contributor, at a monthly salary of forty tomans (Taḳīzāda, in *Lōḡat-nāma*, p. 395; see [CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION](#) ii, vi).

The constitutional period was an era of journalistic efflorescence. Most journalists, however, had no real writing skill, were ill acquainted with the world outside Persia, and lacked understanding of such concepts as freedom, equality, and constitutional government. The journals for which they worked often disappeared after the first few issues. *Šūr-e Esrāfīl*, however, reflected its founders' passionate devotion to liberal ideas. Dehāodā, a gifted writer, was trained in political theory, and, thanks to his knowledge of French and his European travel, he also had a sophisticated understanding of world affairs. He was thus able, through his well-reasoned and clearly written political articles in *Šūr-e Esrāfīl*, to attract a wide audience, particularly for his satirical series *Čarand parand*, which was the main reason for the the rise in the



number of printed copies of the newspaper to a high of 24,000 (Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* II, pp. 249-50), far higher than those of even the best contemporary publications.

After the coup d’etat of Moḥammad-‘Alī Shah (1324-27/1907-09) in 1326/1908 Dehḳodā, fearing retaliation from the court and the reactionary clergy, joined several other notable constitutionalists in taking refuge at the British legation in Tehran (Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā* II, p. 342; Taqīzāda, 1358 Š./1979, p. 76; Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* II, p. 262). Owing to the intervention of British officials, he received a safe-conduct and left for Baku and eventually Paris, where he remained for about a year and a half, until 11 Moḥarram 1328/23 January 1910. This exile was one of the most stressful periods of his life. Not only did the agents of the Persian government persecute his relatives and associates, but he himself was also suffering from depression and poverty (Dehḳodā, 1368 Š./1989, p. 803; Afšār, 1358 Š./1979c, p. 520; idem, 1359 Š./1980, p. 423), yet he never slackened in his literary and journalistic activity. From Paris he went to Switzerland, where in Yverdon he published a new series of *Šūr-e Esrāfil*, which appeared 1 Moḥarram-15 Šafar 1327/23 January-8 March 1909; it was printed in Paris (Dehḳodā, 1358 Š./1979a, p. 114). The cost of publication and smuggling copies to Persia, where distribution was not permitted, were high, but eager readers passed each copy from hand to hand (Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* II, p. 263). Nevertheless, Dehḳodā’s desperation reached such a point that he began to think of suicide. Instead, he went to Germany and resumed publication there, but again there were difficulties, and he moved on to Istanbul, hoping for assistance or employment from the Persian community there (Dehḳodā, 1368 Š./1989, p. 803; Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā* III, p. 101). With the help of Mīrzi Abu’l-Ḥasan Khan Mo‘āzed-al-Salṭana, the head of *Anjoman-e sa‘ādat*, he, *Hājj Mīrzi Yaḥyā Dawlatābādī*, and Ḥosayn Dāneš undertook publication of a newspaper called *Sorūš*. It seems that Persian merchants living in Istanbul assumed the cost of the early numbers of this journal. Again, however, the difficulties of ensuring that copies reached Persian subscribers caused the cessation of publication after fourteen or fifteen issues (Ra‘dī Ādaraḳšī, p. 428; Mo‘īn, p. 5; Rezwānī, pp. 504-05; Šadr Hāšemī, *Jarā‘ed o majallāt* III, pp. 34-35).

After the overthrow of Moḥammad-‘Alī Shah Dehḳodā returned to Persia, on 11 Moḥarram 1328/23 January 1910 (Šadr Hāšemī, *Jarā‘ed o majallāt* III, p. 25). In the same year he was elected by the people of both Kermān and Tehran to represent them in the Second Majles. His popularity in Kermān was owing to



his criticisms in *Čarand parand* of the heavy-handed government of Fīrūz Mīrzā Noşrat-al-Dawla (Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* II, p. 291; *Šūr-e Esrāfil* nos 3, p. 4; 6, p. 5; 13, p. 4; 16, p. 5; 19, p. 4; 21, p. 4). In 1332/1914, with Persia in the grip of British and Russian occupation, Dehḳodā took refuge with the Baḳtīārī tribes in Čahār Maḥāl. After his return he served for a short period in the Ministry of education (Wezārat-e ma‘āref) with the title “head of the secretariat” (*raʿīs-e kābīna*) and in the Ministry of justice (Wezārat-e ‘adalīya) with the title “head of the office of investigation” (*raʿīs-e edāra-ye taftīš*). In 1303 Š./1924 he was appointed director of the Madrasa-ye ‘olūm-e siāsī, where he served until 1320 Š./1941 (“Sālšomār,” p. 429; Dehḳodā, 1358 Š./1979a, pp. xv-xvi, xix).

During his stay among the Baḳtīārī Dehḳodā conceived the idea of compiling an encyclopedic dictionary of the Persian language, and on his return to Tehran he applied himself to assembling the preliminary materials. He also continued his literary and scholarly activities, publishing articles in such journals as *Īrān-e konūnī*, *Āftāb*, and *Dāneš* (Dehḳodā, 1358 Š./1979a, pp. xii-xvi; Ṭabāṭabāʾī, p. 238).

In the atmosphere of strict censorship under Reżā Shah (1304-20 Š./1925-41) Dehḳodā put aside his political activities and devoted himself entirely to scholarly and literary work. The fruit of this period of his life includes the four-volume collection of aphorisms *Amṭāl o ḥekam* (4 vols., Tehran, 1304-11 Š./1925-32) and the first volume of his *Loġat-nāma*, which appeared in 1318 Š./1939, as well as a number of scholarly articles on Persian literature and language. He continued to concentrate on the *Loġat-nāma* through the first decade of Moḥammad-Reżā Shah’s reign (1320-57 Š./1941-79). In 1330 Š./1951 Moḥammad Moşaddeq came to power, and the movement to nationalize the oil industry was gaining momentum; in the prevailing atmosphere of political excitement Dehḳodā once more turned to politics, joining the Anjoman-e havādārān-e şolḥ (Society of the supporters of peace), a group with socialist tendencies. Although the leaders of the Tudeh party (see [COMMUNISM ii](#)) sought to attract the support of well-known Persian cultural figures, Dehḳodā instead declared his support for Moşaddeq (*Bāḳtar-e emrūz*, 23 Tīr 1332 Š./15 July 1953). After the [coup d’etat of 1332 Š./1953](#) and the restoration of the shah to power, Dehḳodā withdrew entirely from political activity and devoted the rest of his life to the *Loġat-nāma*. He was, however, interrogated several times on the allegation that he had been chosen president of the ruling council (Šūrā-ye salṭanatī) that was supposed to have been formed after the shah’s



flight to Rome on 25 Mordād 1332/16 August 1953 (Dehḳodā, 1360 Š./1981b; idem, 1358 Š./1979a, p. xxi; Moḥiṭ Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, p. 467). He is buried in the Ebn Bābūya cemetery in southern Tehran.

Although Dehḳodā never enjoyed wealth or affluence, he was always open-handed. He devoted the royalties from *Amṭāl o ḥekam* to subsidies for printing new books and for the care of the sick (Dehḳodā, 1358 Š./1979a, pp. xxiii-xxiv; Dabīrsiāqī, 1358 Š./1979, p. 455).

Social thought. Dehḳodā’s youth coincided with the last decade of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah’s rule, when, owing to the major role of the clerics in the successful campaign against the tobacco concession, new populist forces were unleashed in Persian politics (see [CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION i](#)). Religious leaders wielded considerable influence in everyday life, and many of them became prominent landowners (see [CLASS SYSTEM iv](#)). In the new liberalizing atmosphere after promulgation of the Constitution Dehḳodā, who had seen the effects of modernization in Europe and was well informed about the reformist ideas of Western thinkers and statesmen, strongly criticized the undue influence of the mullas, their intellectual rigidity, their corruption, and the blind obedience of the Persian people. His fierce attacks on the royalist Shaikh Fażl-Allāh Nūrī, who vehemently opposed reform movements and considered modern educational institutions “contrary to religious law” (*kelāf-e šarī‘at*), brought about the temporary suspension of publication of *Šūr-e Esrāfīl* (nos. 4, p. 6; 5, p. 2; 6, pp. 6-7; Dehḳodā, 1364 S./1985, p. 17-23, 314; Taqīzāda, in *Lōḡat-nāma*, p. 395; Torkamān, pp. 262-63).

Dehḳodā was a firm believer in equality before the law, regardless of religious belief (*Šūr-e Esrāfīl*, no. 22, p. 3), and he fervently supported emancipation of women, particularly abolition of the veil (*Šūr-e Esrāfīl*, no. 11, p. 6). Owing to his early exposure to the ideas of Najmābādī, he was convinced that, over the course of centuries, Islam itself had been unduly manipulated by religious jurists (*šarī‘atsāzān*). He himself, as one who had to earn his living, was aware of the difficulties faced by ordinary folk and the widespread injustices of the landlord-peasant system. Aside from his campaign against what he considered religious superstition, the greater part of his articles were written in support of the peasants and laborers. One of his most important proposals was for establishment of an agricultural bank, to which large landowners would turn over one-tenth of their holdings at a reasonable price, to be converted into small shares and transferred to the peasants, who would pay for them in installments (see, e.g., *Šūr-e Esrāfīl*, nos. 18, p. 22, 19, pp. 1-2, 21, p. 2).



Dehḳodā also wrote and translated a series of articles on the Russian Revolution, striving to familiarize his readers with social and political topics through explanation and criticism of the various political parties and factions involved. He was personally convinced that, in the conditions prevailing in Persia, the program of the Social democrats (Ejtemā'iyūn-e 'āmmīyūn) was most appropriate (*Šūr-e Esrāfīl*, no. 28, pp. 1-4). After he was elected to the Majles he joined the E'tedāliyyūn (Moderate) faction ("Sālšomār," p. 428; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, p. 429; Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* II p. 320).

Prose and poetry. Dehḳodā's prose enjoys a special distinction in the Persian literature of this century. His profound familiarity with Persian classical literature, both prose and verse; his prodigious store of current proverbs, partly derived from his work on *Amṭāl o ḥekam*; and his early involvement in journalism, with the concomitant need to attract large numbers of readers, all helped to develop a clearly understandable style far removed from the ornate artificiality that characterizes the prose of the Qajar period. His knowledge of French, though it brought him awareness of Western literature, never led him to adopt a "Western" coloration or to incorporate French borrowings into his own work. Even *Čarand parand*, which was filled with puns, ambiguities, allusions, and intimations (*ihāmāt, kenāyāt, talmīḥāt*), owed its success to the fact that it was intelligible to ordinary folk and at the same time entertaining to the intellectual elite and sophisticated men of letters. In Dehḳodā's serious political articles convoluted and artificial expression is also lacking, though his editorials in *Sorūš* and his satirical pieces for *Īrān-e konūnī* do not have the same bite as the original *Čarand parand* series in *Šūr-e Esrāfīl*. The difference is so great in fact that some have suspected that the latter was actually written by Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khan (Moḥīṭ Ṭabāṭabā'). The pieces in the numbers of *Šūr-e Esrāfīl* printed in Switzerland were, however, written months after the execution of Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khan, and it therefore seems certain that Dehḳodā himself wrote them after what he called five months of silence (*Šūr-e Esrāfīl* [Yverdon], no. 1, p. 7). The disparity in tone may instead be attributed to the change in Dehḳodā's own circumstances. He wrote for *Šūr-e Esrāfīl* as a member of the disenfranchised elements in Persian society, but six years later he had become a deputy to the Majles and himself a member of the ruling elite.

Although Dehḳodā was not primarily a poet and his poems are mainly exercises in versification, he has nevertheless earned a place in the history of contemporary poetry. His modest output includes *gāzals* and other pieces in



the classical style, each written exclusively in the language of the time of the poet being emulated. For example, in “Lisak” (DehĶodā, 1334 Š./1955, p. 113), which was composed in imitation of Rūdakī, there is not a single word or expression that was not in the Persian lexicon of the 10th century. Similarly, at the request of Ḥabīb Yaġmā'ī he composed a poem in the style of Bahrāmī Saraġsī (*Yaġmā* 3, 1329 Š./1950, p. 81; DehĶodā, 1334 Š./1955, p. 86). Some of these “imitations” are actually superior in lucidity, expository power, and elegance of expression to the originals, including even some from Sa'dī's *Būstān* (e.g., DehĶodā, 1334 Š./1955, pp. 119, 120, 31).

DehĶodā also wrote a *mosammaṭ* and two *maṭnawīs* (in both Turkish and Persian; DehĶodā, 1334 Š./1955, pp. 124-32), also in the popular (*'awāmāna*) manner. Because of his ingenious use of slang expressions his poetry includes the best examples of popular Persian verse ever written. A third group of poems consists of *maṭnawīs* in which he used allegory and narrative to expound his social ideas; as these pieces were aimed at the educated class, he did not hesitate to use all manner of allusions to the Qur'ān and works of *feqh* and belles lettres, as well as archaic expressions. In *Enšā' Allāh gorba ast* (God willing it's a cat!) his powerful portrayal of the mien and behavior of a hypocritical *ākūnd* is almost without equal in Persian literature (DehĶodā, 1334 Š./1955, p. 5). Among other literary works were annotations to the *Dīvān* of Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow (ed. S. N. Taqawī, Tehran, 1307 Š./1928, pp. 619 ff.), the *Dīvān* of Sayyed Ḥasan Ġaznavī (ed. M.-T. Modarres Rażawī, Tehran, 1328 Š./1949, pp. 361-76), *Loġat-e fors* (unpubl.), and the *Dīvān* of Ḥāfeẓ, which appeared in the journals *Yaġmā* and *Dāneš*. He also wrote a biography of [Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī](#), edited the *Şehāḥ al-fors* (*Yāġmā* 3, 1329 Š./1950, pp. 321-26, 366-70, 416-20, 480-85; *Dāneš* 3, pp. 197-202, 269-72, 371-78, 491-98, 549-54, 637-42) by Moḥammad b. Hendūšāh Naġjavānī and the *dīvāns* of Manūčehrī Dām'ġānī, Farroġī Sīstānī, Sūzanī Samarqandī, and (parts of) Mas'ūd-e Sa'd-e Salmān (Mo'īn, 1335 Š./1956, pp. 295-301). Editing and publication of his monumental *Lōġat-nāma* (q.v.) were completed after his death under the supervision of the late Moḥammad Mo'īn.

In all his writing DehĶodā was a perfectionist and a meticulous craftsman. He was a nationalist, outspoken in his convictions, indifferent to the wrath of powerful men, and a firm believer in Persian culture (DehĶodā, 1358 Š./1979c, pp. 912-14; Afšār, 1358 Š./1979c, p. 522).



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