



ḤABL AL-MATIN

ḤABLAL-MATIN (lit. strong cord), name of three newspapers published in Calcutta, Tehran, and Rašt.

1. One of the most illustrious and influential newspapers in the Persian language, the weekly *Ḥabl al-matin* was published in Calcutta, with occasional long interruptions, from 10 Jomādā II 1311/19 December 1893 until 18 Āḍar 1309 Š./9 December 1930, by Sayyed Jalāl-al-Din Mo'ayyed-al-Eslām Kāšāni (b. Kāšān, 13 Rajab 1280/24 December 1863; d. Calcutta, 24 Āḍar 1309 Š./15 December 1930), who also published a number of other papers, including one in Urdu and one in English (Irānparast, apud Šadr-e-Hāšemi, *Jarāyed o majallāt* II, p. 207). From the seventh year of publication, the epithet *moqaddas* (holy) was added to its title, apparently as a reference to the term “the cord of God” (*ḥabl Allāh*) used in the Qur'ān (3.103).

Mo'ayyed-al-Eslām went blind during the last decade of his life, and, therefore, turned over the management of the newspaper over to his daughter, Faḵr-al-Solṭān, who was referred to as deputy-editor (*dabir-e tāni*), and who signed as F. S. Mo'ayyedzāda. From the 6th year of publication its managing editor was Moḥamad-Jawād Širāzi. At the beginning, Sayyed Ḥasan, the brother of Jalāl-al-Din and toward the end 'Ali-Ašḡar Raḥimzāda Šafawi were closely involved in the publication of the newspaper.

The long life of *Ḥabl al-matin* can be divided into five periods, which are distinguished by the differences in editorial policy. During the first five years (1893-98), in format and Persian style it resembled the Persian newspapers



published in India, while in self-censorship it mirrored the attitude of newspapers published inside Persia. From 1898 to 1906, the year the Constitution was decreed (see [CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION i](#)), *Ḥabl al-matin* showed a Pan-Islamist tendency and was mildly critical of the economic and political situation in Persia. From 1906 to 1909, the year Moḥammad-‘Ali Shah was removed from the throne, *Ḥabl al-matin* played an active and significant part in enlightening public opinion in Persia and assumed a moderate role in the struggle against the faction supporting the restoration of despotic rule. For this reason, it is considered as an important source for the history of the Constitutional Revolution (q.v.). In later years, *Ḥabl al-matin* continued to enjoy the same public esteem, but not as much influence.

From the final victory of the Constitutionals in July 1909 and the end of the period known as “The Short Tyranny or Despotic Rule” (*Estebdād-e ṣaḡīr*), to the coup d’état of Esfand 1299 Š./February 1921 (see [COUP D’ÉTAT OF 1921](#)), *Ḥabl al-matin* advocated reforms; during World War I, in contrast to public opinion in Persia, it tended to support the Allies and opposed the Axis powers. From 1921 until its closure in 1930, *Ḥabl al-matin* insisted on the necessity of rebuilding the country. It supported the post-coup d’état cabinets and the person of Reżā Khan Sadār-e-Sepah, (later Reżā Shah Pahlavi), by whose order it received financial subsidies from the government (Raḥimzāda Ṣafawī, p. 162; Sims-Williams, 1984, p. 2; Parvin, pp. 485-86). In an article entitled “Lozum-e jomhuriyat wa tafkik-e qowā-ye ruḥāni dar Irān,” published in several issues from October 6 to November 3, 1924, the paper supported Sardār-e-Sepah’s unsuccessful drive for the establishment of a republic in Persia (Hairi, pp. 140-41 and n. 146). In this period, the reigning king, with the exception of Moḥammad-‘Ali Shah, the country’s premiers, and high-ranking officials were always viewed positively by *Ḥabl al-matin*, for which it has been criticized by Aḥmad Kasrawī, who accused Mo’ayyed-al-Eslām of indulging in flattery out of self-interest. In particular, the paper praised ‘Abd-al-Majid Mirzā ‘Ayn-al-Dawla and criticized people for the event of Masjed-e Šāh that eventually led to the Constitutional Revolution (*Tāriḳ-e bidāri*, ed. Sa’idi Sirjāni, I, pp. 331-36; *Mašrūṭa*3, pp. 42-43, 63-64, 104, 106). Others, on the basis of the paper’s implicit support of British policies in the East, have viewed it as being inspired by the British government in India (see, e.g., Kān-Malek Sāsāni, p. 207; *Setāra-ye sork*, nos. 5-6, in Chaqueri, ed., VI, pp. 264-71). In fact *Ḥabl al-matin*, rather than being pro-British, was against the policies of its Russian rival in Persia. This is corroborated by the decisions that the British authorities in India made against Moa’yyad-al-Eslām or his newspapers, one of which led to



a long suspension of *Ḥabl al-matin* in 1916 and 1917. Moreover, it sharply condemned the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 (q.v.) in a series of articles (tr. in Browne, *Persian Revolution*, pp. 174-89), calling the British government the “enemy of civilisation and justice” (Kazemzadeh, pp. 501-2; Afšār, ed., 1980, p. 215). In 1318/1900 the paper published a series of articles written by Shaikh Yaḥyā Kāšāni, which were all sharply critical of the prime minister Mirzā ‘Ali-Aṣḡar Khan Atābak (q.v.). Consequently Atābak prohibited the distribution of all newspapers printed abroad, including *Ḥabl al-matin* (*Tāriḡ-e bidāri*, ed. Sa‘idi Sirjāni, I, p. 470; Kasrawi, *Mašruṭa*3, p. 25; Ṣadr-e-Hāšemi, *Jarā‘ed o majallāt* II, pp. 201, 203). The ban lasted until 1322/1902, when it was revoked by the new prime minister, ‘Abd-al-Majid Mirzā ‘Ayn-al-Dawla, who incidentally was supported by the paper (*Tāriḡ-e bidāri*, ed. Sa‘idi Sirjāni, I, pp. 211, 471; Kasrawi, *Mašruṭa*3, pp. 63-64, 104, 106, 277). Finally, in spite of its Islamic orientation, *Ḥabl al-matin* did not shrink away from criticizing religious fanaticism, including that espoused by Shaikh Faḏl-Allāh Nuri and his supporters during the Constitutional Revolution. In addition to Muslims in Persia and India, *Ḥabl al-matin* had many readers in Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Ottoman Empire (Carrère d’Encausse, p. 164 apud Parvin, p. 479).

From July 1913 to June 1917, *Ḥabl al-matin* and its affiliated newspapers were managed by a publishing firm, which was eventually dissolved on the order of British authorities in India (Sims-Williams, 1984, p. 2). The paper had its own printing house throughout its existence. Its format through the middle of its seventh year of publication was twelve, two-column, 17 x 25 cm lithographed pages; thereafter it was typeset in sixteen or twenty-four, two-column, 21 x 37.5 cm pages, which was later reduced to 17 x 32.5. According to “Report on Native Papers,” *Ḥabl al-matin*’s print run was 500 copies in March 1897, 800 in 1899, and 1,000 in later years. These figures seem to have been for Calcutta or Bengal only, since from about 1905 for ten years the Persian philanthropist merchant of Baku, Mirzā Zayn-al-‘Ābedin Taqiof, paid for 500 copies to be sent directly to the ulema and theology students in ‘Atabāt (q.v.) in Iraq. The paper was praised by the ranking religious leader, Shaikh Ḥasan Mamaqāni, who recommended it to his followers (Brown, *Press and Poetry*, p. 25; Kasrawi, p. 42; Ṣadr-e-Hāšemi, *Jarā‘ed o majallāt*, II, p. 201; Matini, pp. 489-91). During the Constitutional Revolution the print run rose to 35,000 copies, while during the last years of its publication it was no more than two to three thousand (Irānparast, p. 281). During the first seven years, *Ḥabl al-matin*’s annual subscription was ten rupees, thirty-five *qerāns*, five *majidis*, twenty-five



French francs, or ten rubles, respectively, in India and Burma, Persia and Afghanistan, the Ottoman Empire, Europe and China, and Russia and Turkestan. As of the eighth year, the subscription was raised to twelve rupees in India and forty qerāns in Persia and Afghanistan, while remained unchanged elsewhere. Single issues were priced at one qerān in Persia, four annal in India, and the equivalent of one French franc elsewhere. From the ninth year, the price of single issue was not specified. Collections of *Ḥabl al-matin* are available in most major libraries both in Persia and abroad that deal with the history of modern Persia. However, no complete collection of it has yet been reported to exist in any library, private or public.

Mo'ayyed-al-Eslām's success in publishing *Ḥabl al-matin* led him to similar enterprises, including the publication of *Meftāḥ al-ẓafar*, *Āzād*, *Tamaddon* (in Persian), *Calcutta* (in Urdu), *Molk o mellat* (in English), and the Urdu edition of *Ḥabl al-matin* (Browne, *Press and Poetry*, pp. 28-29, 143; Şadr-e-Hāşemi, *Jarāyed o majallāt* I, pp. 139-40, II, p. 137, IV, pp. 228-29). The publication of these papers lasted only as long as British authorities in India tolerated them.

2. The daily *Ḥabl al-matin* of Tehran and Rašt. The freedom of the press enjoyed in Persia following the establishment of the Constitutional government prompted *Ḥabl al-matin*'s management in Calcutta to launch a daily newspaper in Tehran. Another reason for this new enterprise was the fact that the paper, which reached Tehran about a month after its publication, had lost a good part of its popularity due to the proliferation of newspapers in the period. Publication of the daily *Ḥabl al-matin* was the responsibility of Mo'ayyed-al-Eslām's younger brother, Sayyed Ḥasan Kāşāni, who had become familiar with journalism in Calcutta, where he had cooperated with his brother in publishing the papers *Meftāḥ al-ẓafar* and *Āzād* (Şadr-e-Hāşemi, *Jarāyed o majallāt* I, pp. 139-40; IV, pp. 228-29). Furthermore, he knew the country's conditions better than his brother and was actively involved in politics. He had also been incarcerated (19 Jomādā II 1319/2 October 1901) for two years as a member of the Secret Society (Anjoman-e maḳfi) that had published a broadsheet (*şab-nāma*), criticizing Amin-al-Solţān (*Tāriḳ-e bidāri*, ed. Sa'idi Sirjāni, I, pp. 469-71; Kasrawi, *Maşruţa*3, pp. 26-27).

The daily *Ḥabl al-matin* was published six days a week, initially in Tehran and for a while in Rašt, from 15 Rabi' I 1325/28 April 1907 until 31 July 1909. Moa'yyed-al-Eslām was named general-manager and his brother Sayyed Ḥasan deputy-editor. It was specified (1/3, 2/28) that the Tehran daily was an affiliate of *Ḥabl al-matin* of Calcutta. From number 20 onward, Shaikh Yaḥyā



Kā-šāni, a famous journalist who subsequently became editor of *Majles* and *Irān* and published *Irān-e emruz*, was mentioned as the newspaper's editor. Sayyed Ḥasan, himself an active supporter of the Constitutional Movement, published in *Ḥabl al-matin* (16 May 1907) the Persian version of an article by Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din Afḡāni (q.v.), in which the active participation of ulema in politics had been strongly advocated (Hairi, pp. 17, 79 and n. 93). As the struggle between the Constitutionals and supporters of Moḥammad-ʿAli Shah grew more intense, Sayyed Ḥasan was named as one of those whose banishment was demanded by Moḥammad-ʿAli Shah. After Moḥammad-ʿAli Shah's coup d'état in June 1908, Sayyed Ḥasan took refuge in the British Embassy and eventually fled to the Caucasus (*Tāriḡ-e bidāri*, ed. Saʿidi Sirjāni II, p. 173; Kasrawi, Mašruṭa³, pp. 649, 652-53; Ṣadr-e-Hāšemi, *Jarāyed omajallāt* II, p. 213). From the Caucasus, he went to Rašt, where he resumed the publication of the daily *Ḥabl al-matin* on 22 Ṣafar 1327/15 March 1909 (Nowzād, p. 665). Upon his arrival in Tehran in July 1909 along with the forces that removed the shah from his throne, he once again began the daily's publication in Tehran (Ṣadr-e-Hāšemi, *Jarāyed o majallāt* II, p. 210).

In the first two years before the coup d'état, the daily *Ḥabl al-matin* must have run up to issue 55, although the last issue of the second year found in the holdings of public and private libraries is number 54, dated 22 Jamādā II 1326/22 June 1908. Number 56 was published in Rašt and is dated 22 Ṣafar 1327/15 March 1909. Thus, no copies of number 55 of the second year, which must have been published just before the 1908 coup d'état, seem to have survived those tumultuous days. The daily *Ḥabl al-matin* of Rašt ran 74 issues, the last one bearing the date 10 Rajab, which is a misprint for 1 Rajab 1327/19 July 1909.

The daily *Ḥabl al-matin* was a liberal, reformist, and patriotic newspaper, publishing news and political commentaries. It was suspended four times by the authorities. The first time, in Jamādā II 1325/June 1907 (no. 73), for its attacks on Russian policies in Persia; in solidarity against its suspension all newspaper and printing houses went on strike. After four days, upon paying a fine, it was allowed to resume republication (no. 79). The second time was in Ramažān 1325/October 1907 for an unspecified reason thus far unknown (*Moḏākarāt-e Majles-e šurā-ye melli*, 19 Ramažān 1325/27 October 1907). The third occasion was for its attack on two anti-Constitutionalist religious leaders, Shaikh Fażl-Allāh Nuri and Mollā Moḥammad Āmoli (no. 190, 20 Ḍu'l-qa'da 1325/26 December 1907). It was suspended a fourth time, after the restoration



of the Constitutional government, for having published (13 Rajab 1327/31 July 1909) an article titled “Eḏā fasad al-‘ālem fasad al-‘ālam” (by Sayyed Nur-al-Din Ḳaraḡāni), which described Arabs in pejorative terms and, referring to the execution of Šaikh Fażl-Allāh Nuri, sharply criticized the religious establishment and some of the ulema, particularly Mollā Qobān-‘Ali Zanjāni. This time the suspension proved to be permanent. A court sentenced Sayyed Ḥasan to twenty-three months of imprisonment and a fine of 250 tomans. He was not, however, jailed and his detention also proved to be short. Finally, the appeal court absolved him of all charges (Brown, *Persian Revolution*, pp. 244, 333-34; Šadr-e-Hāšemi, *Jarā’ed o majallāt* II, pp. 211-13; *Šarq*, no. 81; Āryanpur, *Az Šabā tā Nimā* II, p. 107), after which he never tried to republish the daily. He died shortly thereafter.

The format of the daily *Ḥabl al-matin* was four, at times six to eight, two-column, 21 x 34 cm pages. In the first year it was printed at the Fārūs printing house, and from the second year at one owned by the newspaper itself. As of no. 205 of the first year (8 Du’l-ḡejja 1325/12 January 1908), it began to run occasional illustrations. Annual subscription in the first year was forty qerāns in Tehran (single issue sold for 100 *dinārs*), which was raised in the second year to forty-five (single issues were priced at three *šāhis*). It ran a considerable number of advertisements. The *Ḥabl al-matin* of Rašt was printed in the ‘Orwat-al-Woṡḡā printing house with the financial support of Sardār Maṡsur Rašti, whose residence was used as the paper’s address. In format and many other features it resembled the one published in Tehran; its price did not change, except for single issues: in Rašt two *šāhis* and in other places in Persia three.

Collections of the Tehran daily *Ḥabl al-matin* are accessible in most libraries in Persia and those dealing with Iranian studies abroad, the most complete belonging to the Central Library of Tehran University and Majles Library II (former Senate). Some various issues of the Rašt daily *Ḥabl al-matin* are preserved at the library of Cambridge University.



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