



JAMALZADEH, MOHAMMAD-ALI I. LIFE

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i. Life

Early Life and Education. Mohammad-Ali, the eldest of five children, was born in 1892 in Isfahan. His father was the famed cleric and preacher, Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din Wā'ez (Hamadāni) Eṣfahāni (1863-1908), whose family had come to Isfahan from Lebanon via Hamadān and Tehran. His mother was Maryam Kānum, daughter of Mirzā Ḥasan-Bāqer Khan, an Eṣfahāni notable. Along with Malek-al-Motekallemin, Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din was among the most prominent of the radical clerics of the constitutional movement. He was a passionate and effective orator with a large following and was instrumental in the contextual definition and popularization of constitutionalist ideas such as freedom, justice and the rule of law for the ordinary people and the poor (Taqizadeh, in Jamalzadeh, 1999, pp. 14-15). Together with Malek-al-Motekallemin, he wrote the secret pamphlet “*Ro'yā-ye ṣādeqa*” (the Truthful Dream) which was an indictment of the corrupt despotism of Prince Z̄ell-al-Solṭān, the governor of Isfahan, and the ignorant, self-serving short-sightedness of Āqā Najafi and other followers of conservative religion. He was among the *ulama* who founded Anjoman-e Taraqqi (Society for Progress) and the clerical secret society (Šerkat-e Eslāmi) advocating the ideas of modernization and reform associated with Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din Afghani (q.v.), Malkom Khan, and



Ṭāleboff (Moayyad, 1985, p. 3; Mangol Bayat, 1982, p. 186). Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din was also a close associate of Sayyed Hasan Taqizadeh (Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizāda) in the years leading up to and through the first constitutional period.

While in Isfahan, Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din spoke out against oppression, injustice, and regressive religion based on blind faith. He was thus accused of blasphemy (*kofr*) and of Babi (q.v.) sympathies by the conservative *ulama*, and was compelled to travel to Tehran and Tabriz for much of his preaching (Ādamiyat, 1976, p. 266). Jamalzadeh attended a series of traditional schools (*maktab*) in Isfahan, including a religious school for training clerics. He was then transferred to a school established by an enlightened cleric, where he and the two sons of Malek-al-Motekallemin were taught arithmetic and some English in addition to the traditional curriculum. In his memoirs, Jamalzadeh recounts that this school was closed by a mob of religious zealots, and the principal Hāji Jawād was publicly beaten by order of Āqā Najafi. He also relates witnessing the mob burning of two merchants accused of Babi beliefs (Jamalzadeh, 1999, p. 22, 51-52).

In 1902, Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din moved to Tehran along with his family, and began preaching and giving speeches in favor of constitutionalism in the Shah mosque. The young Jamalzadeh first attended the modern Ṭerwat school, where he was taught geography and mathematics by Solaymān Mirzā (Eskandari), Arabic by Shaikh Moḥammad Borujerdi, and French by Mirzā ‘Abbāsqli Khan Qarib (Jamalzadeh, 1999, pp. 53-54). He later attended the Adab School, another modern school with a similar curriculum established by Mirzā Yaḥyā Dawlatābādi and known for its outstanding curriculum and teaching staff (Jamalzadeh, 1999, pp. 54-55; Maḥbubi Ardakāni, 1975, pp. 389-90; Yaḥyā Dawlatābādi, I, pp. 254-57). Along with a few other students of Tehran’s modern schools, Jamalzadeh was selected to attend chemistry, botany and zoology classes taught by French teachers at the Dār al-Fonun (q.v.; Jamalzadeh 1999, p. 55). Jamalzadeh later noted that though they taught Arabic and French in these modern schools, they did not have a course or a teacher for the Persian language. He later taught himself Persian through his years of diligent reading and research when he was abroad (Cuypers, 1998, pp. 64-65).

Being the eldest living son in the family, Jamalzadeh also received much of his education by accompanying his father to his meetings, sermons and speeches. He thus met many of the intellectuals and leaders of the constitutional



movement and as much as his young age would permit, became familiar with the current discussions about freedom, justice and the rule of law. His father's simple and direct style of speech undoubtedly influenced the young Jamalzadeh as did his probable exposure to the constitutional newspapers such as *Şur-e Esrāfil*, and its satirical *Čarand parand* column by Dehḳodā (q.v.; Cuypers, 1998, p. 80). The extent of Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din's influence on the young Jamalzadeh must be underscored; his mosque speeches contained not only discussions of equality, freedom, meritocracy, and social justice but even a definition of the novel, roman, as a vehicle to convey knowledge and wisdom in story form that is more accessible to the whole population (Yağmā'i, 1978, pp. 98-101)

With the ascent to the throne of Moḥammad-'Ali Shah Qajar (1872-1925) and the bombardment of the Majles on June 23, 1908, prominent and vocal constitutionalists were sought and many were executed, notably, Mirzā Jahāngir Khan the editor of *Şur-e Esrāfil*, and Malek-al-Motekallemin. Others, including Taqizadeh and Dehḳodā took sanctuary in various embassies and were later exiled. Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din escaped to Hamadān with the aim of fleeing to the holy cities in Iraq, but he was caught, imprisoned in Borujerd, and shortly thereafter, strangled by order of Amir Afḳam, the local governor (Afšār in Jamalzadeh, 1999, p. 272; Bāstāni Pārizi, 1978, pp. 8-9).

In April 1908, a few months before the anti-constitutionalist coup, and the execution of Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din by the forces of despotism, Jamalzadeh was sent to Beirut to study at the 'Antoura School, run by Lazarite missionaries. There, he learned French, and began to write some poetry and articles in the school newspaper. His school companions in Beirut were Ebrāhim Purdāwud and Mehdi Malekzādeh, the son of Malek-al-Motekallemin (Jamalzadeh, 1999, p. 30, p. 272).

In 1910, following a brief stay in Cairo, Jamalzadeh went first to Paris, and then settled in Lausanne to study law. After experiencing financial difficulties and a clandestine love affair, he moved to Dijon, in 1911, where he graduated from the Faculty of Law in 1914. He married Josephine, a Swiss woman and a fellow student in Dijon, in the same year (Jamalzadeh, 1999, pp. 34-35).

Berlin Committee. As the First World War broke out in 1914, Taqizadeh, prominent constitutionalist and one of the leaders of the Democrat Party who was in exile, invited a number of Iranian exiles in Switzerland, France, Britain, and the Ottoman Empire to establish the Committee of Iranian Nationalists



(Komita-ye Melliyun-e Irāni) in Berlin. Prominent members of this group, which first met in January 1915, included Mirzā Maḥmud Khan Qazvini, Ebrāhim Purdāwud, Ḥosayn Kāẓemzāda Irān-šahr (q.v.), Esmā‘il Nobari, Hājj Esmā‘il Amirḳizi, Rezā Afšār, Maḥmud Khan Ašrafzāda, and Naṣr-Allāh Jahāngir (nephew of Mirzā Jahāngir Khan). Jamalzadeh was among the youngest members of the group. With financial, political, and military aid from the government of Germany, the group’s goal was to fight against the colonial interests and aims of Britain and Russia in Iran (Jamalzadeh, 1999, p. 69, Taqizadeh, 1989, pp. 181-88). Similar groups were formed by Indian nationalists and others, since German policy in this period was to encourage unrest in the British, French, and Russian spheres of control (Taqizadeh, 1989, p. 186). Jamalzadeh was first dispatched to Baghdad via Istanbul, where he was joined by several other members of the committee as well as various anti-British activists and German officers. In Baghdad, Jamalzadeh, Purdāwud, and Amirḳizi established a newspaper called *Rastāḳiz* (which lasted from August 1915 to March 1916). They proceeded to Kermān-šāh and Lorestān with the specific mission to recruit militias from the Kurdish and Luri tribes, and to instigate an uprising against British and Russian control and interests in the region. Once they established a militia called the Nāderi army in Kermānšāh, Jamalzadeh traveled to Tehran in disguise to meet with the leaders of the Democrat Party, Solaymān Mirzā Eskandari and Sayyed Moḥammad Rezā Mosāwāt, to enlist a leader for that militia (Jamalzadeh, 1999, p. 36). The efforts of Jamalzadeh and the other members of the Nationalist Committee in the tribal regions lasted for sixteen months but did not ultimately meet with success. With the advance of the Russian armies in Iran and the British armies in Baghdad, the activists fled to Berlin. En route in Baghdad, Jamalzadeh met the constitutionalist poet ‘Āref Qazvini, the renowned social democratic leader Ḥaydar Khan ‘Amu Oḳlu (q.v.) and the scholar and educator Sayyed ‘Abdul Raḥim Ḳalkāli. In his difficult passage from Baghdad to Istanbul, Jamalzadeh noted the condition of turmoil, and witnessed terrible scenes of the death and starvation of large numbers of Armenians (Jamalzadeh, 1972; pp. 211-17, Jamalzadeh 1963, in Mehrin, pp. 55-69).

Among the interesting episodes in Jamalzadeh’s life during this period was his participation in the Socialist Congress of 1917 in Stockholm along with Taqizadeh, Yaḥyā Dawlatābādi and Waḥid-al-Molk Šaybāni as representatives of the Committee of Iranian Nationalists (Taqizadeh, 1989, p. 188; Jamalzadeh, 1999, p. 43). This conference had been organized by various socialist parties and groups to negotiate a peaceful solution to end World War I, but as the



governments of France, Britain, and the United States did not permit their delegations to participate, it became a forum for discussion rather than a platform for action. Jamalzadeh and his colleagues used this forum to draw attention to the disastrous effects of British and Russian colonialism and interference in Iran (Jamalzadeh, 1999, pp. 43-44; Kamshad 1966, p. 93).

The Kāveh period. During his absence from Berlin, Taqizadeh and Qazvini had established the Persian journal *Kāveh*, which was published from January 24, 1916 to March 30, 1922. In the first thirty five issues which were published during and shortly after the First World War, *Kāveh* was primarily a political magazine with openly pro-German sympathies. It advocated Iranian independence from the colonial manipulations of Britain and Russia, contained reports and critiques of the political situation in Iran, and reported the activities of the Nationalist Committee. There were also a few articles on history and literature. In its second period of publication (January 22, 1920-December 11, 1921) Taqizadeh declared that *Kāveh* would now be mainly devoted to scientific, literary and historical discussions. The new guiding philosophy of the journal was the adoption of European civilization in Iran, resistance to fanaticism, defense of national unity and integrity, the promotion of the Persian language and literature and when possible, the quest for liberty both within and outside of Iran (Aryanpur, pp. 231-32; Jamalzadeh 1962, pp. 3-18). The emphasis on the necessity to adopt and promote modern education was evident from the editorials and the articles that appeared in the journal.

In what proved to be an extremely productive period in his life, Jamalzadeh began researching and writing articles for *Kāveh* from his return to Berlin in 1916 until the last issue of the journal in 1921. The erudite group of exiles who had gathered in Berlin included Mirzā Moḥammad Khan Qazvini, Sayyed Hasan Taqizadeh, Mirzā Fażl-‘Ali Tabrizi, Mirzā Moḥammad-‘Ali Khan Tarbiat, Kāzemzādeh Irānšahr (q.v.), Hājj Sayyed Abu’l-Ḥasan ‘Alawi (father of Bozorg-e Alavi), ‘Abbās Khan A‘zam-al-Saltāneh, Maḥmud Qanizādeh, and Ebrāhim Purdāwud. They organized a literary and scientific association for the presentation of lectures and met for weekly and monthly discussions (Jamalzadeh, 1999 pp. 171-232) Jamalzadeh frequently names Taqizadeh and Qazvini as the two most influential people in the development of his mind and talent. Taqizadeh provided him with wisdom, energy, moral courage, tenacity, and access to his wealth of knowledge and curious mind. He attributes Qazvini with teaching him the European methods of research based on reason, attention to detail, and critical thinking. He also mentions the influence of E. G.



Browne on Qazvini's approach to scholarship. Both expressed admiration and praise for his scholarship and for his great talent as a writer of fiction (Jamalzadeh, 1999, pp. 212, 214-15). During this period, he also had the opportunity to meet and/or become familiar with the work of a number of important German orientalist scholars such as Josef Markwart (1864-1930), Wilhelm Geiger (1856-1943), Eugen Mittwoch (1876-1942), and Oskar Mann (1867-1917; Jamalzadeh, 1999, p. 275).

Devoting his full energies to writing and research, between January 1916 and December 1921, Jamalzadeh wrote *Ganj-e šāyegān* (Priceless Treasure): The Economic History of Iran (Berlin, 1918), a series of fifteen articles on the history of relations between Russia and Iran (1918-21), and articles on various topics in Persian language, poetry and history. His methodic use of European as well as Iranian sources and his direct language was commended by many, including Qazvini and Taqizadeh. The Economic History of Iran, hailed as the first work of scholarship in Persian using European methods of research, received praise from the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society; it was translated into German, but its publication was halted due to wartime difficulties (Jamalzadeh, 1999, pp. 275, 278; Kamshad, 1966, p. 93)

The publication in *Kāveh* in 1921 of "*Fārsi šekar ast*" (Persian is Sweet), the first modern short story in Persian, catapulted Jamalzadeh to fame. In the preamble to its publication in *Kāveh*, he states that he had written it "for his amusement, to present a sampling of ordinary Persian as it is spoken today" (Jamalzadeh, *Kāveh* 1, 11 January, 1921, p. 8). The story was immediately identified as a novelty in Persian literature in several respects: it was narrated in a simple, direct, satirical, and colloquial prose style; language was utilized to present a biting social and cultural critique, and it was the first instance of European realism in Persian fiction. "*Fārsi šekar ast*" and five other stories that Jamalzadeh had written between 1915 and 1921 were combined into a collection entitled *Yeki bud yeki nabud* and published in Berlin and Tehran in 1921. His more serious intentions were spelled out in the introduction to the book where he pointed to the need for writers to rejuvenate the Persian language, to refrain from using stylized, specialized, circuitous language, to write for a larger audience, and to bring social relevance into Persian prose (Jamalzadeh, 1954. pp. 5-21).

The reaction to the book in Tehran was tumultuous. Some regarded it as an insult to language and religion, while others hailed it as a great innovation in Persian literature (see ii. below). The combination of fame and controversy,



and accusations of blasphemy (*kofr*) by the *ulama* must have had a bitter but familiar ring to Jamalzadeh; his father had been the object of conservative clerical wrath throughout his childhood. The uproar led Jamalzadeh to decide not to publish another work of fiction in Iran for the next twenty years (Kamshad, p. 95).

By the end of 1921, the Berlin group ran out of money and resources, and the last issue of *Kāveh* was published in December of that year. Jamalzadeh found full time employment in the Iranian embassy in Berlin first as a translator and then as the director of student affairs from 1922 until 1931. During this period, he did not give up writing scholarly articles. From May 1924 until April 1925, he collaborated with the Iranian students' journal *Farangestān*, along with Mortazā Yazdi, Gōlām-Ḥosayn Foruhar, Ḥasan Nafisi, Mošfeq Kāzemi, Aḥmad Farhād and Taqī Arāni. After the closing of this journal, he began to publish articles in journals such as *Šafaq-e sorḡ*, *Kušeš* and *Eṭṭelā'āt* in Iran. He also became the director of the journal *ʿElm o honar* in Berlin, but it only lasted for seven issues. This seems to have been an unstable and difficult period of his life. He lost his wife Josephine due to an illness; he was unhappy with the persistence of clerical fanaticism in Iranian society at large, and dissatisfied with the reappearance of autocracy, Aryan nationalism, and the imposition of strict censorship for writers under Reza Shah Pahlavi (Kamshad, p. 94; Moayyad, 1985, p. 7. Katouzian, 2003, pp. 20-22.)

The Geneva period. In 1931, Jamalzadeh married his second wife, the German Margaret Eggert, and moved to Geneva to work for the International Labor Organization of the United Nations (ILO). He remained at that post until his retirement in 1956. His job consisted of documenting and monitoring work conditions, compiling labor statistics, and devising labor regulations and laws in industry and agriculture, mainly in the Middle East and South Asia. He traveled to India, Iraq, Iran and Turkey with ILO delegations on several occasions, and wrote reports on the dire condition of industrial workers in Isfahan and oil workers in Ābādān (Mehrin, pp. 77-81).

His literary and scholarly output, which aside from a few essays on classical literature, had diminished during the 1930s, flourished again after the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941. From 1942, Jamalzadeh wrote and published many novels, such as *Dār al-majānin* (Lunatic Asylum, Tehran, 1942), *Qoltašan divān* (Neighborhood Bully, Tehran, 1946), *Šaḥrāy-e maḥšar* (The Plain of Resurrection, Tehran, 1947), and *Rāheāb-nāmeḥ*, (The Drainage Chronicles, Tehran, 1948). He also published a drama/novella entitled *Ma'sume-ye Širāzi*



(Massoumeh of Shiraz, Tehran, 1954), and several collections of short stories, such as *Sargozašt-e 'Amu Ḥosayn-'Ali* (The Story of Uncle Hossein-Ali, Tehran, 1942), *Talk o širin* (Bitter and Sweet, Tehran, 1956), *Šāhkār* (Masterpeice, Tehran, 1957), *Kohneh o now* (Old and New, Tehran, 1959), *Ġayr az Kodā hičkas nabud* (There Was No One but God, Tehran, 1960). Other collections of stories followed such as *Āsemān o rismān* (Tehran, 1964), *Qeṣṣehā-ye kutāh barā-ye bačehā-ye rišdār* (Short Tales for Bearded Children, Tehran, 1974) and *Qeṣṣe-ye mā be sar resid* (The End of the Story, Tehran, 1978). Jamalzadeh also compiled a dictionary of colloquial terms, *Farhang-e loġāt-e 'āmiāneh* (Tehran, 1962), and compiled a volume on the characteristics of Iranians entitled *Kolqiyāt-e mā Irāniān* (Tehran, 1966; for a survey of his work, see ii. below).

With the reemergence of many journals and the establishment of new ones after 1942, Jamalzadeh also contributed articles and stories to *Soḵan*, *Yaġmā*, *Waḥid*, *Armaġān*, *Honar o mardom*, and *Rahnemā-ye ketāb*. In 1945, he resumed writing for a new version of *Kāveh* which was established in Munich by Mohammad Asemi (Afšār in Jamalzadeh, 1999, pp. 276-77).

He is one of the few Iranian writers who spoke and wrote candidly about his life, and who frequently used his life observations and experience in his work. For example, 'Amu Ḥosayn-'Ali in *Šāhkār* is based on Shaikh Abu'l-Qāsem Širāzi, a merchant he met and admired in Cairo. He also wrote and spoke about many of the important personalities that he encountered in his life, including his father Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din, his mentors, friends, and colleagues Sayyed Hasan Taqizadeh, Moḥammad Qazvini, Ebrāhim Purdāwud, 'Āref Qazvini, Yaḥyā Dawlatā-bādi, Sayyed Ziā'ā-al-Din Ṭabāṭabā'i, and Sadeq Hedayat.

Fluent in French, German and Arabic, Jamalzadeh was an able translator. His translations of Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Moliere, Ibsen, Schiller and Van Loon were published in various Persian periodicals throughout his working years. He also showed a commitment to writing articles on European intellectuals and writers such as Maxim Gorky, Friedrich Nietzsche and James Joyce, and Anatole France in order to introduce them to the Persian reading public (Kamshad, p. 104). Jamalzadeh continued to write well into the end of the 1970s, although most critics agree that with advancing age, his later writings became repetitive and lacked cohesion (for criticism of his work, see ii. below).

Although Jamalzadeh lived in Geneva until his death in 1997, visiting Iran for



only short periods of time, he kept in touch with intellectual and literary developments in Iran by reading books and periodicals and earnestly corresponding with authors. Consequently, he produced a massive volume of correspondence, which has been published in various books during his life and since his death (for example, Bahārlu, 1994, Afšār, 1996; Dehbāši, 1998).

Jamalzadeh's devotion to the advancement of education in Iran did not cease with his death on November 8, 1997. From 1977 onwards, he began donating his book collections and his papers to the Tehran University library and archives, and gave a percentage of the royalties from his books to be spent on scholarships, educational institutions and various charities in Isfahan (Afšār, in Jamalzadeh, 1999, pp. 7-8). He died on November 8, 1997, and is buried in Geneva, Switzerland.

Conclusion. Developments in prose and fiction writing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, notably the work of Abdu'l-Raḥim Tāleboff, Zayn-al-'Ābedin Marāḡa'i's *Siāḡat-nāma-ye Ebrāhim Beg* (The Travels of Ibrahim Beg), Mirzā Ḥabib Eṣfahāni's Persian translation of James Morier's, *The Adventures of Haji Baba of Isfahan* (q.v.), Deḡkodā's critical and humorous articles in *Ṣur-e Esrā-fil*, all reflected a modern outlook and a didactic use of fiction and travel literature as an instrument of social change. These books and essays prefaced Jamalzadeh's innovation in the use of language, humor, and social criticism in fiction. As he remarked in his customary unassuming manner, the ground had been prepared for his innovation (Kamshad, p. 106). Nevertheless, his contribution was a watershed in the development of modern Persian fiction.

Jamalzadeh's stories, memoirs and prose reflect his life experiences. He grew up in the "shadow of the mosque" (Cuypers, 1998, p. 68) as the son of an expert orator and preacher, observing the speech and wit of the people of Isfahan in his childhood; he experienced the Iranian constitutional revolution and absorbed the prevailing anti-despotic discourse criticizing backwardness and fanaticism, demanding justice, law and modern education; he studied the French Enlightenment (Bernardin Saint Pierre, Voltaire), the French language and literature (Anatole France, Marcel Proust, Abel Hermant, Henri Lavedan) in 'Antoura and later in Lausanne and Dijon; he persisted in teaching himself Persian by reading and rereading the great classical texts. His political and human observations in Iran and the Ottoman Empire during World War I, and his higher education in research and writing under the tutelage of Taqizadeh and Qazvini in Berlin—all fed his creative talent as a writer and his lifelong dedication to the Persian language and education.



Besides being a consummate and talented storyteller, Jamalzadeh seems to have retained his didactic purpose in the writing of literature throughout his life. Many of his stories and novels were prefaced with introductions that put the work in a sociological, cultural (and consequently always bordering on a political) context. The main themes in his stories involve exposing the multi-faceted malaise of despotism, corruption, and fanaticism, and extolling the benefits of a modern education. He remained committed to contributing to the Enlightenment project that the secular intellectuals and the progressive clergy—notably his admired friend Taqizadeh and his father—had advocated during the constitutional revolution. The main features of this project were the promotion of parliamentary democracy based on meritocracy, the development of the resources and economic potential of the country, and the constant vigilance of an educated, critical population against the habits of corruption, dogmatism, and abuse that had developed over the centuries among all segments of the population. Though Jamalzadeh was an admirer of Western modernity, industry, progress, and education, he never advocated blind imitation of the West. His professional focus on the intricacies of the Persian language and the meticulous critique of its culture was aimed at its progress and advancement.

Jamalzadeh insisted on the removal of dictatorship and corruption, and the pursuit of economic development as the only conditions which could substantially improve the condition of Iran over time (letter to Qāsem Ġani, in *Dehbāši*, 1998, pp. 660-61; letter to Pišdād, in *ibid*, p. 709) As such, he welcomed the Iranian revolution of 1979 because it removed the monarchy which he perceived as the embodiment of despotism in Iranian history (Afšār, 1996, p. 133). Even as late as 1980, he continued to believe that a form of socialism or social democracy, not copied from the east or west, but well thought out and adapted to the traditions and conditions of Iran, would be the ideal form of government for the country. (letter to Pišdād in *Dehbāši*, 1998, pp. 697-701). In his eagerness to celebrate the removal of the monarchy, and perhaps with a degree of naiveté that came with his old age, he could not or did not imagine the development of another form of dictatorship within the framework of a republic with a nativist ideology.

Jamalzadeh's depiction of the lives, mentalities, and language of the common people and the poor in a realistic, yet satirical manner opened the way for the development of modern Iranian prose fiction and influenced the work of writers such as Sadeq Hedayat, Moḥammad Mas'ud, Šādeq Čubak, and Jalāl Āl-



e Aḥmad.

Bibliography: See iii. Bibliography.