



## PAYANDEH, ABU'L-QASEM

**PAYANDEH, Abu'l-Qasem** (Abu'l-Qāsem Pāyanda, b. Jowzān, Najfābād, 1908 or 1911; d. Tehran, 8 September 1984), journalist, translator, and fiction writer.

Payandeh was taught reading and writing in a traditional elementary school (maktab; see [EDUCATION iii](#)) at his birthplace. In 1922 he went to Isfahan, where he received a traditional education in Arabic language and Islamic sciences and theology (Mošār, 1, column 232). In 1929, he began his cooperation with the newspaper *'Erfān*, a socio-cultural magazine published in Isfahan by Aḥmad Marāḡ-i 'Erfān (1894-1951). In 1932, he moved to Tehran and began working with the journals *Šafaq-e Sorḡ* and *Irān*, edited by 'Ali Dašti (1894-1982), and Zayn-al-Ābedin Rahnemā (1892-1993), respectively, and ran the magazine *Ta'lim o Tarbiyat* for a brief period of time. He was soon employed by the Ministry of Information, and was later transferred to the Ministry of Education. In 1947, he was appointed head of the Office of Publications and Information, and began a period of cooperation with the Iranian Academy of Letters (see [FARHANGESTĀN](#)), an organization which was established in 1935 to promote Persian culture and replace foreign loan words by words of Persian origin (Ḥosayni, p. 502).

From 1942 to 1951, Payandeh founded the weekly magazine *Šabā*, which enjoyed the cooperation of a host of noted writers and translators, including Ḥasan Farāmarzi, Šojā' al-Din Šafā, Iraj Mosta'ān, among others. Payandeh's fiery editorials against the revolt of Ja'far Pišavari, the founder of the separatist Democratic Party of Azarbaijan (Ferqa-ye demokrāt-e Āḡarbāijān; see [Azarbaijan v](#)), and his criticism of the Prime Minister Qavām-al-Saltāna's



apparently pro-Soviet policies and wooing of the Tudeh Party (see [COMMUNISM ii](#)), earned *Şabā* popularity and a high circulation (Etteḥād, 9, p. 323). Introduced into the world of politics, Payandeh represented Najafābād in the second Constituent Assembly (*Majles-e Mo'assesān*), in May 1949. He was also elected as the deputy for Najafābād to the 21st and 22nd sessions of the Majles, which were inaugurated on September 1963, and September 1967, respectively.

In the highly charged political atmosphere of Iran in the early 1950s, and the sweeping popularity of Moḥammad Moṣaddeq, the architect of the nationalization of oil industries who later became prime minister, Payandeh published articles and caricatures, ridiculing Mosaddeq and his nationalistic policies. The 'politically incorrect strategy,' as he recalls it in the later stages of his life, soon took its tolls (Etteḥād, 9, p. 327). *Şabā* lost its enthusiastic readers almost overnight, and was eventually closed at 1951 (Behzādi, pp.134-35).

Payandeh had an early exposure to classical Arabic, and learnt French and English languages at the later stages of his life. He translated into Persian, from Arabic translation, *The Pleasures of Life*, and *Quest for Happiness*, both by John Lubbock, first Baron Avebury (1834-1913), as *Dar āguš-e k'vošbakti*, and *Dar jost-o-ju-y k'vošbakti* in 1932 and 1934, respectively. They went through several reprints within a few years (Green, pp. 188-89).

Yet another work by Payandeh was the publication of a compilation of short sermons and sayings, attributed to Prophet Moḥammad, in 1947. The book's title, *Nahj-al feṣāḥa: kalamāt-e qeṣār-e Ḥaẓrat-e Rasūl* (The way of eloquence: aphorisms of the Prophet), draws upon the *Nahj al-balāḡa*, the anthology of dissertations, letters and testimonials, traditionally attributed to 'Ali b. Abi Ṭāleb, the first Shi'i Imam, which was collected in the 10th century by Moḥammad b. Ḥosayn Raẓi (930-977). Payandeh's collected volume has been reprinted several times.

His translation of the Qur'ān was the recipient of the annual royal award for the best work of translation in 1957. The translation, although rendered in a simple, fluent, and comprehensible language, and praised as a hitherto unrivalled translation of the Qur'ān in Persian (Zarrinkub, pp. 202-03), suffered from a fairly large number of critical errors and omissions (Farzān, pp. 344-411). The revised editions of the book, however, enjoyed high critical acclaim (Mahdavi, p. 609). In his comprehensive introduction to the book, Payandeh provides the reader, in an adorned and eloquently crafted language



(Behzādi, p. 139, Ettehād, p. 320), with a brief history of Islam, as well as an account of the Prophet's life. He also offers a glimpse into the numerous difficulties he had to grapple with in translating the text. He also translated *Zendegāni-e Moḥammad* (Life of Mohammad, 1958), by Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1888-1956), and *Tāriḳ-e siāsi-e Eslām* (The political history of Islam, 3 vols., Tehran, 1959-60) by Ḥasan Ebrāhim Ḥasan. Noted among Payandeh's other translations are *Tāriḳ-e 'Arab* (*History of the Arabs*, 2 vols., Tabriz, 1965), by Phillip Khuri Hitti (1886 – 1978), the Christian Lebanese scholar and one of the founders of Arabic studies in the USA. His translation of *Tāriḳ-e Ṭabari* (The History of Tabari), the first complete rendition of Moḥammad b. Jarir Ṭabari's magnum opus in Persian—after Abu-'Ali Moḥammad Bal'ami's abridged translation in 352 AH (circa 962)—appeared in sixteen volumes in 1973. Although Payandeh was praised for his single-handed translation of this lengthy book in a short period of time (Hedāyat, pp. 984-87), the book nevertheless, was not free from defects, and would have certainly benefited from a substantial editing. Payandeh was a prolific writer, with over 40 works of translation (For a comprehensive list of Payandeh's works see John Green, *Iranian Short Story Authors: A Bio-Bibliographic Survey*, Costa Mesa, Calif. 1989).

While Payandeh came to be regarded primarily as a translator and journalist, he remained also active in writing fiction. His first short stories appeared in *Afsāna*, a journal of literary review published by Moḥammad Ramažāni, the founder of Kolāla-ye Kāvar Publishing House. *Afsāna* published, exclusively, works of fiction either by contemporary foreign writers in Persian translation, or by Persian writers, noted among them [Sadeq Hedayat](#) (1903-1951), [Moḥammad Hejāzi](#) (1901-1974), and Sa'id Nafisi (1896-1966; Ṭāhbāz, p.181; Elāhi, pp.301-05). His first novel, *Qātel* (Murderer), which first appeared in installments in *'Erfān*, was published in 1934. *Darsinemā-ye zendegi* (In the cinema of life), a collection of nineteen short stories was published in 1957. It did not attract much critical notice until the renowned poet, Aḥmad Šāmlu (1925-2000), in a review article in *Sepid o Siāh*, a weekly magazine published by 'Ali Behzādi, praised the collection as a literary masterpiece and the best collection of short stories ever published in Persian (Behzadi, pp. 137-38). The revised edition of the collection, entitled *Morda-kešān-e Jowzān* (The Corpse-bearers of Jowzan) was published in 1967. In *Jenāb-e āqā-ye doktor riš* (His Excellency Dr. Beard, 1969), Payandeh throws a light on the barely visible aspects of medical malpractice in Iran. In 1968 he published *Defa' az Mollā Naṣr-al-Din* (In defense of Molla Nasreddin), a collection of twelve short



stories. *Zolamāt-e 'edālat* (*The dark abyss of justice*), a collection of fourteen short stories, in which fictional characters are subsumed by socio-cultural implications, appeared in 1975. His skillful adoption of an eloquent and yet an entertaining language in these collections, is reminiscent of Moḥammad-'Ali Jamālzāda's prose in his earlier works, particularly in *Yeki bud yeki nabud* (*Once Upon a Time*, Berlin, 1921; Mir'ābedini, 1, p. 198).

In general, as contended by a critic, Payandeh's fictional works shun character delineation and elaborate plotting. Often replete with Arabic phrases, and infused by his poignant criticism of the country's social and political institutions, his novels and short stories are characterized instead by a haphazard combination of memoirs, reports, and sermons (Mirābedini, I, p. 199)

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