

WISDOM IN SHAHNAAMAH : BEHZAAD

1. O Man of wisdom
No amount of
Your Speech, Your whole being
Can praise Him wholly
Be not any time
Superfluous and overfull
In your words and phrases
In the state as you are
In words as simple
Praise the existence of the Divine Being
This is more than enough
For a mortal like you,
Be you His worshipper
Obey His Path
With Love and Devotion.
2. Wisdom, right and virtuous
Is the Crown of a good being
An ornament of a good noble.
If you are wise
Make it your life-long
Wealth and treasure
For it is worth doing so.
3. Mortal one-
Do you know that
Without industry
You can gain gold
Without sufferings
You cannot know Joy.
4. These shall redeem
You, your soul.
Wisdom, right and pure
Life, religious and good
Since, Time flies
Make haste — right now
Seek the Threshold
Wherein lie deep below
Your Salvation.
5. Think not this world
To be a plaything — a toy
Strive always for goodness
And leave not
The Path of Bliss.
6. When you know,
O being, that virtue
Is right and fair
Here, there, everywhere?
Then, O being,
Cast yourself about
In search of it
But it gives
Shame and sorrow.
7. Behold, O Man -
Do you know
Your value, your worth
In the eyes of
Be on your guard against
This world with two faces
When you smile, It turns sweet
When you grieve,
It becomes wicked
Inflicts on you, agony.
Mind you: Mind well
It never remains same
And it shall never be.
This world shall ever be
A fairy-tale to you.
8. O world! Nourish not
Do nourish not
The well, well, new-born
When you are certain
To destroy him in the end.
O world! I prithee thee
What is your mystery
Of nourishing the new one
In its infancy
At one time
And take away his breath
At other time
Where lies the mystery
Raising him to lofty heights
Then knock him headlong down
To lick dust.
9. He who his life time
Has his faith and hope
Lost in Paak Yazdaan.

Finds fear creeping
Into his heart and mind
From all directions.

10. O mortal being!
However battered
However weak
Your adversary be
Devalue him not, nay,
As a spent force,
Fatigued and fagged
Or as dead wood.
11. I know not, perhaps
What lies in store for me.
Alas! Alas
No one is able
To read and understand
Into the Mysteries
Of this Mysterious world.

(Zohaak)

12. Do you yearn
For a long, long life?
Why?
When unto you
This wicked world
Does not — never
Its mysteries reveal.

Unto you, it shall be
As sweet, as sweet
As honey.

It shall speak to you
Words as sweet as syrup
It shall do everything
To keep you a smiling
For a while. ...
You, in your innocence
Unto it
Your nature reveal:
But you do not know
The wiles of the world,
You shall see joy
You shall make merry;
But at a moment
So crucial, so decisive
It shall play its dice:
Then, it shall plunge you
Into grief and pain.
Such has been ever
Such had been always
Such shall it ever be
Untrustworthy.
O mortal being!
Sow not — nothing save
The seeds righteous
All your life-time.

13. (Fraanak to her son Fareedun who later defeated Zohaak and became Shah of Iran).

The Path of Peace
Is different from
The Path of Strife.
Therefore, my son,
See not this world
With your youthful eyes:
He who sips
The Wine of Youth
Sips Wine of Sorrow.
He sees himself
High above all.
He perceives no danger.
But, mind you, son
Such a pride
Shall blind you.
Store this counsel of mine
In your heart and
Your mind, son,
That apart from
Mother's words
All others are
Worthless, unrewarding.

14. In the entire Cosmos
The Divine Supreme Being
Is Primordial, Sublime.
So whenever you
Pass through
Agony and anguish.
Stretch your hands
And spread them out
Unto Him, alone.

15. Tell me, O World!
Why are you so wicked?
Why do you kill
The being you nourish?
Tell me, O World!
Where has Fareedun gone
Who captivated Zohaak?
He lived on earth

Full five hundred years,
But, in the end,
You kicked him out.
He is no more, alas
His belongings lie here
He took nothing with him
Save agonies and pain.

16. O Son!
When this world
Has not been eternal
Unto Shah Fareedun,
Why do you hope
It to be eternal
Unto you?
Mind, Son: mind well,
This world has been
Indifferent or hostile
To every one
As they did
So shall you suffer
Indifference and hostility.

17. Any offspring
Gentle and good
Is loved by all.
It does not matter
He be a boy, or,
She be a girl.

18. From times immemorial
This has been the rule.
The human body
That grows old
Grows weak and feeble always.

19. When the Divine Creator
Bestows on you virtue
O mortal being
Receive it with thanks
And tread always on
The Path of Virtue only.

FIRDAUSI'S SHAHNAAMA : BEHZAAD

**Basee ranj bordam dareen saale-see Azam
zende kadam badeen Parsee.**

“For full thirty years, I toiled and toiled;
I revived the glory of the Parsee Deen.”

**Too in-raa dorough fasaanah ma-daan
Ba yaksaan ravesb dar zamaanah ma-daam.**

“Think not that this Shahnaamah is a folklore and imaginative. It is full of historical facts. Bear in mind well that the time has never been the same. (ie. no two eras had similar customs, cultures and events).

It is indeed hard-nay, impossible — to find a Mazdayasni zarathoshti so ignorant as not to know that the Shahnaamah does exist. One thousand years have rolled by and many more shall pass by but the immortal Shahnaamah will ever remain.

Shahnaamah is the most celebrated work in the Persian language. It is also one of the most celebrated epics of the world. It records the glory of the ancient Iranians — their kings, warriors and saintly persons.

Shahnaamah was composed by Firdausi Toosi. But, this was his nom-de plume. His real name is Abul Qaseem Mansoor. He was born in a tiny village of Shaadaab near the city of Toos, which was situated in the Province of Khoraasaan in the north-east region of Iran. He was born in a very poor but saintly family belonging to the tribe of “Dehqaan”. No record of his birth-year is to be found and it is hard to ascertain due to the lack of historical records. But the year 934 or 935 or 941 A.C. is suggested.

It is recorded that around the time of his birth, his respected father, Maulana Fakhroddin Ahmad, had a strange dream. It was very mysterious. He dreamt that his new born babe, climbed over the top of a very high tower and

from its top-most balcony yelled out most vociferously. After some moments the yell echoed. The people of those times had great faith in dreams. They believed that the dreams foretold the coming events. It was like “the coming events cast their shadows.” He decided to consult Sheikh Najeed-ud-din, a well-known interpreter of dreams and visions in his neighbourhood.

The Sheikh heard the story with rapt attention, closed his eyes and meditated for a while. When he opened his eyes, he had something strange to say. He spoke a prophecy which proved to be hundred per cent true. He said, “How fortunate you are ! You are a father of a child, whose name and fame shall become immortal. The height of the tower tells that he shall reach great heights. The yell indicates that he shall be heard well throughout the world. The echo shows that the people will praise his work. Your son will be acclaimed as one of the greatest man of the world. The entire dream signifies that his name shall become immortal in the world.”

Maulana Fakhrood-din Ahmed sat spell-bound for some moments. He could not utter a single word. Subsequently, he regained himself and rejoiced at the strange and mysterious revelation.

Right from his childhood, Firdausi showed great intelligence. He was very good in his study. But, he liked to read poems. His father was a learned man and he took his plunge into the sea of knowledge under the watchful care of his father. He mastered the Persian, Arabic and Pahlavi languages. His inborn wisdom led him to different horizons of knowledge.

After this elementary education, he paid great attention to Ilm-e Urooz (the art of composing poems) under the guidance of the then renowned poet, Asadi Tusi. He also studied

"Ilm-e. Riyazi" (mathematics) under the well-known mathematician, Naaseer-ud-din Tusi.

From his early age, Firdausi hoped to revive the past glory of Iran in a poetic form. Though born a Muslim, he was attracted towards the "Parsee Deen". It is recorded that he tried to study the Holy Quran but did not succeed in mastering it. Although he devoted himself to its study, he could not complete it.

Firdausi was now a young man. He started composing poems in the Persian language. They were merely eulogical in nature. He praised therein the men of rank. They paid him. He used this money to buy Pahlavi books that recorded the glory of Kadeem Iran. Some years later, he came to know that another Persian Poet, Dakiki, was composing poems on the glorious history of Ancient Iran. Unfortunately, this poet was murdered by one of his slaves. Soon a prophetic idea struck him. He thought to himself, "Maybe I am destined to do this

work. Surely, I am born for it." Yet, he found no way to begin with his cherished task. He yearned to bring the past dead to life again.

By this time, Firdausi Tusi had crossed thirty years of his life. He was gradually gaining recognition as a poet of great hope. The rich, nobles, governors and the well-known Iranian personalities invited him and honoured him. They requested him to compose poems and paid handsomely in gold "Ashrafi". Thus, his fame spread far and wide. Some poets of those days grew very jealous and turned green with envy.

Even the ears of Shah Mahmud of Ghazni recorded the wide-spread fame of Firdausi Tusi. He sent a communication to the Governor of Toos urging him to convey his invitation to Firdausi and send him as soon as possible to his court. When Firdausi received this invitation, his joy knew no bounds. He was confident that under the patronage of the Shah

of Iran, he would get all the facilities to breathe fresh life into the past glory of Iran. He decided on that very spot to leave Toos and seek his fortune right under the generosity of the Shah. He prepared to leave for the court.

On the way, Firdausi came across a big garden. As he was very tired, he thought of taking some rest in it. When he got up, he went to a fountain to wash his face. There he was spied by the three well-known Persian Poets. They were Ansari, Farrokhi and Asjadi. These three poets took Firdausi Tusi as their strong opponent and secretly plotted to destroy his name and reputation. They decided to say a line each of a four-lined verse and request Firdausi to finish the fourth line and complete the verse. They chose a topic of eulogising a beloved using the last word ending in "Shan." It is stated that there are only three words in the Persian language ending in "shan": raoshan, Gulshan, jaoshan. They were confident that Firdausi would be at a loss to complete it.

Accordingly, the three approached Firdausi. At first, Ansari said :

Ansari : **Chun Aarezo to maah na baashad
raoshan.**

Farrokhi : **Maanandeh rukht gul na buvad
dar gulshan.**

Asjadi : **Meezgaanat guzar ahmi kunad dar
jaoshan.**

Firdausi : **Maanandeh sanaane Geev dar
jang-i Pashan.**

English - Version

Ansari: Even the moon does not dazzle
like your cheeks.

Farrokhi: Even the sweetest of all the
roses is not sweeter than your
cheeks.

Asjadi: The arrow of your eyelids pierces
the heaviest mail.

Firdausi: As pierced the spear of Geev in
the Battle of Pashan.

The three poets were dumb founded. They were mystified for they knew nothing about Geev and the Battle of Pashan. They never had

an idea that a battle-ground of the name ending in "Shan" ever existed. They inquired about the battle.

When this incident came to be known it brought so much glory to Firdausi that everyone acclaimed him to be the greatest Iranian poet of their time.

Firdausi reached Ghazni. He went to the court and met the Shah. He bowed and praised the greatness of the Monarch. Shah Mohammad was very pleased. When he heard the following couplet, he was thrilled into a state of inexplicable ecstasy.

**Chu kudak lab az sheer-i Maadar bishast
Beegahwaraa Mahmmud gooyad nakhast.**

Right from the moment, a new-born babe suckles his mother's milk, it possesses the intelligence to utter the name of Mahammad before any other name.

Shah Mahammad made Firdausi the court-poet. He came to be known as the "Shaaeraan-Shaer" of Iran. The Shah entrusted him to write the past glory of Iran. Firdausi took it as as a great honour no, a unique one. He finished one thousand couplets and begged the Shah to permit him to recite them in front of him. The permission was gladly granted.

When Firdausi completed his recitation Shah Mahammad was very pleased. He was so impressed at the way of his poetic style, that he failed to bring words to his lips to praise Firdausi. He ordered his Vazeer to pay him one thousand "Ashrafee" (gold coin) as a reward. Firdausi begged the Shah to keep the thousand gold coins as he had to write more and intended to take the full amount after the completion of his "Shahnaamah."

Firdausi did not want the gold coins for him self. It is recorded that there was a river that flowed through the town of Toos. It had a crude dam built on its banks; but, every time it gave way to the flood waters easily and inundated the town and its neighbour-hood. The poor village where Firdausi lived was also affected by it. It was for this reason that he requested the Shah

to give him the whole amount on completion of his *Shahnaamah* so that he was able to build the dam and save his people from the misery.

Years rolled by one after the other. The couplets too piled up in thousands. After thirty years of hard work, Firdausi was able to finish the epic that was destined to become immortal and make him immortal too. When it was completed, it contained 60,000 couplets. According to the pledge, the Shah had to give him 60,000 Ashrafi. The Shah ordered his Vazir Hasan Mohammadi, to arrange for the payment of 60,000 Ashrafi from the royal treasury.

Prime Minister, Hasan Mohammadi, was very envious of Firdausi's fame. In his low tone and with an air of wisdom, he cautioned the Shah: "O Shah To give away such a huge amount in gold from the royal treasury is not an impossible task. But, mind well, that on this earth exceeding joy or sorrow can prove fatal to any person. It is — and I admit it — our

bounden duty to reward Firdausi. But, we have to preserve the life of our "shaaeraam-shaer" (Poet Laureate) and so I advise your Imperial Majesty 60,000 silver coins instead of gold Ashrafi."

Shah Mahammed heard this and soon lost himself in deep thought. The words and wisdom of his Vazir convinced him. He ordered that the amount be paid in silver coins. The silver coins were sent to Firdausi.

When the silver coins reached the destination, Firdausi was in a "hamaam-khaaneh" (Public Bath). He saw them and his dreams of 60,000 gold Ashrafi and his hope of building a dam to save his fellow-men from the misery of the floods vanished into the thin air. He could not decide whether to accept the silver coins or to refuse them straight away. In a fit of burning rage, he distributed the coins. He gave 20,000 silver coins to the keeper of the "hamaamkhaaneh", 20,000 to the slave who brought the amount and the

remaining 20,000 to a sugar-cane juice vendor for a glass of juice.

Poor and unlucky Firdausi ! He had toiled and laboured for full thirty years to revive the past glory of Iran got not a single coin. What an irony of Fate !

Shah Mamammud came to know through his slave that Firdausi had distributed the reward. He felt ashamed to break his pledge. He ordered for the gold Ashrafi. But his Vazir intervened once again. He said to the Shah, "O Shah ! Whatever is sent from the royal treasury has to be respected. No matter if it is in gold, Silver or iron. As a mark of respect, Firdausi should have accepted it. This attitude of his is a clear indication of insult to your Imperial Majesty."

Once again, Shah Mahammud was convinced that his Vazir was right. He took it as an insult. Trembling with rage, he ordered that the body of the Shaaeraan Shaaer be crushed under the feet of an elephant.

Firdausi got the news of the order. The city of Ghazni was now not a secure place for him to live in. His friends and well-wishers advised him to flee. He too decided to leave but not before he composed the poem.

Tov aya Shaahe Mahammud Keshvar

goshaya

Ze man gar na tarsi betars az Khodaaya.

"O conqueror of the world, Shah Mahammud ! If you do not fear me, at least you should fear God."

Maraa Saham daade Keh dar paaye peel.
Tanatraa besaayam chu daryaae Neel.

"You threaten to crush me under the feet of an elephant like the river Bile."

Na didi tov een Khaatere teeze man
Na yandishi az teeghe Khunreeze man.

"Do you not know about my ferocious temper? Did you ever think of my blood-shedding pen?"

Keh shaaer chre ranjad beguyad hajaa
Bemaanad hajaa taa Kayaamat bojaa.

"Mind well, when a poet is hurt he will speak sharply and this sharpness shall last till Doomsday".

Na kardi dareen naamae man negaah
Ze goftaare bad guya gashti ze raah.

"You did not value my Naamah and you led yourself astray by your evil-tongued vazeer."

Haraan kas keh shaer maraa kard past
Na girdash gardoone-gardandah dast.

"Anyone who condemns my Naamah, Heavens shall never lend a helping hand to him."

Benaahaao aabaad gardad kharaab
Ze baaraano az taabeshe aaftaab.

"The magnificent edifices shall be razed to the ground by the rain drops and sun's heat;

Paya afgandam az nazm kaakhe boland.
Ke az baado baaraan neyaabad gazand.

"But the edifice that I have fashioned and figured shall ever remain impregnable to rain and sun".

Agar shaakraa shaah budi pesar
Be sar bar nehaadi maraa taaje-zar.

"If the Shah was of royal blood, he would have placed a golden crown on my head."

Agar maadare Shaah baanu budi
Maraa seem-o zar taa beh zaanu budi.

"If the mother of the Shah of a royal descent he would have rewarded me with lot of gold."

Chu dihim daarast na bud dar nezaad
Ze dihim daaraan neyaavord yaad.

"Alas ! His parents were not of royal blood, and thus the Shah lacked the royal magnanimity.

Jahaan az sakhun kardaham choon behesht
Azeen beesh tokhme sakhun kas nakesht.

"My epic, Shaahnaamah, has brought the light of Heaven to my Iran. No other epic shall glow with more intensity than that of mine."

Firdausi told Ayaaz, the king's slave to deliver this poem to Shah Mahammud after twenty days time.

(To be continued)

FIRDAUSI'S SHAHNAAMA : BEHZAAD (2)

The slave — a faithful person — delivered the letter to the Shah after 20 days. It was read out in the court. The Shah almost went off his head. He thundered and swore that any one who brought Firdausi-alive or dead — would get a fabulous sum of money as reward.

Firdausi by this time, was out of the limits of the territory of Shah Mahmud. He sought refuge in Kohistaan. There he narrated his tale of woe to the Governor. The Governor was a man of noble character. He consoled Firdausi and cheered him up. He then sent a message to Shah Mahmud who happened to have high regards for him.

Shah Mahmud was filled with shame and sorrow. He thought that he had done injustice to Firdausi. He ordered that his vazeer who had misled him to do such an injustice be executed and the sum of 60,000 gold. Ashrafi be sent along with royal robes immediately to the Shaaeraan-Shaaer, Firdausi, in Kohistaan.

From Kohistaan, Firdausi went to Maazandaraan, a nearby province, from where he came back to his native place. Toos.

One day, on one of his usual amble in the market-place, he overheard a small boy reciting some of the couplets from his Shaahnaamah in which he had brought indignity to the Shah. The 71-year-old poet could not stand it. Thirty long years he laboured and he was unrewarded. He sighed aloud. Then writhing with pain, he fell unconscious on the ground.

The people carried him to his house immediately where he breathed his last. It was 1021 A.D.

According to the writings of a well-known poet, Nizaami Aroozi, when Firdausi died, the head Mullaan — Abul Kaasim Gurgaani of Toos city, ordered that no one should perform

the funeral ceremonies for the Shaaeraan — Shaaer. The Mullaan acknowledged that though Firdausi was a good man, all his life he had praised the ancient Iranian monarchs and their Mazdayasni Faith. As such, not only, the Namaaz prayers not be recited but his mortal remains should also not be interred in any Kabrastaan (Graveyard of the Muslims).

Poor Firdausi! He was interred outside without any ceremonials and rites. Some days later, the head Mullaan Gurgaani had a dream. He found himself standing before a palace of great grandeur. He opened the gate and walked in. On an upper floor, he saw a big hall. It was exquisitely decorated. In the middle of the hall, there was a statesque throne fully studded with diamonds and precious gems. He was so dazzled with the dazzle and pomposity that he asked the guard, "Pray whose throne is this?" "Oh, Mullaan!" he heard in reply, "This is the throne of Iranian Shaaeraan Shaaer, Firdausi Tusi".

Gurgaani approached the throne further, and what did he behold? Firdausi clad in colourful clothes and a crown bedecked with priceless gems covered his head. He asked, "O Firdausi! What brought you to this majestic state?"

Firdausi replied, O Mullan! My genuine veneration to the Divine Being-brought me into this place. I had written of Him, thus:—

.....Jehaan-raa bulandi O pasti too-i
.....Nadaanam che-i harche hasti too-i

"You are the height and you are the depth of your Cosmos. I know not who you are. You are what you are."

The dream vanished and the Mullaan awoke. He was ashamed of his action and repented for it. The next morning he went straight to the grave of Firdausi and recited the Namaaz himself.

Another story is that when Firdausi died, Gurgaani ordered that no one should offer Namaaz. This created a problem for the poet's family. His daughter prayed and pleaded to the Mullan to withdraw his orders but in vain. So the women of the village carried the Janaazaa and walked all the distance to the burial place. It is noted that the women felt no weight whatsoever on their shoulder. It seemed to them that some mysterious power lifted the coffin a little above their shoulder.

Firdausi departed from this world as a broken-hearted man. His body was taken out for burial. Just then, the 60,000 Ashrafi and royal robes all laden on camels arrived. Alas! He did not see his reward. His daughter accepted the reward and used it for the good of the Village — Firdausi's wish was fulfilled.

It is not distinctly clear whether Firdausi was married or not. No account of his married life is available. In his Shaahnaamah he indicates about the death of his son. He wrote :

**Maraa shasto panjeh, oo si o haft
Na poorseed azeen peesh e tanhaa beraft.**

“Sixty-five was I, thirty-seven was he; he stayed not to take care in my old age of me.”

From this couplet, it is right to believe that he was a married man.

Firdausi was born in a pious and tolerant Muslim family. Yet he was, as some of the other members of his family, very fond of the stories and wisdom of the Past Glory of Iran. He was also fond of the Mazdayasni Zarathoshti Deen. Many couplets in his immortal epic, Shaahnaamah bears testimony to it. Following are only a few of them.

**Baraan Shaharhaa taazeyaan raast dast
Keh na Shaah maando na aazar parast.**

“All the towns of Iran are now in the hands of the Arabs. Alas! There is not a Shah of Iranian descent to rule over Iran nor a fire-tending Mobed to look after the Holy Fire.

**Ham aatash bemordi ba aatashkadah
Shudi tirah Navrooze jashan-e-sadah.**

“The Holy Flames of the ‘Aatash-kadeh have been doused and blown out. All the celebrations have come to an end. Alas! No more Navroze; no more Jashane Sadah.

(Comment : From the above two couplets, we find Firdausi grieving and lamenting over the state of affairs of Iran of his time. Firdausi yearns for a ruler of Mazdayasni Zarathoshti decent and Mobeds. The celebrations of Navroz and Jashan are of Mazdayasni Zarathoshti Faith.

**Sar aamad Konoon Kisseh-e Yazdegard
Ba maah-e-sfendaar muz rooze ard.**

“On Roz Ashishvagh of Maah Spandarmad, I completed recording the last days of the last Iranian Shaahaan-Shaah, Yazdegard.

(Comment : Firdausi made use of the Mazdayasni Zarathoshti Calendar along with Islamic calendar. Roz Ashishvagh and Maah Spendaar-mad are Zarathoshti names).

**Sooe-gumbade-aazar aareed rooya
Ba farmaane payaghambar-eraast goorga.**

“Turn your face towards the Holy Fire; such is the command of the Holy Prophet.”

(Comment : Here Firdausi describes Zarathushtra as a Holy Prophet because Fire worship was introduced by him only.)

**Ba Yazdaan Keh hargeez na beenad
behesht**

Kasi Ku nadaarad rahe-zardoheest.

“Upon the Holy Name of yazdaan, I do declare that no one shall receive Heavenly Abode who does not care to follow faithfully the Path pointed out by Zardoheest. (Zarathosht).

(Comment : Firdausi hereby makes clear that by the practice of the Mazdayasni Zarathoshti Deen one can achieve the Final Aim the soul has to reach to. This couplet bears the greatest testimony to his craving for the Mazdayasni Zarathoshti Deen.)

**Khujastah payo naamah Zardahosht
Keh ahiriman bad Kuneshraa be Kosht.**

“He of the auspicious step was Zarathosht, the one who had killed Ahriman of the evil cult.”

(Comment: Firdausi praise our holy Prophet as a destroyer of all evil.)

**Beh Geereed Yaksar rahe-Zardohesht
Ba soo-e-boote-cheen bar aareed posht.**

“Acquire the path indicated by Zarathosht. Show your back to the Chinese idolatory and sorcery.”

(Comment: Firdausi lays emphasises on the Good Religion of Zarathosht and asks to get rid of ideolatory).

**Bashahe jahaan goft payaghambaram
Toraa soo-e yazdaan hami raahbaram**

“And unto the Shaah (Gustaasp) of the world, he declared, “I am the Prophet I shall show you the Path of yazdaan”.

(Comment: Firdausi depicts Gustaasp as a monarch of the world and Zarathosht as a prophet showing the Path of Yazdaan).

Firdausi on his Shaahnaamah :

**Azeen beeshtar dar Khurd baa Kherad
Deegar bar rahe-ramz ma-eni barad.**

“My Shaahnaamah can be read and understood by simple and intelligent men. But some segment of it is esoteric and will not be understood by simple intelligence.”

**Agarcheh na payavast joz andaki
ze bazmo-ze razmo az hazaaraan yaki.**

“Many of the narratives are in serial order. The rest are not. Some are in the form of legends and allegories.”

**Jahaan az Sakhum Kardaham choon
behesht**

Azeen beesh tokhme sakhun kas nakesht.

“(Through my Shaahnaamah) I innovated my country Iran into a dazzling place like Heaven.

**Badin naamah bar umrhaa bagazard
Bekhaand haraan has keh daarad.**

“Innumerable millenia after millenia shall roll by; yet, my Shaahnaamah shall outlast all of them. They who are spiritually wise shall understand the mysticism contained in my poem.”

**Guzashtah baraan Saaleyaan sash hazaar
Gar ayadoon keh bartar neyaayad shumaar.**

“These narratives (the naamah in Pahlavi language which Firdausi received) were six thousand year old. Maybe they were much older than that but not less than six thousand years.”

**Gereftah baguyandah bar aafirin
Keh payavandraa raah daad andarin.**

“I blessed the writers of those naamahs hundred times ten and accepted them for they were to fulfil my aspirations to write my Shaahnaamah.”

**Haraan kas ke shaere — maraa kard past
Na girdash gardoone-gardandah dast.**

“Anyone who belittles and cast aspersions on my Shaahnaamah; even the revolving skies shall never assist them”.

**Cher Ferdousi andar zamaanah nabud
Bad aan bud keh bakhtash javaanah
nabud.**

“No other poet was as fulsome and prolific as Firdausi. His only fault was that he was not young (that is, he was an ill-fated person.)

**Hami khaaham az daadgar yak khodaaya
Keh chandaan bemaanam bagiti bajaya.**

“O Lord! My only wish is to let me live in this world till I complete my Shaahnaamah — thus I revive the lost glory of the ancient Iranians.”

**Mar az buzorgaan setaayash buvad
Setaayash varaa dar fezaayesh buyad.**

“They who are really wise shall ever praise my work. Praise to me shall be praise to him. (Shah Mahammud).

**Sukhan hãrcheh gooyam hameh goofteh
and**

Bar az baaghe-daanesh hameh rafteh and

“What I have recorded has been taken from the ancient records. But, they took away the fruits from the garden of Enlightenment.”

**Basharam yaki meherbaan dust bud
To gofti keh baa man yaki pust bud**

**Maraa goft khoob aamad in raa-e too
Ba neki khraamad magar paa-e too.**

“In the city lived a friend of mine. He asked me to write a poem. My idea of reviving the glorious past was indeed good, and I would receive goodness in return.”

**Naveshteh man in naamah, Pahlavi
Ba peeshe tov aaram magar Naghnavi.**

“I have a naamah in Pahlavi and I will bring it to you. See, if it is of any use to you.”

**Khushaadah zabaano jawaanit hast
Sukhun goftane Pahlavianit hast.**

“You are an enthusiastic lad and of sharp tongue. Your words have the strength of pahalwaan.”

**Shav in naamah khusravi baazguya
Badeen jooya nazde — mehaan aabrooya.**

“Write this naamah in the poetic form and win name and fame among the most learned men.”

**Chun aavard in naamah nazdeeke man
Bar aafrookht in jaan-e taareeke man.**

When this naamah was brought to me I was very delighted. My sagging spirit were once again brought back to life and filled me with hope.”

(In the next part we will have some glimpses from the Divine Science of X noom).

(To be Continued)

Age of Zarathushtra — at least B.C. 7,000.

It is most petiable to note that those who, pompously advertise and bear a big name — fails to search into, perhaps the most controversial subject in Zarathushtranism — “The age of Zarathushtra” and suggests age-old, wrong date as B.C. 600.

I think they may not be ignorant about “Zarthosht Namu” (Gujrati) by Khurshedji Rustomji Cama published as early as in the last part of 19th century, wherein he very elaborately discussed this subject and clearly explained the confusion caused by names of Kyanian Shah Gushtasp (Vishtaap) and Achaemenian Darayavaus Hystaspes (Greek “Darius”) and with whatever meagre sources available at that time, he puts the date at least as B.C. 15,00.

ILM-e-KHSHNOOM arrives at, at least B.C. 7012, according to charts etc. of 81,000 years’ cycle of Zarvane Dãrego Khadata. Moreover, it is curious and equally funny that a keen student of Astrology and Astronomy and one who in his work, never missed a single opportunity to criticize Pahlavi literature and its learned authors and the one who had not the inborn ability to digest the divine knowledge like ILM-E-KHSHNOOM and had evidently had no respect for staunch devotees of ILM-E-KHSHNOOM, also by his independent method, arrives at the conclusion, which is very near, to the age of Zarathushtra as ascertained by Dr. Faramroz Chiniwala. This person was the well-known poet, Ardeshir Faramji Khabardar (See, “New lights on the Holy Gathas of Zarathushtra”).

Lastly, our atomic scientist and scholar Ervad Dr. Minocher Karkhanawala also complained about this B.C. 600 as the age of Zarathushtra in Encyclopaedia Britanica. Please also refer to Ervad Jamshedji Cawasji Katrak’s small, but studious book on this very topic of age of Zarathushtra.

— SAVAK S. MADON

FIRDAUSI'S SHAAHNAAMAH : BEHZAAD (3)

Life of Firdausi and his immortal work, Shaahnaamah make interesting reading in the light of Ilme-Xnoom. But, it is impossible to write in all its detail. Only some salient features are given here in brief — the features scattered here and there in the Xnoomic literature.

Many documentations have been written in Ilme-Xnoom about the mission of the Shaacraan-Shaer, Firdausi. It is said that it had been related to ustad Saaheb Behraamshaah N. Shroff by the residents of the Daemaavand Koh, the Saaheb-dilaan, as a part of a religious instruction imparted to him during the three and a half years of recluse along with them in the said Koh.

Firdausi was not the real name of the poet. It was his nom-de-plume. He acquired due to certain reasons. Behraamshaah was given some description of the life of Firdausi and the key to unfold mysticism in his Shaahnaamah.

Firdausi was born in a pious Muslim family. The paternal grandfather of Firdausi, Raamyar was very fond of the Mazdayasni-zarathoshti Deen. Although he professed the Islamic religion faithfully, his heart was full of devotion for the ancient religion and its glorious past. Day in and day out, he thought of the glory of the Ancient Iranian religion. His heart used to grieve for being so unfortunate that he was not able to practise the Mazdayasni-Zarathoshti Religion he so much adored and admired.

The Saaheb-dilaan Saaheb of the Daemaavand Koh were incessantly working to safeguard and find the Flame of the Mazdayasni-Zarathoshti Daena. One day, an Aabed Saaheb of the Saaheb-dilaan group happened to contact him. This holy Aabed picked the thought-vibrations of Raamyar and by the virtue of his spiritual powers lured Raamyar towards him.

It is recorded that during the Mazdayasni Zarathoshti era, these Saaheb-dilaan Saaheb led a public life and moved freely in Iran. But,

hundred years before the fall of the Saasaanian rule, a group shifted into the Chaechaste Cave and fifty-one years later (that is, forty-nine years before the fall) another group left public life and sought recluse in the Daemaavand Koh. The place where these pious Aabed Saahebs lived in public life is known as "Shiraaz"; while the place they sought recluse and retired into life of isolation is termed as "Firdaus".

Raamyar took great pride to belong to this Firdaus. His happiness knew no limits. Thus, he called himself "Firdausi", meaning "one of the Firdaus". The family too acquired the term Firdausi. He passed his adoration and admiration to his son, Fakhrud-din Ahmed who in turn passed it to his son, Mansoor, who became famous as Firdausi Tusi. This is the Xnoomic explanation why Firdausi called himself so.

The Divine science of Xnoom teaches that at that time, a Saint-Dastoor Ardasheer Kermaani, a Saaheb-dil, influenced Firdausi greatly. He contacted Firdausi Tusi both personally and in Visions. He taught him the mysticism of the Mazdayasni Zarathoshti Daena. By the process of "Sezdaa", he showed Firdausi many past events — the way we view television. With each event, he explained the esoteric side of that event. Not only that but he brought him in tune with Asho Sarosh Yazad.

Ustad Saaheb Behraamshah explained that there are ten different ways to seek assistance of Sarosh Yazad. One such a way was in the form of an oracle. The person could hear the voice in his dream or in a semi-conscious state. Firdausi Tusi was under the guidance of saint-Dastoor Kermaani. He helped the poet to develop the spiritual power of hearing the voice of Asho Sarosh. This is the reason why Firdausi mentions the name of Sarosh many times in his immortal epic. Asho Sarosh unfolded to him certain truths regarding the Mazdayasni-Zarathoshti Daena.

At the time of Firdausi, Shah Mahmud of Ghazni was he ruler. He had a paternal uncle who was very pious and loved the esoteric lore. He practised faith fully the code of pious life as laid down in Quran. Being a tolerant Muslim, he was attracted to the esoterism of the Mazdayasni Zarathoshti Daena. He found that the followers of this Daena were ill-treated. He cautioned his nephew, Shah Mahmud not to pay any heed to his courtiers who were trying to wipe out the Daena.

Shah Mahmud was a fanatic. He would not listen to his uncle. But after much imploring and reasoning, the Shah relented, not to harass the Mazdayasni Zarathoshti population on one condition. They had to prove that the Mazdayasni Zarathoshti Daena was the Divine Revelation of the Divine Being. Else they should all embrace Islam.

Instead of discarding the Mazdayasni - Zarathoshti Deen in public, the Mazdayasni Zarathoshti decided to do something that would satisfy the Shah. The paternal uncle of Shah Mahmud too had some rare contacts with Saint-Dastoor Ardasheer Kermaani and of the Saaheb-dilaan fold.

Saint-Dastoor Kermaani was at that time within the inclosures of the Daemaavand Koh. The Saaheb-dilaan Saahebs had many mystical powers. They came to know of the danger posed by the Shah. They decided to aid the Mazdayasni Zarathoshtis in proving the goodness of their Deen and sent Saint-Dastoor Kermaani for the task.

(The account regarding this task will be given at the end of this topic. Its taken from a Persian poem).

The Divine Science of Xnoom affirms, that the Shaahnaamah is the only creditworthy compendium in Persian language which outlines the past events and glory of Iran-e Kadeem. Firdausi wrote some fragments in his native village, Toos because Abu Mansoor bin Mohamad, the governor of the city of Toos was a great lover of the Persian poems and gave patronage to encourage Firdausi in his work.

Ustaad Saaheb cautioned the readers of the Shaahnaamah that it is not a complete, account of the glorious past of the Mazdayasni-Zarathoshti era. It also contains some segments from the Pahlavi treatise, Bundahishn (cosmogony) in the form of a folk-lore. Though Shaahnaamah is written in a simple way much of it is full of mystery and intricacies. Therefore, its real implications can never be apprehended by literal translation.

The Shaahnaamah is an authentic record of the Mazdayasni-Zarathoshti people. Firdausi could give his epic to us because he was in contact with the Saaheb-dilaan fold like his paternal grandfather. They had taught him the art of "Takseeraat". Ilme-Xnoom explains that "Takseeraat" is a branch of science that enlightens a person in composing mystic poems in accordance with the Principle of Numerals and Notations. If such poems are read along with this Principle of Takseeraat, the real meaning of a word, line and couplet can be unfolded. Its true sense can easily be arrived at.

Before the Shaahnaamah saw the light of the day, the Mazdayasni-Zarathoshti Daen and its customs, rituals, liturgy, religious celebrations and culture had sunk completely into oblivion and no one had a wee, bit image of their glorious past. It is the Shaahnaamah that stirred the heart and mind of the Iranians and brought back the lost-nay, almost erased-glory to life.

The significance of the Shaahnaamah is twofold :

i) it contains the way of life of the ancient Iranians of the Mazdayasni-Zarathoshti religion. The way the different sections such as the traders farmers, artisans, rulers, noble men and common people lived. It also speaks of their virtues, benevolence, humanitarianism, cosmopolitanism, generosity, chivalry, crusading spirit, self-denial and self-sacrifice. Besides this, the account of their rulers, their administration, impartiality, justice is also given. The vices of the Iranians who followed the "Deveyasni" cult such as black magic, roguery, criminality, corruption are also recorded.

ii) all about the creation and some words of wisdom.

Ustaad Saaheb Beheraamsha stated that the Saaheb-dilaan Saahebs came to know of the Shaahnaamah of Firdausi. The then Sraoshaavareg Saaheb Kaaran and Saaheb-dil Saarwaar — who was later enthroned as the next Sraoshaavarez Saaheb after Kaaran Saaheb — applied their spiritual powers to have a genuine copy of the Shaahnaamah. They discovered that a family did have the copy of it, when it was time for some public work, a group of selected Saaheb-dils to leave the Daemaavand, Koh, they instructed the group of the copy and the above-mentioned two Saahebs ordered the “Rad” (leader of the leaving-group) to visit the pious Mazdayasni-Zarathoshti family who possessed the copy and was living in the province of Shiraz.

This Zarathoshti family not only had a genuine copy of the Shaahnaamah but also a young lad who had an exceedingly fine handwriting. The two therefore ordered to bring the

lad too along with them. The leaving group carried out the orders faithfully. They brought the lad and another Zarathoshti lad to assist the former in completing the task as quickly as possible.

The two lads lived in the Daemaavand Koh for three-and-half years and completed the task entrusted to them. Papers of very good quality and golden ink were supplied. After the completion of the work, the Saahebs rewarded the two handsomely and requested them to prepare for leaving the Koh which they did most reluctantly.

Many lovers of the Shaahnaamah wanted to know from Behraamshah whether the Saaheb-dilaan Saaheb did tell him if Firdausi wore Sudreh-Khushti or not. Ustaad Saaheb parried to give any direct reply. He said, in reply, that he was forbidden to answer this question. But he said, “Firdausi was a far, far better Mazdayasni-Zarathoshti than what I am and you all are at present.”

SHAAHNAAMAH (4) : BEHZAAD

NERANGHA-I-KALMKASH

(Continued)

Saaheb-dilaan Saaheb did tell Ustad Saaheb if Firdausi wore Sudreh-Kushti or not. But he paried to give any direct reply. He said, in reply, that he was forbidden to answer this question. But he said, 'Firdausi was far, far better Mazdayasni-Zarathoshti then what I am and you all are at present.'

For three issues what was given was merely a bird's eye-view from the Ilme-Xnoom. Those who desire to know more should read the Chiniwalla brothers articles on Firdausi and his Shaahnaamaah in the "Frashogard" quarterly.

Nerangha-i Kalmkash

It is a Persian Poem relating the wonderful spiritual powers of Saint-Dastoor Ardasheer Kermaani mentioned above. The text is included along with the English version to preserve it in the "Dini-Avaz" for the future generations.

**Ferestaado Khandash hame-kebragaan
Ba har jaa keh budand peer o jawaan.**

The Shah ordered his men to contact all the young and old zarathoshtis and summoned them to his court.

**Hame jomlae dar peesh-e Shaah aamadand
Puraz gam ba nazdeek-e gaah aamadand.**

On the appointed day, the entire group of Irani zarathoshtis with sad and sedate expression on their face presented before the throne of the king.

**Namaaze bebord bar shaharyaar
Behoon raaze-dil peeshe-mad aashkaar.**

"O King!" implored they. "Tell us the mystery that lie concealed with in your heart."

**Shaahaanshaahe Mehmud goft aan zamaan
ze maa beshnavad in sohan kebra gaan.
Bebaayad.....**

**Shomaaraa tamaami Kusham man Varaa
ze hukme payambar rasule Khodaa.**

Thereupon Shah Mahammud said, "Hark all ye, O Iranis, to there utterances of mine very carefully. You all should become Mus-salmaans so that all of you be able to follow the Commandments of the Lord of the Universe. In the event of any refusal from you, I shall ruin you all. Mind well! In accordance with the Command of our Prophet, the Messenger of God, I shall slay you all."

**Chun bar goft in goftraa Shaharyaar
Hame kebragaan bas shoodand be karaar.**

When the Irani Zarathoshtis heard these words of the Shah, they were filled with fear.

(They decided to face death boldly rather than be cowards and give up the religion).

**Yakimard daanaae yazdaan-parast
Beamad bare Shah Khanjar be dast.**

**Ba.....
Basi monaezhaae bee namood azaan.**

One from the wise Yazadaan-parast stepped out with a dagger in his hand and stooped before the Shah. He said, "O Shah! Avail of this dagger and, most gladly, put each one of us to death and out from the surface of the earth: for, none of us is prepared to be a Mus-salmaan. Our blind faith and total devotion rest in the religion conveyed to Shah Gustaasp by our Prophet Zarathushtra. Our prophet revealed the Zand-Avesta and with the Lord's Blessings performed many miracles.

**Chun goftaar beshanid Mehmud Shaah
Pur andishe shud jaan aan nek Khaah.**

On hearing this, Shah Mahammud lost himself in deep thought.

**Ba ishan chunin goft Mehmud Shaah
Keh burhaan numaayand zeendin raah.
Agar din-e barhak buvad az shomaa
Numaayand mojeje ba din jaa-chaah**

Thereupon, Shah Mahammud directed the Iranian Zarathoshtis to justify their claim of the goodness of their religion.

“If the Religion that you all practice and follow,” said he, “be great then some-one from you should certainly perform a miracle.”

(The pious dastoors indicated their readiness to perform a miracle. They said, “O Shah ! We do invite you along with the men you choose to the place where we shall perform the miracle. Give us your robes you shall wear on that day, so that we shall wash it with our consecrated water. Wash yourself too with the water we send you. Let your courtiers do the same. Then all of you enter the garden of our Dar-e-Meher and be seated on the special stage erected for you and your courtiers. For three days, we shall be engrossed in our liturgical rituals and during these three days you and your courtiers shall

experience the sacrosanctity of our Mazdayasni-Zarathoshti Deen).”

**Hame lashkar O Shaah O peer O jawaan
Dar aan baag budand dil shaadmaan.**

The Shah, the warriors, the old and the young all assembled in the garden.

**Miyaan e hamaa baag bud gumbade
Dar aan jaa bud e chand tan mobede.**

In the middle of the beautiful garden, there was a white dome and under that the holy mobeds assembled.

**Kushaadand Kushti ba Khur az myaan
Bukhaadand Zehre Khudaa-e jahaan
Bukhaadand aatash nyaayash faraa
Behardand Khaaheesh ba peesh-e Khodaa**

At first the mobeds chanted the Kushti prayers. Then facing the Sun, they recited the other prayers. After reciting the Aatash Nyaayash, they

urged the Holy Spirits to aid them in justifying their claim.

Ze naan bar ungeh ijash Khaandand
Ze dastoor-e aan mobed-i arzmand-Nigaah.
Nigagh.....
Be maand aan Zamaan Shaah andar shegoff
Nehaan ni humaa shaah yazdaan begoff.

On the first day, they performed the rituals to "Mino Naavar ni yajeshni". As a result, the Shah saw in the sky a fascinating scene. He saw the Holy Spirits in green robes and their face glittering like the sun appearing from the southern direction. They were all mounted on the green-coloured horses. Sweet music enchanted the environment all around. Shah Mahmud was greatly pleased. "What a beautiful sight is this, O lord," he said.

Dooyam rooz be shnav ze man in digar
Ba been Kudrat-i Kaader e daadgar.
Behardand.....
Shaahaanshaah Mehmud Khushaal Shud
Ze burhaan ba deedan niko faal shud.

Listen to me, all of you for the events that took place on the second day. Think of the work of the Bountiful Lord. That day the mobeds performed Yajashne in the name of Sarosh. This time the yazads were clad in milk-white robes and all of them were mounted on milk-white horses. The Shah and the assembly saw the spectacle and were delighted.

Ba rooz-i seevom beshnav ai naamdaar
Babeen Kudrat-i paak parvardigaar.
Be.....
Na budand aagaah az aan moobedaan
Base taa rasaanaad aan ba Khaande jeeaan.

Listen, what event took place on the third day. The mobeds were ready to perform the siroozaa ceremony. The raaspi who begins the prayers went hurriedly towards the place where Barsam twigs were unknowingly-kept along with a hair that fell off his beard. The recitation continued but the evil forces soon became active.

Neegaah kard aan rooz aan shaah-i raad
Be deedash ajaayab ze be daado daad.

Alaanmat.....
Be naabed oonge bar-i Kerdegaar.

That day, the Shah saw a dreadful scene. He saw many warriors in ragged, ugly attire and mounting on their elephants came rushing from the North. They all had huge stones with them and were about to fling. The Shah feared that the stones would be hurled at them. He prayed to God for aid.

Ferestaad mard-i ba nazdeek ishaan
Keh aagah kunad mubedaan jaa nishaan.
Be goftash.....
Be aan een zamaa peesh-i man een ba gooye.

The Shah sent one of his chosen courtiers to the mobeds to bring to their knowledge about this dreadful scene. He ordered him to ask the holy mobeds to explain the mystery. The warriors were fearfully black and stinking.

Keh een din ba yak moo-e gardad chunaan
Be daani to aya shaah-i raoshan ravaan
Keh.....
Dil-i saaf ham baa gavashni kunash

"O Shah!" they said. "Judge yourself". Our religion is so sensitive to most minute impurity as a hair. Our religion sent by the Lord is so pure. We stick to it.

Digar baar Mehmud chun bin gareed
Ajaayab digar baar O Khud be deed.
Hame.....
Ajab maand aan Shah dar aan zamaan
Jalab kard aan mubedaan-o radaan.

The Shah looked at the sky. He saw Angels clad in red approaching and was pleased. Their horses were as red as pomegranate's flowers. The Creator of the two words aided them.

Chuneen goft baa mobedaan hushyaar
Keh baashad bar din-i khud oostvaar.
Ba din-i shomaa man na gooyam kanoon
Ba yak moo-e gardad tabeh ham chunoon.

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 9)

The Shah said, "Be you all steadfast on your faith, I shall not disturb you any further. Your religion is good for it is sensitive even to a hair. (Some interesting tales from the Shaahnaamah will be retold in future.)"

FIRDAUSI'S SHAAHNAMAAH : BEHZAAD-

KAYOMARS

The historians — who wrote the history of the past — ask who was that noble person who was crowned and enthroned as the first king on earth. The answer is that the custom of coronating a person as a king of the land commenced with Kayomars.

When the glorious Sun entered the Zodiac Sign of Aires, the earth dazzled with ecstasy and donned the robe of youth. Kayomars gathered his men into a tribe and proclaimed as their king. Thus, law and order was established for the first-time on earth. The first coronation ceremony took place in a cave of a mountain, Kayomars sat on a specially adorned stone which served as his throne and a stone club that served the purpose of a mace.

Kayomars ruled for thirty years. During his reign, the Iranians made their first co-ordinated progress. Their well-being was taken care of by their monarch. His magnanimity and dedication to his people brought him great glory. He did much good and his name and fame shone throughout his land just as the glimmerings of the full Moon's reflections spread out on the surface of a clear lake. So glorious was he that even the animals - wild and not so wild - became mild and timid in his presence.

Kayomars had a son: He was brave and handsome. His name was See-aamak.

Kayomars had no enemy. No being on earth was hostile towards him. Ahi-riman, the Demon of Evilry, could not bear this progress and prosperity on earth. He was burning in envy. He was not powerful enough to destroy Kayomars and his good tribe, So he bade his time and waited patiently for some opportune moment to demolish the Iranian leader and his good tribe.

Ahiriman had a son. He was a sin-laden imp. No lion was as ferocious and no wolf ever

so wicked as he. He swore by his father's name to clinch the glory of the throne, crown and mace of Kayomars. Kayomars was rather complacent. He was unaware of this conspiracy. He believed that his kingship was safe as there was no other claimant to challenge him.

One day, Asho sarosh yazad appeared in his dream and cautioned him of the impending danger.

SEE-AAMAK

Kayomars abdicated his throne in favour of his son. He too was good, artful and glorious as his father. Kaiyomars was very happy. It is a rule that an old father draws strength from his son.

The news of the preparation of war by the son of the evil Ahiriman reached the ears of See-aamak. He too prepared to meet the challenge. He gathered an army. In those days iron was not discovered. The weapons were made of stones and flints. They covered their body with the skin of the animal they killed, See-aamak wore the skin of a tiger.

The two armies met on an open space. Misfortune struck See-aamak. He was struck by a huge boulder and his body rolled on the ground. He was killed.

Hearing the news of his son's death, Kaiyomars was overwhelmed with grief. He ran here and there like a mad man pulling at his beard and scratching his face and forearms till they all began to bleed. His people wailed aloud too. The animals also wailed over good Kaiyomars' grief. In this manner, everyone moaned and mourned, till full one year passed by.

One night, Asho Sarosh appeared before Kaiyomars and said, "Do not grieve over your

departed son any further, Good Kaiyomars! Come back to your sense. Prepare to wage yet another battle against evil and vanquish them." Kaiyomars looked up into the sky and beyond and offered prayers to the Almighty Divine Being. He then prepared for the battle.

HOSHANG

See-aamak had a son. His name was Hoshang. He acted as the Vizir to his grand father and assisted him to govern Iran. He was good, affectionate and wise. To Kaiyomars, his grandfather, he was a remembrance a living memorial of his son, See-aamak. He brought up Hoshang as his own son.

When Kaiyomars decided to avenge the death of See-aamak, he summoned Hoshang to his side and told him of his desire and designs. He said, "I desire to avenge the death of your father, my son. Let us build up an army of valiant warriors to fight the demons. I desire that you take up the command of the army for I am too old and feeble."

Hoshang agreed most gladly. The army — along with some wild animals and birds of prey, marched towards the battleground - See-yaah Dev (the Black Demon) came out on the ground. He saw Hoshang and old Kaiyomars and for want of courage, he quaked and quivered. He spread his evil spell and created a violent sandstorm which filled the entire atmosphere with dust.

Hoshang was unperturbed. Instead, he darted forward at see-Yaah Dev. In the fight that ensued, the Evil Demon was slain. Kaiyomars went wild with joy. At last, the death of his son was avenged. But, he did not know that his death was lurking near by.

Firdausi says, "O mortals! Look at Kaiyomars. He did all the good he could in this world but the world gave him nothing. It threw him out of it. The joy, the smile and the glory on this earth are nothing. These are deceiving illusions. No one has and no one shall gain anything

from it. so be good and mind not the consequences."

After the death of Kaiyomars, Hoshang ascended the throne of Iran. After the coronation ceremony he said to his people, "I am now the King of Iran. Law and order shall be my paramount concern. I shall endeavour to bring peace and prosperity to my people who inhabit any nook and corner of my kingdom. By the Grace of Paak Yazdaan, the Bestorer of Victory, I shall be just in my rule and generous to all."

Hoshang ruled for forty years. During his glorious reign, iron ore was discovered. It was first melted and the molten matter was thoroughly strained. Thus, the crude process of extraction of iron from its ore came to light. As a sequel to it, the occupation of iron-monger came into existence. The axe, saw and other tools were made from this newly discovered metal. The utility of the metal tools brought about a great change in the daily life of the people. It brought some ease in their life. It was in his reign that the idea of building a canal system first occurred to man. This facilitated the irrigation of the fields. Now, the Iranians left their nomadic way of life and settled homes in their fields. Foodgrains were grown with the abundant supply of water from the canal. Grazing grounds for their herbivores were set-up. The art of cooking food and making loaves was developed. Before his reign, people ate raw food.

Discovery of Fire

One day, it so happened that, Hoshang, along with some of his warriors, was passing through a mountainous region. All of a sudden, he saw some black and swift-moving creature—a serpent-like darting out from a big hole in the mountain. It had a black shining head and two prominent blood-red beady eyes. It exhaled so much hot smoky air that it made everything hot. The entire region was filled with smoke and gloomy. It was indeed a dreadful sight.

Hoshang picked up a big stone quickly and flung at it. The dreadful looking serpent dodged

the aim and disappeared in the woods. The stone struck another stone. The strike caused friction and spark of fire fell out. It began to burn the dry grass around. Thus, fire was discovered.

Hoshang stood motionless. He was completely amazed. Then he placed some burning grass along with small bits of dry wood on a stone and offered prayers to the Divine Supreme Being. He said to himself, "This is the Noor (Light) of Pāk Yazdaan. He who shall worship Him through it is indeed wise."

That night, Hoshang kindled a big fire. He and his men stood before it and worshipped the Divine Supreme Being with profound Venerations and reverence. This performance of worship came to be known as "Jashane Sadeh". It is still celebrated as such. After the end of the Jashan celebration, they ate and they drank and made merry.

Firdausi says, "Believe not that the Iranians are only Fire-worshippers. They worship the Divine Supreme Being using Fire.

During the forty glorious years of his reign, the Iranian people saw peace and prosperity. The timid wild animals were trained and domesticated. These domestic animals were used in their daily life.

Firdausi, in his concluding remark to This chapter states; "In this manner, Hoshang completed his forty glorious years; but, for a minute, look at his fate in the end. He departed from this world as others did before him. Death did not spare him and allowed him to stay. O mortal man! Learn this lesson: do not link your heart to the earth. Nay, do not show even your face to it."

TAHMURAS

Hoshang had a son. His name was Tahmuras. He was known as "Devband" (Captivator of Evil). After the death of his father, he sat on throne and wore the crown of Iran. He summoned all the wise men among his people and said to them thus, "May this throne, crown and mace bring more glory and more honour to Iran under

my rule. I shall banish all that is wicked and evil from every nook and corner of my country. I shall also endeavour to reveal the mysteries of nature yet not unfolded."

During his reign, a new occupation came into being. The art of shearing of wool from the body of the sheep, spinning it into yarn and weaving it into woollen clothes was developed. The art of training swift-footed animals and birds was also developed. The people were happy at these new introductions in life.

Tahmuras had a Vizir. He was very good and generous. His name was Sheedasp. He was respected both by the ruler and the ruled. People flocked to him in their need and for justice. His eating habits were very simple.

Firdausi says "The ruler ought to be glorious whose Vizir is virtuous."

Tahmuras spread a holy spell all around and fought the demons. The demons perpetrated against him. They master-minded a blue-print to slay him and his counsellors.

Tahmuras came to know of this conspiracy. He fought them, seeing Tahmuras and his band of men, the demons spread magic all around. Soon a fierce storm broke out. Huge clouds of dust and smoke filled the air. Nothing could be seen. In the battle that ensued there were casualties on both side. The demons could not over-power the Iranians. All of them were either captured or slain.

The demons wanted to make peace. They said, "Valiant Hoshang! Do not destroy us. We will teach you a new occupation. They taught the art of writing in symbols.

Tahmuras ruled for thirty years.

Firdausi says, "O world! If you intent to destroy one born on earth why do you nourish them for some years. What sense is there to sustain life on one hand when on the other you are sure to destroy it."

(The interpretation expressed here is not necessarily "Khshnomic".)

WISDOM IN SHAAHNAAMAH:

Come, O mortal, come!
Together we shall work
Not to entrust this world
Unto evil and vice.
Let us endeavour
To spread in this world
Virtue and Goodness
All around.

Both virtue and vice
Are not constant.
They are undependable.
Yet, between the two
The wise and saintly
On this earth
Choose, seek, work
For virtue only,
You should choose
And seek for it only.

No matter
How much pay
How much wealth
How many palaces
You own as yours.
No amount of these
Shall bring you any benefit
When you are breathing your last.
So hoard them not
Give it away
In your life-time.

If your speech
Be gentle and sweet
You shall be respected
And fondly remembered
Be wise, therefore
And under-rate not
Sweet and gentle speech.

Mind well;
Nothing is sweeter
Than
One's own off-spring
One's own life.

Behold! Fareedoon
The Glorious one
In the end
He grew old and feeble
Dust accumulated
In his Garden of Life.
O mortal one!
Such is the ethos of life.
Life was so in the past
Life shall be so
In the future too.
As one grows old.
One grows feeble too
Death is the end of Life.

Behold, Farrokh Fareedoon
Not an angel was he:
Nor was he a being
Made of musk and ambergris
Yet the fragrance of his fame
Lingers on
Because he was generous
Because he was just.
O Brother!
Be you generous;
Be you just;
And — and
You shall be a Fareedoon
Yourself, too.

How mysterious this is:
You can turn to old
But
Old can never turn
To youth again.

Are you exalted?
Of what use is rank or title
To you?
When your life ends up
You shall have,
Like others,
To lie in the dungeon of darkness.

So pride not :
And rejoice not.
On the contrary
You should weep
Over such an end.

Remember well
That the revolving skies
Do not behave the same
And at the same time
With two persons.
They bring to one
Joy and Happiness
To another comes
Sorrow and Woe.

It matters not :
Even if you are able
To mount as high as
The revolving sky,
And command authority
Over all living beings.
For Death awaits
Every one on this earth.
Dust every one has to lick.

If you desire not disappointment
Forget not the Lord.

O Man !
Lend me your ears.
When you highly appraise
Your dear life
Then do not depreciate
The value of
That of another.
O brother !
Harm not; pray, do not
Take away the life of
Even an ant that drags
Its grain : For
Its tiny life is
To it
As dear and Precious
As it is to you.
Do not over-estimate yours
Do not under-estimate others.

He is cruel
And of evil heart
Who derives pleasure
In harming others.

O world !
After giving him (Irach)
Shelter in here; and,
Nourished him so fondly
In your arms
Could you not protect him
From the evil-hearted
Brothers, who killed him?
O World !
Does any one know
Whom you protect?
Does any one know
Whom you befriend?
Every one should
Weep over your
Deceitful friendliness.

Mind well :
The bow that is
Straight is of no use.
In the same manner
The revolving skies
Never move straight.
If they would have
Then they would be
Also of no use.
Its zig-zag path
Contains both
Happiness and Woe.
He who relies on
These revolving skies
During his happiness
Shall, one day, be
Their victim
And shed tears.
Pray, O mortal one
Put not your trust
On them.
Beware and
Be forewarned.

BEHZAAD :

FIRDAUSI'S SHAANAAMAH (5) : Behzaad

Paadshah Jamsheed ascended the throne of Iran after the death of Tahmuras. He followed the Royal ways of his predecessors. On his coronation day, he summoned his courtiers and declared thus unto them, "It has been my fortune to ascend the throne of Iran. Holy Mazda has blessed me with Farreh-Yazadi (a kind of holy glory). Therefore, I am your king and also a Mobed."

At that moment, Asho Sarosh Yazad appeared and asked, "Do you know why are you sent as a Mobed-Monarch of Iran? Go out, Jamsheed, and spread the Message of Mazda and His Mazdayasni Deen. Rend the cult of Evil apart. The "Kashti" round your waist and ask your people to do so, too. "Kashti" shall shield you and your people from the evil onslaught. Whosoever wears it, shall keep free from evil. Know that the "Kashti" is a symbol of Piety, and I, who am Sarosh bring it for you from Heaven." So saying, Asho Sarosh Vanished.

Paadshah Jamshed was greatly pleased. He and his courtiers, his nobles, his commanders and his people accepted respectfully the tying of the "Kashti" they all praised and worshipped-Mazda. He then said, "with this Kashti may all our hopes and aspirations be fulfilled. Now I shall bring the fiendish demons powerless and lead the people on the Path of Divine Light."

For fifty years-the first fifty of his reign-weapons were made from iron. Another fifty years were spent on making armours and mails for the warriors. The occupation of spinning and weaving cloth from flax, silk, wool and velvet began during his reign, the art of stitching and laundry work came into being this took up another fifty years.

In the next fifty years that followed, Shah Jamsheed divided his entire people into four groups. This first group was designated as the

Aathraavan. Their work was to teach people about the Mazdayasni Deen. They also had to perform certain religious rituals. They led a life of secluded hermits. The second group was known by the name of Ratheshtaar. They were warriors and defended their fatherland. The third group was the Vaastriyosh. This group consisted of the peasants, shepherds and cow-herds. The last group was formed of skilled and unskilled artisans, such as, potters, weavers, cobblers and also tradesmen, labourers, etc. They were called Hutoksh.

During his long- and prosperous reign, houses in the form of cottages were built out of stones and bricks. Precious gems, such as, rubies, emeralds, diamonds topaz and precious metals, such as, silver, gold and copper were dug out from the earth. Different perfumes were extracted from roses and other flowers, rosewood, incense, musk, amber, etc. various medicines for different ailments were prepared. Boats were made to sail on the seas and navigable rivers.

So glorious was his reign that there was no death and disease. His people honoured him by naming the new year after him. It was — and, is yet known as such — the Jamsheedi Naoroz.

PRIDE OF JAMSHEED

Many years rolled by. Entire Iran was happy under his rule. Peace and prosperity reigned supreme throughout this period in Iran. In short Iran was nothing but Heaven.

One unfortunate day, Jamsheed who promised his people to shorten the hands of the wicked people with the weapon of Kashti thought of himself, his greatness and grandeur. He thought that no one was greater than him in the whole world. Once a devout worshipper and defender of the Mazdayasni Deen believed himself as greater than Mazda also. He sum-

moned his courtiers and valiant warriors and addressed them thus.

"I know that this world is not meant for any other person save me. Everything in this world is of my creation. World has never seen a greater soul than me. I've adorned the world and the people admire it. I've conquered death and diseases by my wisdom and because of my wisdom you all have your food and sleep. Due to my wisdom you have clothes and satisfy all your needs. Greatness and glory can only be mine. Can any one from you all say there exist a being superior to me. Who has vanquished death? I am the Creator of this creation. I am the Divine Being. Any one who does not believe in my claim shall be declared a demon. Worship me alone from now onwards."

No sooner did Jamsheed complete his speech than the dazzling glory on his face flew away from him. All the wise and Mazda-loving men bowed their head and sat silent. They were sad at heart. Twenty-three years after this event, every one in the court and the army deserted him. He found himself all alone in the world.

Hark, O reader, to what the wise have said, "When you are elevated to greatness forget not to worship Paak Yazdaan and obey His Commandments. He who does not shall be gripped with fear from all directions."

When the glittering day grew dark over Jamsheed, he realized his folly. He became very sad. He knew he had committed some wrong and wept all alone for his rashness. There was not a single being near to console him in his grief and sorrow. He tried to atone for his sin, but did not know how.

MARDAAS

At that time there lived a very good man named Mardaas. He was a ruler of a small kingdom on the outskirts of Iran. He always feared to displease the Divine Lord. He had a very large herd of cattle consisting of thousands of

cows, sheep, goats and camels. From these he got an over abundant supply of milk. Whoever needed it would come and have it free.

Unfortunately, such a good being had a wicked offspring. There was not an iota of mercy in him. His name was Zahhaak. He was tyrannical, proud and rash. In the Pahlavi language, he is called "Beevar Asp" meaning "ten thousand horses" — because he had ten thousands horses". He was so fond of horse riding that he would ride during the day and during the night.

One early dawn, it so happened that the Devil, in the guise of a pious human being, approached and stood before Zahhaak. He spoke at length of virtue and quoted the scriptures. Young Zahhaak, though bad and wicked, was very much impressed by his sweet-tongue and false show of piety. He listened to him without suspecting of the evil designs of the Devil — nay, it would not be any exaggeration to say that he gave away his conscience, heart and life to him.

The Devil on finding that Zahhaak was trapped safe and sound in his snare, was overjoyed. He danced with joy at his success. He knew that Zahhaak was a being without brains. He said, "Zahhaak! I know of so many things that no one knows. I desire to reveal them to you."

"I am glad to learn them from you. Please teach me," replied Zahhaak.

"At first, O Zahhaak, you shall have to promise me to do one thing as I ask you," said the Devil.

Zahhaak was so affected by the Devil's sweet-tongue that he promptly assured him to do as he was bid.

"First, promise me," asked the Devil, "not to tell any being of what I reveal to you."

Zahhaak promised.

The Devil continued, "Think, young lad, why should there be another man to rule the land that shall be yours one day. When you are

alive, you should do so. Heed to my prophecy that your father is destined to be very, very old and you shall have no time to rule over your land. Your old age will soon swallow you. You ought to revolt against your father and have the crown and throne for yourself. If you murder your father you will be the lord of your land."

Zahhaak heard this and became very sad. A son committing patricide was never heard of in his time. He wished to become a king but he did not wish to kill his father. Agony and anguish nibbled at his heart and mind. He gaped at the Devil all confused.

"O generous being," said Zahhaak, in pain. "I agree partly with your scheme and disagree with the other. I am ready to become a king but I shall never be ready to murder my father who has always been so gentle and loving towards me."

"Mind you, Zahhaak, you've given your word," answered the Devil. "In case you do not

keep your word the sin shall crush your shoulder. Disasters shall pour down on you like the rain and your father shall enjoy all the glory for himself".

Young Zahhaak was caught between the temptation for the crown on one hand and reluctance to murder his father on the other. After much hesitation, he decided to do as Lucifer bid him.

Zahhaak asked, "Pray, how am I to murder my father without any one coming to know of it?"

"Leave that to me," replied the Devil. "I need no one's aid. I can do it all by myself. See how I raise you as high as the sun."

There was a beautiful garden on one side of the palace ground. It was a place where Mardaas offered prayers to God every dawn. On his way, the Satan dug a deep ditch. Then he covered up neatly by spreading branches, leaves and grass.

It was dawn and the good-hearted Mardaas came into the garden to offer prayers. He stepped on the neatly covered ditch and fell into it. He was so seriously injured that he lost his life. Although he was kind and loving towards his son, yet, the wicked son became an accomplice of the Devil and hastened his father's death.

Firdausi writes, "I've heard the wise say that however a son wicked be he never thinks of murdering his own father. Whoever has abandoned his father's way of life is not a son but a stranger.

In this manner, Zahhaak succeeded to inherit his father's property. Lucifer was very pleased. He laid another trap to ensure Zahhaak into doing more wicked deeds.

One day, the Devil came and stood before Zahhaak and said, "I am pleased to find you in my favour. See you paid heed to me and you have become a ruler. If you pay heed to my another advice and promise me to do as I bid you then I shall make the king of the whole world. All wild and timid animals, birds and human beings shall bow to your greatness."

Zahhaak agreed to do as the Devil bid.

Some time later, the Satan came back in the guise of a young handsome lad and started blessing Zahhaak. He then said, "I am a young cook. I can prepare many tasty delicacies that no being on earth has tasted them. If you so desire, I am ready to work for you."

Zahhaak was not only wicked but a glutton too. He was a voracious eater. He immediately employed him. In those days people ate roots, vegetables and fruits. The wicked Devil prepared tasty dishes made of eggs at first. He then made dishes of different kinds of meat. Zahhaak ate these and praised the culinary skill of the fallen angel of darkness.

One morning, when the azure sky let out the golden ball of fire, the Satan kept busy preparing tasty dishes of fowl, turkey etc. He cooked these in saffron, rose-water, fragrant musk and other aromatic spices. It could make any mouth-water. Zahhaak was so pleased that he summoned the Devil - cook by his side and said, "You are

indeed a good cook. I am pleased by your dishes. Pray, what do you wish from me and I'll grant it to you."

The sweet tongued Devil replied, "O Lord! May you be ever happy and rule over the world. My heart is pleased by your gentleness and my body is nourished by your generosity. I do have a wish to ask but I'm afraid. I may not deserve it. If you do not mind, permit me to kiss your two shoulders and rub my eyes and cheeks on them."

When Zahhaak heard this, he was greatly puzzled. He did not know of the evil designs of the Satan. He said, "Well, cook, your wish is granted."

Quickly, the Devil necked Zahhaak as women do and kissed both the shoulders. No sooner did he kiss than he disappeared into the thin air. All those who were around were stunned for no one had seen a human being vanish out of sight.

That very moment, two fierce-looking black serpents sprouted out over his shoulders — one serpent on each shoulder. They began to sting Zahhaak. Zahhaak and his courtiers were horrified. The executors were summoned to cut off the dreadful serpents but like the cut-off branches, two new serpents took their place.

Physicians were summoned to treat the menace of these ever sprouting serpents but all in vain.

At last, the wicked Lord of Darkness came back to Zahhaak — this time in the guise of a physician. He said, "Pray, do not cut-off the serpents. Let them stay where they are. I assure you that these serpents shall never be got rid of. The only remedy is that these black serpents should be fed on human brains — one each every day. Then they will not sting the whole day. Give them no other food. The human brains shall one day kill them".

Firdausi says, "O man! Did you get at the wicked scheme of the Devil? He wanted to kill the entire humanity and the influence of Paak Yazdaan gradually in this manner."

FIRDAUSI'S SHAANAAMAH (6) : Behzaad

Downfall of Paadshah Jamsheed

After the pride of Shah Jamsheed, his glittering days gave way to gloomy darkness. His subjects could not tolerate his vain pride. The discontentment resulted in revolt. His army deserted him.

The news of Jamsheed's pride reached the wicked Zahhaak. He seized this golden opportunity to invade Iran. He gathered a large army and began his invasion. He demolished all the towns and villages that came his way. At last, he reached the Iranian capital and sent a message to Jamsheed, "If you claim to be the creator of the world come out to fight me. If your claim be true you shall win and if not dust shall be your end."

A battle was fought. Jamsheed had a very small army. He fled and Zahhaak became the victor. Just then did he realise his mistake. His pride melted away in the thin air. He wept and repented for his sin. He knew that Paak Yazdaan had punished him and decided to resign to the will of the Lord. He shed aside his royal robe and leaving his gem-studded crown, throne and mace behind, he disappeared into a thick forest.

For many years, Jamsheed wandered aimlessly in the forest. He underwent voluntary penance for the wrong he had committed. Sometimes he had to suffer intense hunger and thirst. His clothes were all torn and tattered. Once a bestower was now a beggar. Such was his condition that if a courtier by chance was to pass by him, he would not recognise him.

One morning, Jamsheed came into a city of beautiful gardens and orchards. He inquired about the city from passers-by. They told him that he was in Zaabulistaan. They further informed him that the Zaabuli ruler had a lovely daughter named Samanaaz. The court astrologers had predicted that one day she would marry Shah Jamsheed. So she grew to love the Iranian ruler passionately.

The news of the down fall of Shah Jamsheed reached the ears of Samanaaz. She became very sad.

Jamsheed had two sisters. The name of the one was Arnaavaz and that of the other was Shaharnaaz. These two beautiful princesses had to flee the palace to escape capture and ill-treatment at the hands of Zahhaak. Unfortunately, Shaharnaaz was captured and imprisoned in a dark dungeon. Arnaavaz escaped. She came to Zaabulistaan and took up a job of maid-servant of Samanaaz.

One day, Samanaaz along with her maid-servant Arnaavaz were in the garden, they saw a poor beggar crying out in the air. "Paak Yazdaan, forgive me for my pride. I truly repent for my sin." Both the women were amazed to hear these words and looked at each other rather dismayed. Samanaaz asked Arnaavaz to go and ask the beggar who he was.

Jamsheed saw Arnaavaz approaching. He soon recognised her. Tears trickled down his cheeks. He was the first one to speak, "Tell me truly, are you Arnaavaz, my sister?"

Arnaavaz was shocked to hear these words. She could not believe the beggar to be her brother Jamsheed. She silently nodded to affirm his identification. Jamsheed fell on his knees and wept bitterly. He then said, "Ah! For the sake of my sin, Arnaavaz, are you too suffering like me? Look at your state. As a royal princess so many maid-servants attended on you, and-alas-now you have to attend on others." Saying thus, he took Arnaavaz in his arms and hugged her most affectionately. For a while both wept clinging to each other. Arnaavaz tried hard to speak but she could not. Agony and pain throttled her throat.

Jamsheed tried hard to console his sister. At last, she spoke, "Jamsheed, you are so changed. But worry not. Shah Kurang is a very gener-

ous and good-hearted ruler of this land. His daughter, Princess Samanaaz, loves you passionately. Some years back, the court astrologers had prognosticated that she would be the mother of Shah Jamsheed's children. I promise not to reveal your identity to her, as far as possible. The ruler is also anxious to make you his son-in-law. Maybe a change may come in our lives." Arnaavaz bade good-bye to her brother. Then she changed her mind and asked him to follow her.

Arnaavaz led Jamsheed to where Samanaaz was sitting. Samanaaz saw him and out of sheer extra-sensory perception or some divination, her conscience kept on pricking that he was Jamsheed. Out of shame, she kept her silence.

Jamsheed begged for some drink — He begged, "O princess! Give unto me a glass of wine. It is a true friend of the accursed and afflicted. Indeed, it is both — food of the hungry and drink of the thirsty." Samanaaz ordered Arnaavaz to bring a glass of golden grape wine. Slowly and tactfully, she asked, "stranger, your looks and your manners confess you are not a beggar. My voice of conscience repeats you are Jamsheed. You hugged Arnaavaz so tenderly. I saw this. No beggar would dare or care to do so. I am sure you and Arnaavaz know each other."

Jamsheed stood silent. Arnaavaz out of confusion and fear revealed the identity of her brother. Jamsheed begged Samanaaz to keep his identity secret lest someone may inform Zakhak about him. He said, "Princess, Zakhak thirsts for my blood. Yazdaan was too good to me and gave everything I wished for. Unfortunately, the Demon of Pride, rode over me and tempted me to utter blasphemy. From that moment — and now many years have passed by — I lead a life of a wandering beggar."

For some time Samanaaz and Jamsheed met secretly. In the course of time she became pregnant. When this was disclosed to her father, Shah Kurang, he bristled up with rage. He summoned his daughter and scolded her harshly. She replied, "Father, I am pregnant. But I have not

sinned, nor I have lost my honour. Did not the court astrologers predict years ago that I was destined to be the mother of Jamsheed's children. It has happened so : Dame Nature never fails."

Shah Kurang, hearing the name of Jamsheed, became ready to accept him as his son-in-law. But finding that he was a beggar he changed his mind. Samanaaz began to weep. She said, "Now that he is no more a monarch and no better than a beggar you can change your mind. But mine does not. May Jamsheed be a mighty ruler or a miserable beggar, I will remain faithful to him."

Shah Kurang smiled and hugged his daughter. Inwardly he smiled to hand over Jamsheed to Zakhak and become his favourite. He secretly ordered some of his men to find out the abode of Jamsheed. Before Shah Kurang's men could do so, Jamsheed came to know of the plot. He fled, leaving a message, "Samanaaz, you revealed my identity. Your fathers honoured me when I was a ruler. Now he wants to hand me over to my arch rival Zakhak to curry favour from him. How wise are the words : never reveal a secret to a woman".

The news reached the palace that Jamsheed fled away from the Kingdom - Samanaaz and Arnaavaz wept bitterly. Shah Kurang ordered for a search. He was discovered and handover to Zakhak along with Arnaavaz.

Zakhak was very pleased. He said, "Are you not the one who claimed to be the Almighty Lord? Why are you in distress now? Use your powers and free yourself."

"I am not crying for my sin," replied Jamsheed. I fear to approach my creator who has been good to me." Saying this, he wept. Zakhak ordered his executioners to saw him vertically into two. For seven hundred years Jamsheed lived — first as a ruler, then as a beggar.

(Contd. on page 10)

(Contd. from page 2)

Firdausi says, "O mortal beings ! Look at the fate of Jamsheed. Why should one long to live such a long unhappy life? The world at first shall be like honey to you and speak into your ears in soft and sweet whispers. You will cry out in glee that the world favours you. But, this attitude does not last long. One day, at some opportune moment, it shall take a full about turn and shall bleed you with grief. Such was, such is and such will be the dubious and treacherous world. So sow nothing save virtue."

Wicked Zahhaak forced Arnaavaz to lead a life of vice and sin. She then became his favourite. He was such a wicked person that he knew nothing of virtue. As a result, he could not teach anything but evil.

(To be continued)

FIRDAUSI'S SHAHNAAMA (7) : Behzaad

The Last Days Of Zahhaak

It happened that many people were against the wicked custom of killing two human beings every day and feeding their brains to the two black and vicious serpents on the shoulders of Zahhaak. Once two strange persons met and decided to meet Zahhaak for the job of royal cooks. They planned to cook one brain of an animal along with one of human so that one human being be saved. One of them was called Armaayal and

called as Kurds. All the workers in the royal kitchen supported the two.

Hardly forty years were left for the rule of Zahhaak over Iran, he had a strange dream. He saw three valiant youngsters, riding on the horse, were coming towards him. Two of the three seemed elder to the one between them. This young lad was as tall as the express tree. His countenance and other physical features were royal and car-

WE ARE TWELVE

Dear Subscribers, Donors, Advertisers, Well-wishers and Readers :

We enter our twelfth year by the grace of Almighty Ahuramazda and his Yazads, his first Prophet Zarathushtra, Asho-Farohars, Magav Mandal Sahibs, Ustad Sahib Behramshah, and you all who have kept your continuous faith in us.

During the time of Kyamat, difficulties will come and they do abound, but they are to be crossed or borne patiently, which this humble journal has been experiencing.

Many thanks to our few helpers especially Mr. K. Fitter, N. Patel, R. Patel, G. Forbes, K. Amroliya, R. Dhondy, K. Engineer, Mrs. A. Bharthania, and you all.

Yours truly,
For Dini-Avaz Committee
C. M. PATEL
Founder Comiittee Member

the other was known as Garmaayal. They spoke to Zahhaak so sweetly that he was greatly impressed. They got the job.

Every day, according to their scheme, they left off one human being. In this way, they save the lives of thirty souls every month. When two hundred lives were saved, they were smuggled out of the territory. These groups formed into a tribe

ried himself most majestically. He held a gurz (mace) shaped like the head of a cow. Suddenly, at a lightning speed, the lad darted forward and began to pound him mercilessly with his gurz. Then, he peeled off his skin from the head to the toes. He bound him securely in heavy iron chains and dragged him all the way to the Da-emaavand Koh. A mammoth crowd followed them.

Seeing this, the heart of Zahhaak almost stopped beating. He was seized with fright. In his bed — in half sleepy state — he thundered so loud that the hundred mighty pillars of his palace quaked alarmingly. Those living beings who heard his thunder were scared out of their wits. Arnaavaz who was sleeping by his side trembled in fright. She asked, "what's the matter, my lord? You were calm and cool when you came to bed. What made you roar? What makes you shudder with fright? The entire world — from the Sun and the Moon in the heavens down to fishes and reeds under the sea are at your beck and call. Human beings, animals and even the mighty demons are at your command. Tell, lord of the world, what frightens you?"

Zahhaak sat silent. He refused to reveal his dreadful dream. He said sorrowfully that the best way to keep a secret is to keep it concealed in the bosom. Should he reveal the dream then the dreadful end of his would become known to all.

Arnaavaz insisted. She asked again, "tell me, my lord, what woke you up? I may think of some way to free you from this terrible fright. Believe me, lord, there exists no misfortune that has no remedy."

Thereupon, Zahhaak described his dream in depth and detail. Arnaavaz was so scared that she turned pale. She cried out in horror, "summon your wise counsellors and know from them the out-come of this dream. Such dreams are not to be taken lightly. Ask them, if the one who pound you is a human being or a demon."

The next morning, Zahhaak sent for his wise counsellors. He narrated his dream to them. The counsellors lent a patient ear to his narration. Then, as usual, they retired into a room for private discussions. They discussed for a long time. when they came to interpret, their cheeks had lost the rosy hue. They stood before him simply gaping. No one had the guts to reveal the truth. They feared that if they declared the truth they would all be beheaded on the spot. For three days, they kept their ruler in the dark, under one pre-

text or the other. Zahhaak presumed that they were solving it.

On the fourth day, Zahhaak could bear no longer. He lost control of his patience and his mind as well and could tolerate no pretext any further. He became furious and shook with rage. He roared threateningly at them, "If you fail to solve my dream by the time the sun drowns itself in the sea, you all shall have to embrace death." All the counsellors shuddered at this ultimatum. They had no other option but to speak out the truth.

The Chief of the counsellors decided to give their solution. His name was Zeeraak. He gently paced towards Zahhaak. He bowed and said, "O Majestic Zahhaak! Set aside your arrogance. Your day is done. No woman on earth has given birth to a child who can evade death. Many glorious personalities came before you, pray tell us, how many of them still exist. See no one can live for ever. They all came into the world and all of them went out of it. Even if you were to live in an iron fort, the whirling sky over our head shall crush you. You can never be immortal. This throne, this crown and this mace, this palace which are yours today shall be someone's else tomorrow. The young lad you saw in your dream is the one who shall roll your head in the dust. His name is Fareedun. Up till now, he is not born and till then you need not fear him. Once he is born, O Zahhaak, your death at his hand is certain. He will rule over Iran after killing you. All that you saw — his lofty stature, the Gurz with the cow's head, the poundings and dragging — shall come true."

Zahhaak listened apprehensively to all the predictions of Zeeraak. He quavered with fright. He asked the chief, "Zeeraak, why does he seek Vengeance on me? For what reason does he want to slay me?"

Zeeraak replied, "O Zahhaak! Be you wise know that no one seeks vengeance for no reason. His father shall meet death at your hands. Listen, this shall be the cause of his vengeance."

Hearing this Zahhaak fell down unconscious from his throne. Zeeraak and his colleagues sensing danger left the court. After some time, he regained consciousness. Hunger, thirst and sleep left him. Life became a dark and dreary existence to him.

Years rolled on and by. Zahhaak became more and more restless. He ordered his men to keep a careful watch over the new born babes. Fareedun had to be found out anyhow and brought before him.

At last, the auspicious moment for the arrival of Fareedun drew near. As foretold in the dream, it so happened that Zohhaak, for some reasons, had bitter feelings for a person named Aatbeen. He ordered his warriors to arrest him. When this news reached Aatbeen, he fled from his dwelling place. He hid from place to place, but, unfortunately, he was spied and brought

before Zahhaak. After the fateful prediction of Zeeraak, Zahhaak took great care not to kill any one as far as possible. He hesitated at first, but his bitter feelings for Aatbeen overpowered his hesitations.

Poor Aatbeen was cruelly put to death. Fraanak, the lovely young widow of Aatbeen, was horrified to learn about the death of her husband. She too fled from her home in panic. Holding her babe, Fareedun, to her bosom, she took shelter in the forest. There she saw a strange cow. No one had seen or heard of such a cow. She stopped before the cow anticipating for someone around to help her. She put down her son and began to weep bitterly.

After some time, an old cow-herd came. He saw Fraanak weeping. He was filled with pity—and led her to his hut—Finding him to be compassionate she gave her child to him and said," O

merciful aged being, take this child of mine in your care". She then narrated the whole story. The old cowherd was moved by her plight. He agreed to look after her Fareedun for some time.

Fareedun lived with the old cow-herd. He was fed on the milk of that strange cow. It was named Purmaaya.

FAREEDUN

Fareedun lived with the cow-herd for three years. As he grew up, his Khoreh (Aura) around him increased in brilliancy. He looked as glorious as Shah Jamsheed. His birth was like the rains that brings prosperity into the world. He was the one who was destined to work for the spiritual progress. The whirling planets favoured him.

One day, Fraanak came back to the hut. She asked to old cow-herd to give back her child. She implored, "O good old man, let me have my child back. My conscience tells me that he shall be a great man. Allow me to take him to the Da-emaavand Koh where pious Mazdayasni Aabeds reside. They will train him and he will fight Zahhaak. Let us submit to the will of Yazdaan. There is no other choice left for us.

Luckily, Fraanak and her son left the hut in time. Zahhaak came to know that Aatbeen's widow had a child and he wanted him to be killed. His dream, in all its details passed before his eyes like a live picture. He ordered that the child be found out by hook or by crook.

At last, the news reached that Fraanak had fled to a forest. All the forests were thoroughly searched and they came in the forest in which Fareedun had lived for three years. The men came to the hut of the old cow-herd. They asked him many questions. They then ransacked his hut. In anger, they killed Purmaaya cow and set the hut ablaze.

Fareedun now lived with the pious Mazdayasni hermits in the Da-emaavand Koh. He remained in it till he was sixteen years old. One day, he sought their permission to leave the Koh and live with his mother. He came back to the

forest where the cow-herd lived. Mother and son were united.

Some months passed by. All these months they exchanged the ups and downs in their life. In one such exchange Fareedun put a rather embarrassing query to his mother. He asked her, "Mother whose son am I? When my friends ask me about my father what name should I tell them?"

Fraanak kept silent thinking whether to reveal the secret would be the right thing or not. Fareedun kept on insisting for the answer. She replied, "Fareedun, my son, listen patiently to what I say in answer to the question put by you. There lived in the Kingdom of Iran a man whose name was Aatbeen. He was of a royal descent. He was a man of virtue and wisdom. I have heard that he was a descendant of Shah Tahmuras and Shah Jamsheed. That man is your father. Some wise men predicted to Zahhaak that he would die at the hands of his son. So he was arrested and killed so that no son be born to him. Hearing this news, I fled to save you. In the forest, I saw a cow — a peculiar one, no one had seen or heard of. I sat down and wept bitterly. Just then, the aged cow-hard came by. He saw me crying and took us into his but. He reared you for three years. At last, Zahhaak came to know about you. He sent his men to kill you. Merciful Yazdaan took us under his protection and led us to the Da-emaavand Koh. I entrusted you to the holy saintly folks — the Aabeds of the Da-emaavand. I learnt afterwards that the cow and the maid were put to death by the men of the tyrant — Zahhaak."

Fareedun became sad. Love swelled up in his heart for his mother who had to undergo so much for his sake. He gaped at his mother for a while and then said, "Mother, a lion is known by his courage. In the name of Paak Yazdaan I vow solemnly that I will fight Zahhaak and kill him.

Fraanak heard the pledge and was overjoyed. But, next moment fear gripped her. She warned her son," your decision is not right. Zahhaak is very wicked and powerful. He has a huge army.

You are all alone. Remember that the Path of friendship and strife are separate paths. Do not look at this world through your young eyes. He who is youthful raises his head and thinks he is second to none sees not any peace and joy. O Fareedun ! Listen to my words. Words that come from the mouth of a mother are never unworthy."

As days passed by, Zohhaak became more and more fearful. Fear of Fareedun gripped his heart and mind. A frantic search was made but Fareedun could be found nowhere. So, he summoned his advisors once more.

Zahhaak told them, "You are well aware of my fear of Fareedun and my eagerness to kill him. But, he is hidden somewhere and is nowhere to be found. He is a lad of royal blood and he is courageous too. Verily, a wise man of yore who said that we should not consider a foe — no matter how young or battered he be — as a weakling is cent per cent right. Fareedun is young-indeed but I fear him so much. I therefore

wish that my people declare on solemn oath that I am their good, truth-ful and just ruler and they shall never turn unfaithful to me."

The wise courtiers heard this and disliked the idea of their ruler : yet, they had to agree as they had no other alternative. This proclamation was made known-in every nook and corner.

Many people signed it. No one dared to refuse and invite trouble from their wicked ruler.

Zahhaak had become impatient and restless. He was very much worried about Fareedun. Each day that passed brought him nearer to death.

Zahhaak was busy scheming to capture Fareedun. He built up a huge army both of human beings and demons. He told them to be alert. Fareedun was to be found : Fareedun had to be killed. This was his problem and there was no other substitute to it.



FIRDAUSI'S SHAAH NAMEH : BEHZAAD

One day, a person came into the court of Zahhaak and yelled aloud for justice. Zahhaak was seized with fear,

The man beat his forehead, hard and wailed, "O Zahhaak! O cruel tyrant! My name is Kaaveh (or Gaaveh). I am an ironmonger by profession. I have come to your court for justice. You have done me great injustice. It hurts me like a dagger in my heart. If you are just, as you declare yourself, - in your declaration - then give me justice too, and ennoble yourself in thy eyes of your people. If you are just then pray tell me what wrong have I done to you to be so cruel to me. Listen, O Zahhaak, I had eighteen sons. Today, I have only one left with me. My seventeen sons were slaughtered like beasts to feed those wretched serpents that have sprung up on your shoulders with their brains. Tell me, O wicked one, do tell me for God's sake what wrong have I done to you? Know that when a person grows old his son alone can become his support. Have a good look at me. I am grown old. The wrinkles formed are the proof and need a support and there can be no better support than one's own son and am a law-abiding citizen. My present plight is unbearable. If you are just -- as you say in your declaration -- then give me the reason for taking away my last son - the eighteenth one - from me to feed his brain to those serpent of yours."

There was a great commotion and confusion in the court. The courtiers were confused too. Zahhaak

sat silent on his throne with the intention of winning back the love of his people, he ordered that the eighteenth and the last son of Kaaveh be spared. He then placed his Declaration in front of Kaaveh and asked him to sign it. Kaaveh noted the contents of the declaration and turning towards the courtiers declared, "O you wicked beings! you all have turned your heart and mind away from the fear of Paak Yazdaan? You have all taken the Path to Hell just to curry favour from your ruler? Now, I fear not you and I fear not your Zahhaak." Trembling with rage, he tore the Declaration into pieces in front of all and like a mad person began to trample upon it.

Kaaveh left the court as he led his last son through the street shouting and screaming wildly at the people to revolt. There was utter disorderliness in the court and on the streets. The people shouted against the tyrannical rule of Zahhaak. The people shouted slogans against their ruler which they had never ventured to do in the past. Soon the entire nation rose in arms. The fear complex prompted Zahhaak to refrain from taking stern action to quell the revolt. He wished to do nothing that would send the people to the side of Fareedun.

The chief of the wise counsellors stood before Zahhaak and said, "O Generous Zahhaak! you are a mighty ruler. No power on earth can do you any harm. Pray do not be so disappointed. Do not lose hope. Do not be disturbed at the actions of that ignorant and stupid Kaaveh. It

will calmed down in no time and your word shall be once again the law of the land."

At those words, Zahhaak plucked up courage. He said, in reply, "O my wise counsellors! these words I tell you may cause surprise in you. I am certain that my downfall is near at hand. The way Kaaveh entered into my court, the way he thundered and the way he gestured cast shadow of the coming events that have dreaded me all these yers."

Meanwhile, Kaaveh continued his agitation. It was not a mere political revolt but a crusade against Evil. Evil had to be curtailed if not completely smashed. Crowds and crowds of people joined Kaaveh. He tore a piece of leather from his apron and tied it to the staff which he carried for support whilst walking. This was the banner of the freedom movement. It inspired the people to fight against Zahhaak.

Kaaveh knew about Fareedun. He began to search him. At last, he found Fareedun in a dense forest. Kaaveh and his gallant band met him and implored him to be their leader. They dressed him in a royal robe and gave him in his hand the Kaavyaani banner to hold. This banner later became the official historic standard of Iran.

Fareedun in his royal robe went to his mother for her blessings. He said to her, "Look, mother, the Iranians are fed up with the tyranny of Zahhaak and prayed to him to become their leader. I am now prepared to fight Zahhaak. I am going there, till then

be engrossed in prayers. Pray for me. Mazda alone is the Lord Supreme. Therefore, keep your hands outstretched towards Him and beg for His Blessings."

Tears rolled down the fair rosy cheeks of Fraanak. She blessed her son to come back to her in triumph. Then, raising her eyes towards the sky, she murmured softly; "O Paak Yazdaan! All these years my son was under the care of pious people. Now, I entrust him to you. Protect him and aid him in his mission to vanquish evil."

Fareedun had two elder brothers. They were good and noble beings. One was named Kayaanoosh and the name of the other was Purmaah. He said to them, "If Fortune favours me, brothers, I shall roll Zahhaak in the dust. I shall thus return victorious. I shall then bring glory to you and save you from the present plight. I shall spread Virtue and righteousness throughout the world. There shall be a just rule all over the length and breadth of Iran. No one shall find injustice in any nook and corner in the land. I shall propagate once again the Good Mazdayasni Deen in Iran.

Fareedun Fights Zahhaak

The next day, when the rising sun splashed all over the sky its first red and golden hues, Fareedun with his band of gallant warriors began the march towards Iran to end the wicked and unjust rule of Zahhaak. The day was Roz Khordaad.

His brothers, Kayaanoosh and Purmaah, were on his either side.

They marched on till they reached the dwelling place of some pious Aabeds. Fareedun requested them to give shelter for a night. That night, one of the pious Aabeds came to him. He was dressed in a pure white loose robe and had white flowing hair and beard. His face was brilliantly lit with golden shine. He looked as if he was an angel come from Heaven. He blessed Fareedun and wished him success in his daring venture. He taught him a very powerful Nirang (a holy spell) and advised him to recite in times of danger. Just then, the night meal was served. After that they all went to sleep.

At dawn, the two brothers woke up early. They became jealous of their younger brother, Fareedun, to fame. They did not want him to be the King. They decided to kill him.

Fareedun was yet fast asleep at the base of a mountain. His brothers saw him fast asleep. A treacherous thought crept into their mind. Both of them climbed the mountain hurriedly, chose a big boulder and rolled it down. It made a loud rumbling noise as it came rolling. This woke up Fareedun who soon chanted the Nirang given to him by the pious Aabed. The boulder stopped rolling for a while till he moved out in safety.

Fareedun soon learnt about the treachery of his elder brothers. He remained silent and said nothing. The march continued. Kaaveh, with the Kaavyaani standard was in the fore. The entire band followed him. They all came to River Arwad. He summoned the chief boat-man and

said, "Pray, unanchor these boats of yours and reach us safely to the other side of the river bank."

The chief boatman refused to comply with the request. He told Fareedun that it was an order from the ruler Zahhaak not to row anyone without the prior permission from him. He asked Kaaveh to produce the royal seal first. Then only he could ferry them to the other side.

The flat refusal did not deter Fareedun. He led his horse into the shallow waters of the river. His followers took courage and led their horses through the river. Although they passed through the waters with difficulty, they landed onto the other side without any loss of men or beasts.

They reached a place called Gang Dezukht in Pahlavi. There they saw a majestic but equally mysterious place. There was a palace, the top of it seemed to touch the seventh Aasmaan. Fareedun ascertained that the palace belonged to Zahhaak. He went near it and learnt that it was unguarded. But, he found that he could not proceed further.

Fareedun recited the Nirang and the magic spell broke. He entered in. Inside the palace, Fareedun encountered some evilbeings. He smashed their brains out of their skulls one after the other with cow-head shaped Gurz (mace). His followers saw this and were overjoyed. They believed firmly that their Fareedun would lead them to victory.

(To be continued)

FIRDAUSI'S SHAAH NAMEH : BEHZAAD

(Continued from last issue)

Fareedun went into the palace. In one of the chambers, there was a throne made of gold and studded with precious gems. He sat on it and commanded his men to make a further search of the palace. They found no one anywhere. They stepped into the harem. There were beautiful girls. They all had sparkling eyes and were of extremely fair skin and had all the features of a fairy.

Fareedun ordered the young girls to come towards him. He talked to them. All of them were very lovely and glorious but they seemed to be wicked and propagators of the demonic cult. He impressed upon them how damaging and disastrous were the ways of the demons. He explained to them how benignant was the Path of Virtue and Righteousness. He asked to mend their evil ways and worship Mazda and practise the Good and Beneficent Mazdayasni Deen.

Just then, Arnaavaz and Shehernaaz came into the chamber. They saw Fareedun and were surprised. They said, "O handsome lad! May you remain ever young in this aged world. But do you know that you are in the lair of a fierce lion? Do you know his ferocity? Pray, whose son are you? What brought you here? This palace belongs to wicked Zahhaak. He defeated our Jamsheed and took us captive. He has given us nothing in our life except misery. We are wonderstruck for you and only you are the first human male to enter into this palace. No one has broken the evil spell around this palace.

Fareedun, thereupon, replied, "O unfortunate and miserable women of the family of Jamsheed! Pray heed to what I say. Fortune and throne do not remain for ever. I am a son of good Aatbeen and the name of my mother is Fraanak. My father was put to death by the wicked tyrant Zahhaak. I have come here seeking vengeance for the death of my father and the cow, Purmaayah, that fed me in my infancy. I have traversed a long distant place to reach this magic land and assure you ladies that I am not going back without smashing the brain out of the skull of that wicked tyrant with this Gurz of mine."

Hearing this, Arnaavaz was overjoyed, she hoped that the death of Jamsheed would be avenged at last. She asked Fareedun earnestly, "O handsome youth! Pray, tell me, are you Victorious Fareedun? Are you the one who is destined to kill Zahhaak? I assure you that we were first Mazdayasnis."

"If the whirling skies favour me," replied Fareedun, "I will smite Zahhaak I am Fareedun. If I become the ruler of Iran I will cleanse the world which is at present contaminated by his evil deeds. Tell me truthfully where does that evil ruler reside?"

Arnaavaz said, in reply, "At present, he has gone to the East to spread his demon-worshipping cult. He is in Hindustaan. The so-called wise counsellors of his court have foretold that Fareedun shall come and kill him and become the ruler in his place,

From that he fears him. He killed so many infants in the cherished hope that Fareedun may be killed. He also killed thousands and thousands of human beings and domestic animals and with this blood and flesh, he performed evil rites and rituals to keep his coming misfortune away. Even the feeding of the two serpents on his shoulders with two human brains has cost the life of many human beings. He is going mad with fear. He will come back soon. There is no place on earth now left for him where he is able to find peace."

Wicked Zahhaak had a faithful guard. He was always near his master. His name was Kundrav. He was named so because he too was as tyrannical as his cruel master. He came to the harem and to his surprise he saw no one there. Then he came into the room where the throne of his master was. He saw a stranger full of brilliant halo round him occupying it. He saw tall Shehernaaz and moon-faced Arnaavaz standing on his either side. He also saw a band of strange and untrained warriors standing by his side.

Kundrav pretended to be no foe of Fareedun. He did not inquire who the stranger was. He went to the throne straight and bowing respectfully said, "O Paadshaah! May you live as long as this earth exist. May the entire world be at your feet."

Fareedun summoned Kundrav nearer to him. He said to him, "Make preparations for this festive occasion. Let the food and drink be brought. Summon the dancers and singers perform their arts. I appreciate all those who are ready to assist me

in my bold venture." Kundrav carried out his command most readily.

Food and drink were served to all. The dancers and singers regaled them. They passed the whole night thus in joy. In the morning, Kundrav chose the fastest steed that was available and galloped away at a lightening speed. He stood before Zahhaak and narrated to him all that he saw.

Zahhaak gaped at him in silence. He was all confused. Fear complex gripped him. Kundrav said, "O Shah! The signs of your end are clear and distinct to sight. Those three valiant warriors whom you feared all these years are all set to kill you. They have come from another country. The youngest of the three is as tall as a cypress tree. His face beams with golden light. Though he is a young lad he is old in wisdom. He has in his hand a very queer Gurz. It has a cow-head at the top end. He shows himself unique among his fellow followers. He has broken the magic spell round your palace and killed all your demons. He sits on your throne and orders about to one and all. O Shah! Is this our Doomsday?"

Zahhaak could speak nothing. He just kept on gaping at Kundrav. He was so scared that he shook all over. At last, he broke his silence. He stammered, "We must invite him and treat him with great honour. Maybe, he may become our friend. I earnestly wish not to turn him into a foe and usher in my end."

"O unfortunate ruler!", answered Kundrav, "Do not think him to be

guest. Believe me, what I see, tells me that he can not be one of us any more. He comes as a foe seeking vengeance and thirsts for your blood. Be quick, O Shah lose no time. He comes with the intention of sending you to your grave. He desires to free Iran from your yoke. He sits on your throne boldly as if you are no more in the world. His intention is to wipe out all evil from the entire world. The good and even the bad whom you have offended have joined him. If you still insist to take him as your guest, its your wish. But beware of my words and the dire consequences."

Zahhaak paused for some moments before giving his reply. He was all dazed. Fear added fuel to his confused state of mind. He thought and thought for some way out of this danger but could find no solution. He looked straight into the eyes of Kundrav and whispered to him very softly, "Kundrav, why do you create such an alarm when there is no reason to do so? Know that a good hearted guest is better than a bosom friend because he is sure to be good to his adversary too. Sit silent and see you speak not a single word any more."

Kundrav was highly displeased. He sat silent but could do so only for some moments. He was a true well-wisher and a faithful follower of Zahhaak. He opened his lips, rather fearfully, "O Zahhaak! Listen to what I have to say about your good hearted guest. He was all surrounded by the women-folk of your harem. I saw Arnaavaz and Shehernaaz talking and giggling with him. I saw him

touching the cheeks of those women who are yours. He even played his fingers on their lips. At night, I fear to say, it was worse. They slept with him. Pray, tell me, what business has this good hearted guest to do with your women."

Hearing these words, Zahhaak could hold himself no more. He trembled with rage. With the ferocity of an enraged lion, he jumped out from his palace and like a fierce tigress thirsty for blood, he thundered furiously at Kundrav, "No more shall you guard my palace. You are not worthy for such a job."

Kundrav could not bear this insult. He retorted, "Now onwards you shall no more be a King; hence there shall be no need of guarding your palace. What can you do to me? When you yourself are not safe who is going to obey your commands? Pray, do something before time runs out. The foe is drawing well-nigh -- the one who now sits on your throne. Such times never came to us in the past. I fear your end is too near."

Zahhaak came to his palace and ordered his warriors to prepare for a battle. He led his men to nip the activities of young Fareedun in the bud. Fareedun was also preparing for the battle. Both the armies met. Zahhaak had both demons and men in his army. Fareedun had only human warriors.

A heroic battle was fought. Fareedun's followers being small and untrained could not put up any resistance. They took to guerilla warfare hiding in the mountains and in the thick undergrowth and at opportune moments making a surprise attack. They hurled stones, thick branches and even some small logs of wood. The battle --

cries that they screamed echoed dreadfully against the mountains.

Just then, an oracle was heard. It came from a nearby Aatash-Kadeh. It said, "Even if a carnivore happen to sit on the throne and be our ruler, let all the old and the young accept him as such readily. But, let not the serpent-shouldered Zahhaak sit on the throne and rule over us."

Zahhaak was disappointed. The words of the oracle rang and re-rang into his ears. He sneaked out from the battle ground and sought shelter in his palace. No one recognised him as he was entirely clad in armour. In a corner, he saw Shehernaaz conversing with her maids. Her cheeks were as rosy as a rose, her face was as bright as the day and her curly hair were as black as a moonless night. From her gestures, Zahhaak could make out that she was fond of Fareedun.

At that moment, Fareedun too entered the palace. he spoke to Shehernaaz. Shehernaaz too talked to him freely seeing this, Zahhaak became jealous. He trembled with rage. The green-eyed monster of envy stirred his heart and mind. He flung his lasso on the balcony where the two were. He climbed up and came into the chamber. At first, no one knew who the intruder was. But, later, Fareedun suspected foul in his movements. He moved away swiftly and raising his cow-headed Gurz, he struck heavily at the intruder and smashed his helmet.

At this moment, Asho Sarosh Yazad appeared. "Kill him not, O

Fareedun," said the Angel. His end is not yet over. Bind him securely; for he is wicked Zahhaak. Drag him and intern him in the Daemaavand Koh".

Fareedun heard these words and was overjoyed to find his mission completed. Soon a camel was brought. Zahhaak bound in chains was placed on it. As commanded by Asho Sarosh Yazad, he took Zahhaak to the Daemaavand Koh and interned him in it.

(Continued)

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FIRDAUSI'S SHAHNAAMAH : Behzaad

After the downfall of Zahaak, Fareedun became the monarch of Iran. A hurried coronation ceremony was performed. In his coronation speech, Fareedun said, "O my faithful subjects! The Iranian throne is mine. Paak Yazdaan -- be a million thanks unto Him -- brought me in contact with the pious Aabeds who brought me up in such a manner that I may free the world from the evil hegemony of the wicked Zahaak. He who receives good from Him must tread the Path of Righteousness. I promise hereby to do so."

Now, the world in general and Iran in particular became free from the evil Zahhaak.

Firdausi says, "O brother! Do no evil. Use your hands and feet for a good cause. Virtue and vice are not eternal. Virtue shall bring you glory and name. Vice brings despise. O brother, look at the world. How cruel it is! O world! Why are you so cruel? You kill the very being whom you nourished all the years he was with you. To what end you bring him one day? See, where is Zahhaak? Where the incoming monarch of Iran, Fareedun, shall be one day? Both of them were rulers but now they are no more. They took leave of you and left everything you had given to them behind. Every being shall follow the same Fate -- be he a shepherd or a sheep.

Fareedun ascended the throne of Iran. The coronation took place on the Roz Hormazd of Maah Meher. Iran turned away from evil and righteousness reigned supreme. There was

a good deal of rejoicing all around. All those who assembled in the court where happily eating and drinking. The Meherangaan Jashan was celebrated on the Roz Meher of Maah Meher. He reigned for five hundred years. All through his reign, he was good and generous. He never committed anything wicked. The people were happy.

Firdausi says, "O Son! This world is not ever-lasting -- both to the good and the wicked. It shall never be so to you. Know that the world has been so from times immemorial and save pain and mishap it gives you nothing."

When the news that Fareedun became the new sovereign of Iran spread in all directions, his mother, Fraanak, was overjoyed. Her rapture knew no bounds. She thanked Yazdaan for His aid. She gave away however little she had in charity to the poor. She sent a small gift and her blessings to her glorious, beloved son.

Fareedun, as the Shahnaamah records married both the sisters Aranvaaz and Shaharnaaz, the daughters of Jamsheed. He had three sons. The two sons were borne by Shaharnaaz while the youngest one was borne by Aranvaaz. The three grew up into gallant and handsome lads. The eldest was named Selam, the middle one was Tur and the youngest was Irach.

One day, Shah Fareedun summoned his most trusted courtier. He said, "Go around the world in search of three lovely and virtuous girls to be the brides of his three sons. They

should be the daughters of the same parents. The three sisters should be so alike in face and stature that it should be impossible to recognise any one from the other two."

Jandal, the trusted courtier, set out in search of the girls. He visited one place after the other but could not find the girls as required by his Shah. He wandered for days and days but in vain.

At last, Jandal reached a small Kingdom of Yemen. Its ruler was Shah Sarv. Jandal came to know that the Shah had three daughters but did not know whether they were exactly alike to one another. So he stayed in Yemen for a long time to gather more informations about them. When he could stay no longer, he decided to meet the King personally and talk to him.

Jandal met Shah Sarv in his court. He said, "O Shah! My Shah Fareedun has sent me to meet you. He has asked me to deliver an oral message to you. He says that as the musk spreads its fragrance all around in the same manner may your name and fame spread all around. Know that nothing in this world is more valuable than one's own offspring. There is no relationship more intimate than the relationship between parents and children. My Shah has three sons and desires your three daughters in marriage. My Shah wants that the sisters look alike in all respects. O Shah! I am told that your three daughters look exactly alike and so I came here with the proposal. It would be indeed right and proper if the three joyous jewels of my Shah marry your three glamorous gems. My

Shah is a three-eyed man and so he wants three sisters of yours."

The Shah or Yemen heard the message attentively. He turned pale just as the jasmine flowers that grow in the marshes do. He pondered over the proposals for many days. If he married his daughters, he would miss them for good. If he did not have his daughters by his side, his days would be as dark as nights. He decided that at the moment the right course would be to keep his lips sewed serious matters required detailed discussion. Any haste would bring harm and sorrow.

The Shah of Yemen promised to send a reply soon. He summoned his wise counsellors.

"Wise men!" said he. "Jandal, the ambassador of Shah Fareedun

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called on me today. He delivered an oral message of his Shah. The Iranian monarch has three sons and he desires that I give away my three daughters in marriage to them. If I agree to this proposal of his I shall become a forlorn soul in this world, and, if I do not, I fear trouble from him. Know that Fareedun is a vanquisher of evil. It is he who captured the perpetrator of evil, Zahhaak. The wise men of yore have said that it is sheer folly to raise one's head against a powerful ruler. Think over this and tell me what you have to say in this regard.

The wise counsellors pulled all their wits together to excogitate a solution to this stalemate. When they came back into the court, the chief one said, "O glorious Shah! We have decided to advise you not to agree to this proposal. Fear not Fareedun for he is not a fearful foe. If he be powerful, we your subjects are no timid cowards wearing ear-rings in the ears and bangles in the hands. If he thinks in terms of battle we are prepared to show our mettle with our swords and our spears. We shall fight bravely, before we all perish. In the event, your Majesty desire to avoid blood-shed then, as a precondition for the marriage, ask from him something that is not possible to carry out."

The Shah of Yemen call the Iranian ambassador to his court. He said to him, "Do convey this message of mine to your Shah. I am ready to give away my daughters in marriage although my life shall become as black as the night. Send your three princes to my court, so that I may acquaint myself with them.

Jandal heard the message and bade leave from the Shah of Yemen. He bowed respectfully and left the court.

Shah Fareedun was greatly pleased to hear of the approval to his proposal. He praised Jandal for his sweet tongue and tact. He called his three sons and passed on the message of the Yemeni Shah. He asked them to leave for Yemen to meet their prospective father-in-law. He cautioned them to be goodmannered, truthful and noble. He told them that these were the three essential characteristics of a good prince. He asked them to listen attentively to what the Shah told them. He assured them that Shah Sarv was a good, wise and just ruler. He possessed wisdom, kindness and throne -- all three together.

After much good words, Fareedun concluded, "Sons, the three Yemeni princesses are all alike in all respects. No one in this world can correctly point out who is the eldest, the middle one and the youngest. Remember, when the three princesses are brought before you three, the youngest one shall be the first, the middle one shall be behind her and the eldest shall be the last to enter. Again, when they come to you, the eldest one shall look at the youngest to deceive you. The youngest shall look at the eldest of you. The middle one shall pose no problem for the middle of you. Remember this thoroughly well."

The three princes heard what their father had told them. They took their father's blessings and made busy with their preparations.

The next dawn, the sun rode to vanquish darkness and lit the sky with its golden hues, the three princes left Iran for Yemen.

The Shah of Yemen, on hearing of the princes coming, sent some of his courtiers to welcome them. The Yemeni men, women and children flocked the streets and lanes to have a glimpse of the three joyous jewels of the Iranian monarch, Fareedun.

The Iranian Princes were received with great honour. A red carpet ovation was given to them. A look of festivity adorned the capital of Yemen. Everyone praised their handsome, gallant features.

The next day, the three princes were welcomed in the Yemeni Palace. Few moments later, the three Yemeni princesses were brought.

The Shah of Yemen asked the three Iranian princes, "Can you tell me from these three twinkling stars who is the eldest, the mid-one and the youngest?"

The three princes answered as their father had revealed to them. The Shah, the courtiers, the nobles and all who were in the court there sat dumbstruck for a while. Even the wise counsellors could not believe their eyes and ears. The Shah thought that it would be unwise to test them further. He showed his willingness to give away his daughters in marriage to the Iranian Princes.

It was midnight. Everyone was fast asleep. Only the Shah of Yemen lay restless and wide awake. He did not want to part with his daughters. He decided to kill than to give them away. By some magical powers,

a deathly blizzard was caused, hoping that their blood would freeze in their Veins.

The princes who were sleeping in the open garden of the palace under the shade of a tree felt the biting cold. They at once decided to recide the Nirang (holy spell) that was taught to them by their father. Soon, the blizzed weakened and the temperature returned to normal again.

In the morning, the Shah came out into the garden in the fond hope of seeing them dead. The three Iranian Prince were all hale and hearty. He was horrified to find that his magic had not affected them.

The Shah stood in a pensive mood. He thought to himself, "Shah Fareedun has done me no wrong. The root of this trouble is me. It is my mis-

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fortune that I have daughters instead of sons. Consider him as a God-blessed man who has no daughter. He who has is an ill-fated one." He decided not to do any ill to the princes.

Shah Sarv summoned his wise counsellors and courtiers:

"My moon-faced daughters are indeed fit to be royal wives. They have been the apple of my eyes all these years. May they be lucky enough to see happiness in their husband's home:

A royal marriage celebrations were held in different parts of Yemen. There was joy everywhere. Some days later, the princes took their wives and returned to Iran. They brought a huge treasure of gold and gems as a part of the dowry. Fareedun

was informed of their return. He went to welcome them.

Shah Fareedun wanted to test the wisdom and bravery of his sons. With the aid of his Nirang taught by the pious Aabeds of the Koh-i-Daemaavand, he appeared to them as a deadful, fire splitting dragon. He spat out fire with each breath he exhaled. He first came to his eldest one. On seeing a darting dragon before him, the eldest son moved out of his way, thinking it wise not to create trouble before he met his father.

Fareedun then attacked his second son. The second son took out his arrow to shoot as there was no other alternative to a battle. The third son, seeing the dragon darting towards him, yelled out. "We are the three

sons of Shah Fareedun. No mother -- she be a human or a demon -- has given birth to one who does not fear our father. If you have heard of our father, do not create trouble. Beware, he shall place a crown of misfortune over your head.

Fareedun was very pleased to hear these words of his youngest son. He disappeared for a moment only to reappear in the human form before his sons and their wives. The sons fell on their knees and kissed the ground under his feet.

Many years rolled by. Fareedun who was growing old and feeble with age decided to divide his Kingdom among his three sons. He summoned some pious Aabeds to his court. He asked them to study the future of his three sons.

Selam was born under the zodiacal sign of Jupiter. He was made to govern the province of Khaavar. Tur was under the zodiacal sign of Leo. He was given Turaan and China. Irach was a Cancerian. The horoscope predicted a gloomy future. Fareedun became sad. He gave away Iran to him.

Once again, some years passed by in peace. Selam wanted Iran. He was dissatisfied with the distribution of the Iranian Empire. Being the eldest son, he did not want to rule over a far-flung province. He became green with envy and began to detest Irach. He was determined to have Iran by means -- fair or foul.

The gloomy future of Irach was taking shape. Selam called his most faithful and trusted courtier in his

private chamber. He asked him to go to China secretly and deliver a written message to his brother, Tur

"Mayst thou live long", wrote Selam, in his message, "May joy and prosperity ever knock at gate of your life. I wish to inform you that our old father has done injustice to both of us. He gave away the main part of his empire, Iran, to our youngest brother Irach. We two received far-flung and unimportant province. I suspect, he did so to throw us out of Iran for good. I can not bear this injustice for it is very humiliating. We ought to do something to redress this wrong ourselves. This distribution of the Empire does not please me. I assure you that our father has lost his wits.

The messenger reached China as quickly as possible to deliver the message. He entered the court and bowed to Tur. He first pronounced many words of blessings and handed the message. On reading it, Tur became furious on his father. He swore to avenge the wrong done to him and his eldest brother.

"Our unjust father has done us wrong, indeed" wrote Tur, in reply. He has deceived us. History shall proclaim that he is the only one who sowed a seed out of which a tree is grown that bore leaves of poison and fruits of blood. Come over here as soon as humanly possible so that we meet face to face and plan out a strategy to teach our unjust father a lesson."

Tur also sent an oral message along with his messenger who was wise and sugar-tongued to Khaavar. In the oral message, he said, "It is

not wise for a man of courage to bear this humiliation patiently. Patience in such circumstances is foolish. It shall spell chaos."

Accordingly, the two brothers, Selam and Tur, met. They cleverly perpetrated a vile conspiracy against their father and their youngest brother, Irach. They sent a messenger to Iran.

"Make haste. Move more quickly than the gushing gale so that it can not pace with you. Stop not even for a fraction of a moment at any spot for food, drink or rest until you reach the palace of our father. First pay our respect; then in your sweet way tell him that a good and just ruler always fear the wrath of the Lord. It is a well known fact that all black hair on the head grow white with age. But the white do not turn black again with further advancement in age. Now that you have grown old, your youth shall never come back to you. You have shown partiality in the distribution of your empire. You have apportioned unjustly your empire among us three. As a sequel to it, we invite you to prepare for your dark end. All your life you have loved Irach as if we were not yours. The wrong done by you hurts us very much. If you do not right the wrong done to us, we shall have no other alternative than to invade Iran."

When this messenger delivered the written message and said the rest as he was told to, Fareedun became very sad. He called Irach to his side and wept painfully.

"My dear Irach," said Fareedun,

"I have a very painful news to disclose. Your two brothers are on the war-path seeking vengeance on me. There is nothing else that we can do but prepare for a battle. Have a good meal, my child, for who knows your brothers may not give you another chance to have your meals. Do not seek a friend to aid you, for self-reliance and truthfulness are the only true friends of a human being."

Hearing these words, Irach became sad too. He pondered over for a while. He looked at his father and said, "Father, the revolving skies speed faster than the stormy winds. It is therefore futile for a wise man to sit idle and grieve. It is known that joy is always followed by sorrow as certainly as the night follows the day. This world is an in wherein we live for some days and leave for good. If you permit me to go, I shall meet my brothers without an army and tell them that it is not good to seek vengeance. I shall of my own free-will lay down my crown and plead to them not to do anything to hurt the feelings of our aged father. I shall ask them why are they attracted to this world? There is no reason to harm our father. I shall draw their attention towards our glorious ancestor, Jamsheed, who took great pride in his achievements, but, eventually led a life of a fugitive and licked the very dust under his feet. In spite of being a good and just king; the revolving skies tempted him to arrogance and, as a consequence, the Iranian throne, crown and mace were no more his. I shall tell them that if they too desire to commit any wrong, the same skies shall pay them back in the same coin."

Fareedun was greatly relieved at these words of Irach. He said in clear words, "Son, while your brothers are seeking strife, you are seeking peace. You shower your good heart on them. But, keep this in mind that however a person be wise, if he happens to stand before a dragon he shall get nothing save his fiery poisonous breath. If you desire peace let it be so, Irach. But, go not alone. Take some warriors along with you. I desire you return back unharmed and safe. Your sight sustains my life."

Thereupon, Fareedun summoned a scribe and dictated to him a reply to his sons. It said, "Paak Yazdaan who is good be good to you. This message addressed to your two brothers is dictated by your father

who has seen many ups and downs in life. The mysteries of Nature show its true course. I love you three equally. It seems that you two are hurt because I made Irach the Shah of Iran. But, it is no one's fault. I found in him all the characteristics required to rule Iran. Both of you do not have. You should not take it as a sign of less love for you. Irach is coming to you, brooking no delay. He is ready to abdicate the throne. Do not ill-treat him and pray, do not harm him. He is younger in age but is noble at heart. Send him safe back to me as soon as possible."

The message was sealed with a royal stamp. Irach took it and left for Khaavar. He was accompanied

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by few gallant warriors and holy Mobeds.

The three brothers met. Two had hatred and one had love in their hearts. Selam and Tur burnt with envy when they saw the splendorous stature of their youngest brother, Irach. They exchanged greetings. All who came along with Selam and Tur saw the dignified manner of Irach and swore that he deserved to be the ruler of Iran. But, they kept their opinion a secret.

Irach was led into the royal court by his two brothers. They talked for quite a long time. The three were together the whole day.

(To be continued)

* * * *

**Be wise, young lad
Ever desire wisdom
Move about always
In company of wiseones.**

* * * *

Firdausi's Shaahnaamah :Behzaad

(The Last Days of Fareedun)

The next morning, when the sun rose, the two brothers met Irach again. Both of them talked to him regarding the distribution of their father's empire. In the mid-way, they changed their tone and began talking in a rude and abusive way.

"Irach, you are the youngest of us. Pray, why did you accept the rulership of Iran proper? It is clear that our father was partial towards you," said Tur.

"Brothers," replied Irach, "If any one of you desire to rule over Iran proper, be patient for a while. I do not desire to rule over Iran. I desire not the throne, the crown, the army and fame. What are these to me when I know that the end of my life is in the grave. I will give up Iran of my own free will, for I need it not. Pray, do not seek vengeance on our feeble, aged father. Except obedience, I have no other conduct: Save humanity I follow no other religion."

Hearing these words, Tur raging with anger, picked up his seat and flung it at Irach.

Irach implored Tur to calm down. He asked, "Tur, do you not fear the Justice of Paak Yazdaan? Do you not have any respect for our father? Do not kill me for the Zamaan (time) shall repay your misdeed very cruelly. If you value your life, value that of the others too. Be not a murderer. A small nook in your kingdom is enough for me. I shall earn my bread by my sweat. Do not take away the life of an ant for its life is dear to it. Why do you want to murder me and plunge our aged father in grief? You want Iran and you shall have it. So do not shed my blood. Do not confront with the Divine Creator. He is powerful enough to roll you in dust in a moment."

The words of Irach fell on the deaf ears of his brothers. Tur took out the poisoned dagger - as planned before - and stabbed it many times into the youthful body of Irach.

Firdausi says, "O world! What is this? You rear one in your lap and you fail to protect him. If such be your attitude, then let me shed tears on you."

The two brothers - Selam and Tur then wrapped the head of Irach neatly and sent it to their father. They attached a note with it. It read: "Herein lies the unworthy head of your son that sat on the throne and wore the crown of Iran." The two then left for their capitals.

Firdausi says: "O Man! Trust not the generosity of the Time and space. The sky above you revolves not in the same manner all the time. It winds its way in a zig-zag manner. Mind well, a bow is never straight; if it were, it would not be useful in shooting an arrow. Take this zamaan as thy adversary and it shall go down its knees in front of thee. But if you beg with your hands folded to be your friend, then it shall kick thee and never turn up before you. Hark, O mortal one, pin not your faith in this world and its pomp and glory."

When Fareedun saw a huge cloud of dust soaring high up in the sky, he was overjoyed. "At last, Irach has returned," he thought. With face all beaming he stood to welcome him. But when he saw him not among the sad-faced warriors, he was filled with anxiety. The leading warrior gave him the packet that contained the severed head of Irach. Fareedun saw it and felt dizzy. Soon, he fell unconscious down on the spot where he stood.

On regaining consciousness, Fareedun became wild. He beat wildly at his chest and forehead. Then he ran about hither and thither like a mad man, bleeding and wailing loudly. It seemed that Fareedun had turned insane.

After long hours of grief, Fareedun became silent. He took the severed head of his beloved son Irach and looking at the sky, said, "O Daadgar

Daadaar, look at this head that was severed for no fault of his. His head is with me, his body is with his two wicked brothers and his soul is with you. Burn to ash the hearts of the two wicked brothers in such a manner that agony is felt till their end. Let their conscience prick in anguish so painfully that even the wildest carnivore feel pity for them. O Daadgar Daadaar! Keep me alive till I prepare a person to sit on the throne and wear the crown of Iran. He shall seek vengeance and see the heads of those wicked brothers rolling on the ground, licking dust. Send me someone who will fulfil my desire and fill my heart with joy. Let then only dust cover my mortal remains in my grave."

Some years rolled by. Fareedun led a humble life. Royal pomps and comforts were done away with. He slept on the ground and partook simple food and drink. Every now and then, he would thunder with fury over the tragic end of Irach. Even the wild and fierce animals took pity on him. Poor Fareedun!

Irach had many wives. One of them gave birth to a daughter.

Fareedun, submitting to the will of Paak Yazdaan, kept patience. The baby grew into a very lovely maiden. She was as sweet as Lalarukh (a lovely flower). Every one loved her. To Fareedun, she was the apple of his eye. She was a source of bliss to him. She was later married to Pashang, a distant relative.

In due course, Fareedun had a male heir to the Iranian Throne. He was very happy. His grand daughter had given birth to a son. But, by this time, he became blind. He took the new born in his hands and said, "Had I my eyes to see this successor to the Iranian throne I would have been more pleased."

No sooner did he wish so than he regained his sight.

Fareedun named the child Minochahar. He took personal interest in bringing up the child. He took great pains in training him in all the regal arts. Minochahar grew into a sturdy young lad.

Fareedun was awaiting anxiously to see Minochahar avenge the death of Irach. On the other hand, Selam and Tur became aware of the trends taking place in Iran. They were greatly perturbed. The news that their aged father was himself playing the pivotal role in bringing up Minochahar to seek vengeance, filled their heart and mind with horror. But, they had no other alternative. They conspired once again to kill Minochahar,

Their Fate went against them. So they chose to revise their strategy - from confrontation to that of co-operation. They ordered that a caravan of camels be loaded with diamonds and precious gems and sent as a gift to the new in-coming Iranian king. They also sent another caravan of camels loaded with silken, woollen and velvet fabrics and other goods sprinkled with sweet-scented musk. A crown of gold studded with gems was also prepared. This they did to appease Fareedun and make him forget their past heinous crime. They then selected a man well-known for his wisdom, sweet-tongued to act as their representative.

The representative on reaching the Iranian Capital delivered the message to Fareedun. It read: "Respected Father, May you live for ever. May Paalk Yazdaan, who gave you royal glory, grant you prosperity too. This is a message from your two sons who have their conscience guilty because of their wicked deed. It is rightly said that man reaps what he sows - a crop of joys and peace or a crop of sorrow and anxiety. We are at present plunged into deep grief. What was written in Destiny of our beloved brother Irach occurred. O Father! Destiny does not allow even the most ferocious lion and the most dreadful dragon go scot free from its clutches. Everyone has no choice, save bowing to it. We your wicked sons, admit that the evil Ahiriman overpowered us in committing such a heinous crime, but what was to happen of Irach at our hands happened. We were mere tools of Destiny. It is a rule of the revolving sky that it gives protection to some and a push into the pit of destruction to others. Know that Destiny willed so while we are made its scapegoats. Father, forgive our deeds and forget the past. Send Minochahar to us so that we shall ever stand before him as his bonded slaves. We

give our word to labour hard to bring him great honour and glory.”

Fareedun heard the message attentively. He said to the representative, “Tell my sons, how do they expect the clouds to hide in broad daylight? Their misdeeds are brighter than the sun itself. Tell them that their message is worth nothing but an empty talk. The words of shameless, impious men have no value and can not be relied upon. Do they truly love Minochahar or they want to give a second edition to their previous act? Tell them Minochahar shall come to them not to forgive but to fight. He shall have the Iranian crown over his head. He shall come with an army, with valiant warriors like Kaaran, Shahpur, Nastooha and many others. Sheeroo-i, Talimaan and the Shah of Yemen, Sarv, shall come to our aid too. They shall meet their doom, for they murdered my beloved Irach and thus sowed the seed of discord. Now, it's Minochahar's turn to seek vengeance. The Tree of Discord is fully grown up and shall seek extra nutrition from their blood. I could not do so all these years because of my age. Both of you believed that Irach was uprooted and Iran would be yours, but fortunately you did not uproot him before his wife was expecting his baby. Indeed, Minochahar shall come, but not with love and affection. He shall come indeed, but with the ferocity of a lion. He shall have as his guide world-famed heroes like Narimaan, Sam and the Kershaasp. The two wicked ones shall beg for mercy saying they were mere tools of Destiny and speak wisdom of the wise men of yore. Mind well, these wise men of yore have also said that he who sows seed of discord and tyranny, shall never see peace in life in the world here and in the Heaven above there. Their speech is sweet, but their heart is bitter. Both of them have incurred punishment and they shall soon receive it. Take back these gifts of theirs, as they well know I shall not allow Minochahar to accept them. He who is shameless sells away his conscience. I care not for treasure. I treasure my slain Irach more. I shall endeavour to seek vengeance as long as I live. This is my reply to the message. Take it to them.”

The representative left the court immediately. He reached Khaavar where the two broth-

ers were anxiously awaiting his arrival. He narrated his impressions and the oral message. He also gave hints to the events that were to come.

Hearing this, Tur said to Selam, “I am sure these are our last days of life. No matter Minochahar be young, but he has our father, the vanquisher of Zahhaak, as his guide. Let us prepare for the battle and slay him. This will not seem as a murder.”

Both the countries raised huge armies and prepared for the battle. Each of the warriors was as strong as an elephant. Unfortunately, though the armies were fully trained, luck was not on their side. They were hopeful of victory, being entirely unaware of the deception their Fate had in store for them.

Minochahar arrived with his army. The bugles for the battle sounded. The battle was fiercely fought. Soon the battle-ground turned into a sea of blood. At dusk time, when the sky turned grey, the armies retired for the night's rest. Selam and Tur planned for a surprise attack at midnight.

Minochahar expected such an attack. So he commanded his men to be alert. It was midnight and it was pitch dark all around. Tur led his warriors towards the Iranian camp. To his surprise, he discovered that the Iranians were alert and ready for his onslaught. Minochahar was helped by some of his warriors in recognising Tur. Minochahar roared, “You killed my grandfather - your youngest brother - in his prime of life. Now you shall be slain though in your old age; you sought vengeance on an innocent man, the skies shall now seek vengeance on the culprits.”

Hearing these words, Tur turned round. He spied Minochahar. For a moment, he stood motionless and dumb. He was disappointed at the sudden turn of the events. Quickly, Minochahar came near Tur. He raised his heavy mace and dealt a very heavy blow on Tur's head. The blow stunned Tur and sent him rolling down on the ground. Just then, without losing a single moment, Minochahar leapt on him and cut off the head of Tur.

Firdausi says, "I do not know the queer ways of the circling skies. It nourishes a new born for years and years. But when it wishes to destroy him, it does it so in a couple of seconds. O Brother, even if the skies befriend you, it will be for a short time."

The news of the death of Tur and Minochahar's victory reached the Iranian capital. Fareedun was so overjoyed that though aged he danced like a small child. At last, his thirst of vengeance was satiated.

On the other side, Selam was deeply grieved. He wept bitterly for his brother. Later, fright seized his heart and mind. He fled from the battle-ground and sought refuge in an impregnable cave of Alaan. He hoped it would be very difficult for Minochahar to capture him.

The cave fort of Alaan was very high. It was also a magical one. Its summit was always covered up by the clouds. Its base was deep down in the sea. The whole cave - fort was made of stones. In it was hidden a vast trove of priceless gems, gold and silver, over which the shadow of the huge wings of the bird, Ha-omaa could not reach. Minochahar did not wish that Selam should slip away. He summoned Kaaran to his side and told him about his suspicion.

Kaaran heard the words of Minochahar. He said, "O Shah! If you wish to seek vengeance on Selam, I am prepared to fulfil your desire. Give me an army and I shall lay siege to the fort. Be quick, we have no time left."

Hearing these words, Minochahar ordered his army to lay siege to the fort. Kaaran called Sheeroo-i and said, "I shall hide here. You take charge of the army. I have with me the ring Tur wore. I'll tell the guard of the fort that Tur has sent me before his death. When he sees the ring he will allow me to enter. When I signal, you all will enter in and attack."

Kaaran set out to gain entry into the fort. He met the guard and showed him the ring. He said, "I come from the side of Tur to guard Selam. It is likely that Minochahar shall attack this fort."

The guard saw the ring. He missed to see any deception in it. He threw open the gate. As pre-planned, the army rushed in and killed the guard and his men. The fort was captured.

Thereupon, Firdausi says, "Behold! This careless guard who made haste in trusting a stranger, without ascertaining his sincerity met with his tragic fate. A fort was lost for his negligence.

Minochahar heard of the fall of the fort. During this time it so happened that Minochahar and his men were attacked by Kaaku, a wicked demon of the Dezhukht gang. He was a descendant of Zakhaak. Many Iranians were slain.

Minochahar was prepared to fight this demon, Salem too heard of the attack by Kaaku and joined him. Kaaran too got the news of the attack and rushed to aid the Iranians.

The battle waged. Huge clouds of dust surged upwards in the sky. The shrill and screeching battle-cries and the dreary neighs of the battle steeds seemed to toll the death-knells of the slain warriors. It was a ghastly sight to see the dying warriors groaning in pain.

Kaaku attacked Minochahar. They fought for some time. As Fate was on the side of Minochahar, Kaaku made a mistake by going too near the Iranian leader. Minochahar held him by his waist girdle, lifted him and dashed him to the ground. He pulled out his dagger and tore open Kaaku's chest.

Seeing Kaaku dead, Salem lost all hopes of capturing Iran. He began to flee back to the Fort of Alaan. But Minochahar was quick. He cut Salem into two. He ordered his men to pick up Salem's head. Salem's men saw his fate and fled. They begged for mercy.

Minochahar sent a message of victory to Fareedun. He gave Salem's head too. He summoned Sheeroo-i to his side and directed him to collect all the valuable goods strewn on the ground.

Fareedun heard of the homeward journey of triumphant Minochahar. He went along with his
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courtiers to give his great grand-son a hero's welcome.

Minochahar saw Fareedun and was greatly elated. He dismounted from his steed, kissed the feet of his great-grand-father and paid his respect. Fareedun then led Minochahar into the royal court and bade him sit on the throne. He then sent a message to Sam-e-Narimaan to come to Iran as soon as possible.

Sam arrived. He met Fareedun. "O my mighty hero"! Fareedun exclaimed in joy. "My days are numbered. The wheel of my life is about its last revolutions. Behold! O Sam! I am stooping double with age. I desire to entrust my Minochahar to you. Aid and guide him in his hour of need in a

manner that shall bring him honour, name and fame."

Fareedun looked at the sky and continued "O Paak Yazdaan! My days are done. I lived my life as you intended me to live. Now you can call me back to you."

Fareedun then murmured in grief, "The death of all my three sons gives me terrible pain in my last days. My days have grown as dark as a moonless night! Ah! Ah! Envy and jealousy always bring violence and sufferings."

Just then, Sheeroo-i arrived with the valuable things collected from the battleground.

(To be Continued)

FIRDAUSI'S SHAHNAAMAH : BEHZAAD

The Reign of Minochahar :

Shah Fareedun was too feeble to rule. He was also broken-hearted. He wished to abdicate in favour of his grand-child, Minochahar.

A pompous coronation ceremony was held. Minochahar was made to sit on a magnificently adorned throne. Fareedun himself placed a glittering, gem-studded crown on his head. He blessed Minochahar and declared him as the new monarch of Iran.

Fareedun did not live long thereafter. A grand mausoleum was erected in his memory. It was made of gold and stones of azure colour.

Minochahar began his rule over Iran, and he ruled for 120 years. Every one was pleased with his rule. Throughout his reign, he worked for the propagation of the Good Mazdayasni Deen, virtue and piety. In the Coronation Message to his people, he declared :

"I compare myself to the revolving skies bringing you whatever you are fit for. Like these skies, I may bring violence and turbulence in life and like them, I can bring joy and happiness in your life too. I can be oppressive at times and just, merciful and compassionate at other times. In short, I can be malevolent as well as benevolent too. This land below

my feet is my slave; the sky above me is my friend. I may seek vengeance but I can offer gratitude too. Mind well that I care not of myself when I do these two. I am the lord of the sword. In times of peace, my hands shall spread out like the open sea; during battle, my breath shall be as fiery as the fire. I shall be a vanquisher of the wicked and I shall adorn the earth with a red carpet out of their blood. I am your sovereign, the master of the mace and crown of Iran. I occupy the throne to spread goodness and charity and to usher in peace and virtue on earth. I am a worshipper of Paak Yazdaan and am proud to serve Him. I shall pursue the ways of our departed king, Shah Fareedun -- though he is an old ruler and I am new. Through him, I donned the royal robes and got the royal mace and crown. I wish his guidance all through my life. He who moves aimlessly in life goes astray. He misses the path of religion, causes affliction to others and brings grief to himself in the end. He who is arrogant is a heathen. He is worse than the evil Ahiriman. Be he cursed by me and others".

Hearing the speech of their ruler, the people rejoiced. Saam, the Zaabuli hero, stood up and said "O Shah! I am happy to see you following in the foot steps of your forefathers. You are the rightful monarch of Iran.

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nation that gave refuge to us over 1000 years ago as we landed on the beach of Diu with that great Dastooran Dastoor Neryosang Dhal. May we thus serve India for the use of its land and resources through which we have become what we are. May we each live up to that high name of PARSEES!

Atha Jamyat, yatna Afrinami!

May it be so, as I have prayed for!

AMEN!!!

* * * *

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May your heart be ever full of joy. May your heart delight in glory. You are without any doubt the person who remind me of my past with your past rulers. On the battleground, may you be as fierce as a lion; in the assembly, may you be as dazzling as the Sun. May Time and Space be like the dust under your feet. May this azure-coloured ivory throne be ever yours. I and my Zaabuli warriors be with thee. My ancestors from Kereshaasp to Narimaan were all friends of Iran. They fought for Iran. I shall do the same. I will go round the world and slay as many of your adversaries as possible".

Shah Minochahar blessed Saam. He gave him much treasure and an army.

The Coming of Zaal

Saam had no sons although he was married for some years. he had a wife whose beauty was praised by all who happened to see her. Her face was as fresh as a just bloomed rose. Her hair were as soft as velvet. She was very tender and sweet.

As Destiny would have it, she became pregnant. When she delivered her babe, it happened to be a male. For one full week; Saam was not informed of the birth of a son. Everyone was in deep grief. The child had one defect in him. He had white hair. The women in the harem nicknamed him as "an old one".

But, how long could Saam be kept in the dark? At last, one of the maid plucked up courage and opened up the secret to him. She bowed before him and said :

"O hero, the Creator is merciful to you for your long cherished dream is fulfilled. He has given you a son whose body is as fair as a fresh lily. His face shines like the light of the Heaven".

Saam danced with joy.

"But", so saying she paused for some time to mark his mood and then continued, "but he has one defect. His hair are as white as those of an old man. My lord, if it was so destined, do not be disappointed. One can not go against Destiny. Accept your son with love and joy."

(To be continued)

FIRDAUSI'S SHAHNAAMAH : BEHZAAD

(Continued from last issue)

Saam hurried towards the harem. He saw his new born babe. He feared he would become the target of mockery and fun because of his son. He raised his eyes towards the sky and murmured, "O Yazdaan! O Creator of the Universe! If ever I sinned I repent for it truthfully. After years of anguish you gave me a beautiful child whose eyes are as black as a raven and body as fair as lily. But, ah, but hair" Saam sighed deeply. He could not speak further.

Saam sat still -- gaping aghast. Slowly, shame gave way to wrath. He ordered that the babe be taken out of the harem and abandoned on the Mt. Alburz. He also decided to leave Iran and have no truck with the country everafter.

Alburz is the highest mountain of Iran. On this mountain, there was a nest of a strange bird called "Seemorg". It was not known to any one. As Fate would have it, the new babe was left on the top of this mountain.

How cruel! A new born babe was forsaken just because of his white hair. How cruel! Saam showed no pity for his painfully moaning wife. The poor babe was left there unprotected from the heat of the day and the cold of the night. A rough stony surface became his cradle. He was laid all bare. His lips were as dry

as the parched ground. Poor babe! He lay helpless, struggling for some nourishment.

It happened that the "Seemorg" spied him. She swooped down and carried him to her nest. She tried to peck, intending to eat him. But, she did not, for she could not. The Merciful Almighty took him under His shelter. When the bird was about to tear the babe apart with his claws, a voice from the blue was heard as saying, "Oh, merciful bird! Do not eat. It is not your food. Nourish him, instead. See, how he comes from a long line of Zaabuli heros and an equally long line of heros shall sprout out from him. He is sent to you. See what new events await him and his times."

Mother seemorg looked her nestlings. Tears dropped from her eyes. Her heart was filled with pity at the misfortune of the unprotected bare babe. She brought some juicy food and put it in his mouth. The hungry babe jabbed the delightfully at it and sucked the juice. This was how the Seemorg nourished him. Days, weeks, months and years rolled by. The nameless boy grew up to be a very handsome but white-haired boy.

* * * *

Who build a Church to God,
and not to fame,
Will never mark the marble
with his name.

FIRDAUSI'S SHAAHNAAMAH : Behzaad

SAAM'S DREAM

Many yers later, one mid-night, Saam had a dream. He saw a strange messenger mounted on a swift-footed steed was rushing towards him. He came from the East and seemed to be an Indian. The messenger informed him about his son whom he had abandoned years ago.

Saam woke up with a fright. Fatherly love seemed to swell in his heart. He consulted some pious Mobeds and related to them his dream. He asked them to reveal all that the dream indicated. The Mobeds promised to help him.

The Mobeds, after hearing the narration, retired in an inner chamber for discussion. After a long time, they came back. The Chief Mobed said, "O mighty-one! It was wrong of you to disregard and disapprove a gift granted to you by Paak Yazdaan -- just for the sake of his white hair. You were no doubt disappointed, but you committed a crime by abandoning him. Mind well, Saam, who is not content with the gift from Yazdaan is an ungrateful, ignorant man for he does not understand the mystry in His gift. Set out at this very moment in search of your son."

Some days later, Saam retired to bed early as he was feeling very tired and sleepy. Once again,

he had a dream. He saw a slave who carried a flag in his hand coming towards him from the East. Behind him was a big army. On his left was a pious Mobed and on his right was a man of great wisdom. One of these two came near to him and was reprimanding him. He said to him, "O thoughtless and ignorant Saam! Do you not have any fear even of Mazda? If you think white hair to be a defect then what have you to say of your hair? Come on, curse your Creator for your hair turning white. You abandoned your tender new-born babe and showed no pity; but, Paak Yazdaan reared him up. Truly no one could be more kind and merciful than the Lord, Our Creator."

Saam awoke and felt restless. He related his dream to one and all around him. They all implored him to forget the white hair and search for his son.

Saam set out towards the Mt. Alburz where he had commanded his men to abandon his son. He soon found the nest of the Seemorg but found no trace of his son. After some long hours of anguish and disappointment, he sat down to rest. The search went on for many days. His men gave him encouragement and pleaded not to lose hope.

One day, Saam and his men saw a robust and sturdy lad loitering

about on the top of the mountain. Saam was overjoyed. He cried out, "O Daadgar Daadar! Help me to reach the top in safety. Forgive me my sins. Shower Your Mercy on me. Help me to get to my son."

No sooner did he complete his entreaties than the Seemorg came out of her nest. She saw Saam preparing for the ascent. She called out and said to the son of Saam, "O human being! I reared you all these years in my nest. I was your protector. I gave you the name of "Dastaane-Zand" because you are the son of a crafty father. Your father, Saam, is a mighty Zaabuli hero. He has come to take you. Come, I'll lift you up in my beak and give you to him. He shall not be able to come up for no human one has. Tell your father to call you by the name of "Dastaane-Zand" only."

Dastaane-Zand hesitated for a moment. He did not wish to leave the Mother Seemorg. He, moreover, liked the life on the mountain. Seemorg pleaded to him to go for better days were lying in store for him. She then plucked out a big feather from her wing and gave it to him. She said, "Keep this feather of mine with you always. Keep it near to you. Whenever trouble visits you, kindle a fire and burn a part of it. Soon, I shall be before you to help". So saying, she lifted "Dastaane-Zand" in her beak and swooped down. The two stood before Saam.

Saam saw the lad and his joy knew no bounds. He thanked the Seemorg for rearing his son. He scanned his son thoroughly from head to foot. He discovered that his son was really suited to succeed him as the hero of Zaabulistan.

Saam named his son, Zaal, meaning "aged one".

Zaal had grown up to be a handsome lad. His shoulders were round and chest as broad as a Vast plain. His arms were as strong as the paws of the lion. His face was of rosy tint and sparkled like the sun. His eyes were as black as a raven and lips as red as rubies. But, he looked at his head and sighed. His white hair was the only one physical blemish that spoilt his appearance. He had white hair on his head, eye-brows, eye-lids and his limbs.

Bliss filled the heart of Saam. He thanked Paak Yazdaan a million times to give him such an offspring.

"Son, my son, come with me", said Saam at last. "Please, forget the past : prepare for the future. I being a true Yazdaan-parast (Mazda worshipper) solemnly pledge not to cause you any harm in future. I shall grant all your wishes." Saam and Zaal prepared for their homeward journey.

FIRDAUSI'S SHAHNAAMAH : BEHZAAD

MINOCHAHAR MEETS ZAAL

The news of the home-coming of Zaal with his father spread far and wide. Shah Minochahar and all the Iranians were happy to take him in their fold. Minochahar had two sons named Naodar and Zarasp. On the battlefield these two princes were as swift as Aazar Gushasp (the fire of lightning). He ordered Prince Naodar to bring Saam-e-Narimaan and his son, Zaal to the palace.

Prince Naodar set out immediately along with some warriors. When they met Saam and Zaal, Prince Naodar bowed to pay respect to Saam. Then he quickly went to Zaal and hugged him. Saam, inquired about the Shah and Iran as he had left Iran for many years in anger. He never visited Iran or cared for the Iranians after the birth of Zaal. He regretted his wrath. As he stepped into the Iranian territory, he dismounted from his horse. He knelt down, to kiss the ground.

Minochahar and his courtiers went to welcome the Zaabuli hero and his son. All rejoiced to see Saam amongst them. Saam knelt down and kissed Minochahar's feet. Minochahar then led them into the palace.

Shah Minochahar presented Zaal with a mace and a helmet. The entire court looked at him in awe and wonder. They whispered amongst themselves all about his appearance and compared

him with his father, Saam and his grandfather, Narimaan.

"Keep Zaal under care, Saam," said Shah Minochahar. Do no wrong to him any further. Train him in the art of battle and also in the art of civilities. You and your ancestors are famous for these two arts. All these years, he has been with the Seemorg and therefore knows nothing of human behaviour. To him only the birds, nests and mountain mattered all these years. How can we expect him to win glory in battles?

Astrologers Read Zaal's Destiny

Shah Minochahar summoned the holy Mobeds of his court and asked them to read the future of Zaal. Some days later, the holy seers prepared the horoscope of Zaal. They applied both their heart and soul to it.

"O Shah," the chief Mobed declared, "Zaal is a fortunate lad. He will be a mighty hero-mightier than his father Saam. He shall win fame and name whenever and wherever he goes. He shall be braver than the fiercest animals of the jungle."

Minochahar heard this and was very pleased. The whole court rejoiced at the prophecy. Saam was the happiest

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soul among all. The Shah then called Zaal to his side. He biesed Zaal and gave him good advice. He gave him many precious gifts, such as an Arab horse with a gold bridle, a gold scabbard with an Indian sword, silk and woollen clothes, precious gems, gold, silver, carpets, azure-coloured cups, saucers dishes, musk, saffron and camphor.

In Zaabulistan, Zaal was trained under the guidance of pious Mobeds, valiant warriors and wise counsellors. He worked hard the whole day to become a worthy descendent of his ancestors. Everyone was pleased with his progress.

(To be concluded)

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