

*Dastan-e Amir Hamza Sahibqiran**

The Beginning of the History

IT is related by the elegant news-writers of yore, the sweet-lipped historians, revivers of old tales and renewers of past legends, that there ruled at Ctesiphon* in Persia (image of Heaven!) Emperor Qubad Kamran. He was a cherisher of his subjects, and unsurpassed in dispensing justice; in this particular he was so rigorous that the best justice would appear an injustice compared to his decree. Weal and prosperity thrived in his dominions and wrong and inequity slumbered in death: and *rara avis**-like, mendicants and destitute were not seen there either. The philanthropists were at a loss to find an object of their charity. The weak and the powerful were equals, and like the two wings of a sparrow nested similarly. The young and the old sought each other's pleasure, neither ever deeming himself a benefactor. The portals of houses remained open day and night, as did the eyes of the vigil. If someone did as much as steal the color of henna from the palm of a hand,¹ he was ground in the mill of justice. The thief therefore would not even dream of thieving, and perchance a traveler came upon someone's property on the road, took it upon himself to restore it to its owner. Before Qubad Kamran's fearlessness, might and valor, Rustam* was the same as a hag most decrepit and cowardly. This imperious monarch had forty viziers, so learned, wise and prudent that in comparison seven hundred Platos and Aristotles would be like so many abecedarians. All these viziers were peerless in intellect and understanding, and so accomplished in Physics, Geometry, Astrology, Ramal* and Jafr,* that they did not consider the likes of Galen and Pythagoras and Euclid fit company for themselves, let alone their equals. The Emperor had seven hundred privy counselors, each more adept than ancient masters in Arts and Letters and in the decorum of Assembly. And at the Emperor's command were four thousand champion warriors, to

whom Sam* and Nariman* and Rustam and Zal* would alike present the sword of humility in combat, and accept from their hands the badge of slavery. Three hundred sovereigns who reigned over vast tracts paid tribute to Emperor Qubad Kamran, and bowed their heads of vassalage and obeisance before him. And ten lakh mounted warriors, fierce and valiant, and forty troops of slaves, clad in gold and finery, waited deft and adroit upon the Emperor at his court (the envy of Heaven, the adornment of Paradise!).

In the same city there also resided a savant by the name of Khvaja Bakht Jamal, who traced his lineage to Prophet Daniel (God's favors and mercies be upon his soul!). He was unrivaled in learning and wisdom, and in the sciences of Ramal and Astrology and Jafr, and was truly a successor beyond compare of the ancient philosophers. Malik Alqash, the Emperor's vizier, who had often profited from the advice of this sage, offered himself as a pupil to Khvaja Bakht Jamal, and became so attached and devoted to him that he would not hear of parting even for a moment from his master. Before long, Alqash too, became an adept at Ramal. His fame spread far and wide, and he proved himself such a consummate practitioner of the art, that he was deservedly labeled Khvaja's distinguished disciple, second only to his master.

One day Alqash said to Khvaja: "The other night I was sitting idle when I decided to draw lots in your name. Reading the pattern I discovered that your star was in the descendent, and some vicissitude of fortune would befall you. The star shall remain in the same house for forty days. During this time it would not augur well to step out of the house, or to trust a soul. Even I must suffer this separation, and not see you!"

As per Alqash's advice, Khvaja affected seclusion and shut himself out from the world, declining to receive all visitors and friends. Of the foretold days of ill-boding, thirty-nine had passed without mishap, when on the fortieth day, Khvaja felt wretched shut inside his house, and taking his staff, set out to see Alqash, to bring his truly faithful and affectionate friend the news of his health and welfare.

Perchance, instead of the thoroughfare, he followed a deserted road, and came upon the riverside. As it was summer he sat under the shade of a tree to take refuge from the burning sun. Sitting there his eyes suddenly beheld a majestic building, save for its fore-walls that had fallen to ruin. Out of curiosity he walked toward it and found also in decay most apartments that were within, and the vestibules lying waste, but for one—like a lover's heart standing desolate and in disarray—that had survived ravage. In that vestibule there was an antechamber whose door was

covered with bricks. Removing the bricks he found to his right a door with a padlock. Khvaja thought of forcing it with a brick or stone, but when he held the padlock in his hand, it came open of itself and fell to the floor. Stepping inside Khvaja discovered a cellar. There he found buried Haft-Ganj, Shaddad's* seven boundless hordes of gold and jewels. At the sight of such immense wealth Khvaja was seized by fright, and without as much as touching a thing, he traced his steps out of the cellar, and hastened to Alqash's house to give him the propitious tidings.

Alqash's face brightened up at the sight of Khvaja. He made room for him on his throne, and after expressing joy at seeing his friend, said: "Today was the fortieth day. Why did you take the trouble and inconvenience yourself? Come tomorrow I had intended to present myself at your door, to receive wholesome bliss from the grace of your genial company." After making some small talk Khvaja broached Haft-Ganj with Alqash, and recounted of the windfall, saying: "Though I was blessed in my stars to have come upon such an untold fortune, however, it was found on Emperor's property, and humble me, I could not lay claim to it, nor is it indeed my station! I resolved in my heart that you being the Emperor's vizier, and a patron and friend to me, I shall inform you of this find. Then, if you saw it in the fitness of things to confer a little something upon your humble servant, then that bit only would I consider, like my mother's suck, warranted and rightful!" Alqash was beside himself with joy when he heard of Haft-Ganj, and ordered two horses to be saddled forthwith; then himself mounting one, and Khvaja the other, they galloped off in the direction of the wasteland. By and by they arrived at their destination. Alqash became greatly agitated and ecstatic the moment he set eyes on Haft-Ganj, and so violent indeed were his raptures of delight on the occasion, that he was almost carried away from this world. While murmuring gratitude to his Creator for bestowing that windfall on him, the thought suddenly flashed across Alqash's mind that Khvaja Bakht Jamal was privy to that secret, and all what had come about. Alqash reasoned that if some day Khvaja Bakht Jamal chose to betray him to the Emperor in order to gain influence at the court, he would find himself in a sorry plight. That would indeed put his life in great peril, and not only would he have to wash his hands of this God-conferred bounty, the Emperor might depose him, declaring him a peculator. It would be small wonder then, if the contents of his house were reft away, and it were razed; he himself would be thrown into the dungeon; and his family would be exposed to humiliation and ruin, with all vestiges of his honorable name forever erased from the face of the earth. It is by far the lesser

evil, Alqash thought, to kill Khvaja right there, and then lay claim to the entire treasure without the least anxiety that it would some day come to light, or that someone might one day reveal the secret. So decided, he immediately bore down upon Khvaja and put the dagger to his throat. Confounded by this turn of events, Khvaja cried out: "What has gotten into your head, Alqash? Does a good deed deserve evil? Is that how a favor is returned? What injury have I done you that you resolve to get even with me thus?" And much did the poor man groan in the same vein, and seek compassion, but to no avail. The heart of that villain did not soften, and his compassion remained unstirred. When the powerless man saw that there was no escape from the clutches of that blackguard, and that it was only a matter of a few breaths before the candle of his life was snuffed out by those hands, he entreated in despair:

"Advertise well how I was laid low by your
hand
That no one shall consider being faithful
again

"O Alqash! I see that you are bent upon my murder, and on dyeing in my innocent blood your villainous hands, but if you could find it in your heart to act upon my last words, I would yet die in your debt." That ungrateful wretch shouted: "Make haste! For the cup of your life is now brimful, and the thirst of the inclement dagger is ordained to be quenched in your blood!" The poor man spoke:

"Such was my lot that friend proves a foe
And the guide waylays me on the trail
—Şābir Bilgrāmī

"There is hardly any money in my house to last my family beyond tomorrow, and even less food. I would for God that you send them enough to enable them to survive. And communicate to my wife, who is expecting, that if the child is born a boy, to name him Buzurjmehr, and if a girl is born, to follow her own counsel." Saying thus he closed his eyes, and began reciting the kalima, seeking divine absolution, as he was dying innocent. Whereupon that heartless villain cut off Khvaja's head with the unrelenting dagger, destroyed his horse too, and in the same vault where were buried the treasures, interred the two.

Then closing the door as before, Alqash went to the river to cleanse the blood from his hands and the dagger, and wash his hands, too, of his faith that he had forfeited for short-lived riches. After that he rode away

to his house, glad in his heart, and thrilled. The day after, he came back to the house with his retinue, and after surveying it, ordered the prefect to have a garden built for him on the site. He commanded that it be bounded by walls of marble; and the vestibule blocked in by erecting a chamber of turquoise over it, where he would give audience; and to have that heavenly abode furnished with rarities and wondrous curiosities. No sooner was the order given than the prefect sent for masons, laborers and sculptors, and began the construction. In a matter of days, the garden, the marble walls and the turquoise chamber were all ready. It greatly charmed Alqash who named it Bagh-e Bedad.

Then he called at Khvaja Bakht Jamal's house, and informing Khvaja's family that he had sent him off to China for trade, and that he shall soon return from there after turning a profit, he communicated Khvaja's wishes. He offered consolation and words of comfort to the family, and bestowed on them a rich purse, mentioning that more would be available upon need, and not to have any fears of adversity. Then Alqash returned home with the grim truth buried in his heart.

My life passed as passeth the desert wind
Alike with bitterness and joy, coarseness
and beauty
The wrong the tyrant feign inflict on me
Passeth over me, and turns upon himself

Of Buzurjmehr's Birth, and of the Contents of the Book Becoming Conspicuous

The singing reed of the learned in bygone tales, and the fluent quill of claimants to past knowledge, thus luxuriously modulate their song, and in a thousand voices thus delightfully trill their notes, that by the grace of God Almighty (Maker of this World and the Hereafter!), that auspicious day arrived when the gestation being over, at an august hour on a Friday, a boy of lofty fortune was born to Khvaja Bakht Jamal's wife.

A sol today lifts the gloom from my life
And stirs fortune with its resplendence
—Nāsikh

At first his mother shed many a tear at her lonesomeness, thinking of Khvaja. Then she doted on the comely aspect of the newborn, and offered

her thanks to the Progenitor. Remembering Khvaja's wish, she named him Buzurjmehr, and in her care the child began to thrive. A clement God safeguarded him from all evil, and the Insuperable Artist endowed him with such perfect beauty, that before him the paragons of beauty hid their faces in shame. His stately forehead bespoke nobility, and his princely face shone with the light of eminence. When Buzurjmehr was five years of age, he was taken to a preceptor who gave tuition to neighborhood children, and was also a former pupil of Khvaja Bakht Jamal. He was asked to earn acclaim and repay Khvaja's debt by imparting knowledge to his son. The man very gladly accepted the charge, and put all his heart into educating Buzurjmehr.

A propitious year's augur is in its spring

It was Buzurjmehr's routine to spend the whole day at his teacher's side, learning reading and writing skills, and to return home, when a few hours remained before the close of day, and partake of whatever his mother had provided for him with her labors. It so happened one day that there was nothing to eat. Buzurjmehr said to his mother: "Mother, I am perishing with hunger. If you could spare something, I would sell it in the market to buy some food." His mother replied: "Son, your father left us nothing that could be sold for food and drink. But on the niche there lies an ancient book,² belonging to my father, that was written long ago. Many a time, when your father was in need of money, he resolved to sell it. But every time he reached for it, a black serpent would dart out hissing from the niche, and your father would turn back in fright. See if you could fetch it and sell it off. Besides this, I have nothing to offer you, or to sell in time to buy food." Buzurjmehr went and fetched the book as his mother had bid, and did not find the serpent there. As he turned a few pages and read them, he at first began to wail loudly, and cried copious tears like a cloud of spring-quarter; then, having read a little further, he burst into riotous laughter. His pallid face that before was the envy of the taper's amber glow, now became the scarlet honor of the ruby from his raptures of joy. Those present were greatly astonished, and marveled at what might have caused such a reversal of humor. His mother suspecting a fit of lunacy, beseeched some to send for a bleeder to bleed him, and others to get an amulet to put around his neck, wailing all the while that he was her only son, and that if he were seized by madness, she would have no support in her adversity. Buzurjmehr, noticing his mother's agitation, comforted her and said: "Do not give yourself to grief, mother, and stop worrying in your heart. God willing the days of affliction shall

soon end, and for all our suffering we shall be more than compensated. I see our slumbering fortunes stirring, our well-wishers rejoicing, and our enemies coming to humiliation and grief.”

“Pass the wine! O cupbearer, ’tis the morn
of the fest
Delay not the rounds until the sun sets
—Nāsikh

“His bounty does not long demur
The hopeful must not show despair
—Mīr Ḥasan

“Suffice it to say that I have neither become deluded, nor taken with delirium. The reason I cried and laughed was that reading this book I became aware of all that has gone before, and all that shall come to pass. I cried when I discovered that my innocent father was murdered by vizier Alqash, and his corpse still lies on the floor, awaiting last rites. And I laughed upon finding out I will avenge my father’s blood, and shall become the Emperor’s vizier. Vex yourself no further about food! We have plenty for ourselves, and for ten others besides.”

Speaking thus, Buzurjmehr took a handmaiden to the corn-chandler’s, and asked him to daily weigh out so much in victuals, and butter, and sugar, as she might ask for, without bothering her about the payment. The corn-chandler asked: “And when shall I be paid? Or do you expect to be let off free?” Buzurjmehr said: “Do you ask payment of me? Perhaps you have forgotten the farmer Chand, from whom you bought several thousand maunds of wheat, and then poisoned him, along with his four sons, to avoid the payment for the grain. How about my revealing it before the justice of law? Would that satisfy you, and be payment enough?” Hearing this the corn-chandler became cataleptic with fright, and throwing his turban at Buzurjmehr’s feet, pleaded in a trembling voice: “My son, forgive my inopportune remarks. This shop is at your disposal. Whatever you shall desire will be sent, but for God’s sake keep this secret to yourself.”

From there Buzurjmehr took the servant girl to the butcher’s shop, and asked him to daily apportion one maund of Tabrizi meat to her. The butcher asked: “And when shall I be recompensed, and the account settled?” Buzurjmehr said: “Remember Qaus the shepherd, from whom you received several thousand heads of sheep, and when it was time for his settlement, slaughtered and buried him in your shop’s cellar, appro-

priating thousands upon thousands of rupees? Would you that I send his heirs to the court of justice, and show you how his blood calls out? Have you taken leave of your senses that you demand payment for the viand of me?" Upon hearing that, the meat dealer began to tremble like a cow at the sight of a butcher, and throwing himself violently at Buzurjmehr's feet declared: "Viand, why, my very life be a ransom to your life! Full as much as your honor's girl shall desire, shall be weighed out to her, and never even in my dreams would I desire compensation. But, pray, safeguard my life and honor, and keep your lips sealed!"

Buzurjmehr dealt with the jeweler similarly, unnerving him by telling him of his past heinous deeds, and settling at his expense a daily stipend of five dinars upon himself. Then he returned home and bided his time in happy anticipation. Friends thronged him, and he indulged himself in all sorts of pleasant amusements, beginning a new life, in great luxury and comfort.

All signs of miseries fade away before God's
bounty

Of the Emperor's Visit to Alqash's Bagh-e Bedad, and of the Festivities Held in that Heavenly Abode

The landscapists of annals, and songsters of the nursery of articulation, thus plant words row after row; and in this wise embellish the white paper with flowers and colorful contents, making it the envy of Mani's* art, that when Bagh-e Bedad was ready, and the form of Shaddad's Heaven³ realized, the euphoric Alqash, in his giddiness, forgot all cares of this world and the next. Enthralled and enchanted at the sight, he gloated over it no end, and one day submitted to the Emperor: "With Your Highness's blessings and continued patronage, your slave has built a garden, grown with multitudinous flowers and fruit trees. A host of rare plants has been collected at great expense, and choice landscapists, past masters of the art, have been employed to dress it. With such industry have they adorned the grounds with flowers and shrubs, that Mani and Behzad* would be ashamed of their skill. But none of it brings any joy to your chattel, for whom it shall remain a figure of autumn, until Your Eminence, Shadow and Vicegerent of God, sets his blessed foot there."

Trodden under your foot, the verdure

becomes greener
 The tree whose shade you patronize, deems
 itself exalted

—Nāsikh

“I am desirous that Your Excellency, Emperor of the World, Naushervan^{4*} of the Age, in the way of diversion, crown it with your presence, and with your condescension raise the prestige of this ancestral vassal to high heavens. Then shall the garden taste of spring, and every bud and flower sprout in majestic splendor. And should Your Highness condescend to partake of a fruit or two, this slave’s prayers will be granted, and his tree of hope bear desire’s fruit.” The Emperor consented, granting Alqash his request. Gratified, Alqash bowed low and departed after making his offering to busy himself with preparations for the feast.

Before long, everything needed for the feast was provided. An array of delicacies was ordered from the kitchen. Trays laden with fruits of all kind were set on tables. Dancers and songsters were sent for. Pyrotechnicians determined when to set off fireworks. Lighting arrangements were made. Thousands of lamps were hung from the walls. Chandeliers and gaseliers and arrases were dusted. Waxen and camphorated candles were lit. And presently there arrived, Exalted as Heavens, Bright as Sun, Most Just and Clement, His Imperial Majesty, in the retinue of his nobles and viziers, to augment the beauty of Bagh-e Bedad with his presence.

At long last Alqash’s prayers were answered. He had had constructed for the Emperor a boreal throne of much extravagance that was encased with diamonds and rubies, in the shapes of flowers and leaves. And there were installed four emerald peacocks in its four corners; and in the cavities of the peacocks incense burned in jewel-encrusted cassolettes; and on either side of each bird were suspended floating pots of narcissi, set with gold and precious stones, the leaves fashioned of emerald, and flowers of diamonds, and pollen from sparks of topaz—an art to rival the Incomparable God’s Nature itself.

At the approach of the royal procession, the lookouts posted by Alqash brought the intelligence, and the Emperor’s arrival was blazoned forth:

As the Shadow of God approached the
 Garden
 The blossoms in ecstasy bloomed out of
 scope

—Şābir

Alqash, escorted by his sons and aides-de-camp, came out with the throne to welcome his sovereign lord. By his side were forty elephants clad in sheets of brocade, and fitted out with bejeweled howdahs and litters worked with gold-inlay. From the necks of the behemoths hung gold and silver carcanets, and talismanic signs. Their foreheads were covered in armor: their tusks sheathed in scabbards of tinged silver, and their trunks in gold-tissue. The elephant drivers were all furnished with diamond-inlaid goads. They sported Banarasi turbans of crushed silk, and wore brocade robes with cummerbunds of brocaded silk around their waists. The ostlers walked alongside them, wielding studded staffs and spears, and wearing drawers of figured-silk brocade and embroidered doublets. They were dressed in Banarasi garters, with millinery of figured-silk brocade wrapped around their heads.

They were crowded by a host of pikemen on three sides, riding, prancing, galloping, and displaying their prowess on amblers. Besides them were two hundred steeds, Tazi, Iraqi, Arabian, European, Kathiawar, Kachchhi, Jokoshia, Bhumra, Thalay, Turkish, Tartar, Najdi, Cape Vella, Mujannas, Dahunay; and a hundred and twenty-five Gallo-way, Rangpur, Pegva, Syrian, Rangoonese, Tibetan, Javanese, Bukhara, Banol, Terhi, and Kusgi. All were nimble-footed, fast as wind, and of a zephyric nature. Fairy-faced, demon-spirited, their gait outpaced thought, and their hooves barely touched the ground. Their manes were pared and cropped, and washed with lavender. They were fitted out with golden saddles and covered with embroidered saddle-cloths. They pranced about bobbing their plumes, sporting chamfrons, crinets, cruppers of leather covered with velvet and small metal bosses, peytrals, tassels, golden charms, richly decorated flywhisks, and wore jewel-studded flanchards over gold thread nets covering their stifles. They had gold rattles around their fetlocks, and woolen martingales tied to their withers with surcingles of silk.

There were two equerries for each bridle who led the horse from halters woven of gold thread. The grooms wore golden bracelets, and silken cords with fringe round their heads. They were dressed in drawers of Gujerati mashru, jerkins of broadcloth, and all the while keeping watch on the animals, they whisked right and left, and fore and aft, with massive fly-flaps, of which each strand was strung with pearls, and the handles were worked in gold-inlay.

Then followed several thousand bridled camels: Arabian, Baghdadi, Bacterian, Marwari, Jaipuri, and Bikaneri, clad in embroidered purpet and brocade sheets, and fitted out with studded panniers. Their muzzles

were caparisoned with gold and silver plumes, and they had cavessons of silk and galloon in their noses. Every camel-rider was dressed to make himself conspicuous, and every she-camel strutted about with an ostentatious air. Never once looking to the ground, she held her nose in the air in lofty spirits, and every so often couched her head in the rider's lap with utmost affection and pride.

Then followed several thousand golden and silver salvers carried by slaves, heaped with rubies, garnets, diamonds, emeralds, topazes, sapphires, chrysolites, star-rubies, corals, turquoises, and such-like, lustrous, costly, and inestimable jewels and accessories.

They were followed by many thousand platters laden with miscellaneous accoutrements and blades: Khorasani, Isfahani, Qazwini, Portuguese, Gujerati, Alamani, Maghrebi, Junubi, Egyptian, Farrukh Begi, tirah, sirohi, kaj-bhuj; and chhuri, karauli, peshqabz, bichhva, bank, katar, dashnah, qama and bihbudi; besides, European percussion-lock, flint-lock, match-lock, pellet-gun, and single, double- and seven-barrelled musketoons in holsters of woven silk. (Avaunt malicious glances, and the likes, etc.!))

Then were brought thousands of bolts of brocade, Damask silk, chanaboot, mashru and gulbadan. Delicate and elegant kerchiefs, double-breadth mantles, turban clothes, Gujerati, jamdani, kamdani, mahmoudi, chandeli, shabnam, chaqan, tar-shumar, tar-andam, muslin, gach, neno, nen-sukh, tanzeb, etc. And for winter raiments were pairs of shawls, kerchiefs, palms, neckerchiefs, jamawar, pectorals, long gowns, quilted cloaks, kalicha, cloaks and long coats, all decorously presented in excellent taste over silver trays and salvers.

Alqash went to the house-front, at the head of this train of effects, to make his offering, and then holding a post of the royal-litter, escorted the Emperor into the garden.

When he entered that heavenly sphere the Emperor found the garden an indulging display, and a resort most sublime and sumptuous.

The gate to the garden was most elegantly and laudably worked, with its sill and lintel made of sandalwood, and its portals of ebony riveted with silver and steel ingots, making it impregnable. There was jewel-encrusted lettering on the crevices of the marble enclosure. Trees with branches and leaves of emerald, and flowers of pearls and rubies, grew from the walls. In their branches were perched nightingales, parrots, mynahs, turtledoves, ringdoves, lals, quails, sina-baz, doves, green pigeons, and black cuckoos, made of turquoise, emerald, sapphire and rubies. The lower part of the walls were taken by bamboo-frameworks, on

which vines of emerald laden with clusters of real fruit were trained. The clusters were enclosed in thousand-rupee purses made of variegated silken brocade and gold foil, each more precious than the other, and hung from the vine by silken strings and lace. The landscaping and finish were of so fine a description that the promenade looked as if it were made of crystal, affording no purchase to the eye, and making the spectator possessed with marveling.

In the flower-potteries was a luxuriant growth of tulips, violets, calendula, chrysanthemums, chamomile, marigold, double poppy, phirki, double jasmines, Tuscan jasmines, jasmines, gardenia, juhi, lilies, ra'e-bel, eglantine, oris, ketki, balsam, coxcomb, farang, Marvel of Peru, bachelor's buttons, tuberose, sunflowers, narcissi, basil, Cupid's arrows, gul-e Abbasi, saffron, and chiraghan. Some gardens were fenced by Indian myrtle and some hedged by chapni. Some flaunted in their four corners, stretches of clipped and pruned Mauisiri trees. The redolence of cypresses, pines, box-trees and weeping Nyctanthes rose from others. The flower boughs comingled, locked in each other's embrace, kissing together with their blossom lips. Laden with flowers the boughs of fruit-trees swayed in the air. Flamingos, demoiselle and Indian cranes, and Greek and Bartavelle partridges preened on the promenades. Thousands of wrens and nightingales in their ash-colored vestures, warbled and crooned from rose-bushes. Cypresses, box-trees and firs retorted with the songs of ringdoves and turtledoves. Four arched gates of silver wire, enameled in green, stood in each garden, bound on four sides by elegantly erected silver-cased columns.

Then there arrived the nurserymaids, in the full bloom of adolescence, sporting red, parti-colored sheets hemmed with gold lace, worn over purlled skirts. They were adorned with mang-tikas and spangles on the forehead; and wore golden bracelets and armbands studded with garnets, and necklets of golden beads. Tinkling toe-rings, their fingers dyed in henna, they began weeding out the wild growth from the promenades and carpet-beds, with hoes of gold and silver handles, fitted out with small bells. Sifting straw and gleaning fallen blossoms, they delighted the hearts of the onlookers with their enterprise. More tenuous than boughs of the sandal-tree were their soft and tender wrists, and before their slender fingers the boughs of Judas tree were put out of countenance. Their ruddy breasts (Avaunt malicious glances!) and the delicious swellings of their bosoms (Ah! One could not describe the sight!) put to shame citrons and apples, and took the light out of many a citrus and pomegranate. Exchanging pleasantries and caroling on the sly, they irri-

gated the gardens in plumps: now weeding-out dry grass from one patch, now hoeing-in verdant panic grass elsewhere; now making water-basins in flower-potteries around trees, now training on bamboo frameworks bell-flowers and vines.

On either side of the rivulets that streamed across the garden were arrayed, in rows of two, herons, cranes, ruddy-geese, teals and snipes. And peacocks danced everywhere on the ramparts. The branches and boughs of taller trees were wrapped in silken tissue sacks—white and golden and green. At every step octagonal terraces of marble, alabaster, and veined jet stone met the eye. Before every terrace were basins filled with rosewater, essence of musk-willow, orange blossoms, and oris water. In the middle of the basins were jets d'eau and fountains, with their golden and silver spouts mounted with nightingales, ringdoves, and turtledoves cut out of gems. The spray jetting out from between their feathers and wings, was a sight to soothe the eyes and gladden the heart.

In the nave of the garden stood a chamber, unrivaled in architecture, made of turquoise, and surrounded by canopies of variegated gold-tissue, fixed on gold-inlaid posts. Galloon-plaited orris lattices hung over them, and gold-tissue curtains suspended by garnet bobbins, were drawn up with strings of gold brocade. At the threshold of the seat of honor, was a platform built of seven lakh gold pieces, and inside was a bejeweled throne.

The Emperor ascended the throne from this platform, and received offerings. Alqash was in the seventh heaven and felt himself most extraordinarily distinguished.

When he regarded the splendor and glory of Bagh-e Bedad, his garden of munificence rankled in the Emperor's eyes, and he ventured: "Indeed, this garden would hold its own in magnificence before Shaddad's own! The sight of it has delighted us! Its sparkling avenues, symmetrical promenades, succulent fruits, luscious fare, rare and curious flowers, sculpted trees, refreshing pools, and the agreeable and blissful air, are all very luxurious and elegant indeed. We used to hear of its air and display, and now we have witnessed it! A most excellent garden it is, praise be to Allah!"

A garden most wondrous, envy of Paradise
 To dazzle the eyes of Heaven's porter,
 Rizwan,
 To drive from his mind the thoughts of
 Heaven
 As nowhere is seen splendor such as this

The avenues and gardens are strewn
 with roses, and tulips and the dog rose
 Here blooms the jasmine, there the
 eglantine
 and somewhere the beds of oris
 The narcissus locks its gaze with a blossom
 some flower returns the nightingale's glance
 From one corner trill the wrens
 cock-pheasants chortle from another
 Obeisant the cypresses stand around the
 garden
 Trucl the fir its expanse
 In the cypress boughs the turtledoves
 warble after the caroling of David
 Fruit-trees fill the eyes with abundance
 quince, the pear, apple and the
 pomegranates
 The golden kernels hung from the vine
 brew already in the vats of the drinkers' eyes
 Peacocks preen on the promenades
 And are a-singing on the ledges

The dastardly Alqash doted at every last word of the Emperor's praise, and, flattered beyond measure, submitted in a transport of delight: "It is all the oblation of His Majesty, the Shadow of God. His abject slave could never have dreamed that he would be chosen to wait on His Eminence! The honor of your devoted slave was today redoubled! Unsurpassed pride was determined his lot! He was held twice and thrice esteemed among his fellows!"

Thereafter the Emperor sat down for dinner. With Alqash orchestrating, the festivities and regalements set a-rolling. Fairy-faced dancers flitted to the tunes of silver-bosomed courtesans. Out gurgled the red wine into the goblets held in ruddy-cheeked cupbearers' hands. The rounds set in motion the firmament of the heavens. The wine unfurled a new world before the eyes. Fireworks were set off, dazzling the skies.

For twenty-one days the Emperor thus indulged in convivialities and merriment. On the twenty-second day he conferred on Alqash the Jamshedi robe-of-honor. The royal litter arriving presently, he then repaired to his palace, fully content, and was soon occupied in matters of state.

**Of Alqash Taking Innocent Buzurjmehr Prisoner, and of His
Deliverance from Alqash's Clutches, and of the Emperor's
Assembling His Prudent Ministers to Ask Them of the Dream,
and Vowing Scourge on Them**

One day when I ventured into the garden
to regard its bloom
My eyes beheld on a bower a withered rose
When I inquired what had caused that
blight
My lips once opened in a smile! It made
answer

Such is the decree of Destiny's Gardener that every instant a new flower should bloom in Life's Green. The farsighted one regards His transcendent art, and disengages his mind from this world and all things worldly. Hardly does one laugh than feel some grief prick his side. The bough that bows in humility procures forthwith desire's fruit. A branch that sticks out is promptly pruned by the gardener's hand.

In this abode one would do well to attend
to himself
For a bubble's existence is not the care of
life's sea

Regard what new blossom flowered in that garden, and what fresh colored bud sprouted there. We return to Buzurjmehr and his story. Regard how times change and fortunes ride and tie.

Thus narrate the legend-writers, and the raconteurs of Past relate, that the wise, sagacious, virtuous, and discerning Buzurjmehr had given himself to a solitary life, and the hours of his nights and days were spent venerating the Almighty. One day his mother said to him: "Son! Of a sudden I am taken with a longing for some greens. If you were to inconvenience yourself, your mother's craving would be fulfilled." Buzurjmehr gladly acquiesced to his mother's wishes, and bent his legs to Bagh-e Bedad. Arriving at the gate he found it locked. He called the garden-keeper who came directly. As he was about to unlock the gate, Buzurjmehr said to him: "Do not touch the padlock. The female of the snake you had killed the other day, is hiding inside the keyhole to bite you and avenge its mate." When the keeper looked closely he did indeed find a snake inside the keyhole. He killed it too, and opening the gate, threw

himself at Buzurjmehr's feet declaring: "It was your forewarning that saved me! Otherwise, nothing stood between me and my death now, and of a certain I would have breathed my last." Thus speaking he asked Buzurjmehr: "What is your pleasure, my dear boy? What was it that brought you here today?" Buzurjmehr answered: "I needed a little greens. I will pay for them with pleasure, and then go my way." The keeper replied: "I will fetch the greens directly. But I shall make a present of them to you as I cannot accept payment from my savior." When the gardener went to bring the greens, he noticed a goat plundering the saffron fields with great abandon. Irritated he struck her with his mattock, and her chapter of life soon ended with her throes. Buzurjmehr called out: "And why did you kill them, taking three innocent lives, O cruel man?" The gardener smiled and said: "Here I killed one goat, young man, and you count her as three? Are you in your right mind?" Buzurjmehr said: "This goat had two yeanlings of such and such color inside her womb, and when you killed her, they died with her too."

Unbeknown to them, as they stood there talking, they had attracted Alqash's ears, who was sitting on his throne, listening. He called the garden-keeper over, and inquired of him what they had been discussing, and what had come about. The keeper narrated all that had passed. When Alqash ordered the goat's belly cut open, it did reveal two yeanlings of the same color as Buzurjmehr had described. Greatly surprised, Alqash called Buzurjmehr over, and seating him by his side on the throne, asked him to introduce himself, his father, and where he had come from. Buzurjmehr said: "I am Buzurjmehr, Khvaja Bakht Jamal's son, and the grandson of Hakim. Afflicted by Fortune, as some tyrant has murdered my father, I hanker after revenge. I have become a recluse and am always consumed by my bereavement!" Alqash asked: "Did you find your father's killer, then?" Buzurjmehr said: "God is the True Avenger, and there is nothing beyond His scope. One of these days a trace will be found, and the blood of the innocent victim shall call out." Alqash asked: "Could you divine what was in my heart that night?" Buzurjmehr replied: "You had it in your heart to divulge to your wife the treasure that you had discovered, the windfall you had come upon. But you did not. Some thought occurred to you and you decided to remain silent."

Alqash's wits took flight at these words, and he became out of sorts. He began a-trembling like a willow, lest his dark deed should become known, and all the wealth and fortune he had hoarded, invite some disaster. This boy is oracular, he thought, and even if an animal were to eat the vitals of such a one, it would become sapient. He decided that he should

kill Buzurjmehr and devour his vitals. That would nip in the bud any evil that might be afoot, he thought, and silence any words that could spell trouble for him, before they were uttered.

Thus decided he called for his black slave, Bakhtiar, and told him secretly that if he were to slaughter Buzurjmehr, and bring him kebabs of his vitals, he would grant him his heart's desire. The slave took Buzurjmehr to a dark cellar, as he was bid, and there he bore down upon Buzurjmehr, and was about to slit open his throat when Buzurjmehr suddenly broke into laughter and said to the slave: "The hope at which you inculcate yourself with my murder, shall never be fulfilled by a false promise, and what you have at present, will also be lost. However, if you refrain from killing me, you shall find success with me, God willing!" The slave said: "If you were to tell me my prospects, I will set you free this instant!" Buzurjmehr replied: "You are in love with Alqash's daughter, but he will never give you her hand. I shall, however, arrange for you to marry her, and, moreover, settle all your wedding expenses too. Set me free today! Ten days from now the Emperor would have a dream that he will forget. He would assemble all his viziers to quiz them and ask them of the dream and its interpretation. When all of them would fail him, he would come into a passion. Then your master would come asking for me. But beware, not until he has slapped you thrice, should you divulge the truth about me. And remember not to breathe a word of it until then!" The slave said: "He had sent me to bring him kebabs of your vitals. If I took him some made from an animal's, he would discover it at once as he is most discerning, and punish me." Buzurjmehr said: "At the gates of the city a woman is selling a yeanning raised on human milk. Take money from me, and slaughter it and take Alqash its vitals, and use the remainder yourself."

At length the slave relented, from fear of God, and also from the hope of having his ambition satisfied. He desisted from killing Buzurjmehr, and did as the latter had told him. Alqash ate the yeanning's kebabs, and believing that he too had now become oracular and sapient, rejoiced exceedingly sitting in his garden.

Delivered from death, Buzurjmehr returned home,

Disaster struck but ourselves spared its
tragedy

and narrated all before his mother. That poor, star-crossed woman, thinking now of her husband, and now of her son's distress and tribulation, was overcome with tears. She offered many thanks to God for her

son's safe return home and said: "My son, confine yourself to the safety of our house, and do not step out. Whatever God will provide by the close of the day we will graciously accept. The enemy lies in wait, God forbid that your enemies come to any harm." Buzurjmehr replied: "You must not torment yourself with thoughts of disaster. Regard what comes forth, and see how God manifests His will!"

It so befell that on the tenth day, the Emperor had a dream of which he was left with no remembrance. In the morning he assembled all his wise counselors and viziers, and addressed them thus: "Last night I had a dream which I do not now recall, and no matter how hard I try to recollect, it does not come to me. It is my wish that you narrate it to me, tell me its interpretation, and ingratiate yourselves with me!"

All of them replied that they would have exerted their wise minds and all their learning to their utmost, and obliged him with an interpretation had they only known the dream. The Emperor replied: "In Alexander's times, his wise men would often narrate dreams that he could not recollect, and tell him their interpretations, for which they were liberally rewarded. I have employed you for similar offices, and you have received all kinds of favors and kindnesses from me. If you fail to narrate the dream and tell me what it signifies, I shall have every single one of you put to the sword, order your wives and children to be macerated in the canemill, and your household plundered. For mercy's sake I shall give you a reprieve of forty days. If you come up with the dream and its interpretation by then, very well and good, otherwise yours will be a most unenviable lot!"

The Emperor was riled most with Alqash, as he was the most celebrated. All the counselors and viziers were at a loss as to how to relate an unseen and unheard of dream, and wondered how to ward off the scourge from their heads.

After forty days had passed the Emperor again assembled the company, and asked them how successful they had been. Everyone remained silent. Then Alqash spoke: "This slave has divined from geomancy that Your Majesty dreamt of a bird that swooped down from heavens and dropped Your Eminence into a river of fire. Your Excellency started in your sleep in fright, and woke up without a remembrance of the dream." The Emperor replied angrily: "O vile and brazen-faced liar, I give you the lie! A fine story you have concocted. On this basis you call yourself learned and prudent and sagacious and a celebrated geomancer? Never did I have such a dream that you relate as mine. I shall allow you two days more of respite, and if you have not related the dream by the end of

that time, I swear by Nimrod's fire-temple⁵ that you shall be the first to be buried alive, and my wrath will visit everyone of you assembled here, and not a single one of you will be shown mercy!"

Greatly distressed at the Emperor's words, Alqash returned home, and directly sent for Bakhtiar and asked him: "Tell me verily where the boy is hidden! Did you spare his life or was he consigned to the grave?" Bakhtiar answered: "I had killed him as I was ordered, and roasted his vitals and brought them to you, and today I am being asked to produce the boy?" Alqash replied: "As he was most wise and sapient, I am convinced that he escaped from your hands, and you do not confess for fear that I would chastise you for disobedience. But I swear by the gods Lat* and Manat,* that I shall not punish you for his flight, and invest you instead with estate and high office. Bring him to me that my life, and the lives and honor of countless other innocent people should be spared." When Bakhtiar reiterated his statement, the dastardly master in annoyance slapped him three times so hard that Bakhtiar's eardrum was ruptured and it spurted blood. In pain Bakhtiar fell on the floor and when he came to in a few moments, replied: "Do not punish your slave. I shall go and bring Buzurjmehr as you command!" Alqash said: "I wonder at your foolishness! How many times did I ask you for him, and so kindly, but got nothing except denial. And now you confess after I have struck you." Bakhtiar said: "He had forbidden me to disclose his whereabouts until you had struck me thrice." Alqash embraced Bakhtiar and said: "Hurry and bring him at once! I shall make you a happy man, and shower you with gold and jewels."

Buzurjmehr came out directly when Bakhtiar knocked at the door, and after inquiring about what had transpired, accompanied him to Alqash's house. The vizier showed Buzurjmehr much respect and deference and excused his past conduct, and informing him of his present predicament, spoke thus: "This is the reason why I have asked to see you: only you can describe what is hidden, and save us and our families from imminent ruin. If you would be kind enough to relate the dream to me, it would be as if you granted us a reprieve from death." Buzurjmehr replied: "I cannot disclose the dream here. But come morning, tell the Emperor that you were testing the wise and learned counselors and viziers in his employ, to see if they had any claim to omniscience. And that, as their knowledge and worth had now become amply manifest to His Majesty, you would like to produce your pupil: that if His Highness were to send for him, he would presently relate the dream and all its particulars."

Then Buzurjmehr said: "When the Emperor shall send for me, I will

relate the dream and its interpretation, that shall earn you great distinction in the Emperor's eyes, save hundreds of innocent lives, and advance you in your office in the bargain."

Of Buzurjmehr's Relating the Emperor's Dream at the Appointed Hour, and of Alqash's Life Being Claimed in Retribution

Do not be neglectful of the retribution for
your works
For a grain of wheat begets wheat, and the
barley its kind

As Nāsikh wrote:

No two days pass alike in this world
There is no garden that could avert autumn

The World is the abode of retribution. Oftentimes every deed is accounted for here, and perchance something remains in abeyance, it is settled on Judgment Day. It behooves every man therefore, to bear in mind the consequences of every deed, and not settle for dishonor in this world and reproof in the world to come for the sake of this vile world and its short-lived riches. What this adage verifies and where the discourse drifts is the story of unworthy Alqash, tyrant and malefactor, who at long last reaped the harvest of his sins, and paid with his life for his benefactor's blood.

Those versed in past legends and privy to the episodes of history thus inscribe night's sable dream on the paper's bright morn, that the next day Alqash presenting himself before his sovereign, narrated verbatim Buzurjmehr's words. And orders were given that Buzurjmehr be produced and presented before the Emperor.

A mace-bearer called at Buzurjmehr's house and said: "Come at once! The Imperial Highness wishes to see you!" Buzurjmehr said: "Have you brought me a conveyance from His Highness that I may present myself at the royal threshold? The mace-bearer replied: "I did not bring one, as I did not receive any orders to that effect. But I shall return and request a conveyance for you from the court."

Returning to the court the mace-bearer said: "He could not come without a conveyance, as he is a man of great pride." Thereupon the

mace-bearer was ordered to take a steed. When he arrived with the horse, Buzurjmehr said: "In its essence the horse is made of wind, and I am fashioned of clay. Wind and clay are manifestly opposites, and I shall not, therefore, ride the horse. But if you were to bring me a conveyance that is suited to me, I would presently go with you, that I may solicit audience of the Vicegerent of the Most Benevolent."

The mace-bearer returned with Buzurjmehr's reply, whereupon the Emperor ordered all the conveyances to be sent to Buzurjmehr's house, so that from among them he might choose one suited to him. As per the royal orders, all the conveyances were forthwith readied, and brought to Buzurjmehr's door. Buzurjmehr looked at them and said: "I cannot possibly ride the elephant, as it is reserved for the Emperor. To ride it would be a breach of deference. And only the sick ride litters. I am neither sick, nor dead, that I should be carried on the shoulders of four, and imagine myself dead while I am still alive. God be praised, I am robust of health, and neither weak nor at all lethargic. The camel is seraphic, and I am but an insignificant mortal. I neither find courage, nor the talent in myself to warrant my riding such a beast. The mule is misbegotten, and I am of noble birth. Therefore it does not behoove me to ride it, nor is it indeed my desire. As to the ox, it is ridden by launderers and corn-chandlers, and I belong to neither trade. I am of gentle birth, learned, and sagacious. And the ass is reserved for the guilty and the culprits, and I am innocent of any crime, and am a law-abiding, God-fearing subject of the Refuge of the World. Return them all, and convey my words to the ears of the one who is a just king."

The messengers again returned without Buzurjmehr, and communicated word-for-word his reply to the Emperor's summons. The Emperor said: "Ask him what conveyance he wishes for. Whatever he desires shall be provided for and sent." The royal pages took the Emperor's message to Buzurjmehr, who said: "If His Highness wishes me to narrate his dream, he should send me Alqash saddled, that I may ride him and present myself before His Majesty and describe his dream in its entirety. Again, I profess wisdom, and as Alqash is the Mount of Wisdom, it is meet and proper that I ride only him."

All this while those assembled at the court had marveled at Buzurjmehr's audacity, and at his utter disregard for the Emperor's orders, as it was a matter of great pride to be chosen for royal commissions, and even if one were ordered through the agency of a vizier or noble, it was still a great distinction, and he should feel greatly indebted to them too. And here, they wondered, the Emperor himself requests his presence, and this

noble personage has so high a mind that he shows supreme indifference. They speculated that either there was something the matter with Buzurjmehr's head, or else they themselves were mistaken, and Buzurjmehr was indeed a man of great nobility and eminence.

When the messengers brought back Buzurjmehr's reply, the Emperor could not help but laugh, and ordered that Alqash be saddled to bring Buzurjmehr. Hardly was the order given than Alqash was bridled and saddled, and trotted over to Buzurjmehr's house to await his pleasure. Buzurjmehr mounted Alqash and spurred him on, proclaiming every step of the way: "I am redeemed today that I caught the one who had murdered my father."

Finding the sight a curiosity—young and old alike—whoever saw them on the way, followed them.

When Buzurjmehr was presented before the Emperor he commended him highly on his deep knowledge and observance of form and etiquette, and then said: "First you must explain what has caused Alqash to be treated so scandalously at your hands, and why do you wish to hold him up to shame?" Buzurjmehr replied: "In the first place he is a peculator, who had Your Highness, the Shadow of God, a Hatim* of his times, and so generous and bountiful a lord, as his master, but stole from him yet, and with such flagrant obduracy! He never once feared what would become of him if his theft came to light! The thought never crossed his mind that he would invoke the Emperor's wrath and be buried alive! That there would be no calamity that would not befall him! That this theft would lead him into a terrible scrape!

"In the second place, he studied Geomancy with my father. And my father in his great generosity imparted to him every word of the knowledge at his command. His own father in his life would not have shown him the generosity that my father did. He was the preceptor of this depraved man, and was trustworthy, faithful, and unsuspecting. My father was glad at his progress, loved him as a pupil, and showed this vicious man more preference than one would his own child. He never concealed any useful knowledge from this tyrant nor kept any secrets. And when my father came upon the seven treasures of Shaddad,⁶ he never took anything, and for the camaraderie that he felt for this man, divulged him the find. And he took not even a farthing, and handed it over to him. And this man here, fearing lest he should be deprived of the treasure if the news of it traveled to Your Highness from my father's mouth and the riches were transferred to you, murdered my innocent father, and consigned him to the cellar where the treasure is buried. And he felt neither

fear of God, nor any scruples, that he was murdering his benefactor, and inculpating himself by shedding innocent blood. This man did not realize that he would be killed in consequence of murder, and shown no respite. And thus at the same place lies my father's cadaver still, half buried in gravel, without coffin or grave.

"I now repose my trust in an equitable sovereign, Your Majesty, and nurse the hope that I shall be dealt with fairly. If you do not settle with me and refuse me justice this day, on the morrow of Judgment Day, I shall petition before the Supreme Justice, and seek redress from that Diviner, the Avenger of Deeds and the Arbiter of Arbiters. There Your Eminence would also be summoned, and would have to answer for yourself. You would be called to account for not rectifying the wrong, and for not succoring the one in distress. O how would you explain your conduct then, before the Omniscient Master?"

When he heard these words, the Emperor cast a fiery glance at Alqash, and said: "Did you hear what he said? What injury did his father do you that you perpetrated such a diabolic felony against him, and ruthlessly killed him in disregard of all obligations due him, making his son an orphan, and inflicting widowhood upon his wife? If you did not fear me, did you also not fear God? Did it not occur to you that the murder of the man who died innocent at your hands would one day come to light, and show you the dark day? Indeed he did you a grave wrong when he taught you Geomancy! Had he not instructed you in its secrets, as Sa'di has said,

Never did I instruct one in archery
But he made me his arrow's mark

death's arrow would not have found him. And if he had not disclosed to you the seven treasures, why would you have so gruesomely abused him?

To give a boon to the dastard
Is the same as to do the good a bad turn

"But regard now O villain (deserving to be roasted alive!) what just punishment you shall receive for this vile deed, and how expeditiously you will be dispatched to hell! If I did not have you riddled with the arrows of Justice, I should hold myself guilty of an equal wrong, and have the blood of equity on my head." Alqash replied: "Your Majesty, he slanders and vilifies me, and plots my undoing!" Buzurjmehr spoke: "Put me to the proof! I have no use for idle talk! Who needs a mirror to see how a bracelet sits on the hand! Whoever cares to come with me, I shall prove

what I profess. Then see if his claim of innocence holds up!" The Emperor ordered Alqash to be dragged behind a horse in chains like a prisoner, and accompanied Buzurjmehr with his cortege to the house where Khvaja Bakht Jamal lay murdered.

All these developments caused much stir in the city, and the populace turned out to see what the tyrant had been brought to. Some called for quarter before divine wrath. Some of the commonalty who accompanied them, when told of Alqash's murder of his benefactor, reviled him. Some commented, "Foul begets foul!" Some remarked, "Every evil deed is accounted for!" Some took admonition from his example. Others marveled at his unwarranted crime.

By and by, surrounded by officers of law and the public, Alqash was brought to the gates of Bagh-e Bedad. Buzurjmehr guided the Emperor to the cellar, and showed him the site. The Emperor saw the seven treasures buried there, and also saw lying in a corner Khvaja Bakht Jamal's shriveled and desiccated corpse—a picture of innocence violated. The dead man's steed too lay murdered beside him, worn to a shadow.

The Emperor was delighted to see the treasure, and ordered that it be removed without delay to the royal treasury, and consigned to the vaults with great care. His orders were carried out, and thus came true the proverbial saying:

In the world gold attracts gold, and
treasure, more treasures

The Emperor then ordered that Khvaja's corpse be removed with a great deal of decorum and protocol, his last rites performed with high ceremony according to the custom of his people, and a magnificent shrine built to his memory. Then he granted Buzurjmehr forty days' leave of absence, and conferred on him thousands of rupees from the imperial treasury as consolation money, and for arranging prayers for the dead. Buzurjmehr brought home elephant-loads of money and placed them before his worthy mother, and told her all that had transpired.

Buzurjmehr then busied himself with the Chehlam⁷ arrangements. All kinds of orderlies and workmen appeared at his door when the news spread of his estate; and when the tidings of his advancement in fortunes circulated, friends, acquaintances, and relatives gathered round. Cauldrons were put on the fire, and food was distributed in the city every day. Thousands of salvers and trays of food were sent out all over the city with great ceremony. After the community and the nobility of the city had been attended to, it was the turn of the laity, and the needy and the desti-

tute. In short, for the duration of forty days, all the rituals of Fateha* and Chehnam were observed, and all the particulars and formalities in that regard were more than met.

Thereafter Buzurjmehr appeared before the Emperor. He was invested with a robe of condolence, and was ordered to be in regular attendance at the court. Buzurjmehr began attending the court every day. One day he found an occasion, and submitted to the Emperor: "If it is Your Majesty's pleasure, I shall now narrate the dream before you, that I am not deemed an impostor in your eyes." The Emperor said: "It is granted! If you describe the dream aright, you shall be richly rewarded; my worries would be put to rest, and my heart will find solace."

Buzurjmehr thus spake: "Your Majesty had dreamt that on a spread forty-one dishes of all varieties were laid. Your Eminence took a morsel of halva from a dish, and had raised it to your mouth, when a black serpent slithered out of the dish and devoured the piece, snatching it from Your Majesty's hand. Your Highness started in your fright, and forgot the dream." The Emperor declared: "By Nimrod's fire-temple, it is indeed the very dream I had had. Verily this was my dream! Now interpret it too, and gladden my heart!"

Buzurjmehr replied: "Allow your slave to be conducted to your palace, and order all your harem to assemble. Then I shall tell you the interpretation, and present before you the true picture of things." The Emperor took Buzurjmehr to the palace, and ordered his harem assembled. After everyone had assembled together as ordered, there arrived walking with dignity and state, in the rout of her consorts and mates, a damsel of great parts and pride: handsome, fairy-like and houri-faced, wearing a most exquisite robe, adorned with lustrous gems and jewels, like a cypress sapling in beauty's green. Among her consorts there was also a black woman. Buzurjmehr caught her hand, and said to the Emperor: "This is the black serpent, Your Honor, who took the morsel away from Your Majesty's hands. And the morsel was this princess, who is guilty of the most grievous ingratitude to a king, who is the like of the sun and the moon in gracefulness."

Surprised, when the Emperor asked what it all meant, it came out that the black woman was in reality a man, who lived in great luxury with the princess in the guise of a woman, and imbibed unrestrained the wine of her charms at all hours of night and day. The Emperor raged most wondrously when he discovered that. The Lord Porter became the object of severe chastisement, and the gatekeeper of that palace received even worse castigation. That black man was thrown before the hounds at the

Emperor's orders, and that miserable princess was given a round of the city on an ass with her face blackened, and then bricked-up alive in a tower on a thoroughfare. A robe of honor was conferred upon Buzurjmehr, and the same day Alqash was taken outside the city walls, and before a crowd of onlookers buried up to his waist and riddled with arrows by well-aimed archers. The goods and chattels belonging to Alqash, including his wife and daughter, were awarded to Buzurjmehr. And in no time did all those riches and estate change masters.

After making his offering to the Emperor, Buzurjmehr took the slave Bakhtiar to Alqash's palace and said to Alqash's wife: "I do not desire your estate and riches. It is futile to put store in such transient wealth. May its possession afford you happiness. But I had promised Bakhtiar that after avenging my father, I shall arrange for him to be married to your daughter, and satisfy his heart's desire by fulfilling my promise. Help me keep my word by giving him your daughter's hand in marriage, and fill his goblet of expectancy with desire's wine. And I promise you, that if a boy is born to your daughter from Bakhtiar, I shall educate him myself, and when he comes of age, prevail with the Emperor to make him vizier in Alqash's stead."

Alqash's wife submitted: "I have no objection to your wishes. We are your professed slaves. Whatever pleases you shall be our pleasure. My daughter is your handmaiden, and whosoever you wish to give her to in marriage, will conform to our wishes." In short, Alqash's wife acted on Buzurjmehr's request gladly, and married her daughter to the slave Bakhtiar.

When these tidings reached the Emperor, he was overwhelmed by Buzurjmehr's act of generosity. After many days, when all the Emperor's viziers, privy counselors, the learned men, the commanders, and the sovereigns who paid him tribute, were assembled in the royal court, he spoke to them thus: "I have found Buzurjmehr to be pious and devout, of noble blood, courageous and unrivaled. He is Khvaja Bakht Jamal's son, grandson of Hakim Jamas, and unsurpassed in wisdom and learning. I have rarely seen one so upright, constant, and generous. All the wealth and riches of the treacherous Alqash, that I had bestowed upon him, he returned untouched to Alqash's wife and daughter. He is well-versed in Morphology and Syntax, Logic, Ethics, Mathematics, Rhetoric, Astronomy, Geometry, Letters, Arithmetic, Philosophy, Geomancy, Astrology, etc. And he is no ordinary lay cleric either, but an adept in Statecraft, Economics, Etiquette, Judgment, Administration of Finances and State, Attention to Forms, and is liberal, brave, and most civil. He is also

virtuous and an eloquent speaker. And moreover, he is oracular. One rarely comes across such a capable and dignified man. Even if one were to search for a man of such accomplishments, such a one would never come by. Previously, all the viziers of our empire were ignoramuses and rank idiots. They were corrupt, raw, and indolent, and deficient in the performance of their offices. Therefore, I desire to make Buzurjmehr my vizier, and confer upon him the robe of ministerial rank.”

The courtiers unanimously sounded the praise and approval of the Emperor’s propitious opinion, and with one voice submitted: “Indeed a man of such qualities is neither seen nor heard of. No opinion could match the capital opinion of Your Highness! Before His Majesty’s precious thoughts, all other thoughts perish! In this matter your beneficent eye has alighted on the ideal candidate. We desire with all our hearts that Buzurjmehr be promoted and advanced in rank!” The Emperor conferred the robe of ministerial honor on Buzurjmehr without delay, and granted him a seat to the right of his throne. Thereafter, the court was adjourned.

Buzurjmehr returned home with great pomp and ceremony, lavishing gifts and offerings, and dispensing alms. Regarding all that, his mother offered thanks to the Omnipotent King. Before long Buzurjmehr occupied himself with ministerial affairs and immersed himself in administration and reform of the finances and state.

Of Dil-Aram’s Expulsion from the Emperor’s Favor and Her Subsequent Reinstatement

How man is reduced to a trick in juggling heavens’ hands! What enchanting antics does this trickster world play on man! Here a beggar is made king! There a whole empire is wiped out from earth’s face! Those who once hankered after dry bread, now distribute alms and food! Those who never saw a cowry, today command untold wealth! Similar is the story of the poor man here told.

Reliable chroniclers report that once exposed to a culpable princess’s deceit, the Emperor became wary of all women—except for Dil-Aram—who, apart from her natural beauty and grace, and chastity and virtue, was most accomplished in musical arts and a lutanist par excellence. Beside her, no other woman dared show herself before the Emperor, and perchance one did, fell soon into disgrace and disfavor.

One day the Emperor rode out to the chase with a bevy of hawks, ospreys, merlins, ossifrage, sparrow hawks, peregrines, stannels, pigeon hawks, goshawks, kestrels; and packs of hounds, cheetahs, and lynx; with a troop of gamekeepers in the train. Not too far from his seat of kingdom there stood a sky-high mountain, tall and imposing; a sight both magnificent and enticing. The Gardener of Nature had strewn the mountainside with carpet-beds, and there the Gardener of Perfect Art had grown a multitude of diverse trees. On one side rose grand and towering trees, half-hidden in clouds; on the other, vines carpeted the expanse. At the foot of the mountain was a game reserve, most worthy and fair beyond description. Every single blade of grass that grew there was the envy of rose and tulip. A tangle of rivulets and springs ran there—and every last spring there was the Fountain of Life. The air, laden with the fragrance of flowers and trees, was more redolent than musk. And its pleasant smell of flowering blossoms was the envy of the jasmine-breathing gale of spring. The trees exuded divine grace, and were in full bloom from the agreeable air. From the spontaneous growth of flowers there the grove presented the portrait of a garden. And such an abundance of game there was, that it could not be described. The hunter was overwhelmed by their sheer numbers. The expanse teemed with geese, coolen, ruddy-geese, teals, Indian cranes, flamingos, buzi, grouse, demoiselle cranes, pheasants, partridges, cranes, peacocks, storks, bustards, Shirazi, kavak, waterfowl, etc. On the other side of the field grazed numerous herds of deer, axis deer, hog deer, stags, paseen, ghora-roz, antelopes and ravine deer. The place abounded with birds and beasts of game, and carpeted with lush growth, the ground stretched like an emerald carpet for miles. In the rivulets the water rushed, and somewhere springs and lovely ravines gushed. Several miles across in width a grand river flowed on one side. Its water was transparent and clear and bright like the hearts of the pure. Its banks were bounded by green fields, and water lilies floated on its surface.

There the Emperor dismounted to admire the landscape. Perchance his eyes espied an old man coming out of the forest, carrying a load of faggots on his head. He was most feeble and decrepit and staggered at every step, unable to manage under the weight. Taking pity over his plight, the Emperor asked to inquire after the woodcutter's name, and the whereabouts of his dwelling. It turned out that the name of that miserable old man—so ravaged and ill-treated by Fate—was Qubad. Upon hearing that the Emperor marveled greatly, and wondered at finding his namesake in such dire straits. He asked Buzurjmehr: "How do you account for this variance in fortunes? Despite our having the same appellation, I am the

Emperor of Seven Climes,* and he is all but a beggar!” Buzurjmehr made answer as per the established codes of his knowledge: “Your Highness and this man were born under the same planet, but at the moment of your auspicious birth, the sun and the moon were together in the constellation Aries, but upon his birth they were in Pisces.”

Dil-Aram who was present there could not help remark: “I cannot for a moment subscribe to these notions! It seems that his woman is a slovenly frump, and this poor man is an ignorant simpleton. Or else he would not have fared so ill. He would not have found himself so wretched, and his life in such distress!”

Already virulent and set against women, the Emperor took Dil-Aram’s well-meaning words amiss. He said: “Her words suggest that all our wealth and riches are indebted to her good management! That we rule an empire is because she has arranged it so! Strip her naked, and let the woodcutter have her! Drive this insolent wench this instant from before our presence!” The imperial orders were carried out the moment they were given. Then and there before thousands Dil-Aram was dishonored and disgraced. Declaring, “I submit to whatever Fate ordains!” Dil-Aram said to the woodcutter: “Take me to your home! God has shown you favor by bestowing upon you a woman such as myself. Offer thanks to the Beneficent Succor that your adverse days are now over, and hard times lie behind you. Do not worry how you shall provide for me, or that in your advanced age you are further encumbered. I shall provide for myself and a thousand others, and earn you honor and acclaim.”

Upon hearing that the old woodcutter was very well pleased and took Dil-Aram to his house. When they arrived near the house, the woodcutter’s wife saw that her man had brought along a fresh blossom. She saw that a new flower had sprouted that day in the woods. That beside her man walked a nubile, houri-faced, silver-bosomed, moon-like, nymph of a woman. And that he took long strides, beside himself with joy. She came out flying like a harpy, and screamed: “Doddering fool! Have you become senile that you bring a rival on my head in my dotage?” Speaking thus she gave the old man such a powerful clout that he fell to the floor in pain, and began tossing around like a ground-tumbler.

Dil-Aram said to the woman:

“For nothing do you seethe and rage
Your husband he is, my father before God
With sollicitudes beset yourself no more
To all anxieties shut your heart

“O houri-faced mistress of chosen-virtue! With this relation you are become my mother, as my own blood-kin! Consider me one among your issues, and give me your scraps to eat. I shall not be a burden on your hearth, but a support to you.” At Dil-Aram’s words the old woman relented, and was ashamed of herself and her behavior. She said: “My daughter! I make you the keeper of my life and domestic. You are now in charge of everything in this household. Whatever you shall apportion as my share I will graciously accept, and serve you faithfully.”

It was the old man’s custom to sell the wood in the bazaar every day for bread. All his twelve or thirteen children who were blind and handicapped, swarmed over him when he returned home and wolfed down the bread amongst themselves, without that food ever satiating their appetite, or satisfying their hunger. And thus helplessly they had continued in their hapless lot. Dil-Aram saw this on the first day and kept quiet. But the second day she could no longer contain herself, and said to the woodcutter: “Dear father! Today sell the wood for wheat, and at no cost must you buy bread from the bazaar.” He replied: “My daughter, I shall do as you say and bring you wheat instead.”

That day the woodcutter sold the wood for grain and brought it home to Dil-Aram. She took it to the neighbor’s to grind it and brought back flour enough to make bread for three days. For the first time the woodcutter’s family had enough food. They praised her industry highly, and in the shadow of her benevolence began enjoying life’s comforts. With the money saved over from two days Dil-Aram bought wool, strung it into a rope, and gave it to the old man to sell at a nominal price. It became her custom in the days that followed that she would barter for wool the wheat saved from several days, and sell it for rope. In a few days she had gradually saved enough money to buy the old man a mule for carting wood from the forest, and asked him not to exert himself so hard in his old age. The old man could fetch ever greater quantities of wood without exhausting himself, and the remainder of the wood was used for fuel in the house. To cut a long story short, in a matter of just two years, Dil-Aram bought some five or six mules, several slaves, and put together enough money from renting them out, to buy some estate and houses as well. By this time the circumstances of the woodcutter’s household had undergone a complete reversal. Adversity had given way to prosperity. The children were all hale and hearty, and the woodcutter’s complexion had improved beyond recognition, and he beamed with complacency.

When it was summertime Dil-Aram said to the old man: “Ask your slaves not to bring wood into the city, from now until the end of

summer, but store it instead in some mountain cavern. During rains and in winter, they will fetch a better profit. The patriarch did as Dil-Aram had advised him. And when the rains ended and it was the outbreak of winter, there was a great demand for wood in public baths and households.

It turned out to be a bitter winter that year. The Emperor had returned to the mountainside to hunt. The following night it suddenly snowed so hard, and it became so biting cold, that tongues froze inside people's mouths. Their teeth chattered and their hands and feet did not show from under their garments. There was no refuge except in cotton or fire. The Emperor's cortege came very near dying from frost. They began scouring the mountainside for wood and by chance happened upon Qubad's store in the cavern. Their spirits revived upon finding the wood. Color returned to their cheeks and light to their eyes. They made a great big fire and set to warming themselves, repossessed of their senses and breathing easily.

In the morning the Emperor finished hunting and returned with his great lashkar to his seat of kingdom, to appear in his royal chamber. And Qubad the woodcutter returned to take out the wood from the cave, as was his custom. When he arrived there and found a great heap of coal instead of wood, he collapsed on the floor from shock catching his sides, and lamenting his fate, began crying at his ruin.

The workings of Fortune brought into play, Qubad's lot then changed for the better. Fortuitous tidings escorted him into his new circumstances. As the saying goes, he touched clay and it turned into gold. It turned out that where the wood was stored in the cave there was a gold mine. Heated by the fire, the ore melted and solidified into slabs. The old man had begun excavating the coal. Thinking that the scorched floor was also coal, he had dug it up when he found the slabs underneath. Not knowing that he had found gold, to show Dil-Aram what had happened, Qubad loaded up two mules with coal, threw a few slabs with it, and brought it all home. There he piled up all the coal before Dil-Aram and with tears coursing down his face told her the whole story. Having reached the end of his story he said: "There were several stone slabs besides what I found there. I brought home a few so that lest you should not believe my story, and suspect me of falsehood, you may witness it with your own eyes! Once you have examined them you could use them as grating slabs for spices, and perhaps I could even sell them in the bazaar." When Dil-Aram scratched a slab with the point of a knife she discovered it to be of gold, and then prostrating herself before Allah and

offering thanks, she declared: "It is His will to raise a particle to a mountain." Then she said to the woodcutter: "Return immediately with the mules, and cart back all the slabs that are there!" The patriarch did as she had bid him and brought home all the gold slabs.

Dil-Aram then wrote out a note to the goldwright Faisal, and loading a mule with as many slabs as it could carry, said to Qubad: "Take the mule to Basra, and hand this note there to the goldwright Faisal, telling him that I send my regards. As you are my father-, he is my brother-before-God, and has shown me compassion always. Tell him that I have sent you as my trustee, and what I desire is written in that note. He will melt these slabs into goldpieces, and give them back to you. But be extremely wary on the way, of the thieves, thugs and ruffians, and their many lures!"

While Qubad headed for Basra, Dil-Aram had a deep hole dug in the courtyard and buried the rest of the slabs. Then with a slave she sent a message to the goldsmith Suhel, who sojourned in Ctesiphon, which read: "For several years I was in disfavor with the Emperor, and made a plaything of fickle heavens, was holed up in a wasteland. But God willing I shall very soon regain prestige and acclaim at the imperial assemblage. You must immediately get here with craftsmen, masons, laborers and carpenters, without wasting or idling a single moment. I wish you to supervise the construction of a building in the image of the royal palace. If it is built in your care, and is to my liking, I shall forever remember your loyalty and diligent exertion. At present you will defray the expenses that are incurred in the construction of that regal abode, and settle with the laborers; and God willing I shall reimburse you very soon to the last farthing."

As Suhel put great store in Dil-Aram's words, he hired skilled masons and accomplished carpenters as soon as he received the message, and presenting himself before Dil-Aram said: "I am your obedient servant. I shall obey whatever you command. Speak nothing of money matters now. Whenever God shall redeem you, and promote you to high office, He will recompense me too, and will not be forgetful of me." Speaking thus, he set to work, and laid the foundation of the building at an auspicious hour.

Thousands of masons and workmen and sculptors busied themselves with the construction, and that wasteland bustled with all that activity. Before long God's will manifested itself in that wilderness, and that splendid building was made ready. The borders of all gates and walls were painted with the portraits of Dil-Aram and the Emperor. Thousands of

ambrosial, charming, and adorable images were painted by painters of enchanting and alluring skill, and the palace was furnished with such regal accoutrements and paraphernalia that it became the image of the house of Mani. Choice footmen, guards, soldiers, chamberlains, valets, betel-box bearers, water-carriers, mace-bearers, and wardrobe attendants were provided for and employed. Champions in all disciplines and of all distinctions: jesters, cudgelers, dagger-throwers, horse-breakers, supermen and archers were sent for from far and wide.

In the meanwhile Qubad had also arrived from Basra with the gold-pieces. Dil-Aram had him sent to the baths. As neither Qubad nor any of his forefathers had ever seen the inside of a bath in seven generations, he panicked when the bath-attendant began undressing him, and throwing himself at the attendant's feet, cried out: "Forgive me if in my thoughtlessness I have done you an injury, and for God's sake do not throw me naked into the seething waters of the hothouse!" The bath attendant had a good laugh at that callow man and comforting him, said: "Nothing like what you imagine would happen. Have no fear in that regard. After the bath your body will feel light and clean, and no harm will come to you!" When Qubad was given the waist-cloth, he began tying it from his head. In short, he was laved and bathed after much trouble and a thousand mischiefs. Then he was decked out in such a stately robe that excepting mighty and imperious monarchs, no one had laid eyes on it. Dil-Aram announced that from then onwards everyone must call him Qubad the Merchant, and anyone caught calling him a woodcutter would be severely punished, and have his tongue extracted from the back of his neck. After a few days Dil-Aram furnished Qubad with choice gifts and curiosities from all over the world, and teaching him the etiquette and decorum of presenting himself before the nobility and viziers, sent him to see Buzurjmehr.

Buzurjmehr was informed of Qubad's arrival at the ministry. And when shown in, Buzurjmehr greeted him with an embrace. Observing that he was an old man, the vizier treated him with honor and deference, and showed him many kindnesses. After the exchange of greetings and the words of gratification, Qubad, in accordance with Dil-Aram's advice, asked permission to wait upon the Emperor and expressed his eagerness to kiss the Emperor's feet. Buzurjmehr said: "Very well! I shall mention you to His Imperial Highness today, and arrange for an audience commensurate with your station and dignity. Tomorrow is an auspicious day and the Emperor shall also be at leisure. Present yourself in the early hours of the morning and you shall be ennobled by waiting upon His

Majesty.”

Qubad took his leave and returned home, and narrated to Dil-Aram all that had passed with Buzurjmehr. The next day Dil-Aram verified from Suhel the jeweler how the Emperor would be dressed. Then she procured for Qubad exactly the same dress as Suhel had described, and sent him for his audience with the Emperor. Qubad first called on Buzurjmehr, who took him along to the royal court as promised. Lodging him in the chamber of audience, Buzurjmehr went forth to have counsel with the Emperor, and introduced Qubad to him in most excellent terms. The Emperor granted Buzurjmehr's request, allowing Qubad to be presented before him.

Now as the poor bumpkin had known nothing besides cutting and splitting wood, Dil-Aram had explained to him before he left how he should put his right foot forward in the court of the Shadow of God, and make seven low bows. Qubad had forgotten all about it. But when he laid eyes on the Emperor, suddenly remembering Dil-Aram's injunction, he collected his feet together and leapt; but slipping on the polished marble floor, landed flat on his arse.

The Emperor smiled at this caper, and the courtiers too smirked when they noticed their sovereign smiling. Everyone present was greatly amused by Qubad's comical entry, but as he had come with Buzurjmehr's reference, they did not dare breathe a word. The Emperor accepted Qubad's offering, and as a mark of singular favor, conferred upon him a piece of sugar-candy that was in his hand. Qubad took the candy and after making salam, put it in his mouth: thus making his impudence and ill-breeding manifest to everyone assembled there. Buzurjmehr, too, felt greatly embarrassed by his actions. When the court adjourned Qubad went home and narrated the sugar-candy episode to Dil-Aram. Feeling abashed at his folly, she felt greatly embarrassed in her heart and said to him: “You showed extreme irreverence and impertinence when you ate before the Emperor what he had conferred upon you; whereas you should have made an offering upon receiving it, made low bows and placed it on your head. Then brought it home as a souvenir from the sovereign.” Qubad asked: “What must I do so as not to let my ignorance show at court?” Dil-Aram replied: “The next time the Emperor gives you something, make low bows and put it on your head, and where making offerings is warranted, you must not be unmindful either.” Qubad committed these injunctions to his memory and appeared at the court again the next day.

The Emperor was sitting at supper, but finding Qubad's antics

amusing, he had ordered him to be announced upon arrival. When the presenter-of-petitions announced Qubad, the Emperor ordered him to be shown in directly. When Qubad presented himself the Emperor accorded him most uncommon preference by giving him a bowl of gravy. Qubad made a low bow upon receiving the bowl, and remembering Dil-Aram's words, poured it over his head, besmearing not only his clothes, but drenching as well his beard, whiskers, and his whole body with gravy. The Emperor said in his heart: "He is absolutely untouched by manners! Every time he does something more foolish than before. And then he also calls himself a great merchant! Wonders never cease!"

That day Dil-Aram had asked Qubad to invite the Emperor to a banquet, using the good offices of Buzurjmehr. She had told him that if the Emperor accepted his invitation it would confer signal honor upon him, and bring him prestige no end. Acting on Dil-Aram's advice, Qubad broached the banquet with the Emperor, and recited the verse taught by Dil-Aram:

"It's no shine out of an Emperor's honor
to show indulgence to a husbandman as his
guest"

Buzurjmehr, who indulged Qubad, petitioned in his favor too. The Emperor, already amused with Qubad's antics and simple ways, granted his request to appear at the banquet. Qubad returned home joyous and elated, and communicated the news to Dil-Aram who immediately busied herself with the arrangements for the banquet, and began providing for the essentials.

Of the Emperor's Arrival at Qubad's House and Restoring Dil-Aram to Honor, and of His Feasting and Drinking

When the supremely diligent orderlies of Nature unfurled the bright spread of morn across heavens, and with great excellence decked it with the golden dish of the world-brightening sun, the Emperor accompanied by Buzurjmehr and his viziers, arrived at the woodcutter's palace. Qubad received him in the approved custom, and made an offering.

"Thou whose advent is the spring of my
welfare!"

Having graced the house with his venerable presence, when the Emperor looked around, he saw portraits of himself with Dil-Aram staring down at him from every gallery and wall. Remembering his courtesan the Emperor expressed great remorse at her loss. Upon discovering that wherever he looked, he found every niche and corner an exact picture of the royal palace, the Emperor remarked to Buzurjmehr: "This house looks an exact replica of my palace. What a wonderful correspondence and resemblance has been achieved!" Speaking thus the Emperor moved to the bejeweled throne in the summerhouse, where the tabla began to play, and the dancers to perform. Presently the meal was ordered. The table-deckers stretched out the spread and the head-cook started bringing out all kinds of sweet and savory delights: halva, viands, nan, broiled meat, grated sweet-apples, and a variety of fruits and dry-fruits laid out in china and celadon bowls. Qubad, as per Dil-Aram's orders, sent for a jewel-encrusted ewer and basin, and doing the honors of washing the Emperor's hands, put choice delicacies before him.

After the Emperor had finished the meal, Dil-Aram, dressed in an exquisite regal robe, positioned herself behind a lattice in view of the Emperor, in order to lure him from behind that cover with the exposed outlines of her form. When the Emperor caught a glimpse of her he asked Qubad: "Who is that woman behind the lattice? She appears most well-conducted, and to my mind it seems all these preparations are indebted to her organization and industry!" Respectfully folding his arms before him, Qubad submitted: "She is your slave's daughter! And all that you see is indeed the fruit of her diligence and industry. There are no personal confidences from the Refuge of the World. If Your Eminence were to grant the women the honor of visiting their quarters, Your Honor's slaves would be most esteemed. Your Majesty's slave-girl, my daughter, is herself most desirous of audience, and eager to wait upon Your Eminence!"

When the Emperor went into the women's quarters, from a distance he mistook Dil-Aram for herself. And approaching nearer when she made an obeisance, the Emperor exclaimed: "What do I see here Dil-Aram? Is that you?" Dil-Aram flung herself at the Emperor's feet, and began to unburden her heart by way of shedding copious tears. The Emperor raised her head and embraced her, and offered her many kind words of consolation.

Dil-Aram submitted that it was the selfsame woodcutter, Qubad, to whom she had been given away, handed in utter disgrace. And that by the benefit of His Highness's prestige, he had risen in the world to be called the Prince of Merchants, and so honored that the Emperor of the World,

to grace his house with his presence, had directed his august and distinction-bestowing feet thither.

The Emperor was most embarrassed to hear that, and taking Dil-Aram by her hand, brought her to the summerhouse. Praising her industry highly, he seated her near the throne. He invested Qubad with a robe of honor and confirmed him as Prince of Merchants. Then, to show Dil-Aram his former favor, asked her to play on the lute. Acquiescing to his wish Dil-Aram began strumming on the lute, and played it more wondrously than she had ever played before. Intoxicated from her music even Venus in heavens began to sway and flutter like a kite. The air became so suffused that all those present were overwhelmed and became still like portraits. After Dil-Aram had finished playing and regaling the Emperor, it was the turn of the bhandis, bhagats, kathaks, kashmiris, qavvals, dharis, kalanots and courtesans to perform. Some time having passed in these regalements, the Emperor invested another robe of honor on Qubad, and taking Dil-Aram alongside him, repaired to the royal palace. The Emperor's misogyny having changed into fondness, he was imperiously wedded to his uncle's daughter, Mohtram Bano, before long.

**Regarding the Birth of Naushervan and Bakhtak,
and Buzurjmehr's Predictions, and of Naushervan's Falling
in Love with Mehr-Angez**

A year after the Emperor's marriage, the Empress showed signs of expecting a boy, and the gestation over by God Almighty's grace, she went into labor. The Emperor sent for Buzurjmehr, and informing him of her condition, asked him to prepare an account of his heir's fortunes and draw the horoscope.

To ascertain the precise moment of birth, Buzurjmehr put Indian, Frank, Roman, Dutch, and Gaelic clocks before him. Then setting an astrolabe to determine the movement of the stars, he sat alert with the dice ready in his hand, and the astrological table spread before him, to await the illustrious birth of the Emperor's heir. By the grace of the Incomparable Progenitor—a sun of magnificence and prestige; a luminary of grandeur and dignity; the light of the Empire's eyes; and the spring of the Kingdom's garden; to wit, a worthy son, arrived from the constellation Aries at an auspicious moment, secure into the midwife's arms. Buzurjmehr immediately inscribed the moment and threw the dice

on the astrological table. Drawing the horoscope when Buzurjmehr matched the forms, he found the sun and the moon in Aries, and discovered Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Saturn and Mars also ascendant, in complimentary constellations. Beside himself with joy, Buzurjmehr felicitated the Emperor and recited the verses:

“Felicitations on the son of happy omen
May his friends prosper and his foes perish
He is the Emperor of Seven Climes
Illuminator of the Crown and Diadem!”

Then Buzurjmehr submitted: “This glorious child will grow up to reign over countless kingdoms and realms. He will be just and equitable, and the sovereign of a bountiful land, and shall rule for seventy years with great magnificence and grandeur. However, from the knavery of one of his counselors he will often find himself in straits.” Speaking thus Buzurjmehr was beginning to propose a name, when two ayyars⁸ presented themselves and submitted to the Emperor: “The chosen spring for royal consumption that had dried up long ago, has today begun to flow of itself, and gushes with water.” Accounting it as a happy augur, Buzurjmehr named the prince Naushervan. Some chroniclers have written that at the moment of birth the Emperor was holding a glass of red wine, when Buzurjmehr submitted in Persian:

“Qibla ‘Ālam jān-rā nōsh-o-ravān be-farmā’id”
(May the cup nurture your soul, O Guide
of the World!)

It is said that the Emperor was so pleased at Buzurjmehr’s words that he invested him with a robe of honor, and named the prince Naushervan.

The trumpeters were ordered to blazon abroad the eminent birth, and the cannoniers to discharge musketry. Kettledrums were sounded and fire was shown to the fuse of cannons. The shouts of “Congratulations and Salutations!” rose from the earth and reached the hearing of the dwellers of the heavens. The commonalty and the élite, the plebeian and the noble, the attendants and the viziers, everyone and all celebrated and exchanged felicitations and benedictions. All the apparatus for amusement and regalement was provided for, and everywhere there was singing and dancing in the streets. The old man of heavens, elated at the birth of that illustrious infant, began playing at the tambourine of the sun and the moon, and every single heaven was set a-whirling, so enchantingly did Jupiter and Venus dance. The doors of the royal treasury were thrown

open, and by the Emperor's wealth-scattering, every single beggar was made rich. The subjects were all forgiven a whole year's tribute, and every last household in the empire was visited by prosperity.

On the eleventh day informers brought intelligence that another slave had appeared from his mother's womb into the service of the Prince of Heavens, as a boy was born to Alqash's daughter. The Emperor turned to Buzurjmehr and said: "It would be proper to do away with Alqash's grandson forthwith. If allowed to live this boy would stir great evil. If he ever obtained power over you, he would turn against you, and of a certain avenge his grandfather's blood. To kill the snake and nurse its young is not the way of the wise! In my view it is seemly to act in this wise. However, I leave the matter to your esteemed opinion, and shall give it precedence over mine!" Buzurjmehr replied: "No religion ever sanctioned punishing one before he is guilty of an offense! And it is inadmissible to murder an innocent child!" The Emperor said: "I believe that a villain should be destroyed before he causes injury! We must put out his existence, or we shall have the foundation of evil laid today. Mark my words that if he lived, it would bode ill for you, and sooner or later you would come to grief at his hands!"

But Buzurjmehr protected the infant and persuaded the Emperor against murdering him. Then he took his leave of the Emperor and went to Alqash's house, and named Bakhtiar's son Bakhtak.

When Naushervan was four years of age, the Emperor entrusted him to Buzurjmehr's care to be educated. A week later, Buzurjmehr arranged for Bakhtak to make an offering to the Emperor, and used his good offices to have him appointed the beneficiary of Alqash's pension. Then he began educating Bakhtak alongside Naushervan with equal diligence.

As Naushervan was intelligent and bright, he very soon mastered all the sciences of council, including Morphology and Syntax, Rhetoric, Logic, Philosophy, Letters, Mathematics, Astrology, Geomancy, Geometry, Astronomy, Geography and History; and excelled as well in martial sciences, making for himself a name in those fields too.

It so happened that merchants from China arrived in the city one day. After they had made their offerings to the Emperor, they sought permission to call on the prince and present gifts to him too. The Emperor granted them permission to wait on the prince. After the merchants had presented Naushervan with gifts and curiosities, and lavished many delicate and wondrous marvels on him, Naushervan desired that they tell him of the Emperor of China's court.

Having discoursed at length about the Chinese Emperor's court, the

merchants said: "The Emperor of China also has a daughter, Mehr-Angez of name, moon-faced and jasmine-bosomed, elegant of bearing and shaped like a blossom, fairy-limbed and houri-like, whose forehead is bright as sun, whose waist is thin as hair, and the renown of whose beauty has traveled the world from its one end to the other. The whole world dotes on her sovereign grace. Thousands of princes draw water from her love's well, and hundreds of kings sigh after her Venus-like charms.

Love is not engendered by a beautiful aspect
alone
By comely speech too, it is oftentimes
implanted

These words about Mehr-Angez's charms evoked a passionate longing in Naushervan's heart and a flame of love kindled in the prince's breast for this beloved. His heart pierced by the arrow of love, Naushervan was overcome by passion's potent spell. By degrees endurance and verve gave way, and patience and composure took their leave. Eating and drinking became things of the past and Naushervan was struck silent. He gave up merriment and society altogether, and soliloquized night and day in his heart thinking of her. And sometimes, imagining himself before her, he would passionately intone these verses:

There was a time that in spring quarter
I would long to hasten outdoors
My ardor having brought me to the grove
The boisterous morning air would make
offerings of flowers
Together with friends and singing
Now sweetly laughing, now cavorting
In life's mead my heart was not a bud
unblossomed
Its splendorous sprouting made flowers
stare mirror-like in wonder
Night and day the cup of delight remained
brimful
And in the heart every moment a new joy
awakened
I had neither mind for lovely damsels
Nor was I enamored of some fair mistress's
cheeks
I was a stranger to the winds of grief
And my lips were unacquainted with

melancholic strains
 Given to toasting to life's pleasures all night
 I ever saw my morns melt into eves without
 a shade of anguish
 Garden walks, friends, and wine were my
 only employment
 And amusement and liberty from sorrow
 were all my cares
 Assuredly there was nothing that clouded
 my humor
 The only visions before my eyes being the
 garden and spring
 In her arms ever saluting the Mistress of
 Delights
 By heavens I was apportioned a new fate in
 night and morn
 The winds of love have made me desolate
 Stripped bare of its foliage is the tree of my
 heart
 Like autumn, of a sudden it has gained
 pallor
 And the bloom of spring has left Delight's
 flower
 The Bride of Joy has withdrawn from my
 side
 And the heavens have sent me sorrow's
 company instead
 Like a withered flower my head is bowed
 low
 And like the narcissus I am wide-eyed and
 astonished
 My vermilion tongue has become thin like a
 lily petal
 And of itself my tunic is become rent like a
 bud sprouting to flower
 All laughter is forgotten, no memory
 remains of the mead
 I sit by, my head lowered, like a broken-
 winged sparrow
 Like a ringdove I wear gloom's collar in my
 neck
 And under its ballast heavily I tread
 A sea of blood issues constantly from my

eyes
 And only my heart knows what it must
 endure
 I can bear it no further, how must I act O
 God!
 To whom must I turn, and how allay this
 pain
 I am fallen into a deluging sea of sorrow
 Whose shores are nowhere in sight
 Its every single wave a chain of blight and
 grief
 And much else that shall befall, remains in
 abeyance still
 Now there is no one familiar, and none
 who could afford me succor
 Who but God is my friend and companion
 in this hour
 How to give it words, and to whom convey
 this grief
 That night and day I am consumed by
 love's fire
 When I breathe flames dart from my
 tongue
 How much longer could I contain within
 this blaze
 How much longer must I keep silent and let
 this fire sear my heart
 And burn secretly within and keep this
 secret sealed

However much Naushervan tried to disguise his condition, he was betrayed by his wan look, his chapped lips, and cold sighs drawn from the well of his ailing heart. As his condition began to deteriorate with each passing day, well-wishers submitted to the Emperor: "We do not know what malady has overtaken the Prince (from the good fortune of his foes!), that he has stopped eating and drinking altogether. He neither listens to anyone, nor speaks his heart. And wonders by himself mirror-like." Upon hearing that, the Emperor became very restive and distraught, and sending for Buzurjmehr informed him of the Prince's condition.

Buzurjmehr comforted the Emperor and went to see Naushervan, and said to him in private: "Are you keeping well, Your Excellency? What

is the reason for the state I find you in? What is it that has so weighed you down? Why are you so distressed? You would be well advised to confide in me, so that I busy myself in finding some cure, and effect a remedy!” Naushervan replied: “Dearest Buzurjmehr! In the first place you are vizier to my excellent father, and in the second place, my preceptor! You are older and wise and I consider you my guide! But seemliness and propriety forbid me to speak. Revealing the secret shows me up to unreason, and decency does not allow me leave to broach this matter with you, or reveal to you my condition and confide in you my heartache. And yet, as considerations of modesty must not preclude the statement of truth, I must muster courage to state that I have become enamored of the daughter of the Emperor of China, Princess Mehr-Angez, from just hearing of her charms, and never setting eyes on her. Shot by the arrow of her love, I am full confident that I shall not survive if I do not marry her. Unrequited in my passion, and away from that beloved, I will forfeit my life.”

Speaking thus when Naushervan tried to stifle the soul-searing sigh,

His heart caught fire and was set ablaze
His soul aflutter he fell into a stupor from
the heat

Buzurjmehr said, “My dear Prince! One must not become so derelict and let go of one’s reason, as it does not behoove the ambitious and high-minded! One must not take leave of one’s senses entirely. What you are out of sorts about and become unnecessarily distressed for, is not something that is beyond the realm of possibility. For God’s sake cast this burden from your heart! Partake of food and drink! Amuse yourself with pleasures! And in God’s name, regard your tender years before you set yourself to renouncing the world! The beauties of the world would offer you their hearts and souls in love of themselves! Kings of the world would feel honor in offering to you their daughters’ hands! Take a hold on yourself and preserve your self-possession. It is not a pursuit in which you must feel that your life is at stake. Set your mind at ease! I shall take charge of this affair myself, and fill your cup of longing with the wine of desire!”

Comforted by Buzurjmehr’s words, and with his hopes of union with Mehr-Angez revived, Naushervan leapt out of his bed, and after having had a bath and changed, he sent for his friends and companions and sat down to breakfast.

After speaking with Naushervan, Buzurjmehr went to see the Emperor and conveyed to his ears the amorous affliction of the Prince.

The Emperor said: "This matter will not be resolved without your assistance. Only your wisdom can solve it amicably. The Emperor of China is a proud and mighty king, and the monarch of numerous lands and illustrious tribes. Such delicate matters of alliances and unions need the diplomatic offices of august and illustrious men if they are to be brought to fruition. Only a wise and gifted man could unravel these intricate affairs."

Through their mutual counsel it was decided in the end that Buzurjmehr would himself go with an embassy to the Emperor of China, and undertake to arrange Naushervan's marriage to Mehr-Angez with his reference and on his own. Arrangements were made to that effect, and Buzurjmehr proceeded to China in a rout of fifty thousand foot soldiers and cavalry.

Now we return to Bakhtak, who, ever since he had come of age and heard about his grandfather, would daily say to his mother: "Whenever I lay eyes on Buzurjmehr, blood rushes into my eyes; and thinking of my poor grandfather, my heart is overcast with grief. I shall remain restless until I have avenged his blood. Once I have ensnared Buzurjmehr, and he is in my power, he will find no escape!" Bakhtak always spoke ill of Buzurjmehr, and slandered him before Naushervan, painting him as the devil incarnate. But Naushervan always reproved him, and reminding him of Buzurjmehr's kindnesses toward him ever since he was a child, would tell Bakhtak: "Regard how nobly he treats you, and then see what diabolical aspersions you cast on him. O ungracious wretch! He is in every way your benefactor. Repent before you find instruction to your detriment, in this world and the next. Out of countenance before God, you would be made wretched and debased in this world too!"

Of Buzurjmehr's Journey to China With Troops and Equipage and Returning With Princess Mehr-Angez, and the Nuptials of the Seeker and the Sought

The songsters of the pleasure garden of ecstasy, and the melodists of the assembly of discourse, thus create a rollicking rumpus by playing the dulcimer of delightful verbiage and the lute of enchanting yarn, and thus warm the nuptial assembly most exquisitely that, having taken leave of his Emperor, Khvaja Buzurjmehr proceeded with his retinue in wondrous pomp, state, and grandeur. Traversing league after league, and bridging

stretch after hazardous stretch, he entered the frontiers of China. When he set foot in the country, spies of the Emperor of China brought him intelligence that the prudent vizier of the Emperor of Seven Concentric Circles,* has arrived with an embassy from his sovereign, Qubad Kamran, the Emperor of the World.

Upon hearing that, the Emperor of China sent forth his ministers to welcome Khvaja Buzurjmehr, and when his equipage approached the precincts of the seat of his kingdom, ordered his sons to go forth with the kings of Scythia and Tartary, to greet the vizier and escort him in. Upon entering the Hall of Private Audiences, Buzurjmehr made an obeisance according to the imperial custom, and conveyed the regal words of fond greetings and happy wishes from his sovereign. Then he presented the expensive jewels and horses and elephants and accoutrements and artifacts gleaned from every corner of the world, that he had brought from his sovereign as offerings for the Emperor of China, and placed those souvenirs before the latter.

The Emperor of China was greatly taken with Buzurjmehr's fine taste and his refined ways, and most gratified with his gracious address, invested him with a robe of honor, and returned Emperor Qubad's offerings many times over, and bestowed immense riches and gold upon Buzurjmehr. Every time the Emperor asked something of Buzurjmehr, he received an answer to the purpose, and conferred a robe of honor upon the vizier. It is said that during the first audience alone, he conferred the robe of honor upon Buzurjmehr eleven times, and showed him great honor and wonderful preference. When the Emperor asked Buzurjmehr the purpose of his embassy, he explained the matter in so courteous and refined a manner, that the Emperor agreed to Naushervan's marriage with his daughter with all his heart. Indeed he could think of no other reply but consent, and exclaimed with great pride in the court: "It is my good fortune to have such an august son-in-law as Naushervan!"

He then ordered to commence forthwith the preparations for the princess's departure, and to make haste that her journey to Ctesiphon was not delayed for a moment longer than necessary. To cut a long story short, no sooner were the preparations ordered than Mehr-Angez's equipage was made ready. The Emperor placed her in the protection of his worthy sons, Kababa Chini and Qulaba Chini, at the head of forty thousand Turkish troops: and gave away in her dowry the heirlooms and family treasures of gold, jewels, dresses, and fine and rare objects, together with several hundred slave girls, and Turkish, Ethiopian, Scythian and Tartary slaves.

After a journey of many months, Buzurjmehr arrived near Persia safe and happy, and ordered Mehr-Angez's camp to be secured there for the night. In the morning the commanders organized their respective troops, and with great organization and ceremony the Chinese princes took the dower and the bridal gifts under their care, and the entourage proceeded toward Ctesiphon. Upon hearing the portentous tidings the citizenry began arriving in droves to see the majestic arrival of the bridal procession. A jubilant and exulting Emperor and Prince greeted the cavalcade, and scattered salver after salver of gold and jewels from Mehr-Angez's litter onto the poor, making them wealthy and opulent. They embraced Buzurjmehr with grateful affection, and conferred upon him numerous robes of honor. Imperial arrangements were then set afoot for the nuptials, and at a propitious hour Naushervan was married to Mehr-Angez. Shouts of "Congratulations and Salutations!" rose from every corner. The sum total of God's creations were united in their great joy, and from the wealth scattering of the bridegroom, the poor became affluent. All these festivities lasted for a year after the wedding ceremony.

So magnificent and splendorous were the
nuptials
That commonalty and élite were alike
satisfied
The delivered woman⁹ set foot out of doors
As the bridegroom set out in the starry
night
His resplendence made the dark night
bright
As the bridegroom was the world-
illuminating sun
The flower beds of rose and tulips and
jasmine
Were blossoming in the flower-potteries
That night must take preference over the
brightest day
As it was the Shab-e Barat¹⁰

It is said that when the Emperor gracefully broached with Buzurjmehr his heart's desire to step down in Naushervan's favor, and sought his vizier's opinion in the decision, Buzurjmehr submitted: "You may anoint him after forty days have passed, and duly celebrate the coronation, and appoint an heir-apparent. But until then give the Prince into my power, to do with him as I see fit, and have no one interfere in this

matter!" The Emperor acquiesced to Buzurjmehr's wishes with all his heart, and gave him the powers he desired. Buzurjmehr ordered Naushervan to be shackled and consigned to the gaol, where he remained for forty days. Then pulling Naushervan behind his steed, Buzurjmehr brought him to the royal palace running on foot. The burning sun, the flying sand, and these hardships compounded with this incessant toil, had greatly agitated Naushervan, when Buzurjmehr lashed his back with his whip three times so severely that Naushervan cried out from its violence. Buzurjmehr then unsheathed his sword, and presenting it to Naushervan, lowered his neck and submitted: "I deserve to be beheaded for this outrage, for such is the punishment for this contumely!" Putting his arms around Buzurjmehr's neck, Naushervan violently embraced him, and said: "Khvaja! There must be some logic behind what you did, or else you would not have put me through this trial, and yourself suffered at my indignity!"

As per Buzurjmehr's advice, the Emperor stepped down from the throne in Naushervan's favor. He affected seclusion, and in the custom of those renouncing the world, became a recluse, but before Naushervan's coronation, he enjoined him more than once: "Do not take any step without first consulting Buzurjmehr, and do not at all heed Bakhtak, or allow him to have any say in the state affairs, lest the empire should slip into the hands of ruin, and the sun of your prestige become clouded."

But when Qubad Kamran died two years later, Bakhtak gained influence in Naushervan's court, and rose to command great authority. There was no audacity or evil but that wretch forced Naushervan's hand to commit. The Emperor let loose all manner of grief and injury on his subjects at Bakhtak's behest. His trespasses rose to such an extent, that he came to be called Naushervan the Tyrant, and the word of his injustice and despotism spread far and wide.

One day a convict was brought before Naushervan on the charge of robbery. He was the chief of highway robbers and a most sanguine and consummate rascal who had taken thousands of innocent lives, lynched hundreds, beheaded many, and poisoned and waylaid countless travelers. Naushervan ordered him to be put to the sword. When the headman arrived to drag him to the execution ground, the convict submitted: "I understand that I must be killed of a certain, and awarded my due punishment. But I am possessed of a wondrous gift and knowledge, that no one in the imperial assemblage would have heard of, let alone possess. If I were to be given forty days' reprieve from death, and besides that grace period the Emperor also allows me the pleasures of food, wine and

women, I shall impart that knowledge, after forty days have passed, to the one in whom Your Excellency reposes this trust. Then my life would be entirely at your disposal!" Naushervan asked: "What is that knowledge? Is it at all useful?" The convict replied: "I know the language of all beasts, but I am particularly versed in the speech of birds." Granting him reprieve, Naushervan put the convict under Buzurjmehr's charge. Buzurjmehr provided him a mansion furnished with every last comfort and amenity that he desired, and had it well-stocked with food and drink and robes. And there the convict lived in great luxury for forty days and imbibed the nectar of all earthly charms.

On the forty-first day, Buzurjmehr said to the convict: "Now that forty days have passed, instruct me in the language of animals, as you had promised." He replied: "I am a complete stranger to all learning, and never crossed ways with any kind of knowledge. I am nothing but a doodle and an imbecile, but all praise to the bountiful God and his amazing ways, even his donkeys feast nobly! It was his will to save me from impending doom, and keep me in food and drink most wonderfully, and thus apportion these pleasures to my lot. I craved for that luxury, and by this ruse my longing was fulfilled. Now I am at your mercy, to be beheaded, lynched, or put to death in any which way you find seemly!"

Buzurjmehr laughed heartily upon hearing his speech, and after securing a pledge from him that he would never again rob or steal, set him free.

One day Naushervan strayed away from his hunting party, and only Buzurjmehr and Bakhtak remained by his side. They came upon two owls hooting and screeching perched atop a branch, and Naushervan asked Buzurjmehr: "What are they deliberating on? What is it that they confer and argue about?" Buzurjmehr replied; "They are discussing the plans for their children's wedding, and argue regarding the settlement. The boy's parent says that he will not give his consent unless the girl's parent agrees to give three wastelands in her daughter's dower. Only then will he let his son marry her, otherwise he will arrange for his son's match elsewhere. The girl's parent says that if Naushervan were to live and continue in his cruel and audacious ways, let alone three wastelands he would give away Naushervan's whole empire as a bridal gift, and fill up the skirts of his expectancy with more flowers than it could hold of desire!"

Naushervan said: "Now our despotism has become so widespread that the word of our injustice and tyranny has even reached the animals!" Naushervan took warning from that, and shed many a tear of compunc-

tion and remorse, feeling ashamed and miserable at his vile deeds. Upon his return he had a bell hung from the Court of Justice fitted out with a chain, and had it blazoned in the country that any petitioner may ring the bell without having himself announced, or being routed through mace-bearers and functionaries. Thus it became the custom that any petitioner who arrived was meted out justice upon ringing the bell. From that day Naushervan's justice became legendary, and to this day he is remembered by the young and old as Naushervan the Just. But why go into these details! After many years the Emperor was blessed with a daughter and two sons from Mehr-Angez, and stars of nobility decorated the sky of his prestige and grandeur. He named his daughter Mihr-Nigar, and his sons Hurmuz and Faramarz. They were raised in the imperial custom and their instruction and education was trusted to Buzurjmehr's care. Buzurjmehr named one boy Siyavush, and the other Daryadil, and applied himself to their breeding and supervision. God also gave a son to Bakhtak, who named him Bakhtiarak.

Narrators write that one night the Emperor had a dream. He dreamt that a jackdaw came flying from the East, and flew away with his crown; then a hawk appeared from the West, and killed the jackdaw and restored the crown to his head. Naushervan woke up from the dream and in the morning narrated it to Buzurjmehr, asking for its interpretation. Buzurjmehr submitted: "Toward the East there is a city called Khaibar. From those regions a prince by the name of Hashsham ibn-e Alqama Khaibari, will rise against Your Highness, and wage war against the Emperor's armies, causing much turmoil and bloodshed. He will rout the imperial armies, and claim Your Highness's crown and throne. Then a youth named Hamza will come from the city of Makka in the West.¹¹ He will kill that villain and restore the crown and throne to Your Majesty."

Naushervan became jubilant upon hearing these words, and investing Buzurjmehr with a robe of honor, sent him to Makka to announce that when the boy is born he should be proclaimed his protégé, and raised with great honor under imperial tutelage.

Carrying numerous gifts and jewels and riches, Khvaja Buzurjmehr repaired to Makka to seek out that worthy boy, and went searching for signs of his birth in every house.

Of Buzurjmehr's Arrival in Makka and Searching for Signs of Hamza's Birth, and the Birth of Hamza, Muqbil and Amr

The gazetteers of miscellanies, tale-bearers of variegated annals, those

learned in the involute enigmas of legend-writing, and reckoners of the subtle issues of eloquence, gallop the noble steed of the pen in the field of composition, and spur on the delightful tale, that arriving near Makka (the hallowed!) after fording ells and traversing fathoms, Khvaja Buzurjmehr sent a missive to Khvaja Abdul Muttalib, chieftain of the Banu Hashim, which read: "This humble servant has come on a pilgrimage to Makka, and also seeks your audience. He hopes to be regaled by your audience, and awaits sanction to partake of your hospitality." Khvaja Abdul Muttalib was most pleased to read Buzurjmehr's communiqué, and proceeded to welcome Buzurjmehr together with all the nobles of Makka. He brought him and his cortège into the city with great honor and prestige, and vacated palatial mansions for their stay. Buzurjmehr first went with Khvaja Abdul Muttalib to pay homage to Ka'ba (the sanctified!). Then he greeted the élite of Makka with great propriety. Confering riches and gold pieces on every last one of them, Buzurjmehr spoke thus: "The Emperor of Persia has sent word that he is very well content with you, and always numbers you among his well-wishers. He hopes to remain forever in your prayers, and seeks and prays for your friendly favors and noble gestures." Sending for the town crier, he then had it blazoned that the first boy to be born as of that date would be raised in the service of the Emperor of Persia; and that as soon as he was born, his parents should bring him to be named and bequeathed his outlay from the Emperor.

As Buzurjmehr had arrived with a large entourage, he had camped outside the city, but he regularly called on Khvaja Abdul Muttalib in the city, and on occasion Khvaja Abdul Muttalib also returned his visits. Some fifteen or twenty days had passed since Buzurjmehr's arrival in Makka when, on one of his visits, after they had exchanged the customary greetings, Khvaja Abdul Muttalib said to the vizier: "Eternal God has conferred upon me a firstborn; this past day your slave was blessed with a man-child!" Buzurjmehr requested that the boy be brought to him. Upon looking at his face, then throwing dice and drawing the horoscope, he discovered that it was the selfsame boy destined to exact tribute from the emperors of Seven Climes and conquer the whole world, he who would humble all the great and mighty on Earth and on Mt. Qaf; the star of the heights of prestige before whom mighty warriors and rulers of the world would make obeisance; the one who would cause the True Faith to flourish and idol-worship to be stamped out; and the one who would force tyranny to give way to the rule of justice. Buzurjmehr kissed his forehead and named him Hamza, and congratulated Khvaja Abdul Muttalib most

warmly, and felicitations and salutations were exchanged all around. Then those assembled there, Buzurjmehr included, turned towards Ka'ba (the sanctified!) and offered prayers for Hamza's well-being and benediction, and said their thanks to the Almighty. Buzurjmehr then presented Khvaja Abdul Muttalib with several chests filled with gold pieces and the rarest of garments and robes.

Khvaja Abdul Muttalib was going to offer sherbet to the assembly as per the Arabian custom when Buzurjmehr said: "Wait awhile! Let two others arrive, whose boys shall be your son's companions and peers, his devoted mates and supporters, and steadfast friends." Even as Buzurjmehr was speaking, Abdul Muttalib's slave Bashir brought in an infant and said to his master: "Your slave has also been blessed with a son!" Buzurjmehr named the boy Muqbil Vafadar, and conferring a purse of one thousand gold pieces on Bashir, prophesied: "This boy will be an accomplished archer, and a peerless marksman and bowman!"

Bashir was returning home after seeing Buzurjmehr when he crossed paths with the cameleer, Umaiya Zamiri. Umaiya asked Bashir whence he was returning, and how he had come into the purse of gold pieces. Bashir gave him all the details, and Umaiya went home in great excitement and happiness. Narrating the whole episode to his wife, he said: "You keep telling me you are with child; now quickly bear me a son, that we may take him to receive gold pieces, find peace and comfort at last, and begin a life of luxury." His wife said to him: "Are you mad! Have some sense! I am hardly into my seventh month! Heaven forbid I bear now! May my enemies go into labor in the seventh month!" Umaiya said: "Just begin straining and I am sure the boy will drop! We need him hatched between today and tomorrow. Plenty of good it will do me if he is born two months hence!" His wife, who had worked herself into a rage, shouted: "This wretch has gone addle-brained! How wantonly he forces me into labor! O wretch! You do this not out of viciousness, but because you are a prize ass! You would do well to take all your snarling elsewhere!" In a fit of anger Umaiya kicked her in the abdomen with such violence that she fell to the floor rolling in agony. The boy burst out of her womb from the impact, and the woman's spasms ended soon afterwards.

Umaiya quickly wrapped up the infant in the sleeves of his coat, betook him to Buzurjmehr, and submitted: "Propitious fortune has smiled on your slave and blessed him with a son! I have brought him to present before you, and to give him into imperial tutelage." Khvaja Buzurjmehr laughed when he looked at the boy's face, and turning to Khvaja Abdul Muttalib, remarked: "This boy will be the prince of all

tricksters, unsurpassed in cunning, guile, and deceit. Great and mighty kings, and champions of the order of Rustam and Nariman will tremble at his mention, and void in their pants from fright upon hearing his name. He will take hundreds, nay, thousands, of castles all by himself, and rout great armies single-handedly. He will be excessively greedy, most insidious, and a consummate perjurer. He will be cruel, tyrannical, and flint-hearted, but shall prove a trustworthy friend and confidant to Hamza, remaining staunch and steadfast in his fellowship!”

Speaking thus, Buzurjmehr took him into his arms, and the boy fell to screaming and yelping; to quiet him Buzurjmehr gave him his finger to suck. The boy slipped the ring from Buzurjmehr’s finger into his mouth and fell silent, ceasing to cry at all. When Buzurjmehr noticed the ring missing from his finger, he searched the pockets of his robe, and not finding it there, said nothing. When sherbet was brought for everyone, Buzurjmehr put a few drops in the infant’s mouth too, and as he opened his mouth the ring fell out of it. Buzurjmehr picked it up and remarked in jest to Khvaja Abdul Muttalib: “This is his first theft, and he has chosen me as his first victim!”

Then Buzurjmehr said: “I name him Amr bi ’l-Fatah!” Thereupon he conferred two chests of gold pieces on Umaiya and enjoined him to raise the boy with every care and great diligence. Umaiya secured the chests of gold coins and then submitted: “How can I raise him? How does Your Honor propose I care for him, when his mother died in childbirth!” Buzurjmehr said to Khvaja Abdul Muttalib: “Hamza’s mother died in childbirth too, as did the mothers of these two boys here. It would be best that all three of them stay under your roof. Presently, there shall arrive at your door the mother of Aadi Ma’dikarib, Adiya Bano, whom Prophet Abraham has converted to the True Faith in the realm of dreams and sent here to be Hamza’s wet nurse. Go forth to greet her, and let her nurse Hamza on her right, and Muqbil and Amr on her left breast.”

As per Buzurjmehr’s advice, Khvaja Abdul Muttalib welcomed Adiya Bano in the finest traditions of hospitality, offered her sherbet, and had the honor of washing her hands and feet performed for her. He gave the three boys into her care and appointed her their wet nurse.

When six days had passed after Hamza’s birth and he had been bathed, Buzurjmehr said to Khvaja Abdul Muttalib: “Come morning, have Hamza’s cradle removed to the roof, and despair not if you find it missing! With his unbounded might the Maker of the World has created a host of wonderful creatures, and to each species a separate abode and a diverse way of life has been prescribed. The inhabited quarter of the

World is bounded on all sides by a great sea whose vast expanse is interspersed with populous islands and ports. Alongside it is situated Mt. Qaf, the domain of the slumber folk and the children of Jan, surrounded by numerous colonies of the jinn, paris, devs, ghol, camel-foots, bovine-heads, behemoth-ears, nim-tans, tasma-paris, the equine-faced and others. The King of those dominions is Shahpal bin Shahrukh, a most dignified and comely monarch, beautiful as the sun and the moon. His vizier, Abdul Rahman, has no equal in the present times. He is just and wise, and prudent moreover, and an administrator of the first magnitude, who prays night and day to the Almighty. He will send for Hamza's cradle for his King, and return it after seven days. Many advantages will be gained from this, and it will serve Hamza's cause and profit him no end." Thereafter Buzurjmehr took his leave and returned to his encampment. And Khvaja Abdul Muttalib began biding his time in anticipation of that augured moment.

Hamza's Cradle is Carried Off to Mt. Qaf, and That Sun of Excellence Shines on the Mount of Brilliance

The zephyr-paced sojourner, the stylus of fascinating accounts of the expert chroniclers, the flying arrowhead, to wit, the pen that must detail the briefings of the incorporeal messengers, also records a few words concerning events on Mt. Qaf, and regales those enamored of fables and legends of the past with some choice phrases from this wondrous tale.

One day the sovereign Lord and Potentate of Mt. Qaf, Shahpal bin Shahrukh, was seated with all imperial pomp and majesty and boundless state and dignity on Solomon's boreal throne, which was his seat of government. In the court were assembled the monarchs who ruled the eighteen realms of Mt. Qaf, who paid him allegiance and were his tributaries and feudatories. Numerous lords and nobles from the neighboring lands and regions were paying court and receiving royal audience, when the watchman of the harem presented himself, made obeisance, and communicated the propitious tidings that a Star of the Constellation of Blessedness and Virtue, a Venus of the Skies of Rectitude and Continnence; to wit, a princess—like the Sun in beauty, and in nature the like of Jupiter—had risen forth to shine over the King's House, by gracing the cradle from her mother's womb.

King Shahpal turned to his vizier, Abdul Rahman, a most eminent

jinn bred in Solomon's court, who had distinguished himself in his service, and was a past master of all sciences. The King asked him to name the girl and cast her horoscope to see what it foretold, and determine what should be the star of her prestige and dignity. Abdul Rahman named the girl, Asman Pari, and throwing dice, casting the horoscope, and relating the shapes together, conveyed the news to King Shahpal, rejoicing greatly at what he deciphered: "My felicitations to Your Honor! This girl will rule the eighteen realms of Mt. Qaf, and hold majestic sway over these dominions. But eighteen years from this day, the mutinous jinns, who pay vassalage today, shall rise as a body in rebellion. They shall insurrect most contumaciously, violate the bounds of obedience and propriety, and show impudence towards Your Highness. With the exception of Gulistan, Iram, Zarrin, Simin, and Qaqum, all other cities shall slip out of Your Majesty's control. In those days a human will come from the inhabited quarters of the Earth and rout those rebels, and inflict upon them a most resounding defeat. And he shall conquer the occupied countries by his might and return them to Your Majesty's rule!" King Shahpal greatly rejoiced upon hearing these tidings, and thus delirious with joy, asked Abdul Rahman: "See if the boy has been born yet, and blessed his mother's lap! Learn of what land he is a native, and of what prestigious constellation a luminous star!" Vizier Abdul Rahman cast the dice and said: "In the land of Arabia there is a city called Makka. He is the son of its chieftain and today is the sixth day since his birth. He has been named Hamza, and this day his father has had his cradle set upon the roof of the house." The King ordered four parizads to bring the cradle, and forthwith present before him that bliss to the eyes of rank and dignity.

Then the King busied himself with the festivities and ordered celebrations at the state's expense. The King was still celebrating when the parizads brought Hamza's cradle before him, and every child of Jan solicited regal benefaction for this royal commission. All those present were amazed, spellbound, when they gazed upon Hamza's beauty, and upon setting eyes on his features and graceful airs, the paris became bereft of their senses. The King lifted Hamza from his cradle and kissing his forehead, had his eyes lined with the collyrium of Solomon.* Then he sent for the wet nurses and dry-nurses and handmaidens, who came bustling upon hearing the summons, and he had Hamza nursed by devs, paris, jinns, gholis, lions, and panthers for seven days. Vizier Abdul Rahman then said: "My knowledge of Ramal tells me that Asman Pari will be married to this boy, and the ties of man and wife shall be established between the son of Adam and the daughter of Jan. The king

rejoiced at the news and sent for a cradle from his palace encrusted with various costly jewels, with legs and poles cast of emerald and side-pieces of ruby. He placed Hamza in it and gently rocked him to sleep. He hung the cradle with several lustrous carbuncles woven into red and green silk, and lined it with all sorts of rare and expensive jewels. Then he ordered the parizads who had brought him: “Conduct him safely whence you have brought him. Then return with word of his well-being, of what transpired on the journey, and the intelligence of that land!”

The parizads took Hamza’s cradle back to Khvaja Abdul Muttalib’s roof, and returning a short while later, narrated in great detail before the King all that they had witnessed on their journey.

Buzurjmehr’s Return to Ctesiphon, And the News of Bahram Gurd’s Insurrection in China

The swift-paced pen hastens through the stretches of the ream and thus diligently fords the stations of this new history in its wanderings, that a week later Buzurjmehr sent word to Khvaja Abdul Muttalib, to inquire if Hamza’s cradle had returned from Mt. Qaf, and whether or not he had been reunited with his lost Joseph. Upon receiving Buzurjmehr’s message, when Khvaja Abdul Muttalib sent a man to look on the roof, he turned to stone upon setting eyes on that resplendent cradle. Blinded from the refulgence of the cradle, everyone was transfixed with wonder. Khvaja Abdul Muttalib was informed that Hamza had brought back a cradle the likes of which even the eyes of heaven had not seen; it had illuminated the whole upper story with its radiance and caused the roof to glimmer from end to end like a mine of jewels and rubies.

Despair not, for the missing Joseph has
returned to Canaan.

A joyous Khvaja Abdul Muttalib immediately sent this news to Buzurjmehr, who arrived directly upon receiving the report, to bless his eyes with the sight of Hamza.

Then Buzurjmehr said to Abdul Muttalib: “It has been ages since I last touched the feet of my sovereign, the Shadow of God, Emperor Naushervan. God only knows what has transpired with my wife and children in my absence. Now I am become listless for the audience of my

liege. I am consumed with the desire to set eyes again on my homeland, and the reins of my resolve steer me violently thither. Therefore, I shall beg your leave now, hoping always to remain in your prayers of benediction! Pray do not be neglectful in raising Hamza, Muqbil, and Amr, and apply yourself with due diligence, and to the best of your ability, in their instruction and education. When you receive a missive from me, pray grace it with a prompt reply, providing detailed responses to all questions therein asked. Proclaim Hamza the protégé of the Emperor of Seven Climes, and have this fact blazoned in all regions and to all men.” Khvaja Abdul Muttalib acquiesced to these requests with his heart and soul, wrote out a letter of thanks to Naushervan, charged Buzurjmehr with its delivery to the Emperor, and requested him to convey as well to the Emperor his respects, fond greetings, salutations, and benedictions.

Buzurjmehr then returned to Ctesiphon with Khvaja Abdul Muttalib's letter and, arriving in his country after some time, ennobled himself with the Emperor's audience and paid court to him according to the royal custom. He presented the epistle to the Emperor and sang Abdul Muttalib's praises, lauding his manners, his exalted rank, and his many kindnesses. Immensely pleased himself to read Abdul Muttalib's letter, the Emperor invested Buzurjmehr with a robe of honor.

One day, many months later, Naushervan was seated on the Throne of Kaikaus, and viziers and nobles of all denominations, minor and eminent, men of excellence and men of dignity, were all basking in the glory of his blessed audience. The nobles were standing at their respective stations, and plenipotentiaries from around the world as well as merchants from the environs and neighboring tracts were in attendance at the court. Gazettes from diverse territories and metropolises were being continuously recited, when the report of the gazetteer from China was read out. It brought intelligence that Bahram Gurd, the son of the Grand Emperor, had been anointed Emperor of China and become the master of crown and writ. It said that he had no peer or equal in power and might, and Rustam and Nariman were as feeble crones before him. By a blow to the skull he had brought the feral elephant trumpeting to its knees. The desert lion he considered of less consequence than a mangy cur. Every champion and warrior swore by his superior mettle. Besides the whole Empire of China, several cities had also fallen to his sword, and he had claimed very many great and fertile lands with his might. He was loath to submit his due of the four years' tribute, and averse to remitting land taxes to the Emperor's coffers (the abode of felicity!). As his force and might had made him arrogant, he brazenly averred that the Emperor

of Seven Climes would do well to forget about gold arrears and pay him some light tribute instead, or else he would lay waste to Ctesiphon and plunder it and raze every last hut and hovel in the Empire to the ground.

Naushervan became greatly alarmed upon hearing the news, and said to Buzurjmehr: "What do you advise we do regarding this menace! We would like to hear your sage counsel and the strategy you suggest." Buzurjmehr replied: "As Bahram Gurd has yet to fortify his power and resources, I would suggest that you detail some fierce and seasoned warrior from among the royal commanders to apprehend him and bring this insurrectionist before Your Highness, or to present Your Majesty his contumacious and boastful head on a salver. For if he were allowed to gain power, it would become exceedingly hard to exterminate him, and he would turn China into a hotbed of rebellion and strife." Naushervan said: "I authorize you to appoint whomever you find worthy of leading this campaign and crushing this recreant!" Buzurjmehr chose Gustham bin Ashk-e Zarrin Kafsh, a renowned Sassanid commander, eminent in that assembly of warriors, and had the Emperor confer upon him a robe of honor. He was sent at the head of twelve thousand fierce and sanguine troops, with a retinue of very many valiant lords and ferocious and lion-hearted veterans, for the correction and chastisement of Bahram Gurd, the Emperor of China, with strict orders to exact also from Bahram Gurd an offering in the way of a fine, in addition to the four years' tribute due in arrears, and in the event of the least show of resistance, to inflict a humiliating defeat upon him, and bring him to Ctesiphon chained and fettered. Gustham was sternly enjoined not to depart from or mitigate those commands, and on receiving his orders, he made obeisance and left for China.

Of Amr Stealing the Ruby, and the Three Boys Being Sent to the School

Children riding reed canes, shedding droplets of ink, gallop about the quire in search of delightful episodes, with their cavalry drawn up behind Hamza and Amr thus, that it was Adiya Bano's custom to nurse Hamza on one breast by himself, and to have Muqbil and Amr share the other one, and she had cultivated greater affection for Hamza than for the other two boys. But with every passing day Hamza grew thinner, and Amr fatter, even though Amr shared with another the breast he sucked. Every-

one wondered why he was fleshier than the other two, and so marvelously rotund and plump.

One night Adiya Bano started in her sleep, and woke up to find Amr sucking the milk from both her breasts with loud smacking sounds, having pushed both Hamza and Muqbil from the bed. In the morning she recounted the episode to everyone and said: "This boy will grow up to become an infamous and notorious thief, if such are his deeds at birth, and so outrageous his antics!"

After a few days when Amr began to crawl on his hands and knees, he made it a custom to go crawling into the vestibules at night after everyone had gone to bed. Then slipping away with women's rings and bracelets, or any jewelry he could lay his hands on, he stowed them away in Adiya Bano's pandan, or under her pillow, and quietly went to sleep. In the morning, when people searched for the lost objects, they were recovered from Adiya's pandan or found under her pillow. Adiya would be puzzled and most embarrassed, but could neither offer explanation nor voice suspicion.

One day, without anyone noticing, Amr put a carbuncle from Hamza's cradle into his mouth. Khvaja Abdul Muttalib was informed that there was one ruby less in the cradle; that it had gone missing from within the house. Perchance Khvaja Abdul Muttalib caught a glance of Amr's face and discovered that one of his cheeks was swollen. He waxed even angrier with Adiya Bano and the attendant maidservants, and calling Amr over, looked to see what had caused the swelling. When he pressed Amr's cheeks, the carbuncle fell out of his mouth. Khvaja Abdul Muttalib exclaimed: "Heaven's mercy! If such are his deeds in infancy, what will he grow to be! There will be no outrage that he will not commit!"

Amr thus vexed and tormented everyone, and they could only grit their teeth at him and his pranks. When Hamza and Muqbil and Amr were five years of age, Khvaja Abdul Muttalib sent them to study with a mulla who taught the boys of Banu Hashim and Banu Umaiya, and they began going to the school, as was the custom of the day.

Their Bismillah was performed the first day, and all rituals were carried out as per tradition. On the second day the Mulla began their lessons. While Hamza and Muqbil repeated after him, when the Mulla asked Amr: "Say *alif*!" Amr answered: "The Upright and Righteous!" The Mulla said: "What kind of a fool are you! I ask you to say *alif* and you say *the Upright and Righteous!* What is this stupidity!" Amr replied: "I only respond to what you ask. What I understand is what I submit before you. That is, you say *alif* and I say *the Upright and Righteous!* I see absolutely

no ambiguity or the least discrepancy in that! That is, *alif* is upright,¹² and its numeric value is One.¹³ And the person of God, who is alone and without partner, is also One. If what I say is wrong and I speak preposterously, instruct and admonish me and explain how I am wrong! And convince me in some manner how you maintain that God is not One, and that He has a compeer, and another besides Him who claims singularity!”

In short, Amr went through the first tablet after great trouble, and when he progressed to the second slate, and it was time to learn that *alif* is blank, *be* has a dot under it, *te* two dots over it, and *se* three; Amr expressed ever greater wonderment and perplexity, and his nature became disposed to mischief. He would attend to his lessons not at all and while away his time in horseplay. Much though the Mulla admonished him, Amr paid him no heed. He always made light of the Mulla’s instructions, and followed his own bidding. Sometimes Amr would say to Hamza: “You are free to continue your lessons, and waste your time with this Mulla. But I shall have nothing further to do with him. I have had enough of this teaching and instruction, and I renounce this learning. Was I sent here to read the primer or do math! Aplenty I care if *alif* is blank; and what concern is that of mine if something has one or two or three dots!” Such were the roguish remarks that Amr often made.

One evening the Mulla called on Khvaja Abdul Muttalib, and after bitterly complaining about Amr, spoke thus: “He neither studies himself, nor lets Hamza or anybody else learn anything! If you wish me to continue teaching Hamza, you should give Amr into someone else’s charge. I refuse to teach this rascal, and you might as well recall the other boys too!” Khvaja Abdul Muttalib resolved to send Amr elsewhere, but Hamza would not hear of it; indeed, he began crying at the very mention of such a proposition, and said: “Where Amr goes, I will also go! Or else I will refuse to learn a single letter!” Khvaja Abdul Muttalib found himself helpless, and desisted from separating the boys.

It was the custom that the parents of these young boys sent to the school whatever food their circumstances allowed. One day, as was the routine, the food had arrived from the homes and was lying arrayed in pots and pans. Except for Amr, who was wide awake, everyone had fallen asleep, including the Mulla. Amr wolfed down all he could of the delicacies, and hid away the rest under the Mulla’s gear. When everyone woke up and looked for food, it was nowhere to be found. Famished with hunger, the boys began to complain. The Mulla said: “Nobody else but Amr would have done such a thing! Who but he could even dare think of

it!” Amr replied: “Fie! Fie! This reminds me of the proverb that the master searches for the camel high and low when it is conspicuous in the city from the pillage. First conduct a thorough investigation into the matter, O master! The guilty party is the one from whose possession the food is recovered. It will prove to be his doing, and he will be deserving of the severest chastisement then!” The Mulla said: “Why don’t you search for the thief yourself!”

Amr replied: “I hear, and I obey!” Feigning supreme ignorance, he first frisked all the boys thoroughly. Then he looked this way and that and began searching under the Mulla’s mattresses and pillows. When he turned all of the Mulla’s clothes and gear upside down, everyone saw the food hidden inside. Amr immediately raised a great hue and cry, and began shouting and clamoring:

How fare Faith when Ka’ba itself becomes
the abode of Untruth!

“When a mulla has such vile designs, and such a monstrous nature as this great scholar has, what can we expect of the unlettered! Get up Hamza! Tell your father we shall not study with a thieving Mulla, and would much rather remain illiterate. He will be better off sending us to a benevolent chandler! Ask him to arrange our lessons with a well-intentioned teacher!”

Abashed and embarrassed, the Mulla gave Amr a few tight slaps, and when that failed to silence him, dealt him the whip. But Hamza intervened and did not let the Mulla have his way with Amr.

The next day, when the Mulla and the boys went to sleep in the afternoon, Amr took the Mulla’s turban to the sweetmeat vendor. He pawned it for five rupees worth of sweets and put them in the school, then curled up in a corner and went to sleep himself. When the Mulla woke up and saw such a huge amount of sweets, he rejoiced in his heart, but also feared lest it should turn out to be one of Amr’s pranks. He inquired of every single boy what the occasion was for those sweets, and who had brought them. But all of them expressed ignorance, as none of them knew the truth. When the Mulla woke up Amr and asked him, Amr replied: “Father brought these sweets as an offering he had pledged. Some acquaintances were also with him, and he thought it improper to wake you up. He left instructions with me to have you say the Fateha on the sweets when you wake up, and to distribute them; and asked me to keep his share myself.” The Mulla asked: “In whose name should I say the

benefaction, and to whom must I apportion the benison?” Amr replied: “In the name, and for the soul, of Baba Shimla!”* The Mulla said: “What kind of a strange name is that, so odd and confounding!” Amr answered: “Recluses have such appellations, with which their patron saints address them!” In the end the Mulla said the benefaction, and gleaning the choice morsels from the top of the bowl, partook of them himself. Amr ate some himself and distributed the rest among the boys.

Now, the inviting peras that the Mulla had eaten, had been adulterated by Amr with a potent purgative, and presently he began experiencing cramps and tenesmus. His stomach began to churn and his bowels to grumble, and stricken with a severe case of diarrhea, he would rush to the privy every few moments. Soon he was unable even to remove himself to the privy, and his hands began to shiver and tremble. He groaned: “O Amr! What was in those sweets that has brought me to this!” Amr replied: “You are so fluent in the *re* of the primer as to make it a refrain in your speech. I shall also not refrain from this speech, as I too am well versed in such language.¹⁴ All of us here had the sweets and did not suffer the least belch or burp. It is no concern of ours if you have come to this end from eating the sweets. There is always the possibility, as the proverb goes, that some eat the eggplant, and some are by the eggplant worsted. Or it could be that before I woke up, you incited some boy to bring you some sweets on the sly. You might have eaten it without good faith, or with abandon. Baba Shimla is not someone to be shown the least disrespect, and he does not visit you with a great turmoil of the bowels. But if that is not the case, it must be your greed! Why eat so unrestrainedly as to suffer bad digestion and become sick!”

Hamza discovered Amr’s hand in this and sent for buttermilk for the Mulla, and had it administered to him and said: “It must be the sugar’s warmth that caused your body to become heated. Have this buttermilk and do not give yourself over to anxiety!” Delivered from that unforeseen calamity, the Mulla barely escaped with his life.

Some hours then remaining to the close of the day, the Mulla sent the boys home. After everyone had left, the Mulla also donned his cap and gown and prepared to leave, but could not find his turban. Giving it up for lost, the Mulla wrapped his cummerbund around his head and set out for home. When he approached the sweetmeat shop, the vendor came running with the turban and said: “You didn’t have to insult me by pawning your turban, if you wanted to buy sweets from my shop! What is a sum of five rupees that I would not trust you with it, and leave you alone for a week or ten days! Please feel under no obligation to pay! Settle

the account whenever you are paid. Consider it your own shop, and always send for any kind of sweets that you feel a fancy for!"

The Mulla made up a reply, and was obliged to pay him five rupees and get back his turban. The Mulla said in his heart: "Those were the same sweets on which Amr had me say the fateha! Very well! Let the night pass! Come morning, it will be Amr and me! His back and my whip! Oh, how I shall belabor his buttocks!"

The next morning Amr arrived early, before anybody else. He tidied up the Mulla's mattress and neatly arranged his bolsters and cushions upon it. Then he opened his primer and started studying it diligently. When the Mulla arrived and saw Amr already there, he said in his heart: "Terror of me has plainly overwhelmed him. That is why he is here before everybody else today. Rather than chastise him, now is the time to show him indulgence!"

After prescribing the lesson for the day, the Mulla said to the boys: "I am going to the baths and shall be back presently. Read and learn your lesson while I am away!" Having already prepared his hair-dye and sent it ahead of him with Amr, the Mulla himself set out for the baths. On the way Amr took some time to mix a tola of very fine ground ratsbane into the dye. In the baths, after applying the dye, when the Mulla rinsed it with warm water, along with the dye his beard and whiskers were washed away too. Then it was with tears of bitter remorse that the Mulla washed his face. He could not show his face for shame. The whole day he remained in hiding, and come night, went to Khvaja Abdul Muttalib's house clad in a burqa. He unveiled his face before him, remonstrating and lamenting much, and in a voice choked with tears said to him: "This is what I have been brought to in my old age, at the hands of Amr. In this wise Amr has embarrassed and humiliated me on the last leg of my life! Now I cannot show my face for shame, and while I am in this state, I must remain hidden from my friends and acquaintances!" The Mulla also narrated the episode of the turban and sweetmeats, and how Amr had adulterated them with the purgative.

Khvaja Abdul Muttalib expressed his heartfelt sympathies to the Mulla, and sent him away after comforting and consoling him. Then he sent for Amr and, after punishing him, banished him from the house, then said to Hamza: "I shall be furious with you if I ever hear you mention Amr's name again. Who has ever heard of keeping company with a boy of such dastardly habits and conduct, my son! How could you associate with a rogue and a ruffian of his like! The only gain to be had in the company of such a one is disrepute, for bad company leads to bad

ends!” But Hamza could not think of parting with Amr, and remained without food and drink for two days, going every now and then to the roof to cry his eyes out. When informed of this, Khvaja Abdul Muttalib found he had no choice but to send for Amr, forgive his conduct, and reunite him with Hamza. Khvaja also wrote out a note to the Mulla, interceding on Amr’s behalf. The Mulla forgave Amr, and he was allowed into the school as before.

One day food was sent for the Mulla from a pupil’s house. The Mulla said to Amr: “Take it to my house, and see that you do not play any tricks on the way, as there is a chicken inside, that will fly away if you open the pot, and no matter how hard you tried, you would never be able to catch it!” Amr replied: “What business do I have opening the pot! I am not bitten by a mad dog to do such a thing! I shall hand it to your wife and bring the receipt.” Speaking thus Amr set out, carrying the tray over his head. Approaching near the Mulla’s house, Amr found a safe spot, put down the tray, and upon opening the pot found it full of sweet rice. Amr was hungry to begin with; salivating with greed, he now sat down with the bowl and ate his fill. Then throwing the remainder before the dogs, he tore off the tray cover and the pack-cloth, and went forth and knocked on the Mulla’s door, calling for his wife. When she came to the door, Amr handed her the tray, and said: “The Mulla has forbidden you from opening this food. He has asked you not to cook anything, and to ask your friends in the neighborhood not to cook anything either, as food will be sent to them from your house today!” That poor woman knew nothing of Amr’s deceitful ways. She did not cook anything, and kept her two close friends in the neighborhood also from cooking.

As luck would have it, when the Mulla finished at the school, he decided to stop by a friend’s house to talk and inquire after his welfare. The Mulla was held up at his friend’s house till late, but much though the friend tried, he could not prevail upon the Mulla to have dinner with him, as the latter, in anticipation of, and craving the sweet rice waiting for him at home, declined his offer. Obtaining his friend’s leave much later, the Mulla returned home and said to his wife: “I put you through a lot of trouble today by keeping you waiting for me. Bring whatever you have cooked. I haven’t had anything since morning and am famished!” His wife replied: “Why would have I cooked anything when you yourself sent word forbidding me to? I even stopped such and such ladies from cooking, as per your wishes. And now you return several hours late into the night, with absolutely no thought of your guests! Those poor women are starving, their husbands and sons too. They are waiting to be fed. In

any case, the food that you sent is here. First send some to those poor folks whom I made our guests at your request, and then have some yourself." Hearing this the Mulla said in his heart: "I would to God that all is well! There is more to Amr's prank than meets the eye! I smell something foul in this, and it bodes great mischief!" And sure enough, upon opening the pot, the Mulla found it empty. He said in his heart: "Indeed, there is no greater folly than to repose trust in one proven false! What came over me that I once again trusted Amr, after he had duped and deceived me so many times before!" That night the Mulla's whole family slept on empty stomachs, and when their neighbors heard what had happened, they did likewise.

After scraping together some breakfast in the morning, the Mulla went to the school and asked Amr: "Whatever became of the food that I had sent home with you yesterday?" Amr replied: "I know nothing about any food, but the chicken you had sent flew away on the way, after tearing the tray cover and pack-cloth. I tried my level best, but could not lay hands on it!" The Mulla then asked: "And who had asked you to tell my wife not to cook anything? When did I ask you to tell her to invite the neighbors and starve them along with me?" Amr replied: "In doing that I was indeed in the wrong!" Thereupon the Mulla bound Amr's hands and feet, and punished him severely. But Hamza again interceded, and begged the Mulla to forgive Amr, promising that Amr would never again do such a thing, or trouble him in any way. But now Amr swore enmity against the poor Mulla, and waited for a chance to even the score with him.

Abu Jahl and Abu Sufyan studied in the same school. One afternoon, when the boys were deep in slumber, Amr slipped off Abu Jahl's ring from his finger, and sneaking inside the Mulla's house, hid it inside the pandan of the Mulla's daughter. Then he called on the Mulla's daughter, and in the Mulla's name asked her to give him her earring. Returning to the school, he slipped it onto Abu Jahl's finger, and lay quietly in a corner without stirring. When the boys woke up and returned to their studies after splashing their faces with water and refreshing themselves, the Mulla gave a start upon noticing his daughter's earring on Abu Jahl's finger. But he did not challenge him outright, and instead asked: "How did you come upon the earring on your finger?" Greatly startled himself, Abu Jahl became frightened upon finding it there, and replied: "I cannot say who slipped the earring onto my finger!" Thereupon Amr interjected, saying: "Ask me respected master, for I know all too well, and have become privy to this shameful secret, and the scandalous affair. Ask me, although

propriety requires that I hold my tongue!” The Mulla said: “I bid you speak!” Upon that Amr said: “In the afternoons when yourself and the boys go to sleep, Abu Jahl visits your house, then retraces his steps, and sneaks back inside, before anyone wakes up. It was his ill luck, that just when he was stealing out today, I woke up and quietly followed him. Upon arriving at your house he shook the door chain and your daughter came running out. They first exchanged kisses, arranged trysts, and then made some loving prattle. When they parted, Abu Jahl gave her his ring, and himself took her earring. I returned after witnessing the whole episode, and pretended to be asleep.” Upon hearing these words, blood rushed to the Mulla’s eyes. He snatched the earring from Abu Jahl, and securing his limbs to four posts, gave him such a merciless beating that Abu Jahl’s innards emptied all he had consumed since his birth. Fuming, the Mulla then headed home, and told his daughter to bring out her pandan. When the Mulla looked inside, he found Abu Jahl’s ring, put away very securely. Immediately upon discovering the ring, the Mulla lay violent hands upon his daughter, seized her by her hair, and slapped her rosy cheeks black and blue. The girl cried out in pain, and fainted. Her mother came rushing to her rescue, screaming at the Mulla at the top of her voice: “What has come over you? What devil has taken possession of you that you are bent upon murdering her! What is her crime, in God’s name?” Shouting thus, she landed a powerful blow to the Mulla’s back with her clenched fists. The Mulla now let go of his daughter, and turned upon his wife. Soon the Mulla was pulling at her plaits, with the woman hanging from his beard.

The racket reached the neighbors, who came running upon hearing the rumpus, and demanded of the Mulla: “Who has instructed you in molesting a woman? Who is the preceptor of your action? Show us the book that commands a man to beat his wife! Give us the source from which you draw this authority!” In the end the neighbors intervened between the Mulla and his wife, after heaping many rebukes on his head and remonstrating with him severely for assaulting his wife.

But Amr was not finished with the Mulla yet. He went to a haberdasher’s shop and said to him: “Your wife is on her deathbed, and I have come to inform you at the pleading of your family!” Immediately upon hearing this, the haberdasher rushed home, crying and lamenting and pulling at his beard. Amr accompanied him a little distance, then retraced his steps to the haberdasher’s shop and said to his apprentice: “Your master has sent for the large box of bodkins. He has a buyer willing to pay a good price for them. As your master cannot come himself, he sent me in

his stead. But it is entirely your decision whether or not you wish to trust me with the goods!" The peddler's apprentice looked at Amr's face, and thinking that he looked truthful, not one who would cheat or deceive him, handed Amr the box of needles. Amr headed straight for the school, and finding the place all to himself, riddled the Mulla's bed and bedding with the bodkins, and went home.

As the Mulla and his wife had quarreled that day and come to blows, the whole house was in turmoil, and nothing had been cooked. Estranged from his wife, the Mulla headed for the school and spread out his mattress, resolved to keep away from his wife and home, and spend the night at the school. The moment he set foot on the mattress, bodkins pricked the soles of his feet, and screaming with pain the Mulla sank onto the mattress. The needles now bore into his fundament, piercing him painfully. As he lay down to allay his distress, his waist and stomach were all run through, and he began rolling about in a rapture of agony. His whole body became like a sieve, blood oozing from every single pore. As it happened, the next day was a Friday and the children were on holiday from their studies, playing in the streets, with no one in the school who could remove the needles from the Mulla's body. Thus the Mulla remained riddled with bodkins for a day and two nights, and his whole body swelled up like a crocodile's.

When the pupils arrived on Saturday, they found the Mulla groaning in distress, spread out on his mattress, looking pale and withered. They began plucking out the needles, and as the Mulla screamed loudly every time one was removed, and grew inconsolable with pain, they had a hard time of it. Having reached the school in the meanwhile, Amr, who had purposely arrived late that day, set up crying loudly with tears upon finding the Mulla in dire straits. Swearing most solemnly, he declared: "If I ever find out who has done this to my master, I will inflict a similar fate upon him to avenge my dear teacher!" Then and there he arranged for a mule, helped the Mulla mount it and led the way to the surgeon's house.

As the mule approached the haberdasher's shop, he recognized Amr and rushed out and shouted: "O vile boy! Indeed you are a wanton seditionist, and a great fomenter of evil! You duped me and sent me home saying that my wife was in her last breaths. And you also cheated my apprentice in my name and made away with my box of several thousand bodkins! But now that I have caught you: I shall not rest until I have made mincemeat of you, taught you a good lesson for your trickery, and recovered my goods!" The Mulla pricked up his ears when he heard the mention of bodkins, and asked the peddler: "When did he make away

with your box of needles?” Amr, realizing that the secret would be out before long, gave them the slip, and returning to the school post-haste, addressed Hamza and Muqbil thus: “So long, my friends! My time is up; this city has become too small for me!” Hamza became agitated upon hearing Amr speak of parting, as he could not think of a life separated from his friend, and asked: “What is the matter? Tell me verily why you look so pale with worry!” Amr said: “I cannot at present make answer, as I am not in command of my faculties. But I will convey the entire story to your blessed ears and narrate to you in detail the account of my misfortunes when I am a little more composed!” Hamza said: “Come, take me where you will, for I shall be miserable without you! I pledge my lot with you this moment, even though I am all too familiar with you and your pranks!” Hamza and Muqbil, and other boys who had become attached to Hamza, followed trembling with fear in Amr’s train, casting terrified glances at every step, with their hearts in their mouths. Amr brought them to a pass in the hills of Abu Qubais where they hid for one night and one day.

After they had gone hungry for a whole day, Hamza said to Amr: “We are consumed with hunger and dying of starvation. We must look around for something to eat or drink and satisfy our hunger.” Amr replied: “While away some time talking to one another, whilst your humble servant procures food and drink. Just wait and see what wonderful delicacies I shall provide for you in this wasteland!” Speaking thus Amr went into the town, and buying a length of clean intestine from the butcher, headed for the dunghill in the backyard of an old woman’s house, where her capons were pecking around. Amr tied a knot on one end of the intestine and threw it on the dunghill. When a capon swallowed it, Amr would blow into the intestine from the other end, and it would inflate and choke the bird. Then Amr would quickly slaughter it and wrap it in the kerchief.

In this manner Amr had caught some fifteen or sixteen pullets, when he thought of something else. He showered a hail of stones on the old woman’s roof and then lay in wait. Frightened by that barrage of stones, the terrified crone rushed out from the front door, shouting and screaming, and Amr broke into her house from the back door. He sneaked into the kitchen, stole the eggs that lay in a pot, and darted out.

Farther down the road was the shop of a kebab-seller where Amr had the chickens roasted and khagina made of the eggs, and bought five rupees worth of shir-mals* and nihari.* After putting all the food in a tray, securing it with a pack-cloth and carrying it on his head, Amr asked the

kebab-seller to send a man with him to Khvaja Abdul Muttalib's house, and told him that he would be paid for the food there, as it was meant for a banquet that the Khvaja had arranged for his friends. When the kebab-seller heard Khvaja Abdul Muttalib's name, he did not question Amr, and let his man accompany Amr to fetch the payment.

After they had gone a little way, Amr said to the man: "Go ahead and wait for me at Khvaja Abdul Muttalib's guest-house. I shall be there soon after buying some cheese, and pay you for your trouble!" The man headed towards Khvaja Abdul Muttalib's house, and Amr for the hills of Abu Qubais.

Amr's companions greatly marveled at the tray-load of food that Amr put before them. When they tore it open in their hunger, they found it full of all that delicious food. Hamza in particular was delighted to see the shir-mals, the roast chicken and the khagina, and knowing Amr's trickery all too well, asked him: "First of all, tell us with what ruse you came into all this food, and what cozenage you worked this time?" Amr replied: "Eat first, and talk later! First have the food, and then ask me what you may!" All of them fell upon the food, devoured it in no time, and picked clean the bones.

In the meantime, the kebab-seller's man arrived at Khvaja Abdul Muttalib's house and said: "My master has sent this humble servant with his respectful regards to request of you the payment for the shir-mals that you sent for." The Mulla having already arrived and detailed his woes, a bewildered Khvaja Abdul Muttalib was listening to the kebab-seller's man, when crying and wailing was heard, and the old woman presented herself, petitioning thus before Khvaja Abdul Muttalib: "O poor me! With what treachery Amr deprived me of my chickens and eggs, and in how foul a manner tricked an invalid old widow like myself!"

Khvaja Abdul Muttalib now asked the kebab-seller's man: "Did you catch a glimpse of where Amr went?" He replied: "I saw him shuffling furtively towards the hills of Abu Qubais." Khvaja Abdul Muttalib paid him and compensated the old widow too for her eggs and chickens, and said to the Mulla: "I ask that you take the trouble to go to the hills of Abu Qubais with your pupils to apprehend Amr and bring him before me!"

His ill luck drove the Mulla to lead his pupils to the hills of Abu Qubais to catch Amr. When they drew near the hilly pass, Amr roared with laughter upon espying them in the distance, and said to Hamza: "Here comes the Mulla and his dogs to catch us! They will have hell to pay for this, and I will send them home in such a sorry state that their own mothers will not recognize them!" Upon hearing this the Mulla

stopped in his tracks, but urged Abu Jahl and Abu Sufyan and some others to go and capture Amr, shouting commands at them from a safe distance.

When Abu Jahl and other boys closed in upon them, Amr called out: “Do not call this calamity upon your heads. The Mulla is indeed insane, but what rabid dog has bitten you that you wish to sell your lives at such a bargain! It would be to your own good to return in one piece to your families!” But Abu Jahl was never one to heed a warning. He mustered his courage and went forth. When he came close, Amr let fly a barrage of pebbles with such violence that his whole face was cut and bruised and his whole body lacerated with their sharp points. Those pebbles were the devil’s own pellets! They pierced Abu Jahl’s forehead and cheeks, and pockmarked his face like a sieve. Rubbing his eyes and screaming with pain, Abu Jahl then turned tail. And when they saw his state, the other boys dared not take a step forward. The Mulla, imagining that Amr would give up in terror if he saw him coming, went boldly ahead. But as soon as he drew close, Amr hurled a stone at him with such savage force that it broke open his head, and jets of blood shot forth from the wound, blinding him so that he couldn’t go a step further. Finding his business done, the Mulla too beat a retreat and headed back to the town drenched in blood. He went straight to Khvaja Abdul Muttalib’s house, showed him Abu Jahl’s face and the state he himself was in, and recounted the whole episode, saying: “I have had enough of teaching and educating Amr, as he makes me wonderful recompense for all my pains!”

Upon hearing this, Khvaja Abdul Muttalib himself rode out to the hills of Abu Qubais to the spot the Mulla had identified as the boys’ hiding place. Amr recognized Khvaja Abdul Muttalib from far away, and said to Hamza: “I see Khvaja Abdul Muttalib coming, and over him I have no power! There is no knowing what punishment he will mete out if he finds me. I shall remain true to my vassalage to you, but now I must go my way and leave you to your own devices!” Arriving at the pass, Khvaja Abdul Muttalib did not find Amr. He sent Muqbil and the other boys to their homes escorted by his slave, and consoled and comforted Hamza. Then, seating him on his camel, Khvaja Abdul Muttalib returned home, his mission fulfilled.

Upon arriving home, he said to Hamza: “Now beware and take heed from this! Never must you utter Amr’s name again! Never ever invite him into your house! Boys from good homes do not mingle with such vicious liars and cheats; you must avoid such low company. He will lead you to the path of wrong and evil! He will earn you a bad name, and sully the

honor of your forefathers!”

But when was Hamza ever comforted or consoled without his friend! He began to sob uncontrollably, and no matter how hard Khvaja Abdul Muttalib tried to reason with him or explain things, Hamza made no answer, sealed his lips, and did not touch food or drink for seven days. When seven days passed in this state, such that neither a morsel of food nor a droplet of water had found its way into Hamza’s mouth, Abdul Muttalib panicked, and fearful lest his son should forfeit his life over a trifle, he was forced to send people to look for Amr and bring him back. But at the same time Khvaja Abdul Muttalib also enjoined Hamza: “Never must you follow Amr’s bidding, my son! And never again lend your ears to what that rascal says! If you feel the need for recreation, visit our gardens, and amuse yourself there. But never, O never must you venture into someone else’s garden. Remember to adhere strictly to my words!”

Of Amr Leading Hamza into the Neighbor’s Garden, and of Amr Stealing Dates and Hamza Pulling Out Three Trees

We lure him to a stroll through the rose-
garden, saying:
“Come to the grove, for the nightingales are
calling!”

—Nāsikh

One day Amr persuaded Hamza to visit the garden and take a walk in the grove. Thus incited, Hamza took Muqbil and Amr to his garden and was soon happily engrossed in the scenery. But Amr sneaked into a neighbor’s garden, came back after having his fill of the fruits and delicacies, and reported: “My lords! There is such a paradisiacal garden close by, before which the blooming splendor of this garden is reduced to an image of autumn!” Hamza asked him: “How far away is this garden of which you speak?” Amr replied: “Adjacent to yours!” With Muqbil and Amr alongside him, Hamza headed thither, and when they reached the garden by and by, they indeed found it blossoming with flowers. The flowerbeds had a dense growth of all sorts of lovely flowers. Rivulets ran along the garden, and it was patched with flower-potteries and carpet-beds. There were also some date-palms in the garden laden with fruit so luscious that

the moment one set eyes on them, one began salivating with greed, and to eat the fruit made one forget the taste of all fruits ever eaten before. In the nave of the garden was a beautiful marble terrace, so bright and smooth that it afforded no purchase to the eyes. Hamza sat down and occupied himself with admiring the green, while Amr went around climbing trees and stealing fruit. Presently he returned with his hands and mouth full of dates. Hamza said to him: "Let me have some too, that I may also taste and enjoy this delicious fruit!" Amr replied: "Sit quietly! Why must I give you a single fruit, and not eat all of it myself, after all the trouble I have taken in picking them, climbing trees and risking my life! If you are so consumed with greed, there are the trees! Go and help yourself! As they say, dig your own well and drink from it!"

As Hamza got up to climb the tree, Amr chided him, and said: "Such labors become thin people like your humble servant! Fat people are well advised not to climb trees! If I had a constitution like yours, I would pull this tree from its very roots!" Hamza felt the sneer and challenge in Amr's words, and raging with fury, dealt a blow to the tree. It broke from the base, and came crashing down. Amr said: "What is so great about bringing down a sapling of a tree like this one. It is no great show of strength to fell a cankerous plant that would have fallen of itself. Even a weakling like me could have brought it down and proven my strength!" Upon hearing that Hamza waxed even more furious, and pulled out another tree from its roots. Amr said: "Now this is what I call a tree! However, the real test of strength would be to fell that big, strong, firmly rooted tree over yonder. That would indeed be a manly feat, and prove your mettle beyond a shadow of dispute!" In his anger Hamza felled that tree as well. Thereupon Amr said: "O Arab! What has come over you? Why are you set upon destroying someone else's property? Have you no fear of God! What is this arrogant pride in your strength that makes you forget all other considerations!" Speaking thus Amr ran to inform the garden's owner, and calling the gardener over, said to him: "A while ago such a strong storm blew that it brought down three of your trees. First it snapped some branches and then in one swoop lay down three trees." The gardener said: "There was hardly any wind here to stir a leaf, let alone bring down trees! Nor do I see a single flower or fruit fallen on the ground to believe what you say!" Amr replied: "Do not take my word for it. Go and see for yourself! Then you will know whether or not I speak the truth. Once you are in the garden, you will be able to judge the truth of my words or their falsehood."

When the gardener went over to investigate, he did find three trees,

the pick and pride of his garden, lying on the ground. He began to cry and lament loudly, as he earned his bread from selling the fruit from those trees, and the subsistence of his whole family depended on it. Hamza took pity on the gardener; he comforted and consoled him by promising to give him three camels in lieu of the three trees, and immediately sent a man to bring the camels and give them to the poor gardener. Beside himself with joy, the gardener blessed Hamza from his heart, and the withered sapling of his hope became green again with foliage.

But Amr said to the gardener: "Do not for a moment think that you can dupe boys, and trick them into parting with camels! Or do you believe that I would allow you to swallow this loot, and let you have a moment's peace, until you have shared the spoils with me! O ye unbridled camel! You will have hell to pay for this mischief!" The gardener was frightened out of his wits by Amr's dark and ominous threats, and gave one of the camels to Amr. Then he went his way with the other two, thanking heaven for his deliverance from that devilish boy.

Of Hamza, Muqbil and Amr Becoming Blessed, and of Their Acquiring Divine Gifts

The fingers of ancient scribes astride the provident dark reed thus gallop their mount in the sphere of rhetoric, and in this enchanting wise speed the fleet gray steed of the pen in the domains of the page, that one day Hamza was seated with Muqbil and Amr in the vestibule of his mansion, along with their companions and acquaintances, when he noticed a crowd of people streaming in one direction. He said to Amr: "Find out where these people are going in droves, and what is it that attracts them!" Amr brought news that some merchants in the trading caravans had brought horses to sell. The people went thither to see the horses, and to freely indulge in watching them displayed. And if Hamza so desired, they too could join them and go see the steeds on show. The minute he heard about the horses, Hamza decided to go, and in their eagerness, the three friends set out on foot. Upon arriving there they found horses of fine breeds—Turks, European, Arab, Najdi, Hindi, Cape and such like, tied to posts at short distances from each other.

Also in that caravan was a stallion, heavily restrained with chains, with a muzzle over his face and lunettes on his eyes, and secured with chains instead of front- and heel-ropes. Housed inside a pavilion, the

charger stood fierce and proud like a lion.

Amr made contact with the horse's owner and asked him: "What is this horse's crime that you have chained and fettered him thus?" The merchant replied: "This horse is a great biter, and has all five vices defined in the Shari'a. Nobody can even go near him let alone mount him. He is fed with the muzzle on, and eats and drinks with much ado!" Amr said: "This is all stuff and nonsense! What senseless talk is this that nobody can mount this horse! Don't you make it sound like a calamity! Tell me what you wish to bet, and lose, if someone were to ride him." The man answered: "I have tested and tried their mettle to my contentment, and find no one around here man enough to ride him! If someone could mount this horse and manage him even a few paces, I would present him with this horse worth thousands, without asking for a farthing in return!" When he heard that, Amr made him pledge that offer in the presence of some neighboring merchants, and made them witnesses to the bet. Then he returned to Hamza and repeating the terms of the wager before him, incited him to ride the horse. Hamza went forth to have the horse saddled, and brought to the grounds with his fetters and lunettes removed. The unchained beast began to display his vile temper the moment Hamza put his hands on his mane with the intention to mount him. He reared and clawed the air with his forelegs. But Hamza closed in and with one leap was upon his back. The horse nipped his leg, bucked, and sidled. Then Hamza landed such a powerful blow to the horse's head that it caused the beast great agony and dispossessed him of his wits. His ears drooped like a goat's and sweat poured from every pore on his hide. Hamza gathered him under his seat and made him amble, then pick up speed and break into a gallop. As Hamza pressed him under his thighs and sat firmly, the horse got his second wind, and as he was a headstrong stallion, much though Hamza tried to rein him in, he bolted and ran at a gallop for fifty leagues. Finally, Hamza weighted himself down in the saddle and broke the horse's back in retribution for his wickedness and malignity. The horse collapsed and died, and Hamza turned homeward. As he was not used to traveling on foot, and his legs were not familiar with such an arduous tramp, the soles of his feet became blistered, imperiling his safe return home. He tried to move his legs but they failed him. Exhausted, Hamza sat down to rest under a tree.

Presently he espied a rider approaching, his face veiled, leading a parti-colored horse adorned with a jewel-encrusted saddle.

If one were to write down the praise of that

steed
 Its speed would be attributed to the zephyr,
 its color to red wine
 The charger of heavens is not fleeter
 The zephyr itself that horse outpaces

Upon approaching, the veiled rider, who displayed a patriarchal mien, greeted Hamza, and said to him: "O Hamza! This horse here is the mount of Prophet Isaac (May the blessings of God be upon him!), and answers to the name of Siyah Qitas. He has the parts and properties of the zephyr, and at God's bidding I have brought him to be your mount! And as it is ordained by the Omnipotent One, I make you my favored one and pronounce this blessing, that no warrior will ever overcome you, and the Vertex of your Prestige shall forever remain ascendant over your opponents! The might of your arm will bring them all low, and they will pay you the court of allegiance! Remove that stone standing on the heap over yonder, and dig into the earth underneath. It will reveal a chest of accoutrements of the prophets. You shall find therein an endless array of choice weapons. Adorn yourself with them, and test their mettle when the occasion presents itself."

Hamza removed the stone and discovered such power and force in his limbs that he had never suspected himself of possessing even a fourth of it. He removed the earth and upon uncovering the reliquary found within the vest of Ishmael, the helmet of Heber, the chain mail of David, the arm-guard of Joseph, ankle-guards of Salih, the cummerbund and dagger of Rustam, the swords Samsam and Qamqam of Barkhia, the shield of Garshasb, the mace of Sam bin Nariman, the scimitar of Sohrab, and the lance of Noah. Hamza took them out and, dressing and decorating himself with the accoutrements, pronounced the name of the Almighty and mounted Siyah Qitas.

As he mounted the horse and couched
 himself in the seat
 "A jewel is mounted on the ring of saddle,"
 it was proclaimed!

Then the veiled one was gone within the blink of an eye, vanished from Hamza's sight. It is recorded that the veiled ancient was none other than the Angel Gabriel (May the blessings of God be upon him!) who assisted and succored Hamza that instant, that day (God alone is the perceiver of the truth!). Then Hamza turned the reins of his mount towards

Makka, and betook himself thither.

Now we turn to Amr, who followed Hamza on foot for ten leagues, never letting up running, and kept him within sight. But when the soles of his feet became as porous as a beehive from acacia thorns, he could carry on no longer and collapsed unconscious under a tree. As per God's decree, Prophet Khizr reached his side and offered him words of encouragement and solace. He lifted Amr from where he lay on the ground, and made him his favored one. Then Khizr declared: "Rise O Amr! I bless you by the command of Allah, and declare that no one in the world shall outpace you as long as you live!" Thus proclaiming, Prophet Khizr vanished; God alone knows whence he disappeared. Amr got up on his feet and, to test the veracity of what Khizr had pronounced, sprinted a short distance and learnt that he could indeed run more swiftly than the wind, and that it was impossible even for the palfrey of thought to best him. He prostrated himself in thanksgiving to the Almighty, and set out to search for Hamza in the direction he had seen him disappear.

He had not gone more than a few paces when he saw Hamza coming, and both friends, expressing joy at their meeting, recounted the hardships they had faced on their adventures. Amr marveled greatly at the horse and armor and said to Hamza: "O Arab! What did you make of that merchant's horse? Tell me verily, whom did you murder to come into this horse and armor!" Hamza replied: "What purposeless talk you indulge in! As to murdering people, it is an office best suited to the likes of you! God had ordained that I be blessed by the Angel Gabriel, and inherit the arms and armor of prophets! This horse, named Siyah Qitas, is the mount of Prophet Isaac, and the arms and armor you see are the accoutrements of the prophets and are gifts from God!" Amr said: "I would believe your word as true, and hold you in earnest, if your horse would get ahead of me and I lagged behind even a single step!" Hamza thought Amr had gone mad or was speaking like a clown as was his wont—for how could a human ever run beside such a horse! What power does a mortal have to outpace such a steed! He then said to Amr: "Here! Come show me how you fare alongside my horse!" Amr replied: "First wager something that I may derive some consolation from it!" Hamza said: "Make any bet you wish!" Upon that Amr said: "If I get ahead of your horse, I shall win ten camels from you; if the horse outpaces me, my father will graze your father's herd of camels for a whole year free of charge and without wages!" Hamza accepted the wager and spurred on the horse. Amr too set off. They both ran for ten leagues, disconcerting the wind with their swiftness, and remained shoulder to shoulder and head to head. Hamza was

amazed at Amr's speed and marveled greatly. Amr then submitted: "Hear this, O Hamza, that I too have been blessed by Prophet Khizr, and made his favored one!"

Now let us hear what passed with Khvaja Abdul Muttalib when the merchant's horse ran away with Hamza in the saddle and Amr in pursuit. The news was communicated to him in its entirety, and upon receiving it he became very agitated. Along with the notables of Makka he left the city to join in the search, and had gone a few steps when he saw Hamza approaching in the distance astride Siyah Qitas, with Amr alongside him, holding his saddle ropes. Hamza was sporting regal accoutrements and wearing helmet and body armor. Signs of prestige and grandeur were manifest on his august and glorious forehead, and his face shone with happiness and bliss. Beholding that sight, the grief on Khvaja Abdul Muttalib's face, and his dejection at Hamza's feared loss dissipated, and he beamed with a blush of delight from the rush of blood to his face. Hamza dismounted at the sight of Khvaja, and making obeisance, kissed his feet. Khvaja Abdul Muttalib embraced Hamza with tears of joy coursing down his face. They all returned homeward jubilant and happy, offering many thanks for Hamza's safe return. Khvaja Abdul Muttalib also made many sacrifices in Hamza's name, and with his dispensation of alms the cup of desire of beggars and mendicants was filled to the brim. Then Khvaja queried Hamza about the horse and armor; he was delighted when Hamza provided him with the particulars, and offered many more thanks to the True Benefactor.

Now listen to the story of Muqbil Vafadar, and hear of the fidelity of that faithful one. When Muqbil heard that Hamza and Amr had been blessed and proclaimed favored ones of the Angel Gabriel and Prophet Khizr, and become the elect of mortals by the grace of God Almighty, he said in his heart: "Now I cannot possibly hope to prevail on these favored personages. They are invested with high aims and lofty ambitions, and poor me, I cannot pass muster alongside them. It would be best to give myself into Emperor Naushervan's service, and become his courtier. God willing, I may secure some honorable post and become esteemed and creditable. My slumbering fortunes would revive, and my lot would change for the better. In Naushervan's court everyone is worthy of respect, and in the King's service, all are equals!" Engrossed in these vain speculations and absurd fancies, Muqbil set out towards Ctesiphon. He had barely gone some five leagues, when he sat down in exhaustion under a tree and said to himself: "Death is a far better prospect than a life such as mine! It is better to give up my life than to continue in this wretched

existence, with neither a farthing for traveling provisions nor a mount for transport! What an utterly disgraceful state is mine!” Giving in to despair, Muqbil climbed up the tree and tied one end of his cummerbund to a branch. Then making a noose of the other end, and putting it around his neck, he let himself go, and his limbs began to flail from suffocation. The avis of his soul was on the verge of fluttering out of his body and flying heavenwards, and he was on the brink of being dispatched from the abode of mortality, when there arrived the Lion of God, the Exalted One, the Sahib-e Hal Ata,¹⁵ the feller of Khaibar, the Second of the Five Holies,¹⁶ and he called out to him, whereupon Muqbil fell to the ground. The holy personage helped him to his feet, and presenting him with a bow and five arrows, proclaimed: “I bless you with the art of archery, and pronounce you peerless and unmatched in this skill. Many a master archer will feel honored to be accepted as your pupil, and the archest of arch archers will never best your aim!” Muqbil submitted: “If someone were to ask me by whom I had been blessed, how must I answer and make reply?” The Exalted One said to Muqbil: “Say that you have been blessed by the Triumphant Lion of God, to whose selfsame house you swear vassalage duty-bound!” Hearing these words Muqbil returned to Makka jubilant and happy, carrying his bow and arrows.

When Hamza and Amr did not find Muqbil, they became apprehensive, and Amr set out to search for him. As he left the city he saw Muqbil coming towards him. They ran into each other’s arms and happily embraced, and Amr took him to Hamza. Muqbil presented his bow and arrows before Hamza and told him how he had come into them, and that he had received blessings. Hamza expressed great delight upon hearing Muqbil’s adventure, and they dwelt happily together again.

Of Hamza Exacting Tribute from the King of Yemen, and of the Fortunate King’s Conversion to the Folds of the True Faith

With the reed’s key the inkwell’s cap is opened, manifesting to the connoisseurs’ eyes a treasure horde of florid locutions, and the trinket box of the ocean floor is pried open, revealing pearls of eloquence to adorn the ears of the listeners, that Hamza was into his seventh year when one day he happened by the bazaar in the company of Muqbil and Amr, where he came upon some deputies of Suhel Yamani, the commander of the King of Yemen, exacting treasury revenues from the shopkeepers under their

king's orders. Those shopkeepers who had nothing to give them pleaded with them and made pledges, but those tyrants would show no mercy, and cuffed and buffeted them. Hamza asked Amr to go and find out the cause of the commotion. Amr brought news that the deputies of Suhel Yamani were exacting the levy, and when a shop-owner made excuses, molested and pilloried him.

Hamza took pity on the victims and asked Amr to tell the deputies to desist from such vicious and high-handed ways. Amr went as ordered, but nobody would listen to a boy. Now Hamza himself went forth and ordered Amr to tell the shopkeepers not to pay anything, and seize also from the deputies all they had collected. At this command Muqbil and Amr at once confronted the deputies to stop them from their brutality and coercion. Thinking of them as mere boys, they tried to disperse them. Thereupon Hamza severely chastised some of the deputies, breaking their arms and legs, and cracking open their skulls, at which they turned tail and sought refuge in Suhel Yamani's pavilion; they recounted how a six-year-old boy first interfered with the collection of taxes and tried to stop them, then when they resisted, charged them with two other boys, battering them into that state and confiscating all they had collected. Even as they were narrating, Hamza arrived astride Siyah Qitas outside Suhel Yamani's pavilion, flanked by Muqbil on his right and Amr on his left side. Suhel Yamani came out of his pavilion and addressed Hamza thus: "Hear O youth, that I greatly admire your mount and armor. It seems fortune has smiled on me by sending me this windfall. Waste not a moment and forthwith make a present of them to me, that I may forgive your trespasses, and pardon your transgression; or else you shall pay dearly for your offense, and be severely disciplined for this felony!"

Upon hearing that Hamza laughed loudly and replied: "Convert first to the True Faith if you value your life, then dare speak before me! Submit to my allegiance, or else you will grievously lament your ways, and bitterly repent your end!" Suhel Yamani thundered: "What has come over this boy that he utters threats so far beyond his scope! Pull him down from the horse and snatch all his arms and armor!" At these orders his soldiers surrounded Hamza on all sides, and attempted to lay violent hands upon him. Hamza killed some on the spot with a hail of arrows, beat a few more to pulp with his mace, and dispatched some to Hell with his sword. Some others were trampled under the horse's hooves and found in the Erebus of Hell a permanent abode. Then arrows began to fly from Muqbil's bow, and anyone who made a foul move presently found himself pierced with one. When Suhel Yamani regarded thousands of his

men lying murdered, he grew livid with rage and came charging at Hamza to avenge the dead. Catching hold of his cummerbund, Hamza raised him over his head, resolved to smash him against the ground and to lay low that miscreant, when Suhel Yamani asked for quarter, and sought mercy. Whereupon Hamza placed him gently on the ground, and Suhel Yamani converted to the True Faith with one thousand champion warriors. Embracing him, Hamza seated him by his side and showed him great affection and kindness, and promoted him greatly in honor and esteem.

Then Muqbil and Amr and Suhel Yamani, and the thousand champion warriors who had converted with him, declared Hamza their Amir, in recognition of Hamza's ferocity and grandeur, and of the superior strength of that Cognizant of the Divine. They made offerings, and lowered their heads before him in obedience and allegiance. Hamza smiled, conferred robes of honor upon each and every one according to his station, and rewarded them in consideration of their individual rank and prowess.

Upon entering the city Hamza first paid homage to Ka'ba and offered thanksgiving prayers to Allah. Then presenting himself before Khvaja Abdul Muttalib, Hamza kissed his feet and narrated how he had been made an Amir, and how he had battered, routed, and massacred infidels, and converted Suhel Yamani to the True Faith. Khvaja Abdul Muttalib said: "Although it is an occasion for me to rejoice, and give a thousand thanks to God Almighty, who honored you thus, won you this glory with his unbounded grace, and made you the leader of august people, yet I fear that the nobles of Makka will resent it and smolder with envy at this news. The King of Yemen commands forty thousand fierce mounted troops, and hundreds of thousands of foot soldiers and auxiliaries besides, and receives tribute and vassalage from many kings. Should he advance against Makka, drawn here by this incident, the citizenry would be thrown into turmoil, and would hold you to blame!"

Hamza replied: "All I count on is your prayers, and divine favor; God willing, I shall keep the King of Yemen from Makka. Indeed, yours truly will himself advance against the King of Yemen, and visit calamity upon his head, should he refuse conversion to the True Faith!"

After a few days Amir Hamza took his leave of Khvaja Abdul Muttalib, and left the city with Muqbil and Amr and Suhel Yamani. Friends and travel companions were in their retinue and, mounted and on foot, chiefs and nobles traveled by their side. At the time of parting some blessed them with prayers, others tied amulets to their arms. Khvaja

Abdul Muttalib embraced Hamza and confided him to God's care, and made some injunctions. In short order the army charted its course, and Amir Hamza set out towards Yemen with great pomp and glory, at the head of one thousand mounted warriors, riding under the banners of the omens of victory and prestige. □

—Translated by Musharraf Farooqi

Notes

¹ The word used in the Urdu text is “*duzd-e henā*,” literally, “the thief of henna”—a term for the white spots that have escaped the application of henna on the hand/palm.

² The book referred to here could be *Jamāsb-Nāma*. It was authored by Jamās (sometimes spelled Jamāsb or Jamāsf), who was the son of the Prophet Daniel, celebrated in the East as a skillful physician. A certain Castellus claimed to have a copy of *Jamāsb-Nāma* in his possession. In the beginning of the *Dāstān-e Amīr Ḥamza* (DAH) we are introduced to Khvāja Bakht Jamāl as belonging to Prophet Daniel's race and, later in the work, Emperor Qubād mentions Buzurjmehr as Jamās's maternal grandson.

³ One of the possible reason for the allusion to Shaddād's Heaven (or Gardens of Iram) as a rival to Alqash's Bāgh-e Bēdād is possibly based on the construction of the throne with four peacocks, that Alqash had prepared for Qubād Kāmārān. It was perhaps modeled after Shaddad's throne that was called “Čahār Kargas.” In a Persian miniature, Kaikaus, the eldest of the four sons of Kaiqubad is also seen flying on a throne that has four birds tied to its four posts, trying to get at the meat bait tied above and out of their reach. His throne was also called “Čahār Kargas.” See (S), also plate 19, “Kaikaus and His Flying Machine,” in *Miniatures from Persian Manuscripts*.

⁴ The Sassanian emperor who ruled Iran in late sixth century. Subsequently in the text it refers to Khusrau I (531–79 C.E.), the son of Qubad I (reigned 485–531), the most illustrious king of the Sassanian Dynasty (third–seventh centuries). For Naushervan's complete and unbroken kingly pedigree, fourteen generations into the past, and three generations into the future, see aṣ-Ṣā'ālibī, pp. 72, 93. Zoroastrianism was the state religion of Persia during the Sassanian Dynasty. Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, was born in the reign of Naushervan in 570 C.E. Ḥamza, Muhammad's paternal uncle, was three years his elder. In the Turkish version of the *Dāstān*, however, Hamza is shown to be forty years older than his nephew.

⁵ It appears that in the *dāstān* tradition the fire-temple of Cyrus has gotten mixed up with the great fire of Nimrod. For more details, see pp. 138 above.

⁶ Dr. J. C. Mardrus's version of *Alf Laila va Laila* doesn't mention Shad-

dad's seven treasures; however, it does mention the seven gates of Shaddad's city Iram. The walls of the city were made of gold and silver blocks, and seven gates opened in them. The first gate was of ruby, the second of emerald, the third of agate, the fourth of coral, the fifth of jasper, the sixth of silver, and the seventh of gold. (See "The Keys of Destiny," in *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*, vol. III, p. 503.) At least eight treasures are known to belong to each of the two Persian kings, Khusrau and Jamshed.

⁷ Čehlam: is the commemorative ceremony held on the fortieth day after the death of a Muslim. The bereavement in Muslim families is officially over after the fortieth day. Here, the forty days of mourning commenced from the day Khvaja Bakht Jamal was buried. Chehlam was an Indian-Muslim tradition and couldn't have been known in the Pre-Islamic times, the time of the *Dāstān*.

⁸ *Ayyār* is an artful or crafty fellow, a knave (P). A cheat, knave, impostor, charlatan, conjuror, juggler, sly, mischievous (Steingass). These are very simple definitions, however. In the *DAH*, the word "*ayyār*" is used as a famous suffix after 'Amr's name. Amr is a most cunning fellow and unmatched in resourcefulness and slyness. While his resourcefulness derives in part from the gifts bestowed upon him by the prophets, his slyness and craftiness are native. But in this place the word is used to describe two informers or spies. It is possible that there was a hierarchy of *ayyars* (like a modern espionage network), in which all were called *ayyar* (like we use the word "spy") but some were ground agents and some were spymasters. In that sense, Amr would be a spymaster, while these informers would be plain ground agents, or lay spies. But nowhere in dictionaries do we find "*ayyar*" described as a "spy." In the text I have translated the word as "intelligencer," unless it is used as a suffix with the recognized tricksters' names, in which case it has been kept as "Ayyar" with a capital "A."

⁹ The word in the Urdu text is "*zāčča*," meaning a woman who has recently given birth to a child. She retains the status of a *zāčča* until the fortieth day after her delivery, after which her confinement ends and she could step out of the house. It is considered an auspicious moment because it signifies the woman's safe deliverance from all postnatal ailments as well.

¹⁰ Shab-e Barāt is the fourteenth night of the Islamic calendar month Sha'bān, which is considered holy by Muslims. Here it is probably used in the sense of "the night (*shab*) of the wedding procession (*barāt*)."

¹¹ See footnote 31, p. 138 above.

¹² A play on words, alluding to the straight vertical form of the first letter of the Arabic alphabet *alif* (*aleph*).

¹³ An arrangement of the Arabic alphabet based upon the numeric value of the letters from one to thousand called *abjad*. The first letter being *alif*, it is assigned the numeric value of one (1).

¹⁴ This is an untranslatable passage as there is a simultaneous play on sound and words here. "*Rā*" is a Persian suffix added to nouns to mark them as accusative or dative. The Mulla addresses Amr accusingly as "*Arē*'Amr" (O Amr!), and

Amr tells his teacher that he has become abusive, and that he (Amr) would retort by uttering “*lām, kāf*” (i.e., “*l*” and “*k*,” which stand for abusive speech).

¹⁵ I’m grateful to S. R. Faruqi for explaining that “hal atā” is borrowed from the opening words of al-Qur’ān 76, which, according to some interpreters of the Qur’ān, is about ‘Alī, hence he is often described as the “Tājdār” or “Ṣāhib” of “hal atā”—“he in whose honor the Qur’ānic chapter ‘Hal Atā’ is revealed.”

¹⁶ Namely, Muḥammad (first), Fāṭima (second), ‘Alī (third), Ḥasan (fourth), and Ḥusain (fifth). Here, however, ‘Alī is listed as the second of the five holies.

Glossary and Secondary Notes

- *Barkhia (Āṣaf b. Barkhiyā): He was minister of Solomon.
- *Behzād (Behzād): The legendary painter who headed the royal scriptorium at Herat in the time of King Ḥusain Bayqarā and his vizier, the great Chaghatay poet, ‘Alī Shēr Nevā’ī. Already during his lifetime Behzād’s work had become the standard for judging all other Persian painters. Later, when Bayqarā’s reign ended, the Safavid Emperor Shah Ismail brought Behzād over to Tabriz and put him in charge of the palace studio. (JMR)
- *Bismillah (*bismi ’l-Lāh*): A phrase which means “in the name of God”; uttered by Muslims before commencing an act; here, festivities following a child’s commencement of learning.
- *Burqa (*burqa*): A head-to-foot-long robe-like veil worn by South Asian Muslim women.
- *Children of Jan (Banī Jān): The jinn or genii; spirits; the balance of supernatural creatures, such as fairies, demons, etc. (S)
- *Collyrium of Solomon (*surma-e Sulaimānī*): a collyrium which makes one see the hidden treasures of the earth. In the *dāstān*, however, it makes one see jinns, *dēvs*, *parīs*, etc., who otherwise remain invisible to the human eye.
- *Ctesiphon (Mādā’in): Collective name of seven cities which flourished during the reign of Naushervan. (S)
- *Fateha (Fātiḥa): To cause blessings to be invoked upon a deceased relative; this is done by having the opening chapter of the *Qur’ān* read over the de-

ceased for forty days after his death, and distributing alms and food. (P)
Here (p. 235), the blessings are to be invoked on an offering of sweets.

- * Garshasb (Garshāsb): An ancestor of Rustam.
- * Ghol (*ghōl*): Commonly translated as “ghoul,” it is in reality an imaginary sylvan demon of different shapes and colors, supposed to devour man and animals; a co-genre of the European Loupagarou or man-wolf. (S)
- * Hatim (Ḥātim): An Arab chief of the Ṭai tribe, known for his generosity and boundless munificence.
- * Jafr: According to Steingass, the art of divining from certain characters written by ‘Alī upon a camel’s skin, which contains all events, past, present, and future; according to others, the art of making amulets or charms, said to originate with the Imām Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣādiq. Aṣ-Ṣa‘ālībī says that in this art a large part is played by interpretation of the numerical value of letters, the occult value of letters and numbers and their use. (§, p. 87, f. 8)
- * Lat (Arabic, al-Lāt): A cubic stone which was the major goddess of the people of Ṣaqīf in pre-Islamic Arabia. Condemned in the *Qur‘ān* (53:19), Allat was venerated by the Quraish as well as all the Arabs. They also used to name their children after her. She used to occupy the spot which is now the left-hand minaret of the mosque of aṭ-Ṭā‘if. Allat continued to be venerated until the Ṣaqīf embraced Islam, when the Apostle of God dispatched Muḡhīra b. Shu‘ba to demolish it. The latter did just that, burning her temple to the ground. (K, pp. 14–5)
- * Manat (Arabic, Manāt): The pre-Islamic goddess roundly condemned in the *Qur‘ān* (53:20). Manat was the most ancient of all idols. The Arabs used to name their children after her and sacrifice before her. The Quraish as well as the rest of the Arabs continued to venerate Manat until Muhammad set out against her in 8 A.H. and commissioned Ali to destroy her, which the latter did, carrying away all her treasures to the Prophet. (K, pp. 12–3)
- * Mani (Māni): A celebrated Persian painter and the founder of Manicheanism. The name of his book was *Artang*, which was also the name of his house. (S)
- * Mt. Qaf (Qāf): A fabulous mountain imagined to surround the world and to bind the horizon on all sides. (S)
- * Nariman (Narīmān): Name of a famous hero of Persia. Son of Qahraman (Qahramān), father of Sam.

- *Naushervan (Nūshīrvān): One “who has an immortal soul.” It is not really a name but a title or honorific appended to a name. Naushervan was the famous Sassanian Emperor who ruled Iran in the late sixth century.
- *Nihari (*nahāri*): A thick soupy dish seasoned with spices and eaten for breakfast.
- *Nim-tan (*nīm-tan* or *nīm-čherā*): A species of imaginary beings, having half a face, one eye, one arm, one foot. It is male and female, the male having the right hand, foot, etc., and the female the left; when united they resemble one human figure; when separate they are supposed to run with amazing speed on one foot and are considered very dangerous and cruel. (S)
- *Pandan (*pāndān*): A box in which betel and its apparatus are kept. (P)
- *Parizad (*parizād*): Fairy-born.
- *Ramal: A type of geomancy used to obtain information about the present and to predict the future. It is carried out by means of several small cubical objects like dice, whose facets are inscribed with coded numbers, letters and signs. Each of these markings signify a meaning. After the cubes have been cast upon the ground, the sides turned upward are read and their meanings related to each other. Sometimes repeated castings are required in order to elicit intelligible communication. The cubes are often made of sheep’s knucklebones. (WSW)
- *Rara-avis (*‘anqā*): A fabulous bird, also called *sīmurgh*, believed to live in the Caucasus and also in Arabia. It is said to live a certain number of years at the end of which it makes in Arabia a nest of spices, sings a melodious dirge, flaps its wings to set fire to the pile, burns itself to ashes, and comes forth to new life, to repeat the former operation. (WRB)
- *Rustam: The most renowned Persian hero. Son of Zal (Zāl), grandson of Sam (Sām).
- *Sahibqīran (Ṣāhibqīrān): “Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction.” Jupiter and Venus were thought to be benevolent planets, and their conjunction was therefore considered most fortunate. It was also the title of Timur, one of whose descendants, Babur (reg. 1526–30), was the founder of the Mughal Empire in India. Mughal Emperor Shah-Jahan (reg. 1628–57) inherited Timur’s title and was called Ṣāhibqīrān-e Ṣānī (“The Second Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction”). A monarch who has ruled for forty years is sometimes given this title. It has also been

applied to Jesus and the Prophet Muḥammad.

- *Sam (Sām): A celebrated hero in old Persian romance. Father of Zal, grandfather of Rustam.
- *Seven Climes (Haft Iqlīm): The division of the Earth by classical Islamic geographers into the Greek system of zones or climes.
- *Seven Concentric Circles (Haft Kishvar): A method of the classical Islamic geographers to divide Earth into the Persian system of seven concentric circles with Iraq as the cynosure, where the Sassanian Empire had its capital.
- *Shaddad (Shaddād b. ‘Ād): A cruel and merciless Eastern monarch, who arrogated divine power to himself. The founder of the Gardens of Iram (P and S). His architectural efforts are reviled in the *Qur’ān* (89:6–8).
- *Shimla: A turban.
- *Shir-mal (*shīrmāl*): Puffy, round bread made of flour kneaded with milk.
- *Tasma-paris (*tasma pari*): A fairy with long laces for legs and feet, like the “old-man-with-tentacles” that Sindbad encounters on an island during one of his voyages.
- *Tola: A measure of weight weighing 210 grains.
- *Zal (Zāl): A famous Persian prince. Father of Rustam, son of Sam.

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