



LA CHICA'BAHAR
A GIRL CALLED

SPRING

SHORT STORIES BY JYOTSNA LAL

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PROLOGUE

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01 LA CHICA'BAHAR

I'm Bahar Fakhraie, an Iranian teenager, I'm the only girl in the family among many brothers hence I was named Bahar meaning spring. My Dad Karim Fakhraie, a translator for European firms, affectionately calls me La'Chica Bahar meaning my girl Bahar.

Girls don't have the right to choose the major they like to study. The government decides for them based on the score one gets from the overall exam for the university admission entrance.

Since there are more applicants than actual spots in the colleges, the government will determine what who will study and therefore the government will decide what the person will become. Everybody studies hard to get into the university and then get accepted to the major of their interest. Thanks to my uncle Farzad Taghaboni's relations in India. I came to know about the foreign student cell in Sam Higginbottom Institute of Technology and Agriculture a deemed University, uncle Farzad Taghaboni's son who lives in California, his father in law was the head of chemistry department before he migrated

to US. I have got admission in Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture and Technology for Masters in physics session. I celebrated my birthday June 14 in Tehran and took the Emirates flight via Dubai to Allahabad, international port was Delhi.

I was received at the airport by Rita Richards and her husband Edwin in early hours of the morning at Allahabad airport.

Allahabad named by Mughal emperor Akbar as the city of Allah, you can see here the Triveni Sangam the confluence of the rivers Ganges, Yamuna and underground river Saraswati. Nearby is the old fort built by Akbar. I visited the museum and learnt a great deal about the ancient history of India. The ancestral home of the Nehrus where Mr Gandhi [Father of Indian nation] often stayed who had adopted Feroz Gandhi

One of the best things about Allahabad is that it is a very laid back town quiet and life here is much more comfortable, less traffic and ample greenery. The new Yamuna bridge is a great place to hang out on a cool evening when the cool breeze just blows through your hair. You can sit on the sandy beaches and enjoy a great sunset. Allahabad is the hometown of "Amitabh Bacchan" The star of the millennium.

The Sam Higginbottom university is away from the hustle bustle of the city, situated on the bank of Yamuna, right opposite to it on the other bank is the Ewin Christian college. River Yamuna which flows down from the city of Agra and Delhi meets the river Ganga in a grand merger at Sangam in Allahabad

If you happen to visit the old city of Allahabad which is

called sheher (Ironic ! Isn't it?) by people living near the university campus, you can know it yourself that bad state and poor maintenance of infrastructure and basic public amenities have reduced the city to a little over a village.

In contrast, the roads, drainage system and proper town planning do really exist in and around the University area. The lush green Sam Higginbottom campus is a visual treat for morning walkers/joggers who are found strolling/jogging/running on the campus roads. I'm a ninja, often practice in the early hours before anyone wakes up as I staying with the Richards.No one is aware of my past .Every one was impressed to know that I practised the Japanese ninjutsu martial arts , ofcourse they never guessed that I was a full fledged Ninja . Japanese ninja focuse on the development of self-control, patience and self-respect including unarmed self-defense and the use of weapons.

A lot of women that train in ninjutsu in Iran. The reason is simple: ninjutsu requires a full-body keikogi, a traditional uniform that must be worn during training. Since the training gear covers the whole body, ninjutsu classes attract women of all ages, including those who follow the strict Sharia rules.



Dr Rita Richards had a meeting in Delhi ,so she decided to take me along for somesightseeing. From Allahabad we headed to Delhi by overnight train. I was surprised to find that despite the fact that it took almost 18 hours to get to Delhi . I actually quite enjoyed the train ride. We were in the third AC class, and each had a sleeper bunks. The beds were three high, with the middle one folding down to become a seat during the day. I slept surprisingly well though the night. The train was about an hour and a half late, which was not bad as they are pretty frequently delayed a lot longer than that. We spent the early afternoon touring around Delhi, stopped by the house of Rita's college friend of from high school in Connaught Place, and then took the metro to Old Delhi. We walked along Chandni Chowk, an old market street

that they found rather crowded with a lot of people hassling us as foreigners, stopped by by a Jain temple, that housed a bird hospital. It was rather odd walking around the bird hospital without shoes on (you took them off entering the complex) but there were some pretty interesting birds, along with some quite sick birds, that were being housed there.

I saw Jama Masjid which is apparently the largest mosque in India. As it was Friday they were actually there during the call to prayer Namaz , and it really reminded me of Tehran seeing hundreds of men bow down to pray. The crowd exiting the mosque after prayers

The Mosque was huge, but unfortunately didn't get to go up the towers since I were carrying cameras and didn't want to bother getting tickets to take them in. We did get more stares than usual, and people trying to sneak pictures of us which was rather annoying.

From there we drove around the Raj-Path, Parliament, Presidents residence and the giant India Gate. they were staying with an iranian family who are friends of Rita's family's from allahabad . I must say it was incredibly nice to in some ways step back into an iranian lifestyle for a couple of days. We had a delicious spaghetti dinner complete with Garlic Bread.

I went to the Gandhi Museum, had lunch in Kahn Market and saw the National Museum, saw the ashokan peace symbol at the Gandhi museum

I really need to read more about Mr Gandhi, I know very little about him but he really was an incredible man. The museum is in the house that he spent his last 140 odd days before he was assassinated in the back garden. Although there was really too much to read it was a pretty cool museum. There was kind of an odd interactive section on the top floor- but there were guides that led you through and ended up doing most of the inter-active stuff for you which was rather odd. Dr Rita and I had lunch in the upscale Kahn Market, really great Pizza and pasta. I ended the day at the National Museum of modern art which had some cool exhibits along with a few odd Indian touches. There were several main exhibits that you had to walk through empty rooms to get to, and then several exhibits you walked through in succession, and then had to walk back through them all to get out. The third floor also didn't really have lights turned on in the hallway, but there were some cool exhibits. They had a bunch of old coins and did a good job of explaining the different methods of coin making. There was a massive collection of miniature paintings, some stunningly beautiful crafts and decorations, an exhibit on the history of the maritime force/navy and a cool exhibit on textiles. I was surprised to see a Egyptian statue of a pharaoh from 2,000 bc chilling in the hallway, and some random French and Thai stuff. Beautiful chariot outside the National Museum in Delhi

The local guide informed me that Delhi had once been the a part of the ancient Mughal kingdom , the Red fort was the imperial residence . He told me the Red Fort in Agra is more impressive and I should go to see the Qutubh Minar which we did,situated in the mehrauli area

and saw ancient wonder.

I feel like I am starting to get to know Delhi a little bit- and am still incredibly impressed with the efficiency and wide reach of the Metro. It's a really great way to get around the City. I don't know if I'd want to spend a whole lot of time there, but it wasn't a bad place to visit, and there are still a couple of things I'd like to see there. I also liked old Delhi even though it was extremely a crowded ,noisy and the most polluted city

Well, that's it for travel week- although it was a great trip it's also nice to be back home in Allahabad. This week I have a couple of papers and presentations to finish up, It will be busy but interesting. Time has really been flying- it's hard to believe I'm enjoying my time in India.

02 A GIRL CALLED SPRING

Family and friends brought baby shower gifts such as a cot, toys

and baby clothes. she made sure there was a sufficient supply of pastry, cookies, fresh and dried fruits and special nuts on hand, plus tea .Some names were suggested if it was a boy like EhsAn (Goodness of God) or Amjad(farsi Most excellent, glorious) Ofcourse if it's a girl child then BahAr Spring (season),BahArak Small Spring (season) or BahAreh Someone who brings the spring (or a sprint flower)

It has become a fixture of modern medical practice: women giving birth in the comforting presence of

the father-to-be. Now a custom long seen as a sign of western social progress is being adopted in the conservative

setting of Iran as doctors seek to wean the country's women off their preference for caesarean births.

Sarem hospital in Tehran became the first in Iran to allow a father inside a delivery room for the birth of his child.

The hospital is offering couples the chance to stay together during childbirth after being told that it is permissible under Iran's Islamic laws. The atmosphere in delivery rooms seemed so peaceful and I wondered if it was because the fathers were there.

So I offered it to the husband Karim whose name in farsi means 'Generous' of one of my patients Najmeh Fakhraie

"He agreed after we asked if it was religiously permissible and were told that it was. We gave the mother a low epidural. The environment was very spiritual and friendly, with husband and wife laughing and joking. The mother was able to help the medical team a little and delivered the baby, a girl, without great discomfort. The husband was emotional and in tears." His mother was also present.

This baby born on June 14, 1985 was called SRING Bahar

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Same day, Trans World Airlines Flight 847, a flight from Cairo to San Diego with en route stops in Athens, Rome, Boston, and Los Angeles. After an uneventful flight from Cairo to Athens, a new

crew boarded Flight 847. The new crew in Athens were Captain John Testrake, First Officer Philip Maresca,

Flight Engineer Christian Zimmermann, Flight Service Manager Uli Derickson, Flight Attendant Judith Cox, Flight Attendant Hazel Hesp, Flight Attendant Elizabeth Howes, and Flight Attendant Helen Sheahan. On the morning of Friday, June 14, 1985 Flight 847 was hijacked by members of Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad shortly after take off from Athens. Most important, the hijackers were identified by an accomplice as members of Islamic Jihad (or Holy War), the shadowy Shi'ite Muslim organization that is regarded as a sort of umbrella for various fundamentalist terror groups operating in Lebanon and other Middle East countries. Sympathetic to Iran's revolutionary ruler, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and quite possibly subsidized by the Iranian leadership, Islamic Jihad and its confederates are blamed for many of the suicide bombing missions that have afflicted American and other Western military bases and diplomatic missions in the Middle East in the past two years. At 10:10am, Flight 847 departed Athens for Rome. It was commandeered shortly after takeoff by two Arabic - speaking Lebanese men who had smuggled a pistol and two grenades through the Athens airport security. One was later identified as Mohammed Ali Hamadi, who was later captured and sentenced to life imprisonment in Germany. [The Shiite Hezbollah terrorists who immediately demand to know the

identity of those with Jewish-sounding names. Two of the Lebanese terrorists, armed with grenades and a 9-mm. pistol, then forced the plane to land in Beirut, Lebanon. On a political level, the hijackers of Flight 847 called for the release not only of the Lebanese Shi'ites still held by Israel, but of a few others imprisoned in Cyprus and Kuwait. They also demanded the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon (a pullout has been under way since January and, except for patrols and forays back into the border area, is now virtually complete) and international condemnation of the U.S. and Israel. In a broader sense, the Shi'ites of Lebanon, newly radicalized by the violence that has plagued their country, particularly since the Israeli invasion of June 1982, are seeking a fairer shake after generations of neglect and discrimination by Lebanon's wealthier and more powerful Maronite Christians and Sunni Muslims. The hijackers were seeking the release of 700 Shi'ite Muslims from Israeli custody. Beyond all that, the Shi'ite fanatical fringe, inspired by the example of the Iranian revolution, wants to destroy the last vestiges of Western "decadence" in the Islamic world, particularly the presence of the U.S., that "Great Satan." Whether the hijackers of Flight

847 fitted into that category, or were exemplars of a more classical political terrorism, bent on achieving specific ends in the region, was not yet known. Millions around the world watched their television sets or listened to their radios as the horrific drama unfolded. "He has pulled a hand-grenade pin and is ready to blow up the aircraft if he has to. We must, I repeat, we must land at Beirut. We must land at Beirut. No alternative." After much delay, the curious, grudging reply of the Beirut control tower: "Very well. Land. Land quietly. Land quietly." Then another desperate plea: "They are beating the passengers. They are threatening to kill the passengers. We want fuel now. Immediately. Five minutes at most, or he is going to kill the passengers." After that, another, more excited, more hostile voice, in broken English: "The plane is booby-trapped. If anyone approaches, we will blow it up. Either refueling the plane or blowing it up. No alternative." The plane was diverted from its original destination of Rome, in airspace over Greece, to the Middle East and made its first stop, for several hours, at the Beirut International Airport in Lebanon, where 19 passengers were allowed to

leave in exchange for fuel. Shortly before landing, air traffic control initially refused to let them land in Beirut. Captain Testrake argued with air traffic control until they relented. "He has pulled a hand-grenade pin and is ready to blow up the aircraft if he has to. We must, I repeat, we must land at Beirut. We must land at Beirut. No alternative.

During this time, Lebanon was in the midst of a civil war, and Beirut was divided into sectors controlled by different Shia militia Amal and Hezbollah.

Beirut International Airport, surrounded by a Shia neighborhood, had no perimeter security, which had been over-run by Islamic militias, and nearby residents could simply drive onto the runway. The hijackers had systematically and regularly beaten all the military passengers, but during this stop they selected U.S. Navy diver, Robert Stethem, beat him, shot him in the right temple, and dumped his body out of the plane onto the ramp and shot him again, seeking permission from other Shia Muslims operating the control tower to obtain more fuel. Seven American passengers, alleged to have Jewish-sounding surnames, were taken off the jet and held hostage in a Shia

prison in Beirut.

After airport authorities complied, the stricken plane took off from Beirut, where it had landed after having been hijacked out of Athens. Hours later, it landed in Algiers, then took off again and returned late that night to Beirut, the tension rising, the crew bone-weary. And minutes after landing, the senseless slaying of a hostage, and a harsh voice over the plane's radio: "You see? You now believe it. There will be another in five minutes," and the nightmare rolled on.

On 15 June The proud parents Karim and Najmeh Fakhraie brought home Baby BahAr with much rejoicing ,she was the first girl among many brothers. The Family knew nothing about the hijacking byThe Shiite Hezbollah terrorists. Typically, the relatives and friends visit the new baby, The visits naturally have to be relatively short, . Every relatives announces in advance to the family and which days of the week or holidays are their reception days.

In the beginning, the hijackers were outnumbered by their captives 153 to 2, and U.S. authorities tended to believe that the terrorists

would soon be overwhelmed by exhaustion if nothing else. By Sunday morning, however, with the plane on the ground in Algiers, the ranks of the hijackers had swelled to between twelve and 15, and all but 32 male American passengers and crewmen had been released (another passenger was later freed in order to receive medical treatment). The gunmen set a 10 a.m. deadline (5 a.m. E.D.T.) for their demands to be met, but then inexplicably left Algiers more than an hour ahead of time. Once again, their destination was Beirut. On landing there, they demanded the release of 50 fellow Shi'ite Muslims currently detained in Israel; such a gesture was justified, the hijackers said, by their freeing of three American men the night before in Algiers. The terrorists had been seeking the release of 700 Shi'ites from Israeli custody, and this appeared to be the first step in realizing that goal. If Israel and presumably the U.S.) balked, declared the hijackers, "our blood will be a witness." Nearly a dozen well-armed men joined the hijackers before the plane returned to Algiers the following day, Saturday, 15 June, where an additional 65 passengers and all

five female cabin crew members (flight attendants and purser) were released. That afternoon, the aircraft continued on across the Mediterranean to Algiers, Algeria, where 20 passengers were released during a five-hour stop before heading back to Beirut that night. The passengers and crew endured a three-day intercontinental ordeal; passengers were threatened and some beaten. Passengers with Jewish-sounding names were moved apart from the others. United States Navy diver Robert Stethem was killed, and his body was thrown onto the tarmac. Dozens of passengers were held hostage over the next two weeks until released by their captors after some of their demands were met. The hijackers wished to fly to Tehran, but mysteriously returned to Beirut for a third time on Sunday afternoon, 16 June, and remained there for unknown reasons. (The pilot working as Flight Engineer deemed this portion of events could be dangerous to any who may be involved in future situations. The other pilots agreed with him to withhold details of his actions from the media.) The initial demands of the hijackers included: the release of the "Kuwait 17," those involved in the 1983 bombing of the U.S. embassy in Kuwait, the release

of all 766 mainly Lebanese Shias transferred to Israel's Atleat Prison in conjunction with immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, international condemnation of Israel and the United States.

The Greek government released the accomplice, Ali Atwa, and in exchange the hijackers released eight Greek citizens, including Greek pop singer Demis Roussos, to be flown by a Greek government business jet from Algiers back to Athens.

By Monday afternoon, June 17, the 40 remaining hostages had been taken from the plane and held hostage throughout Beirut by the Hezbollah. Nabih Berri was the chief of the Amal militia and the Minister of Justice in the fractured Lebanon cabinet. One of the hostages was released when he developed heart trouble. The other 39 remained captive until intervention by US President Ronald Reagan with Lebanese officials on 30 June, when they and the pilots held captive on the airplane were collected in a local schoolyard and met with international journalists, then driven to Syria by the International Red Cross to the Sheraton Hotel and a press conference in

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