



O Friend of long-standing

Yár-í-Deerin



This Epistle is the summary of the life of our father; Mírzá Siyávash-i-Sefídvash.

It comprises: the opposition and aggression towards the Faith, from the Zoroastrian Priests of the time; the hostility and conflict of the ignorant regarding the Faith of God and the heavenly confirmation and blessings of the Beloved of the Worlds toward the inhabitants of the city of Faithfulness.

Premise penned by Mírzá Siyávash Sefídvash in his Will as the prelude to his memoirs.

Synopsis of the life of Mírzá Siyávash-í-Sefídvash

Mírzá Siyávash-í-Sefídvash was born in 1875 in to an orthodox Zoroastrian family in Yazd where he himself admits to the strict disciplined observance of all the customs and traditions of Zoroastrian life. He declared his Faith in 1895/1896 at the age of 21.

After his declaration, Mírzá Siyávash made great efforts to teach the Cause to his family; members of the Zoroastrian community; Zoroastrian scholars and High Priests. He firmly defended the fulfilment of Zoroastrian prophesies regarding the advent of Sháh Bahrám in Bahá'u'llah and sternly withstood the onslaught of opposition that followed from the Priests of Yazd.

He was granted the bounty of being in the presence of Abdul'Bahá on several occasions and blessed with many tablets revealed in his honour. Mírzá Siyávash was graciously granted the gift of Abdul'Bahá's walking cane prior to The Master's departure for America, as well as several other items bestowed upon him by the Master on other occasions such as a Ring, Prayer beads, Candle and Handkerchief.

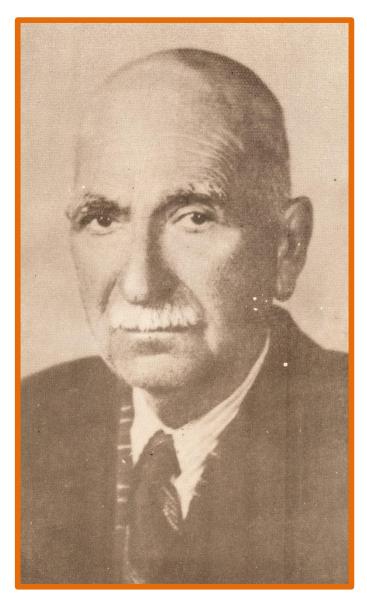
Among his accomplishments:

- He was the founding member of the "Parsian Brothers Company"; a company established for the dual
 purpose of employing the unemployed persecuted members of the Bahá'í community; and to provide
 financial returns for the benefit of the Faith.
- He was instrumental in establishing the first Bahá'i cemetery of Yazd, named "Golestan-í-Jávíd" (the everlasting garden).
- He actively pursued and procured the original tablets of the Báb to the king (Muhammad Sháh) for The Master - pursuant to the Master's instructions.
- Was an appointed member of the World's first and second Local Spiritual Assemblies in Tehran and served on that holy institution alongside the members of the Hands of the Cause.
- Mírzá Siyávash made arrangements for the publication and distribution of several self-complied Bahá'í
 books and pamphlets both in an effort to assist the friends in their teaching efforts and to make Baha'u'llah's
 writings more widely accessible to Baha'is at a time when publications were rare.
- He secured the land for the Bahá'i Centre of Tehran and as per the instructions of the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran and later transferred the deed in to the name of the Guardian.
- Was requested (among several others) by the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran to assist in fulfilling the Guardian's direction to procure land along the slopes of the Alborz mountains in northern Tehran for the future Bahá'í House of Worship.

Under the direction of the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, Mírzá Siyávash wrote a summary of his life story for the magazine "Star of the West" which was published in America at the time.

**

2



Mírzá Siyávash Sefídvash

Original Publication by the National Bahá'í Publishing Trust: BE 132

A note from the Translators

The following text is a translation of the life story of Mírzá Siyávash-í-Sefídvash who documented the significant events of his life with his own pen.

In his will, Mírzá Siyávash conferred the responsibility of having his memoirs organised, arranged and published to his 5 children; his written testimonial requests his children to seek the approval of their relevant Assembly for the day and having attained this approval, publish his memoirs accessible free of charge for future generations.

After his passing in 1958, Mírzá Siyávash's three sons attempted to assemble the memoirs as per their father's request. However soon after this task had commenced, two of the three brothers departed Iran. The completion of the memoirs became complicated as each son lived in a different country; Kaykhosrow in Italy (pioneering), Rostam in Ireland (pioneering) and Ennáyat-i-Khodá in Iran.

Special consideration must be given to the enormity of the task undertaken by these sons; Other than the inability to sit together and consult, the transcripts they each composed were hand written. This meant that mistakes made in compiling the data, the editing of the text and the inclusion of missing information resulted in phrases, sentences and large paragraphs being crossed out and re-written with additions and corrections made along the margins of each page in small font. Moreover, they had to resort to attaching supporting material/documentation with tape to the original manuscript.

In 2013, during a telephone conversation with Rostam (the only living son of Mírzá Siyávash at the time), the translators made mention of the progress of their translations from the published Persian Book- Yár-i-Deerin. Rostam revealed that he was in fact in the possession of the original three hand-written manuscripts that he and his brothers had compiled some 40 years ago and that the Persian published book "Yár-i-Deerin" had gaps in its published content due to the political sensitivities of the time.

Rostam clarified the matter in this way; in the mid 1970's, the final effort of Mírzá Siyávash's three sons to compile his life story was forwarded to a Bahá'í "publishing" committee established under the guidance of the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran. This Publishing Committee was charged with the authority to approve and publish submitted Bahá'í material. After the perusal of the draft submitted, the committee determined that certain sections of the book may - owing to the sensitive political situation of the time - be the cause of further misunderstandings and difficulties for the Bahá'í community and thus parts of the book were omitted before it was finally published 18 years after the passing of Mírzá Siyávash in 1976 under the title "Yár-í-Deerin". As a result, the Persian book and this translation do not completely marry up as the sections previously omitted (mostly to do with the tablets revealed in his honour, the purchase of land for the Bahá'i House of Worship, the Tehran Bahá'í Centre, his personal poems and so on) have been painstakingly identified by the translators and added back into the translation of this book. Further differences come from the addition made to this text from relevant material gleaned from Ennáyat-i-Khodá compilation titled "Historical documents letters and tablets pertaining to the life of Mírzá Siyávash".

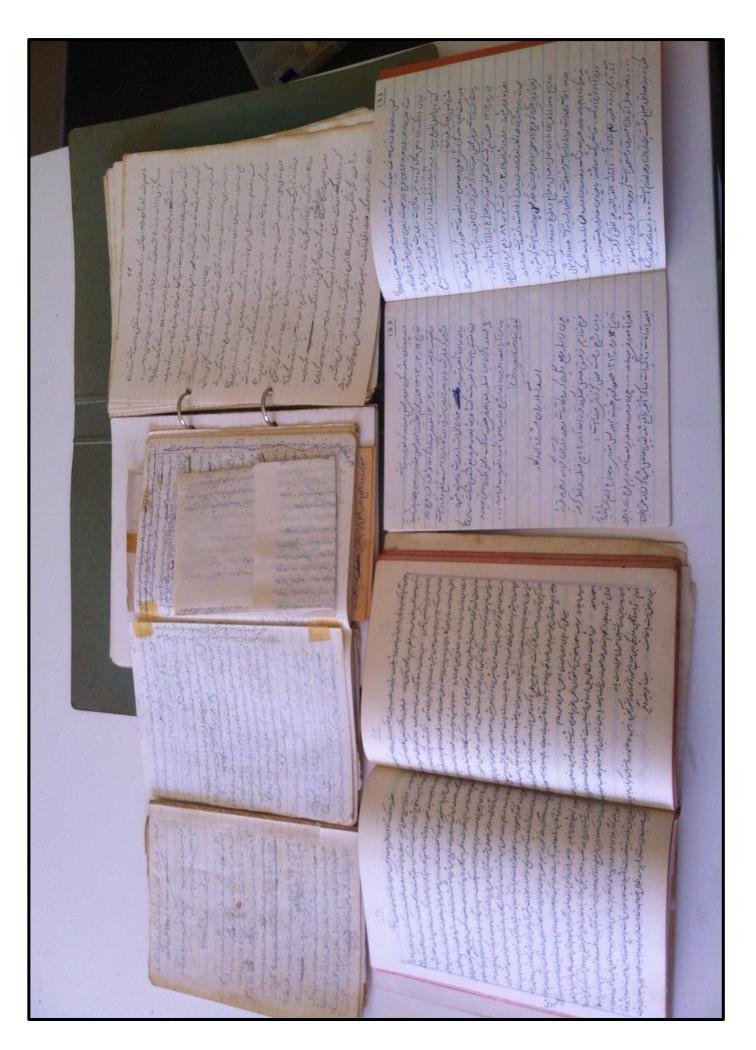
Having been made aware of the existence of these original hand-written manuscripts, the translators became very excited and sought after them from Rostam. Unfortunately, Rostam clarified that several years earlier he had searched extensively but failed to locate their whereabouts in his attic. Owning to his failing sight and frailty, he was not optimistic about the prospects of finding the scripts. The translators then contacted another grandson of Mírzá Siyávash (Manouchehr Manuchehri) who was living in Ireland and requested him to offer his aid and assistance to Rostam in this matter, in the faint hope of achieving the ultimate prize. The two elderly men got together soon after and worked feverishly for hours sweating in the heat and dust of the attic looking through boxes and plastic bags until – Praised be to God, they achieved their goal. Rostam gave the original manuscripts to Manouchehr who, fortuitously was headed for Australia for a visit (where the translators reside) within the same week. In this manner and clearly through divine intervention, these original manuscripts were located and made their way to Australia.

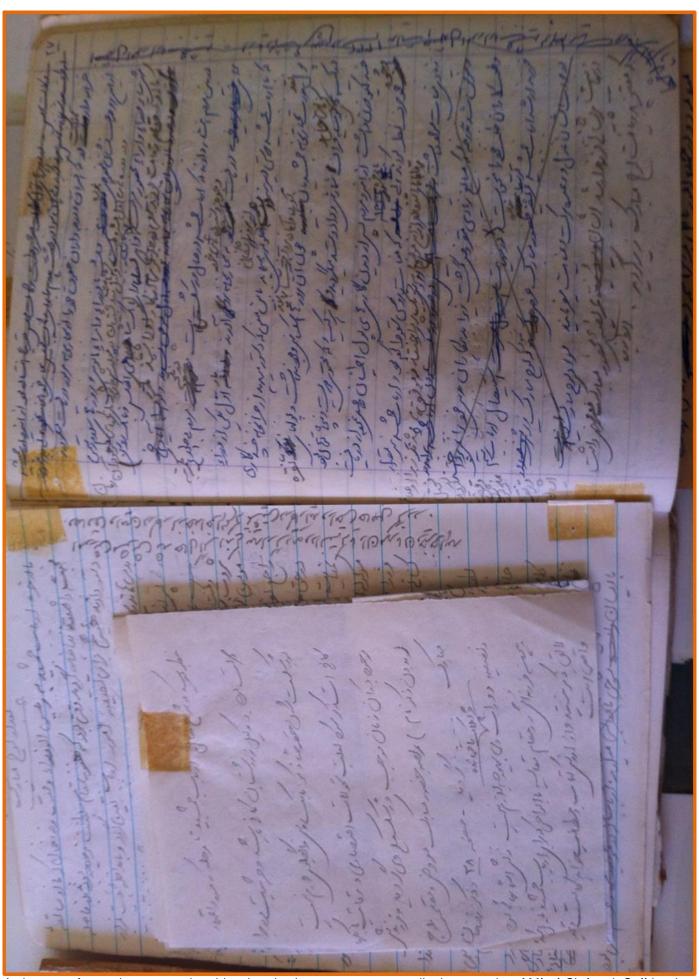
The pages of the three original manuscripts brought to Australia had so dramatically disintegrated over time that the pages of the books were falling out; those still attached were yellow with age; and the tapes used originally to attach additions to the manuscripts were reduced to yellow band aids. Of greater concern, the pages of the manuscripts smelled of damp and mould. Once the original manuscripts were procured by the translators, arrangements were made to have two physical copies made of all three original transcripts. In addition to this, each page was electronically scanned and kept as a back-up record.

The original manuscripts were returned to Rostam through Manouchehr along with a fresh copy of the set as well as the unfinished works of the translators to seek his advice, feedback or additions.



The original transcripts of the book Yár-i-Deerin complied by Mírzá Siyávash's three sons. The black, pink and coverless exercise books together form the one oldest attempt at compiling these memoirs. The mustard coloured book is another effort and then the file.





A close up of a random page - the oldest hand written attempt to compile the memoirs of Mírzá Siyávash Sefídvash

It was then the lot of the translators to begin the arduous and complicated task of reconciling the three manuscripts with the published version of "Yár-i-Deerin" and the compilation of Ennáyatúlláh to ascertain gaps or omitted information. Please note that little has been excluded as part of this translation. The sections that were omitted are as follows:

- A lengthy lists of names of ordinary individuals Mírzá Siyávash stayed with, visited or taught the Faith to in relation to his teaching travels through India;
- Several general advice tablets addressed by the Master to a long list of Zoroastrian believers with Mírzá Siyávash listed as an addressee (which have been scanned and included here in the Persian language but not translated into English)
- The greater part of Mírzá Siyávash's personal poems and odes. All have been scanned and included while only a small sample selection has been translated.

The constraints of technology at the time inevitably meant that the transcript approved for publication by the committee as the book for Yár-i-Deerin is written and presented somewhat out of sequence. The bi-lingual reader will appreciate that the Persian and English languages are vastly different in their grammar, sentence composition and in their manner of their presentation of ideas. A delicate balance had to be struck between remaining faithful to the original text and rearranging the ideas into pages and paragraphs that would read sequentially for a native English speaker.

Additional materials in the form of Footnotes, photographs and maps have been added into the body of the text to assist the reader. The names and spelling of Persian words largely follow the example of the Guardian's spelling and are not phonically recorded.

In response to receiving the unfinished translation carried back to Ireland by Manouchehr, Rostam became very excited and offered several clarifications and suggestions. He also made arrangements to post several never-before seen images of the family (included in chapter 36) as well as an audio-tape of a brief 20 minute interview with Mírzá Siyávash recorded shortly before his passing. In the audio recording, Mírzá Siyávash chants a prayer and speaks very briefly about his life while he is interviewed by two of his sons - Rostam and Ennáyat-i-Khodá.

The CD of the interview with Mírzá Siyávash sent over was hard to decipher and understand. The recording was taken to a recording radio studio in Australia where a contact was able to amplify the volume of the recording and omit background noise and interference which has significantly improved the sound quality of the 1950's recording. After three copies of the recording were made, the original CD recording accompanied by an improved copy was back sent to Rostam in appreciation of his efforts.

The original Persian book "Yár-í-Deerin" contains only three photographs; these and the hand written memoirs of Mírzá Siyávash were in the possession of Mírzá Siyávash's youngest son – the late Ennáyat-i-Khodá. In the early 1980's, during the height of the opposition of the Iranian government, revolutionary guards stormed the home of Ennáyat-i-Khodá and confiscated Bahá'í books, papers and files and placed him in prison. Praised be to God that the original of the Tablets written to Mírzá Siyávash by the Master had been sent to the Beloved Guardian in the Holy land many years prior. It is a testament to the Will of God that his memoirs have survived at all. Had Mírzá Siyávash himself not documented the major events of his own life; had he not bequeathed the responsibility of publishing his memoirs to his children in his will; had his children not been faithful to their father's wishes after his passing and failed to publish his memoirs - then we would not have the Persian "Yár-i-Deerin" to use as the foundation of this translation - as some of the documents and materials would have been destroyed in early 1980's.

It should be noted that the personal record and documentation of Mírzá Siyávash of his own memoirs were very brief and he bequeathed the responsibility of expanding and explaining the content to his children.

The translators could not ascertain the whereabouts of the original of the three photographs in the book Yár-i-Deerin; thus the images captured in the grainy black and white photographs of the book which have been scanned and included - are remarkable and priceless; such as those of the members of the world's first and second elected Local Spiritual Assemblies.

In studying the contents of this text, the reader needs to be conscious of the fact that this translation is not a professional effort. In particular, the translation of the letters and tablets received from Abdul'Bahá posed insurmountable obstacles for amateur translators. Numerous dual language dictionaries have been utilised in an attempt to translate these tablets as accurately as possible.

It must be noted that the tablets and epistles of 'Abdu'lBahá translated <u>are only provisional translations and not</u> the translations approved by The Universal House of Justice.

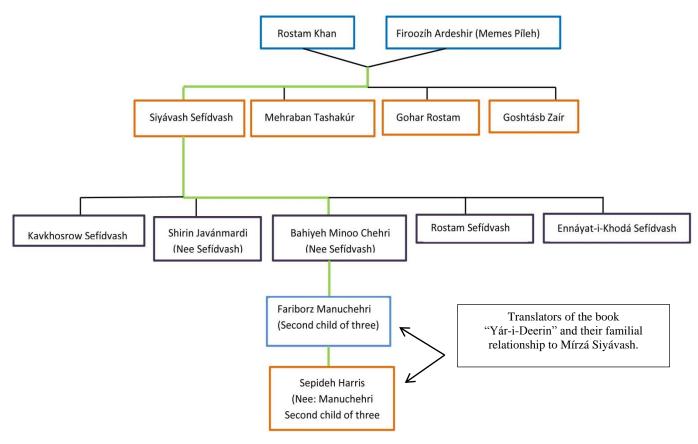
As an indication to the interested reader, it took the translators and their several dictionaries some 2 and half hours to translate two medium length sentences of The Master's tablets from Farsi into in to English. As a consequence of

this experience, the translators have found a heightened level of appreciation, respect, love and gratitude to the genius that was the beloved Guardian who meticulously and arduously translated complicated and abstruse Writings from Persian and Arabic into masterpieces in the English language; only future generations and historians will be able to fully appreciate His unique Gifts, His exceptional talents, His supreme genius and His unprecedented Sacrifices.

This current translation of the Farsi text of "Yár-í-Deerin" into English was carried out over a four year period by two of Mírzá Siyávash's descendants; namely, his grandson Fariborz Manuchehri and great-granddaughter Sepideh Harris- in loving collaboration. Fariborz and Sepideh are both bi-lingual; His strength is the Farsi language, hers the English. For the translators the motivation for this translation came from the necessity of the decedents of Mírzá Siyávash in the west to possess the knowledge and understanding of their family roots and take pride in the achievements of their forefather – using his example as a means of inspiration and dedication to serve the Cause.

Furthermore, it is evident and apparent that should this current generation of bi-lingual descendants fail to collaborate together using their unique dual language capacities to translate these precious memoirs, then potentially the latter generations in the west shall remain heedless of the knowledge and achievements of their forefather for a long time to come.

Family connection - the translators to Mírzá Siyávash.



The surname "Minoo Chehr" was graciously bestowed upon Bahiyeh's father-in-law Manouchehr by the Master in a tablet revealed in his honour. "Minoo Chehr" translates to "Radiant face". Over the passage of time this beautiful surname bestowed so graciously has been sadly shortened to Manouchehri.

من درافي حاند روما ان د

Original: The hand written will of Mírzá Siyávash Sefídvash in which he bequeaths the responsibility of publishing his memoirs to his children. Mírzá Siyávash passed away in 1958

وصیت نامه اقا میرزا سیاوش سفید وش اوست باقی و ساینده

این بنده سیاوس سفید وسباکهال امید واری به هریک فرزندان عزیز خود خواهش و وصیصت می نمایم که بعداز وفاتم از این عالم فانی همه نوشتجات گنجانیده شده نامبرده درفصول هفت گانه ذیلرا که در صند وق نوشتجات موجود می باشد در موقع فرصت به دقت رسیدگی و ملاحظه و مطالعه نموده و باهم ارتباط داده و متدرجا به نظر اربابان دانس و بینسس رسانیده که سهو و غلط های املائی و انشاء آن را اصلاح و تصحیح نمایند و پس ازان در موقع مقتضی که اعلاء امر الهی و رسمیت و ازادی عمومی بوده باشد برای اگاهی و تذکر ایندگا با اجازه محفل مقدس روحانی آن زمان ، قضایای تاریخی گذشته را به عبارت ذیل طبع ومنتشر نمایند . مجانیا . و از قرائت کنندگان هم تمنا و استدعا دارم که به چشم خطاپوش نظرد دار برای این بنده شرمنده طلب عفو و غفران از ساحت قدس محبوب عالمیان نمایند .

ای د عا ازتو اجابت هم ز تواست .

رساله ،خلاصه شرح ایمان و گزارس زندگانی پدرمان سیاوش سفید وش و مقاومت دستوران ان زمان و مرد مان ناید انان در امریزد آن و شامل بودن عنایات محبوب عالمیان به اهل ایمان موجب فصول هفتگانه زیز می باشد:

فصل اول: شرح بد ایست زندگی و گزارش ایمانی وی از سال ۱۳۱۳ قمری تا ۱۳۱۸ فصل دوم: قضیه خوشی و ناخوشی جسمانی و روحانی ایشان درسال ۱۳۲۹ هـجری قمری فصل سوم: یا د داشتهای مسافرت به ارض اقد ستا مراجعت به طهران در سال ۱۳۳۰ قمری فصل چهارم: مطبوعات جلاتینی منتشره در ۲ اشماره که ابلاغ امرد ربین زردشتیان گردیده به صورت سئوال و جواب در سنه ۱۳۳۱ هجری قمری .

فصل پنجم: نه بند اشعاری بوده که به وصول عکس عنایتی مبارک و بیان حسن ختام و اینکه رضای مبارک حضرت عبد البها و ماسواه فد اهبر عبودیت محضه صرفه بوده سروده و به ساحت ندس ارسال گردیده خدمت حضرت حید ر قبل علی علیه ۹ درسال ۱۳۳۲ وجوابم قبولیت نوشته افصل ششم : گزارش تاریخی مخالفت و مقاومت دستوران و تاسیس شرکت گلستان و رضای ان از سال ۱۳۳۲ لغایت سنه ۱۳۳۷ عجری

فصلهفتم : شرح مسافرت به عند وستان تا مراجعت به ایران دراواخرسال ۱۳۳۸تا اوایس سال ۱۳۴۰ . بعلاوه ممکن است فرزند آن عزیز هرچه را صلاح دانند با تصویب و معیست د وستان راستان د و فصل دیگر اضافه نمایند که نه فصل تما مبود ه باشد و الا فلا .

The same page of the Will of Mírzá Siyávash typed in his Native tongue; note there are several errors in the typed copy.

Will of Mírzá Siyávash

Page 2

He is the Eternal the Everlasting!

I Siyávash-i-Sefídvash bequeath and beseech each of my children to take all the written accounts of my life - arranged across seven chapters and placed in my writing container — and have it published in the following manner after my passing from this earthly realm:

Examine, consider, peruse and study its contents; Draw, connect and organize the chapters together; make arrangements for one who is knowledgeable to correct and rectify shortcomings in spelling and grammar; obtain the permission and approval of the Spiritual Assembly for that era and publish these memoirs at a time when the Faith has achieved formal recognition - is widely promulgated and its freedom of speech established - for the knowledge, benefit and awareness of future generations. Once printed and published it is to be accessible to the public free of charge.

To those who read these words, I beg and beseech you to look upon these memoirs with a sincovering eye and I implore you to beg forgiveness and pardon for my soul at the Holy Threshold of the Beloved of the Worlds.

O thou who hast revealed prayer and supplication Acceptance and sanction are thine too

¹This Epistle is the summary of the life of our father; Mírzá Siyávash-i-Sefídvash. It comprises: the opposition and aggression towards the Faith from the Zoroastrian Priests of the time; the hostility and conflict of the ignorant in the Faith of God; and the heavenly confirmation and blessings of the Beloved of the Worlds toward the inhabitants of the city of Faithfulness.

The epistle comprising the accounts of my life are contained in the following seven chapters:

<u>Chapter 1:</u> My early life and the events pertaining to my declaration in 1313HG (1895/96) up to aged 22.

Chapter 2: The events of my physical and spiritual illness in 1329 HG (1911).

Chapter 3: Memoirs from my pilgrimage and return journey to Tehran in 1330 H.G (1912).

<u>Chapter 4:</u> 12 Gelatine printed pamphlets teaching the faith among the Zoroastrians in the format of questions and answers in 1331 H.G (1913)

<u>Chapter 5:</u> Nine poems of nine verses each; composed for the Master after receiving the precious gift of His photograph.

¹ The composition of the Will of Mírzá Siyávash implies that his children should head the transcript of his memoirs with this self-authored passage starting with: "This Epistle" . . . and ending with "city of faithfulness".

<u>Chapter 6:</u> Summary of the opposition and wrangling of the Zoroastrian Priests and the establishment of the Pársián Brother's Company from 1332 – 137 H.G (1914-1917)

<u>Chapter 7:</u> Summary of my trip to India and return to Iran toward the ends of $1338\,\mathrm{HG}$ to $1340\,\mathrm{HG}$ (1919-1921).

In addition, my offspring may elect after consultation with the Friends to add an additional two chapters to the content of the transcript thus bringing the total to 9 chapters.

If not, so be it.

PRIOR TO READING THESE MEMOIRS IT IS HELPFUL FOR THE READER TO HAVE A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE NORMS OF SOCIETY IN IRAN OF THAT ERA

Travel:

The events of this book took place at a time when air travel did not exist. Traveling from city to city was achieved for the upper class through the use of horses and mules and for the lower classes on foot. Traveling with a caravan as a group afforded the individuals a degree of safety from highway robbers and thieves. Along all major routes Caravansaries were set up for the benefit of the weary travellers. Caravansaries were a primitive form of motels. For a fee, the traveller secured for himself a small empty room devoid of furnishings. At any time several strangers could be assigned to the same room. The Caravansary was built as a two story structure around a central court yard. This acted as a fortress against would be robbers. The court yard served as the housing quarters for the travel animals. The weary traveller had to carry with him every item for his needs on the journey ahead; clothing, bedding, pots and pans, tea, utensils, food and all required accessories.



Sample Caravansary located in Akká, Israel The black and white image is dated earlier



Town:

In late 1800's in Iran, the adherents of each religion kept to a certain part or 'quarter' of every town. The dress, head gear and associations of the followers of each religion were visibly clear for all citizens and each religion observed its dress and headwear with pride. For example, the members of the Zoroastrian community lived in their specific quarter of town exclusively and wore a particular style of outfit, belt and headdress which identified them as Zoroastrian to each other and to the public they encountered. The same applied to each religion; each living in exclusive sections of the town and identifiable by their dress and headwear. Socialisation across the quarters of town and between the different adherents of faiths was unheard of. Broadly speaking prejudice, hatred and bigotry dominated the interaction of people across different faiths.

Each city had a tall perimeter wall for its protection and several gates on each side (usually located on the north, south, east and west). The gates were always guarded and the travellers questioned and sometimes searched prior to entry. It was customary for the town inhabitants to receive an honoured guests or relative outside the city gates as a mark of esteem and respect.

Money:

In the absence of a national banking system, everything revolved around the cash each individual carried or hid for a rainy day. Two international banks – the Bank of England and the Bank of Russia operated with immunity with in the country. Oligarchs were very rare and the few who had wealth were very well known throughout the width and breadth of the land.

Owing to the lack of national (or inter-city) banking facilities, it was difficult for individuals residing in one city to immediately access funds and assets owned in another city. As a result, it was common for individuals to arrange for well-known traders or agents based in their former town to advance funds to them which were equivalent in value to their assets. The lender would subsequently sell those assets and re-coup his funds.

Religion:

The concept of being an atheist or agnostic in such society was inconceivable. Religion was pivotal in people's everyday lives. It dictated where they could live, whom they would marry, their names, social circles, occupations, adherence to dietary requirements, attendance of various ceremonies, observance of customs and rituals and

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- > Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

