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Biography

Childhood and adolescence at the intersection of football and books

Home, School, Dusty Ground

If I could, I would not have been born in Bahman
There are two bad things about being born on the last day of the eleventh month of the Persian calendar, Bahman: First, you will be one year older than yourself! That is, when you go to school later at the age of 7, you meet classmates who think they are one year younger than you, while they are just two months younger than you, yet they were born in 1960 and you were born in 1959! It’s really hard to be a year behind, just for one month!

I did not kill my father
I was eight years old when my father died, on a sad autumn evening in 1967, it was Muharram, the month of mourning for Imam Hussein when my brothers had gone to the mosques. My mother was in the kitchen at the end of the yard. Only I was with my father, who had been lying in bed for a month and was struggling with his illness ... but I did not kill him ...
I was playing for myself. My father called me to give him a glass of water, but he just wet his lips. Then he called me again ... I left my game again, he said: “Pull the blanket over my feet, son, I’m cold ...” I pulled it and returned to my game. He called me again: “Masoud, Baba, come here ...” (My nickname was Masoud.) I lost my temper, nodded, and got up ... I wrote this scene in the story of The Unregistered. In the case of a boy who is with his father in the slum in the very
last moments of his father’s life. He was white like chalk. He turned his eyes to me and smiled. His eyes were full of love. I took his wrinkled hand in mine. It was cold. Like a piece of ice!
I said, “Sir, should I go and call my mother?” He did not say anything. I just waited. He opened his eyes again and his lips moved gently, but no sound came out. Suddenly I felt cold and quivered. The cold wind blew the kilim in front of the slum and the lantern flashed, but the light did not go out. A strange fear came over me and I no longer understood what had happened. Like a crazy person, I pushed the tent kilim away and ran outside.

**Because of the little black fish, I cried from the library to the house!**
The day I decided to become a writer was probably an early October day when it was not raining and the wind was not blowing and the leaves of the trees had not yet fallen enough to rustle and crunch underfoot. There was no romance in the air and on the ground and in my heart. But when I was just 12 or 13 years old, my heart was pounding. As I was walking through the newly established park for children, I entered a newly established library, where I was confronted with things that surprised me every time ... I was surprised. The library of the center was mysteriously empty this time. The door was mysteriously open. The librarian was mysteriously not at her desk. The two-and-a-half-foot-tall kids were mysteriously at the new tables that took our hearts. The library was empty, empty, with no sound, no sound. Why, it was just a sound coming from that corner, from that corner of the library that I did not notice at first glance. There was
no sound, no talking voice. It was a piece of soft music, a heartbreaking and sad sound... When the music was over, there was a sound that seemed to be playing on the radio or a weak speaker or anything I had never heard before. All the kids were gathered in a corner, they were around a table with the librarian and listened to a story being played on a tape recorder: “There was a little black fish that ...” this is the same Little Black Fish that changed my views on everything. On crows, bald eagles, doves, peaches, and even turnips ... I must have become a storyteller from that moment on!

When the story was over, when the storyteller said, “Eleven thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine little fish said good night and went to sleep. The grandmother fell asleep too, but no matter what the little fish did, he did not fall asleep, he was all thinking about the sea all through the night up to the morning ...” When the soft, calm and sad music that was playing in the depths of the sea, finished the story, when it was over, on the way home, without wanting to, there was like tears that flowed from my eyes because of that little black fish that no one knew what happened to him, when that night, until the morning, that sad music at the end of the story rang in my ear...

It was four or four-thirty in the evening - I had just returned from school, I had not even changed my clothes, I went, sat on my notebook and wrote the first story of my life at the age of twelve:

“The brave freckled chicken ... the story of a chicken that wants to jump off their fence and go see where the farm is?” I mean, is it so different! A brave freckled chicken in its path with the danger of cats, foxes, jackals, eagles, and crows ... No, it certainly was not crow. I said that the Little Black Fish changed my perspective on everything, especially the crows.
Our school was in the slum area, below the rail station.

Our school was at the outskirts of the town, below the rail station. Beneath it, they were planting cotton, and cucumbers, tomatoes, and eggplants. Sometimes, away from the eyes of our school principal, we jumped down from the southern wall of the school where we could pick cotton swabs or tomatoes or cucumbers, depending on the season we jumped.

In front of our school – yes Tavakkoli School indeed – there was a Fire Temple. I do not remember seeing a Fire Temple there, the name of its neighborhood was Fire Temple, and also there was a water reservoir with 1000 stairs descending underground, and there were evil boys at our school who were known all over the city. But our principal was a good person, our teachers were also good and literate people, at least in our early years they seemed very literate. However, we – the children of Tavakkoli School - especially we, his clever students, craved for the national school. It was called a national school, but the reality of it was not so much national, it was mostly a school for rich children, a symbol of the class system of education. Its children were all different from us, their appearance, their clothes, etc. Most of them wore uniform suits and even though they were our age, they carried a Samsonite bag in their hands and had a snack in their bag and a box of 36 colored crayons and luxurious notebooks with hardboard cover. The one we missed until high school. Our bag was a plastic bag with handles, and at its best, a thin black bag that lasted only a month or two and then cracked. In all the celebrations, programs, and ceremonies, the children of the national school were in front rows, however, their football team was so decent and weak, they did not have a football player at all and this cooled our hearts ... but this cooling did not last more than a few days. One day they lined us up and said we want to take you to the library. It was good that we were leaving the school, but when we found out that they were taking us to Mehran School, which had a large hall and was in the upper areas
of the city and had just built a new library that ignited our regret and resentment.
We were too young to recognize many of the relationships, but we felt strong educational and class discriminations with our skin and flesh. You could not see or hear the silent suffering that was going on in our school, in our classroom, in the neighborhood of rail station and Fire Temple, and in the back alleys of our city – Semnan. Perhaps the voice of this silent suffering was there that has occupied some of my stories, without my decision, in stories like the Journey to the City of Solomon, with the suffering of a carpet weaver girl whose dreams are woven into the fabric of a carpet. Semnan is not the birthplace of carpets and rugs, but in the dark slopes that descend some steps below the ground, I have seen kilim weaving, felt weaving, and plush weaving from old fabrics, and the suffering of sad and silent little girls.
It is this accumulated suffering that overflows in the stories without any plan or decision, in the stories of The Two Immature Dates, The Sun, The Outlander, The Black Yellow, and even the humorous stories of Babajan Heshmat.

Summer vacations of work
It was hard to work in the three months of the summer vacations, but I was happy to be affluent to buy the book that I have seen and marked in the Hashemi Bookstore, to go and watch the Qaisar movie, which was recently screened by the only cinema in our city, and to pay my monthly membership fee to our football team. I worked in the summers, everything from the selling ice creams to apprenticeship by Mash Ebram the shoemaker, whose shop was attached to our house, and I, who was not more than nine years old. My job was to hammer crooked nails. Or an attendant boy at local cookery that prepared traditional souvenirs of Semnan, or even a worker in the age of 15-16 for the restoration project of cultural heritage buildings, the architectural arch behind the bazaar, or the roof of the Grand Mosque of the Shah Abbasi caravanserai.
My work was not for the needs of the family. My father’s allowance was good for survival. But my salary was to help spend my school months buying pens, notebooks, and pencils, and more importantly, I could buy my favorite books or go to the movies and pay for our football team. Thursdays were my personal celebration, with the master baker preparing less dough to finish the work by about 2 p.m. Then he would put the wage he had always prepared in my hand. The last Thursday of each month was as constant as a boring movie. As I was about to leave, I had even gone and reached the front door, it was him that called me, “Boy, come here!” He never called my name. If he was bored, he would say “baby” and if he was cheerful, he would say “boy”. I would return and he would stretch an azure blue banknote towards me: “Take it, go to the cinema ...” And as far as I could see, I walked with firm, gentle steps that did not reveal my taste, and then I ran straight to the house itself, pouring my weekly wage into my mother’s lap and not waiting for it to sit and count the banknotes and coins with patience. I picked up my 10 rials banknote and ran to the only cinema in the city, which was miles away from our house, to reach there at four or five in the afternoon. From those days, I still have the smell of juice in my nose, which was made with water, milk, eggs, turmeric, saffron, and another fragrant essential
oil that I do not know what it was. My job was to soak the bread in this juice, even though it was a simple task, but I hated the endless repetition and the smell that still lingers in my nose. It was 5 pm every day, but the moment I got rid of this smell and repetition in that the semi-dark workshop and endless pattern of baking, was the moment of my freedom.

Some images of my summer works are repeated in such works as *Summer Vacation*, *The Night Bibi Was a Guest*, *Aghajan’s Bicycle*, *Babajan Heshmat Tales*, *My Scientist*, and even *The Black Yellow*.

**On the crossroads of football and books!**

It was not my fault. I loved football and I loved books. I do not know where and how this love fell on my head or my heart as if they say love falls upon the heart and not upon the head!

But my two loves met once. It was summer. I was sitting in the library and reading John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, the story had absorbed me since morning. In a halo of panic and anxiety, I was worried about Kino’s fate and the large pearl he had caught. It was 3:00 when I saw a shadow standing over my head. It was Shahram, our teammate. All the kids knew they had to step into the library when they lose me. “Why don’t you come then? The game starts at four!” I just remembered that day was the day of the semi-final match between our team and the team for which we had long boasted. “Oh! Today?” I said, “I did not remember at all.” “Go, go, we have to answer Mr. Atta right now why we are late,” He said.

I took a look at the book and at Shahram. It was the worst dilemma I
had ever encountered. “My ankle is a little twisted, I can hardly play,” I pretended. Shahram looked at the book and closed the book and took my hand and said: “Get up, Masoud, today is even more important than the finale.”

Now that many years have passed since that day, sometimes I still feel penitent about *The Pearl*, and although I read it two or three times for compensation, I still do not know if it was worth it to close the book and gave up the fate of Pearl to go to a game we eventually lost leading to our elimination? Alas! I chose football that day!

**What is the use of a forty-piece ball?**

But that was not all. Football has had many benefits for me, even for storytelling, even for storytelling courses. To me, football and fiction are strangely similar, much more alike than cooking or driving, as most writing courses claim! The storyteller is the same football player in the white rectangle paper; and interestingly, the ratio of the dimensions of the football field and A4 paper are very close to each other! Aside from this math joke, a football player on the field must develop a special story to play. The game of football contains a strong narrative with all its components, knots, openings, and individual creations. The storyteller in the pages creates a football out of the story. The characters are the same players and there is a drama that underlies the strategy of the game. The comparative advantage of any story goes back to the creativity and individuality and the *creative* techniques employed by the author, and for this reason, storytellers are as diverse as footballers, and their storytelling style is as different as that of Buffon as compared to Neuer.
Two-hour detention for a book fair at the age of 16
As a teenager, I was after the trouble of a wall newspaper and a book fair in which we were involved. I held the first book fair of my life at the age of 16 and was arrested for two hours. I wrote about this in *White Hoopoe*¹:
With two of my friends who were interested in theater and the wall newspaper and all that kind of trouble, we decided to run a book fair in the school hall, a real book fair. The principal allowed us, and we went to school over the weekend and arranged all the books until midnight. The exhibition was ready on Saturday morning. On the third day of the exhibition, SAVAK forces (National Organization for Security and Intelligence) arrived and collected the books, and we, the three eleventh grade students, were detained for two hours for such works of poetry and fiction as the books of Jalal Al-Ahmad, Ali Ashraf Darvishian, Samad Behrangi, Ahmad Shamloo, Akhavan Sales, Dr. Ali Shariati, Morteza Motahhari, and Mahmoud Dolatabadi, etc.²

500 Meters to Writing

University, Teaching, the First Books

Escape from the Linear Algebra Classroom to the Artistic Field!
I did not have more than one semester to finish my university to get my bachelor's degree in mathematics from the University of Tehran. By the end of the semester, things had turned tough and I had almost skipped most of the classes to get to my storytelling! It was not my fault. What motivated me the most to escape from the classroom was that our faculty was the Faculty of Science, the easternmost faculty of the University of Tehran, and my field of study was

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¹. A magazine for children published and mainly distributed in public libraries.
². This is the list of contemporary Persian writers, most of whom have works that directly or indirectly criticize the ruling political system of Pahlavi.
mathematics, with a building that was the easternmost faculty building and 500 meters to the east of the university there was the Artistic Field (Howzeh Honari), the most important center for literature and art education and practice after the revolution. I wrote stories and had been in charge of children’s books for many years. It was just a quarter of a mile away. When finding time for half an hour, even between the classes or the lunchtime, this close distance always tempted me to run away to attend the Howzeh Honari space. But when I got there, I was so engrossed in the magic of stories and books and other matters that I usually forgot to return to college.

**What is the use of mathematics for a story?**

One day, when I went to drop linear algebra because of the accumulation of my absences, the professor, who was incidentally interested in literature and knew the reason for my absences, looked me in the eyes and as if revealing a secret, told me: “Mathematics is useful even in literature. Do not drop it!”

He was right; When I was writing a story, when I was thinking about the world of my story, I saw all the variables that were ahead, and I had to build a new world with them, this is how I felt the presence of mathematics ... that numbers are infinite, that how variables, functions, derivatives, integrals, etc. explain the motion of spaces and existence how things are made
understandable, more complex, incomprehensible, and infinite, and you constantly have to think of new variables, factors, series, and strings, and fly your mind without being able to control it. They help to create new variables for the world of your fiction and to create new concepts of world, story, space, character, drama, and narrative.

In my experimental storytelling workshops, which I named the Story Experience Room, Mathematics helped me explain the structure of the fictional world to students through my little knowledge of mathematics. I have often seen how using simple mathematical models can make understanding the creation of the story and the narrative and drama easier, newer, more different, and even more exciting.

The last thing I came up with at the winter’s workshop was the fact that for better understanding the world of storytelling and narrative, it is more effective to use mathematical models and graphs, and a gestalt and holistic view of the story, not a view of story elements as independent islands. The world of fiction and narrative is the result of the Cartesian multiplication of all the components of the story in each other that create a correspondence between the individual components of the character, space, and drama.

In this case, a new world emerges that is different from each element of the story and superior and more complete than them.
Teaching on a dirty blackboard!

I already knew I would become a teacher one day, from my childhood. I had been teaching a teacher since I was a child, teaching the children of the neighborhood to whom I taught arithmetic and geometry, and sometimes, like real teachers, I even was paid for it. By assigning homework to my classmates, I was practicing a teaching job. I have even compiled a textbook on geometry for my classmates in second grade and introduced the author as myself! This was the first book I wrote with awful self-confidence. In the summer of 1971 or 1972, when I had just finished my second grade, I reproduced the textbook in three copies with carbon copy and distributed it among the children I was teaching.

The teacher was one of the three jobs I always dreamed of. The other two were writing and filmmaking. Teaching was a familiar job to everyone, but writing and filmmaking were more mysterious. To me, it was more like childhood dreams and fantasies.

But incidentally, I became both a teacher and a writer, and from the desire to make a film I just reached the level to write screenplays.

Teaching was a dream for us, who were students in the last years of the Pahlavi regime and with such a heavily active revolutionary spirit that was prevalent in the social strata. This image was a dream derived from the image of Samad Behrangi. He was a teacher and writer with a revolutionary spirit traveling from village to village with a bag of books to give to children. This was the mythical image that made me go to the schools in the southern districts of the city as soon as I entered the University of Tehran. I was accepted in the teacher training exam and became a teacher in two or three schools located in the poor neighborhoods of Naziabad, Rail station, and Yakhchibad.

Based on the same image, I was inclined to teach in
schools in the southern district of the city and slums. From 1958 to 1964, I became a math teacher in middle schools in the south of the city and a teacher of geometry, algebra, and trigonometry in two high schools. The dream of being drowned in that eternal image of that teacher with a backpack full of books and notes for stories! Perhaps because of the myth of Samad in the back of our minds, we were reading stories even in math classes. The reward for solving difficult math problems was ten minutes of storytelling at the end of the class. With such an outlook, even though I was a math teacher, not a cultural teacher, we took the kids to the mountains with two other teachers on Fridays. We toured all the mountains near Tehran, from Shir Pala to Palang Chal, at least, Twin Falls.

Teaching had fun, in the evenings we played football with the children in the schoolyard and on Thursdays, we went to the football field near the school. Even when one of the children broke his hand in the mountain and I had to leave the mountain and the children in the middle of the way to two other teachers to bring the boy with a broken hand in fear and trembling to his house did not cause me to stop going to the mountain, or stop football, or to leave the backpack of my books. Perhaps this was the experience that gave rise to the story of the *Mountain Scream*. It is about a teacher who takes the school children to the mountains, one of the children gets lost and he is getting lost in the snow in search of his lost pupil.

That mythical image of Samad never found objectivity for me, the realities of life in Tehran in the 1980s were rougher and more complex than the setting of Samad’s time, but perhaps my share and sign of this hidden feeling in my soul was the desire to be a teacher in journalism and later writing training workshops and the story experience room.
The Howzeh that was ...

The book took me away from the rough, harsh, unkind, nasty, and ignorant world to another world.
It was a normal book. But it was a book. It was a real book. It had a real and complete book, with a cover and a painting on the cover. It had a story, a complete story. Criticism; yes, there was real criticism; there was poetry; there was real poetry, there was poetry, and there was drama... don’t laugh. At the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War, when society was in turmoil between war and fire, books were not as I describe. They were comprised of a faded or colorless cover and text written by simple typewriters with no design in title and text. Its pages seemed to have just been removed from under the stencil machine, as if disposable. Very much like a nightly newspaper or announcement with a text that seems to be ready to shoot words at any enemy and obstacle!
Books were like that in those years. But this was different. It was a book. I said it was quite a lot of a book.
I looked at it. The publisher was Howzeh Honari and the address was close. It was only 500 meters or 600 meters away from the University of Tehran, as measured from its eastern side, which was our Faculty of Science and Department of Mathematics. At the first opportunity between the classes, I walked towards Hafez Street, the corner of Somayeh street. The Howzeh, without prior decision, and possibly without pre-determined strategic planning, allowed you to grow in all directions. In the Howzeh Honari, you had the opportunity to be a poet, filmmaker, theater director, actor, musician, storyteller, graphic artist, painter, and photographer at the same time. In the work you were reading, you had the chance to discuss it with a photographer, or a filmmaker.
It was during those open years of Howzeh that I wrote stories, became a teacher, and went to the battlefront of Iran-Iraq war. You could
experience and mix different moods. Sometimes you could be with the guys at Howzeh, sometimes in the setting of the battlefront, sometimes as a teacher and a volunteer .... These moods are reproduced in such fictional works as *Exam Days*, *Mountain Scream*, and some other works that are published in *Keyhan for Kids* of those years.

**A Thousand Missed Ways, Concerns, and Dreams**

**Writing and publishing is the right of children!**

Sometimes things have no root in conscious decisions. You never know exactly when, from what moment did this thought occurred to you? Some things are internal, they have become part of your daily worries while you are not aware of them!

As if I do not know when the idea of “writing and publishing is the right of children” occurred to me. Did it come to me from the years I was working at Sunflower Magazine? No, it should have been before that, from the years I was working for Soroush of Young Adults Magazine? No, even before that. From the years at Howzeh Honari? Possibly ... perhaps even earlier than that, perhaps from my teenage years when my uncle, who was an employee of the Railway Telegraph Office, brought me the rolls of telegraph paper and I sat down carefully and cut the paper into equal sizes with two sheets of azure carbon—also brought by my uncle from the rail station—and I wrote stories and puzzles and tables and published a fantasy magazine called *Childhood World*. The magazine was in eight pages and three copies, one of which was written in pen and two of which were carbon copies, and its inevitable clients included my sister and the children of the relative and the neighboring.

Later, from 1981 to 1987, this concern turned the *Surah of the Children of the Mosque*, into 17-volume of books, each volume about 150 pages, including
children’s works, stories, poems, literary pieces, and even books reviews and introductions.
It was the same temptation that made me arrange for the publication of Soroush for Adolescents in 1988, in the very first few months, I decided to convince Gheisar Aminpour and Buick Maleki, together with two other members of the editorial board, to devote give 16 of the 64 pages of the magazine to the children and title it as “Magazine in Magazine.” We left the magazine to an editorial group of three young people working under the main editorial board. In response to the CEO’s concerns, I accepted responsibility for the magazine’s teen editors. Later, the writers of the same Magazine in Magazine emerged to show themselves as big names that today are famous writers, poets, and critics. This restless mental occupation later accompanied me wherever I went and every magazine I started, in the form of pages and even magazines there was special pages for emerging talents; they were in Sunflower Newspaper, in Bicycle weekly, in Sib Magazine, in Pender, in Backpack, in Children of the Earth and Chelcheragh.

**Camps and workshops for young journalists**
I said sometimes things have no root in conscious decisions. It was not a decision that children had the right to have a share of everything and that the magazines should publish in their name; it was not a pre-conceived program; it was a raw idea ... it was part of the children’s reality emerged after working with the children. It means that it could not have been other than this, and if it was other than this, there must have been a problem. This route is not one-way; if it is, there is a definite problem
somewhere, especially when it comes to children’s affairs. If you publish a children’s magazine where the children are just readers, not a real content production partner, there is a problem with the job; if the magazine is not open to the children and they cannot enter to see, hear, learn and teach, there is a problem. It was from the Soroush for Adolescent that we started the idea of writing and journalism workshops. In the first part of the workshop, we gathered 100 young talented writers from all over Iran. We had found them through the Magazine in Magazine, and we organized a three-day camp for writing and journalism workshops. This yoke, however, has was always been with me, wherever I went, it accompanied me for about 40 years, it was me in Sunflower Newspaper, in Bicycle weekly, in Sib Magazine, in Backpack, in Children of the Earth, and Chelcheragh. Now when I look at the list of teenagers who were in the writing and journalism workshops of Soroush, the Sunflower, the Bicycle, and the Chelcheragh, and then I look at the list of writers and poets of these days of children and teenagers, I think, though heavy and expensive, it seems that the yoke has not been fruitless.

Against one-way roads!

What’s wrong with going to a party in linen shoes? Or children have the right to choose!
No, this is not a provision of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, although it is very close to it. This is not an election slogan either. This other side of the same craving came to me as a child. The story goes back to my love for Chinese linen shoes. I do not know if Chinese linen shoes are used today or not? But in our childhood
and they were great shoes. The outer sole was green and made up of rubber and an upper made up of cotton usually in white and sometimes in black. They had a marvelous life span. But even though I loved football, I was often deprived of it. The reason was that it could not be worn at a party, and if we were to buy new shoes for the new year, I would have to buy leather shoes with which one could not even shoot a plastic ball.

From that time, I thought, why shouldn’t I choose my shoes? I realized that I had to choose within the budget of the family whose father had just died. But I had no other choice.

Maybe this is the story that had settled in my subconscious and surfaced later, and it was that wherever I could, I tried to open the way for the children to choose next to the grown-ups, and if it was only a choice, again if I had the power, which sometimes and often I had no power, I gave priority to the choice of children and not the choice of grown-ups.

This strategy for the first time resulted in Soroush for Adolescents. With the Soroush for Adolescent Book of the Year Award, of course, I could not give all authority to children, but the initial selection was made by hundreds of teenagers from all over Iran, and the final selection was made by critics and authors from among the three books earlier selected by the children. It was a worthy trophy!

It was at the same Soroush for Adolescents that idea of nominating a film for the Isfahan International Children and Adolescent Film Festival by Children and
Adolescents judges was developed and presented to the festival. In 1988, for the first time, children and adolescents licensed the films of the festival. I was in charge of this project together with such friends as Marzieh Boroumand (filmmaker), Ahmad Gholami (editor of Keyhan for Kids), Taqī Jalili (painter), Giti Khameneh (host of children’s TV program), Mostafa Kharaman (writer) Mehrdad Ghaffarzadeh (writer and filmmaker) And Afshin Ala (poet) who acted as facilitators and guides for the juvenile judges in their task. This judgment dates back to 1994 when the Sunflower newspaper was established and continued with the newspaper.

The selection of the book by the children themselves was held in the Bicycle Magazine with a more detailed mechanism in 2001, under the title of the Golden Bicycle Award for the best book selected by the children. More than 7,000 teenagers participated in the first round of judging. In the next stage, 110 young judges were selected to read and rate the books, and the best book among stories, poems, and translations was selected by these judges. A message from the IBBY President was also sent for the event.

And later in the celebrations of Shab-e Cheleh (Yaldā Night or Chelleh Night is an Iranian winter solstice festival celebrated on the “longest and darkest night of the year.”), Chelcheragh Magazine took the stage to select the best cinematic, literary, and theatrical works of the young generation by its readers.

The White Hoopoe Award was perhaps the culmination of this effort. Based on the idea, and taking advantage of the possibility of libraries across the country and their librarians, the most active children and adolescent members of libraries were identified and based on their free participation, in three stages (High Circulating Books – 7000 votes of most active children and adolescents – 1000 votes of young judges), the most popular books in the three fields of poetry, fiction and non-fiction were selected.
Peace, Environment, Dialogue among Civilizations: topics by the kids

I am the one who believes these issues are the same as those expressed by children. The children themselves. I have several reasons for this. Is it possible to talk about peace and the environment and the dialogue among civilizations without knowing where the children stand and without their participation? Children are both its bearers and supporters and as its users and audience ... These are not slogans; they are documented in several experiences over several years.

In 1994, the Sunflower Newspaper called for a form of green movement among teenagers. Thousands of teenagers from all over Iran joined the movement. During the call, environmentally friendly children and adolescents were asked to submit their ideas and activities as well as individual and group projects, and literary and artistic works in support of the environment. More than 15,000 children and adolescents responded to the call. Among them, 500 children were selected and in 1995, a green celebration was held in Tehran with the presence of 500 Iranian children and adolescents aged eight to 12 years. These children spent five days in Tehran discussing their environmental concerns.

In 1996, five children were selected by the Sunflower newspaper out of the same 500 children who represented the Iranian children at the World Environment Conference in Eastbourne.

In 1999, the Children of Earth Peace Conference was held with the participation of 500 children and adolescents who love peace and
dialogue among civilizations. These 500 people were selected from about 10,000 children who responded positively to the call of the Children and Adolescents Department of the Institute for the Dialogue among Civilizations and the idea of President Khatami, in support of peace and dialogue among civilizations. At the conference, children’s writings in praise of peace, dialogue, and cultural heritage were presented to the President, and the message of the UN Secretary-General - Kofi Annan - was read to Iranian children. The Secretary-General’s message praised the efforts of Iranian children to promote peace and dialogue. The children’s works in praise of peace, dialogue, and the environment were published in the *Children of the Earth Magazine*.

In 2014, the Sepidar Prize was run in praise of the authors who had written or translated books on the subject of the environment, to encourage children and adolescents who responded to the call. The award was held for three consecutive years until 2016, and hundreds of environmental books were reviewed and introduced.

**The Dream of a Second House for Writers**

**Association of Writers for Children and Adolescents**

The dream of children and adolescent writers having a non-governmental organization to defend their rights, to be a home for their gatherings and talks, to become a home of hope if they are disappointed everywhere ... has been on my mind for many years. Establishing an
Association of Writers for Children and Adolescents was not an individual work of mine, it was a collective effort. Besides, it was the result of a collective desire that was fulfilled once articulated.

The association was built a few years ago, we laid its first bricks in the 1980s with storytelling sessions that first circulated in our homes, then moved to a park library in Tehran – City Park. Initially, we called the Office of Art and Literature for Children and Adolescents, and four children and adolescent writers, Mostafa Rahmandoust, Mohammad Reza Sarshar, Mehdi Hejvani, and I were its founders, with me acting as the secretary, but it soon disintegrated due to social unrest and the three of us later became board members of the association.

The association was officially established in 1998. We invited the authors to participate in the formation of the association. In December 1998, the first general assembly of the association was held with the presence of about 200 writers, and with the votes of the writers, I became the first president of the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Adolescents.
Journal of Literature and Art in the Postwar Years

Hyperactivity and its consequences

A friend of mine, who is now a great filmmaker, used to say, “You are hyperactive in your work!”

Maybe he was right, at least for my youth. The secret idea of publishing Soroush for Adolescents magazine, regardless of the other reasons mentioned, maybe due to this hyperactive spirit.

Between 1981 and 1987, we published children’s books in Howzeh Honari and launched the Surah Book series for children’s works, which were published once every three months. But that was not enough for that hyperactive aspect. An insistent voice kept repeating inside me: more, more, more, faster, faster, faster.

Time was wasted quickly. Why? for what? I do not know, I felt that there was not much time left. There was a mixture of panic and excitement. This prompted me to publish a monthly magazine. But we were afraid of journalism. At first, I did not dare to share the idea of publishing a magazine with my friends. The publication of the magazine was contrary to our literary idealism. But I cheated, on myself and my friends and
everyone. It was not a cheat, it was a device for preparation, a way out, and perhaps a solution against which internal resistance persuades us. I said, “A literary and artistic magazine very much like a book, in size and scale of the book. Something like *The Book of the Week* and the *Sokhan Magazine* or *Alphabet* ...” These things were in my mind. When I said that, everyone joined, and most of all, Qaisar Aminpour, the late poet whom we miss ever since he left us.

The publication of Soroush for Adolescents in April 1988, a work that had started in January, was not a difficult task. Many literary and artistic publications have been published. The importance of the Soroush for Adolescents was in its obvious defamiliarization in its specific time and space. In a geographical location affected by eight years of war between Iran and Iraq and penetrated to the depth of everyday life, making everything war-stricken, mournful, and traumatic, where poetry meant lamentation and mournfulness and the books and magazines became the media for this sorrowful atmosphere, in such a situation, the publication of a magazine that talked about art and literature, for teenagers who are to follow formal education, is itself a kind of transition from formal stereotypes towards defamiliarization of the official voice of the time?

This voice resonated and was heard beyond expectations, and during the ten years it was published on its original goals, it was an informal and civic school of fiction, poetry, literature, and art for thousands of teenagers who read the magazine. This resulted in dozens of poets and writers who informally were graduated from the School of Soroush for Adolescents, without such a mission being defined as the mission of this publication.

**What do children see in a newspaper turned 90-degree?**

The idea of publishing the *Sunflower Newspaper* for me started with a recurring live image. Like the recurring dreams that Jung describes, they are signs and contain mysterious messages. This recurring image
started one summer day in a small park near our house where I had taken my 5 years old son to play. A father at my age, or older, was sitting on a park bench reading a newspaper. Her little daughter kept walking in front of the slide and returning to her father. It was clear that she was bored. But the father was drowned in a newspaper. For a moment, the girl seemed to look at the back page of the newspaper facing her and stare at it. It was interesting for me that the girl was silently nailed. Just as I watched my son not fall off the slide, I was looking at the girl to wonder what magical and strange thing nailed her like this? Now the little girl had tilted herself 90 degrees behind the newspaper in such a way as if she could read and reveal a secret message by this turning ... The father closed the newspaper and the girl's struggle was shattered for a second without her father noticing anything.

This picture was strangely repeated that night at home for my son. My newspaper was on the sofa and I was flipping through the pages. One page caught my son's eye and I was amazed to see him tilted like a little girl and with strange difficulty trying to discover something in my newspaper with his slender figure. I turned the newspaper 90 degrees; my son straightened his tilted body to stand up. Now he was simply watching it in the turned newspaper. Later on, I found that it was a picture of a treehouse in the city of Abadan.

What did my five-year-old son saw in this 90-degree rotation? It was there that I decided to pursue the idea of publishing a special newspaper for children, even if I had only published it for a month. I had to find out if it is possible to publish a newspaper of the children themselves so that they would no longer have to rotate their entire innocent body 90 degrees to get rid of the photos and contents of the adult newspapers. The hidden and personal spark of publishing a newspaper for children came from this repetitive image.
Columns not to be read!
Can you believe it?
Some stories are written so that no one could read them! There are books that no one flips them through! There are publications no one even glances at them! There are designs and images that no one even looks at! There are notes and editorials columns never to be read!
You may not believe it, but they all exist and they are paid, and worse, they expect children to come and buy these stories, these books, these magazines, and these articles but do not read them!
The Bicycle Magazine was not supposed to be like this from the very beginning. It was to be published for reading. And it was hard to rise against our convenience! The Bicycle in 2000 and Chelcheragh in 2001 were uprisings against stereotypes. This war against stereotypes was evident in its very title. Bicycle?! Is it possible to name a magazine as bicycle?!
When they heard the title, they asked the same question, even the editor-in-chief!
But the title was inspired to me like a miracle in a dream. To be honest, I wrote the story in the very first issue of Bicycle.
After the name, it was the turn of the logo and then the turn of its editorial. First of all, it should have been the turn of the editorial, because the most unreadable part of any publication is always its
editorial. For *Bicycle*, however, it soon became the most popular column in the magazine. Because its editorial was written by an editor-in-chief like me, and he wrote things that rolled the eyes of the children. It was a kind of rebellion against all the nonsense do’s and don’ts that inadvertently and unnecessarily tied the hands and feet of children and was of no use to them! The 42-year-old editor stood next to the 14-year-old readers and wrote an editorial with mild humor against the school, against the formal education system, against parental coercion, even against the children themselves.

From the very first issue of the editorial, a large number of children’s letters flowed to the *Hamshahri Newspaper*, where the bicycle was printed. For the officials of *Hamshahri*, despite being the most widely circulated newspaper in the country, this volume of feedback was amazing.

A year and a half after the *Bicycle*, *Chelcheragh* weekly was published with the theme of culture, art, and literature and with the slogan of the voice of the third generation, which included young people and adolescents aged 16 to 25. It started with a similar direction as *Bicycle* in its fight against formality and stereotypes. It was a full-blown revolution against all conventional journalistic traditions; in its logo, in titles and headlines, in graphics, subjects, tone, and narrative. In rebellion and revolt, it was united with the young generation. *Chelcheragh* soon became the most popular and widely circulated magazine of the young generation in Iran and played a leading role in creating the artistic and literary taste of the young generation between 2000, 2013. Very soon the language and look Chelcheragh was recognized as a kind of youthful outlook.
A Room for Storytelling Experiences

Against Storytelling Classes!

Many young writers experienced the creation of teen novels in this room!

The teen novel experience room was a kind of protest against the storytelling classes, even my storytelling classes that I had in various forms in Howzeh Honari from the early 1980s to 2009. In the late 2010s, a disturbing thought came to me. The horrible question of whether storytelling classes are useful at all. Is it possible to teach storytelling? Does not the storytelling class become a factory of storytellers of one shape and one color? Isn’t it a form of treason?

I suddenly collapsed! I felt that in all these years I had betrayed fiction and literature and, for my part, promoted the stereotyping and assimilation of people and stories. I closed my classes for 4 years and banned the teaching of storytelling for myself.

In 2011, a friend who was the editor-in-chief of a newly established publication and knew I had a storytelling class before, asked me to teach a teen novel class. I said, “I have repented of running a class,” and I told him all the horror I had of promoting the cliché and simulating storytellers, and teasingly I continued, “If anybody asks me for a workshop on storytelling I will accept and will design an anti-class, a workshop against all the elements of the story that they teach.” He paused
for a while and said “Well, do it! Come and hold a workshop against teaching
teaching storytelling!”
I found the idea not too bad, “Let me think,” I said.
The result of my reflection was the idea of a “novel experience room” for teenagers.
In the teen novel experience room, there is no talk about classic teachings of
storytelling and their textbooks. No word, element, or method is defined.
Students only experience and then create. The creation of the story goes
through the personal experience of people. The writers present their personal
experiences and discoveries of the idea, the character, space, everything in the
story, and in dialogue and collective editing, the story is slowly formed and
created.
The teacher in the experience room only plays the role of facilitator, in a Socratic
way he only tries to discover and narrate the narrative assets of each author in
his or her effort.
The method of this workshop was presented at the Istanbul Children’s Literature
Symposium 2016 and was welcomed by the participants.
The output of the experimental room workshops were authors and novels
that bore no structural, intrinsic, substantive, formal, or technical similarity.
Many of the novels published by these workshops in different periods have
won national awards, and most of the young writers who experienced these
workshops have become successful writers in Iran during these years.

**Worries and Adversities of Love**
In the city I was in, in the days I was in, in the space I was living, in the school
and the university, and then in Howzeh and Soroush, while as a teacher, and
wherever I went, I was always surrounded by worries of love. Even if there was
no love, there were worries. These fears were sometimes imposed on you by the
smallness of a neighborhood and city, by the avoidance of the ideals you fought
for, sometimes by the limits of the official view of a government that did not
tolerate any love, as Ahmad Shamloo, the famous contemporary poet of Iran
expressed it, “They smell your mouth if you have said I love you”... Amid all these
dark and anonymous woes that surrounds love, how could you write about
teenagers, write for teenagers without talking about love?
Still, love imposed itself on my stories, sometimes hidden and sometimes overt, but always suffused in suffering. Is love imbued with deep suffering and grief a form of virtue that can be distinguished from the sentimental love of flowers and nightingales and joy? Whether or not, the loves of my stories were always tainted with suffering. Then the worries quietly arrived and captured it. They were awful loves and sometimes so imbued with suffering that they are not even visible at the first glance. Can the delusive talks of the girl at *The Outlander* and her picture of the worker boy who came to dig a toilet well, be called love?
Or the taste and passion imbued with the fears of Sohrab, the boy who tells the story of *Two Immature Dates* toward a girl who also came to be sold in a market where a little mare was sold for a higher price. Are the two immature dates that the girl gives to Sohrab and can hide that suffering, a metaphor for love?
Or the pitiful and romantic moments of cycling in *The Sun* that passes between Sohrab, the son of a thief, and Aftab, a beggar girl. The story ends with the arrest of Sohrab, who is happy with a few minutes of romantic cycling with Aftab ...
Or the spontaneous love of Samadar, the circus bicycle in *The Black Yellow*, towards Shimano, the bicycle he hates to the point of death ...
And do the silent feelings of the teenage narrator of the story of *Coupe No. 9* (from the Tales of Babajan Heshmat) to a disabled girl who is going to the final storytelling competition, indicate a sign of love or just contain worries of love?
I wrote the story of the *Two Immature Dates* in 1989 when it was published in *Soroush for Adolescent*. Publishing a love story for teens in
Iran of the 1980s a little miracle. But it happened.

**Journey to the City of Solomon, the beginning of a journey to a more real world**

I know, *The Journey to the City of Solomon* is the story of a girl who begins a poetic journey in a mood of suffering and fantasy, but for me, it was the beginning of a departure from being surrounded by Howzeh Honari. I had recently married, my first child had been born, and my spirit was full of liberation, love, passion, and poetry. Perhaps it was at this same high spirit that from *The Journey to the City of Solomon*, despite being immersed in suffering, a narrative imbued with imagery, poetry, color, carpet, and imagination emerged and made it won the Book of the Year award ...

**Bicycle, Bicycle again Bicycle**

Yes, the bicycle is important, one of the most important human inventions and one of the most important characters in my life! The bicycle is an important invention because it is lifeless but it stays alive, with its movement, with its sound that is not the sound of the car, with its mirror that while you pedal forward, they show many kilometers back, with its pedals that when you move it for minutes and hours, they slowly become part of your feet and part of your being.

More importantly, the bicycle gives children the feeling of growing up, on the very day when a young child can balance her bicycle with the auxiliary wheels and start pedaling, it is as if she is no longer a baby and has become a child. And when a child learns to balance on a bicycle without any auxiliary wheels and the support of the parents, it is as if she is no longer a child, and is a teenager who picks up the bicycle and moves away from home alone,
the farther the better, and goes to unknown places in his city, where she has never been before, and steps in the ways she did not know before and now pedals in the newly discovered land, it seems that she has grown up ...

However, the bike also broke my hand and there is its scar in my 60s. At the age of 13, I picked up my brother’s bicycle and went to school. The school entrance was higher than the street Let’s go up. We the students at Dariush School loved to speed up our bicycles - if we had one and it was important to have one - and to climb the slope of the school entrance quickly. I pedaled and accelerated, I do not know if a girl was there or not. But I know that there was a slope of sand, I slipped on the sand and the bike became one and I could not control it, I fell and my arm broke and whatever medicine I treated never it was like before!

The bicycle later imposed itself on me in many stories: Aghajan’s Bicycle, The Night Babi Was Our Guest, most of Babajan Heshmat’s comic stories, The Songs of My Land, The Black Yellow, The Sun, the screenplay of The Black Yellow series, the video story of Someone Missing A Bike? And finally, it sat as the title of one of the magazines that I started in 2001 for teenagers: Bicycle Weekly.

But bicycles are different! The bike of each story is different from the bike of the other story, a huge difference. Aghajan’s Bicycle is a bicycle that carries the burden of hope and suffering of a teenager who travels from the slums to enroll in an affluent school.

The bicycle of The Night Babi Was Our Guest is a bicycle that carries a kind grandmother at the dawn of Ramadan, in the nights of the bombing of Tehran, who innocently and sadly encounters her ruined house.

Bicycle in the Tales of Babajan Heshmat is a device for the livelihood of Babajan the boaster, an artless man who
experiences all possible jobs with his bicycle, from bicycle courier, mobile library, bicycle thief, glass cutter, repairman to cycling champion. 

*The Black Yellow* is the story of the world of bicycles. Circus bikes, war bikes, peace bikes, revolutionary bikes, cinema bikes, lover bikes, traitor bikes, sad and happy bikes that experience all human suffering and aspirations.

The bicycle of the story of *The Sun* is the bicycle of a working teenager who carries his first teenage love with Aftab, a beggar girl, and witnesses the endlessness and anxiety of this strange and sad love.

The bicycle of the story of *The Songs of My Land* carries a bewildered teenage boy who rides with two silent loves: the broken musical instrument of his lost father and Zohreh, the granddaughter of the master of his dreams.

Bicycle of the pictorial story of *Has Anybody Lost a Bicycle*, is a scrap and broken bicycle that, with the help of the animals who have found it, bings life and movement back to the dry desert of their lives.

**Are old people as pacifists as children and giants?**

I have just come to this hypothesis, at the age of 60, that old people are as pacifist and peaceful as children, like giants and even dragons. And one more hypothesis: War is the work of idiots, idiots who feel very scientific, like crows on the Time Boulevard who do not even understand why war breaks out and why they have to confuse a grenade with the eggs of strange crows.

Instead, the dragons that humans have left behind can surprise us with their kindness, such as Jedoka, whose eyes are
astigmatic and who, no matter how hard he tries, cannot be a vicious dragon, who travels far and wide in danger to bring light back to the jungle of animals. Or who can believe that sometimes the giants, the very giants that have frightened us so much, get kind and like philosophers of the modern world, look down from the hill on our stupid world and descend to give us water and peace for no purpose? Just as we look at their faces and say what stupid giants!
The more I think, the more I look around at the stories of recent years, I am more convinced that old people, especially in their 60s, will become pacifist and peace-loving, whether or not this peace-seeking manifests itself in their stories, deeds, and dreams. I say this because I am turning sixty-one right on these days!
Resume

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- **Mountain Cry** (Collection of Stories), Islamic Propaganda Organization (Howzeh Honari), 1982.
- **Little Spring Journey** (Long Story), Islamic Propaganda Organization (Howzeh Honari), 1983.
- **Firewood** (Long Story), Islamic Propaganda Organization (Howzeh Honari), 1984.
- **Exam Days** (Long Story), Islamic Propaganda Organization (Howzeh Honari), 1984.
- Summer Vacations (Collection of Stories), Islamic Propaganda Organization (Howzeh Honari), 1984.
- **Aghajan’s Bicycle** (Collection of Stories), Islamic Propaganda Organization (Howzeh Honari), 1984.
- **Journey to the City of SOLOMON** (Pictorial Story), Illustrated by Mohammad Ali Bani Asadi, Amirkabir (Shokoofeh Books), 1989.
- **Beyond the Poplars** (Long Story), Soroush, 1991.
- **The Two Immature Dates** (Collection of Stories), Qadyani (Violet), 1995.
- **End of the Game** (published under a pseudonym), Sunflower, 1996
- **Crows of Time Boulevard**, (Collection in Five Volumes), Ofogh, 2007.
- **Professor Skolski and General Piskolski**, Ofogh, 2008.
The Black Yellow, Center for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, 2009.
Garbage Thieves in the City (published under a pseudonym), Shahr Publications, 2009.
The journey of the Small Spring (collection of works), Teka, 2009.
Songs of My Land (published under a pseudonym), Aftabgardan, 2015.
Small Book of Story Writing, Center for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, 2015.

Theoretical works:

Awards and Achievements
Journey to the city of Solomon, The Best Book of the Year of the
Islamic Republic of Iran, 1989.
Received the Golden Moon Award, the Festival of the Best Writers of the Association of Writers for Children and Adolescent, 1999.
Received First-Class Art Award in the Field of Fiction, 2008.
Received Golden Pen Award, the best note of the editor of children and adolescent magazines in the 9th Press Festival, 2002.
*Professor Skolski and General Piskolski*, final candidate for Children and Adolescent Book Festival, 2010.
Appreciation of Fereydoun Amouzadeh Khalili in Koomesh Literature Festival (Semnan), 2013.
*Crows do not Catch the Bird Flu*, selected by the White Crow List (Munich International Library), 2010.
Aban Badge by the Association of Illustrators, 2019.
Badge of the Association of Theater Critics and Writers, 2014.
*Evil Dragon With (No) Astigmatic Eyes*, Finalist for Gold and Silver Flying
Nominated Editor-in-Chief of Children’s Books by the Children’s Book Council.
Selected editor in the Children and Adolescent Press Festival of the Center for Cultural Development of Children and Young Adults.

**Activities**

**a) Design and founding of festivals and group activities**

Member of the founding board and chairman of the board of directors of the Association of Writers for Children and Adolescent (since its establishment and in at least 6 of 11 periods, 1998 to 2020).
Founder and secretary of the Office of Art and Literature for Children and Adolescents in Howzeh Honari, 1986.
Head of Iranian Children’s Environmental Team Dispatched to Eastbourne World Environment Conference, UK, 1995.
Secretary of the International Conference on Children’s Literature, 1998.
Secretary of the Children of the Earth Peace Conference (Dialogue of Civilizations), 1999.
Secretary of Green Celebration (Iranian Environmentally Friendly Children Conference).
Secretary of various festivals including Song Festival, Green Festival (Environmental Conference for Children), Chelcheragh Festival, Sepidar Award (Children and Adolescents Environmental Book Festival), Different Years.

Member of the Policy Council of the Children and Adolescents Reading Clubs, 2018.

Member of the Policy Council and Editor-in-Chief of Children and Adolescent Publishers, including Blue Bird (Scientific and Cultural), Kimia (Hermes), Ladder (Iran Technical Publishing Company), Different Years.

b) Designing programs, awards, and promotional projects

Establishment of judging by children and adolescents in Isfahan International Children’s Film Festival, 1989.

Establishment of Rudbar Children’s Library after the devastating earthquake (Call for donation of books by Iranian children and writers to Rudbar children and collection of thousands of books, opening of the library by forty writers), 1990-1991.

Golden Bicycle Award (Selection of the book of the year by adolescent judges), 2001.

Green Celebration (Iranian Children and Adolescents Environment Conference), 1996.

Celebrating Hello Grandparents (Children’s Letter Writing Festival to Grandparents and Holding a One-Day Special Program for Grandparents, Grandmothers, and Grandchildren), 1996.

Friday Book Bazaar (Exchange and sale of teen books by teenagers in Tehran cultural centers), 1996.

Establishment of Sepidar Award (Festival of the best
environmental books), 2016-2018.
Establishment of Blue Children Festival, Festival of the best books on the subject of children with special needs, 2014.
Establishment and secretary of White Hoopoe Festival (book selection by active members of libraries), 2018.

c) Design and establishment of periodicals and collections
Summer books (one book per week), cheap 32-page books in pocket size, summer 1996.
White Hoopoe Book (Literary Feast including various materials about books and reading in collaboration with children and adolescent members of public libraries throughout Iran), 2018-2020.

d) Designing, founding, and editing children’s and adolescent publications
Founder and editor of the first Iranian newspaper for children (Aftabgardan),
Founder and Editor of Bicycle Publishing (Supplement of Hamshahri Newspaper for Teenagers), 1999.
Editor of Pendar Weekly (owned by the Student Organization), 2003-2004.
Adamak (Adolescent supplement of Maghrib newspaper), 2012.
Founder and editor of Sib weekly (children’s special issue of Nowruz newspaper), 2000.
Founder of Backpack (Supplement to Shahrvand newspaper, for Red Crescent Society of Teenagers), 2014.

Workshops
Holding a training workshop for adolescent journalists (story / writing / reporting) in Aftabgardan newspaper, 1995.

Judgments
Member of the Jury of Iranian Cinema, Isfahan International Film Festival
Some papers, meetings, roundtables, and lectures

How to read a book and how to write a story, lecture in Shahrekord schools.
Roundtable on Subject in Fiction, Soroush for Adolescents Magazine, May and June 1988.
*Fictional Language and Perspective (A Note on the Characteristics and Techniques of the Story), Journal of Fine Arts, 1989, No. 3*
Objects, Dear Forgotten Clutters (A Note on the Role and Function of Objects in the Story), *Journal of Children and Adolescent Literature*, Winter 1995, No. 3.
For children and adolescent writers, addressing poetry, fiction, and criticism is the most important policy. *Book of the Month for Children and Adolescents*, May 1999, No. 19.
Roundtable on New Life Values from Form to Content, *Children’s Literature*, Summer and Fall 2006, Nos. 45 and 46.
In Praise of Witchcraft and Unauthorized Overtaking (A Look at the Workshop and
Lecture at the meeting “Children and Adolescents Literature, Current Conditions, Future Perspectives”, Center for Intellectual Development Children and Young Adults, 2014
The Black Yellow (Interview with Mohammad Hadi Mohammadi about *The Black Yellow*), Ketabak website, 2019.

**Articles and notes about the writer’s works**
About the Two Immature Dates, Mohammad Azizi, Soroush for Adolescents, November 1989, No. 20.
Journey to the city of Solomon, Mohammad Reza Bayrami, Surah for Adolescent Monthly, 1990, No. 3.
In memory of the rainy days of Amouzadeh, Ruhollah Mehdipour
Omrani, *Book of the Month of Children and Adolescent Literature*, August 2000, No. 34.


The manifestation of carpets and rugs in Iranian children’s literature (a case study of *The Journey to the City of Solomon*), Seyed Mehdi Hejvani and Seyed Habibollah Lezgi, *Goljam Magazine*, Spring 2006, No. 2.

Chelcheragh (Chandelier) of Iranian Children and Adolescent Literature (Special Issue in Honor of Fereydoun Amouzadeh Khalili), *Association of Writers of Children and Adolescent*, December 2009.


In the end, Loneliness Wins (Reviewing the cultural life of Fereydoun Amouzadeh Khalili and Crows of Time Boulevard), Seyed Navid Seyed Ali Akbar, *Book of the Month for Children and Adolescents*, December 2009, No. 147.


The image of working children in the fictional works of Persian children and adolescents after the Islamic Revolution, *Literary Text Research*, Fall 2017, No. 73.


**Theses and books about the Writer’s works:**


A Study of Gender Identity in the Works of Three Writers of Adolescent Fiction (Houshang Moradi Kermani, Fariba Kalhor, Fereydoun Amouzadeh Khalili), Maryam Mohammadkhani, Supervisor by Ali Mohammad Mohammad Moazeni, University of Tehran, 2013.

A Study of Characters in the Stories of Fereydoun Amouzadeh Khalili, Golzar Azarhshour Nargi, Supervisor by Mahvash Vaheddoost, Urumieh University, 2015.

A Comparative Study of Speech Actions of Characters Based on Searle’s Theory in five Stories by Fereydoun Amouzadeh Khalili and Yaghoub Al-Sharouni, Hamideh Najarian Khalilabad, Supervisor by Mahdokht Pourkhelegi Chatroudi, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, 2016.
Overview of Work

Fereydoun Amouzadeh Khalili is an exceptional phenomenon in the history of Iranian children’s literature. The magazines he founded for children and adolescents were not just magazines but cultural institutions that played a prominent role in shaping a generation of children and adolescents as writers and activists. What distinguishes Amouzadeh Khalili from other writers is not only his persistence and years of creative activity but also his talents for founding and running effective institutions. Every time he has founded a magazine, he has taken journalism for children a step further and opened up new spaces for children and by the children. In his journalistic works, he brings all the capacities of literature. His writings are as literary as journalistic. His prose has living pulses, it is full of blood and excitement. This theme can also be seen in his fiction, fluent prose close to the eyes and life-world of children and adolescents. His prose is filled with tender emotions and intimate reason. The poetic combinations and interpretations that he uses in describing the narrative situations make the reader feel awakened and close to the characters. Given that he has been teaching storytelling for many years, he has the ability and power to apply the elements of the story and the technical principles of storytelling. He masters how to use each element and situation of the story to influence the reader and bring the story to a rational and emotional climax. Descriptions that
help to visualize the space and mood and position of the characters and dialogues full of spirit and close to the world and language of children and adolescents are among the characteristics of his works.

The works produced by Mr. Khalili for teenagers, especially in the eighties and nineties, are mainly short stories. Most of the stories of the eighties are influenced by the atmosphere of Iranian society in that decade in terms of content and perspective. Many of these stories deal with the plight of the lower classes and use characteristics and beliefs derived from tradition to depict the space. Over the years, his work has been accompanied by changes in Iranian society, and in his work, concepts of the modern world have found their way, values such as peace and tolerance.

He has an accurate knowledge of the world of his audience due to his continuous journalistic activities, active presence at public events, and deep reading. This enables him to introduce and address issues that are absent in Iranian children’s literature, topics like teen love that is banned in contemporary Iranian literature. Amouzadeh Khalili is one of the writers who cared for such absent and often marginalized topics.

In the stories of *The Two Immature Dates* and *The Sun*, the focus is on love, and in other stories, like *The Outlander* the opposite sex becomes an important topic for literary production. One of the themes of *The Black Yellow* is the love that happens between the bicycles. Personification and the choice of a bicycle as the protagonist and the
narration of events through the language of bicycles is a creative way Amouzadeh discovered and applied to bypass such controversies that may arise around love in the traditional parts of Iranian society. To portray the love of adolescence in his stories, Amouzadeh uses both male and female heroes. The point of view in both stories of The Two Immature Dates and The Sun is the first person. The first story is told by a thirteen-year-old boy and the second story is narrated with a focus on a girl. The protagonists in Amouzadeh Khalili’s stories are rational and peaceful characters, even if they suffer deeply from conditions such as prevalent discrimination and injustice. Amouzadeh tries to illustrate this discrimination with accurate descriptions and to make the reader think about finding a way out. Amouzadeh Khalili has experienced both realism and fantasy writing in his works. In his more realistic works, social issues such as poverty, class distance, injustice, superstition and discrimination, and other problems are portrayed. In his more fantasy works such ideals as peace, friendship, mutual understanding, and love of environment and dialogue are introduced with a universal perspective. Another feature of his works is the humorous tone that is especially prominent in the stories of the last two decades. Amouzadeh Khalili has developed multi-layered but simple humor that is expressed in a humble and straightforward language where he tries to explore and critique social relations, without falling into direct judgments. Judgment is the task to be done by the reader. Even in his most terrifying stories, such as Two Immature Dates, which deal with the sale and purchase of Baluch children, the writer avoids judgment. He is a narrator, depicting situations and events with fluent language and effective and fresh descriptions, but creates a space to invite the reader to reflect on the images to gain a clear view of the world around and to become a more active participant in the world.
Excerpts from Reviews

Crows of Time Boulevard Collection

Seyed Navid Seyed Ali Akbar

*Crows of Time Boulevard* is the beginning of the third stage of Amouzadeh Khalili’s literary achievements. In these writings, he has turned to humor, when he starts satirizing and ridiculing the whole current of children’s literature, a revolt, and rebellion against all previous repetitive forms of children’s literature, including his previous works.

*Crows of Time Boulevard* is a five-volume collection about the lives of two groups of crows living on the same boulevard. Crows are everywhere, on cliffs and under sycamore trees, on power lines, and next to snow-covered bushes. This amazing lonely blackbird has always been with mankind. What was it about the crow that made it so powerful and enduring in the human storyline? By what trick did crows occupy all the endings of the ancient Iranian stories? On Time Boulevard we see a community of crows. A society of two groups that are always at war with each other over trivial and useless issues.

The inept crows on the boulevard of the clock are clear and unequivocal representations of the tradition, and the adept crows are the representative of the moderns who live side by side in the form of a tribe. The main feature of tribal life is “prejudice”. Prejudice to the blood of the tribe, prejudice to the law of the tribe, prejudice to the ruling thought of the tribe, and so on.

The only thing that does not make sense in a tribe is the “individual”. Modern, free, independent, and self-reliant individuality is eliminated in a tribe. An individual is a small part of the body of a tribe that cannot decide for itself and stays apart from others. Nothing, from the outbreak of the flu to war, from the time bomb to the mountain explosion, from World War to the French Revolution, from love to language, from peace to history, from frogs to humans to crows, nothing and nothing matter for crows of Time Boulevard. The only thing that matters to them is their tribe and “you just have to oppose the
opponent” is their only motto! This is the main basis for the formation of the crows on Time Boulevard, just as “the conflict of tradition with modernity,” the constant conflict of contemporary Iranian history that has continued from the Constitution Revolution to the present day.

What is amazing about Amouzadeh’s humor is its horror background. The is a humorous, enjoyable, easy-to-understand procedures surface for a frightening and frustrating core. Throughout the story, the power of his humor is used for playing and entertaining the audience.

The story of The Two Immature Dates
Shahram Shafiee and Maryam Mohammadkhani

The story of The Two Immature Dates is the story of Baloch children being sold by their families. The story is told by a teenage boy who goes to the market with his father in the morning to find people to buy him. In the market, a love happens between him and another girl who is also brought to the market for sale. The calm tone of the narrator in the narration of this story, which is accompanied by the poetic prose of Amouzadeh Khalili, intensifies the effect for the reader.

The story begins with a few lines from the father. The father is supposed to say something, start the story with those words, and leave some information about the story for the reader. These are the functions of the
father’s utterances to engage the reader from the outset and prepare her for reading a dialogue-oriented story.

The point of view of the story is the I of the narrator or the first person. In this story, it seems that the characters want to create feelings out of a few simple pictures, a few simple dialogues, and a few very simple events. This simplicity does not mean that the events are insignificant, but all these events are very important in the lives of the characters, especially in the life of the protagonist. But in these stories, however, they are simple, as simple as a memory narrated by a young adult person, free from any kind of classical introspection.

The types of sensory images in the story are as many as human senses: visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, vestibular, and olfactory.

The story of the *Two Immature Dates* is based on not becoming emotional. In this story, the writer resists becoming emotional to arouse the reader’s emotions. He has no hurry and maintains the distance between himself and the narrator through increasing the emotions. The writer can invite any kind of person to the world of his story, as long as he has prepared the appropriate context and texture in advance. When the narrator’s daughter is heartbroken, the writer does not need to be heartbroken and allows her to express her feelings several times in the story. To experiment, replace all the dialogues with silences and do not touch the rest of the story. The result will be much better, as it is in the story of *The Two Immature*
Dates.
This short and influential story is one of the best examples of a Persian teen story, a story that cannot be forgotten or simply ignored. It is a story that portrays the living conditions of a group of people in Sistan and Baluchestan. Being barefoot, lack of access to piped water, lack of sanitary baths, lack of schools and roads, etc. are among the problems that the people of this region face and lead to poverty, making them sell and purchase children and adolescents. By choosing an adolescent boy as the narrator, Amouzadeh creates spaces and opportunities for the further engagement of the audience and leaves an unforgettable impression on the reader.

Journey to the City of Solomon
The main character of Journey to the City of Solomon is a girl without a family who works in a carpet weaving workshop located in a basement. Her only dream is that one day she will be able to weave a rug like the rug of Solomon to fly with it, to fly over the roofs, to cross the clouds, to reach the stars, and to pick up a few bright but small stars, and then to walk towards the city of Solomon. One night while the girl was looking at the stars in the sky, a bright star suddenly flashed in her head and she decided to weave a rug for herself the next day. The little girl works day and night to finish the rug. Finally, one day, the birds that are embroidered on the carpet, but the
little girl, who is sick and her eyes have faded due to days of weaving, on the carpet and take her to the sky. 

*Journey to the City of Solomon*, which refers to Solomon in religious literature and his flying rug, depicts the plight of working children. Children whose only properties are dreams and fantasies.

The story begins in a real setting and ends with surrealism. The girl who is trapped in a basement does not want to accept the words of Halimeh. Halimeh’s grandmother is an old woman who accompanies her in the carpet weaving workshop and, according to her, has supported the girl for many years because of carpet weaving. She mocks the girl’s wishes.

But fantasy is the only way for a girl to get out of the rough situation. The situation that Heshmat Khan has created for her; Heshmat Khan is the owner of the carpet weaving workshop who exploits the girls without paying them enough.

The writer has created an imaginative ending to the story. Will the girl die in the end or will she achieve her dream and fly with the rug? The author does not want to provide definitive answers to these questions. It is the reader who chooses to accept either the ugliness of reality or the power of imagination.

The writer tells the story with a fast rhythm, his comprehensive knowledge about Persian carpet weaving and carpet workshops is evident in this story. The illustrations created by Mohammad Ali Baniasadi intensifies the imaginative color of the story and complement the descriptions of carpet and rug weaving through images.
A Small Book for Storytelling

This book should be given to all teenagers and even young people who want to learn how to write as a gift. The little storybook is not going to work like a miracle, but it does teach how to learn to write patiently and step by step. Many books have been written and translated about fiction and short story writing in Iran, but *A Small Book for Storytelling* is a different work that is just enjoyable to read as a literary work and can inspire the reader’s interest in writing. At every step, Amouzadeh Khalili finds sweet ways to overcome the difficulties of writing.

Amouzadeh does not underestimate his readers. He talks as if a teenager is sitting with a pen in front of him, waiting for him to finish to start writing. He does not overestimate the reader to ignore the small points and leave them to the reader. With appropriate language, he leads enthusiast novices to the path of writing and trains them so that this enthusiasm is not easily lost. He knows the lazy moments of writing. He knows the mechanisms of wasting time by novices and tries to tame them every time with a trick. *A Small Book for Storytelling* is both humorous and patient, but if you want to play tricks, the book has its special countermeasures. The book does not work through jargon and terminologies to create false literacies. It tells you most of the important points, in a concise and precise way, from A to Z of writing, from finding a subject to finalizing the story.

The book is not after training homogeneous and standardized writers. Therefore, it explains each issue in different forms and through different examples. It does not involve itself in writing styles and forms. The reader can apply what they have learned on different subjects and models, as it is the very passion for writing is important. Of course, according to the author, you have to “have the guts” to start writing.
Every teenager is interested in bicycles. The contemporary generation of children and adolescents are too much tied to their electronic devices and this may not be comparable to the memories of the previous generation of long-distance cyclists, but at the same time, even these teens of the technology and computer games generation may have sometimes set their feet on pedals. Perhaps few writers have concluded that the bicycle can be considered as independent from the “cyclist” and instead of the multiplicity of characters who owned a bicycle, work on the idea of the multiplicity of the bicycles themselves and create a new world with emotional actions and interactions by inanimate objects. The free imagination of the writer allows this artificial world to flow as far as it likes. Accordingly, it can be imagined that when bicycles fall in love, wherever they turn, the image of the beloved bicycle is portrayed. It can be imagined how bicycles become addicted to burnt engine oil, there feel strong pain in their wheels, their frame, and their pedals and brakes burn.

This particular fictional world will undoubtedly appeal to a teenage reader. The Black Yellow is a successful work in both its processing of the details and its overall structure.

The Black Yellow or Salamander is a circus bicycle that is thrown out of the circus and ends up in a scrapyard where he finds friends who help him return to the circus, but the escape plan fails and Salamander and Tsunami pass through India. In India, Samandar and his friend meet a filmmaking group, and Samandar becomes the hero in the Indian film industry. He struggles to learn artistic (and magical) techniques and devices, but an accident happens to him in the final scenes of the film. Salamander who is now a famous artist finds a position to be the leader of a social movement for the social rights of bicycles. The Black Yellow consistently endeavored to keep the audience through
maintaining the right rhythm and a smart seasoning. Following the events and the subtle humor that fill throughout the text, makes the teenage reader actively engage with the text and pursue the next event of the story.

The personification of bicycles and eliminating the human characters in the novel can be a double-edged sword for the work. If, on the one hand, the author elevates the human aspect of the novel, the world of the story based on the bicycle heroes will be seriously damaged, on the other hand, if the story becomes full of moving metals and the human color and smell of the story diminish, it will fail to convey emotions.

Amouzadeh Khalili artfully creates a balance among these two disproportionate weights even if there is a third element, the reader, whose attention must be attracted.

One of the writer’s devices in creating a scrupulous fictional world that can both convey the messages and at the same time remain an appropriate channel for conveying the message is transferring a large part of the fictional setting to India to create a setting suspended between humor and emotion for the reader to follow.
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