



Parvin E'tesami's House

# Spring in Tehran

By: Parvin E'tesami

Spring with all its fragrance and freshness had entered the orchard of our house. As if a chunk of spring had just fallen into our yard. The smell of Farvardin (the first Iranian calendar month) had permeated everywhere. There was warm and pleasant sunshine. I could just see the warm breath of the earth coming out of the soil of the orchard. It was the Sizdahbedar Festival (the thirteenth day of the Iranian New Year).

Although the sky was clear and it was a sunny day, a few patches of adamant dark clouds had settled over the mountain; as if they were threatening the poor sun from a far distance that they would eventually snare it, draw the curtains of its room and im-

prison it. I was afraid lest all of a sudden it would rain. I didn't like that day to rain, not even a drizzle. The few adamant dark clouds were continuously disturbing my concentration. Off and on, my glance would clandestinely fly to the mountains, evaluating the clouds. My mother had told me that on the day of Sizdahbedar even if it were a sunny day, some clouds would finally arrive and the rain would soak the earth, dispersing the people who had gone out to dispel the bad omen of the Thirteenth Day of the New Year. The joy of the Sizdahbedar lies in its drizzle. But I didn't like that day to rain. I liked to dispel the bad omen of the Thirteenth at the orchard of our house.

I had spread a pale, worn-out mat in the middle of the humid orchard. I had arranged toys around myself. I had also some wooden, cotton, ceramic, and plaster dolls as well as a small brass samovar.

My mother had permitted me on that day to pour water into it, put it on the table of Sizdahbedar and play. My mother did not know that I play with my shadow when I am alone. I always played with my shadow, considering it as my aunt. If she had come to know, she would have definitely quarreled with me; for my mother believed that if somebody played with her shadow, she would not be mentally sound and would eventually land in the madhouse.

I and my shadow wanted to give a very good party. I did not like those few dark, adamant, bad clouds to disturb our small party through their drizzle. Just like many other days when the guests would pour into our house, my father's friends would come to our house. My father's parties were larger than that of mine and my shadow. My mother was saying that the party of that day would include eight to ten people. We had prepared vegetable stew and vegetable rice with fish for lunch. The smell of vegetable stew and fish spilled over to the rooms from the kitchen. The guests had not come yet. There was enough time until noon. I wished I could be alone; the guest of myself and my shadow. I was not in a mood to host elderly guests. But I didn't mind seeing one of the guests of that day. I liked his voice and even liked his heel's sound. He was kind just like my father and would listen to my poems very carefully. Whenever I read my poems to him he would applaud and praise me; would encourage me, frequently saying viva and bravo. He would say on occasions: "Well done", I would not understand what did that mean, probably it was a kind of bravo. When he would leave our house, the fragrance of his clothes and that of his words would remain around me. And I liked to sit and compose poems. Whenever he came as if he would pour a few poems along with the dried fruits into my hands. Perhaps he would hide the poems in between the figs and dried berries, giving them to me. His name was Bahar. And now on the thirteenth day of spring, I was waiting for Bahar (meaning spring in Persian).

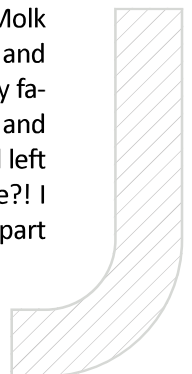
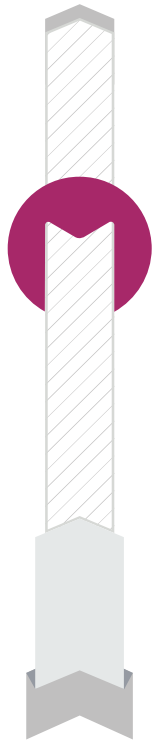
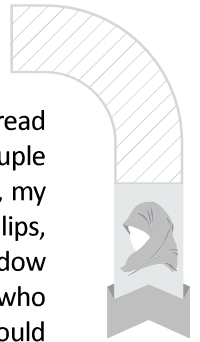
My shadow was sitting beside me, gazing at me. It was silent. Perhaps it too was waiting for Bahar

to come. Perhaps my shadow too wanted to read my songs for Bahar's shadow. I had seen, a couple of times, that when I read my poems for Bahar, my shadow too would shake its head and move its lips, reading poems for Bahar's shadow. Bahar's shadow would silently listen, just like Bahar himself, who would remain silent and listen to my poems. I would sometimes think: just like human beings, trees, flowers, and clouds I have a shadow, and probably my poems, too, had their shadows. Perhaps my shadow reads out my poems for Bahar's shadow.

I had heard from my father and other elderly people say that Bahar is a great man. He was truly great. He was very tall. When I stood in front of him, it seemed that a small sapling was standing in front of a great, tall pine tree. His shadow was taller than himself. They would say Bahar is an important person. He is a parliament member and a great poet who composes very good poems. I wished I could become like him. I wished I would be as tall as him and compose as good poems as those of his.

I had heard that he published a magazine. He liked me too much. Unlike others who called me Rakhshandeh, he would call me Parvin. He would talk to me in a manner as if I had the same stature. Probably, whatever was there was in my name and his name. Whenever I was Parvin, they would treat me like grown-up people and whenever Rakhshandeh I would become a little girl and they would treat me just like an infant. But I liked both the names. I liked to grow up. This was why I tried to be Parvin, but I didn't know why I did not grow up. I did not grow up even a morsel.

Once Bahar told my father: "Yousuf, your little girl composes better and more beautiful poems than a number of grown-up pompous poets who only try to show off." My father only laughed but did not say anything. When Bahar saw that I was watching him and my father in a surprise, turned his face towards me - but as if addressing both of us - and said: "The daughter of a person like Yousuf E'tesam-ol-Molk should become a great poetess in childhood and compose genuine poems!" I don't know why my father smiled again and patted Bahar on the back and this time Bahar too smiled. They went away and left me with a question in mind: why did they smile?! I thought a lot, but I could not finally realize what part



of Bahar's remarks was funny that even made him and my father laugh.

The hot sunshine had shined on the wet soil of the orchard; making it evaporate. Suddenly I located an ant moving hurriedly under the pomegranate tree. The food was moving ahead of the ant. I bent and looked at it. I carefully inspected it; it was not clear where it was going. At times it would go ahead in the same route and sometimes it went back and forth and after hesitating for some time it would go back the traversed path. I said to myself: "It is better to help it. I have to search and find its nest and then lift it and put it in front of its nest to put an end to its bewilderment."

I inspected the route of the ant to find its nest. Finally, I succeeded. Its nest was a small hole near the pomegranate tree. Some soft, sieved soil was on the side of its nest. A big stone was on the nest. Probably, it was its roof. I picked up a small branch and stretched it towards the ant, saying: "Little kid, jump on the branch. Jump on the branch to take you to your nest!" I don't know how it did hear me with its little ears that were not seen; it jumped on the branch, sat on it and I carried and dropped it in front of its nest and made it enter the nest. I don't know why it was coming back and did not want to go inside. I had to force it with the tip of the branch to go inside. It had hardly entered the nest that quickly rushed back. It was not carrying its seed anymore. Suddenly two ants came out of the nest and attacked my ant. The poor ant was lonely and could not fight them back and those two bad ants beat it badly. The poor ant fled the scene. It suddenly occurred to me that probably the nest did not belong to the ant. I searched around. I was right. There was another nest nearby. Once again I picked up the ant with the piece of branch and dropped it near the new nest. As soon as it jumped down the branch it ran into the nest and did not come out anymore. The ant and its measures surprised me. As if two horns were growing on my head. The ants, just like human beings, do not allow strangers to enter their homes. The ants, too, defend their territories. These were what I realized that day about the ants and thought about it. I gave up the preoccupation about the ants and returned when I realized that my shadow too was astonished just like myself. It had crossed my

hands and was thinking. Perhaps it too..., and suddenly I heard that my shadow whispered:

**With a lot of effort, I carry a seed to my nest  
I fail hundred times though I do my best**

**I don't complain of my hard work without rest  
One cannot live successfully only by taking rest**

**No other duty for the ants except quest  
Ants are alien to indolence, gluttony, and rest**

The sun was dragging itself towards the middle of the sky, silently and voicelessly. Those few patches of clouds had mounted the horse of wind and had descended the mountain. I guessed they were coming towards the sun. The poor sun was trying to get rid of those few pieces of adamant, dark clouds. But it was tired and could not move. It was on foot, while the clouds were riding.

Suddenly someone knocked at the door. I saw our servant going towards the door to open it. I cast a glance at him, wishing that the comer would be Bahar. But it was not. For eight times I counted from one to thirty; finally, it was his turn to come. When I heard the knock, I realize that it was him. His knocking too was different from that of others. As if he was testing the melody and meter of his poems on the door. Before the servant went to open the door, I went and opened it. The door was ajar. He pushed and opened it. I saw his tall stature which appeared within the frame of the door, evergreen as a pine tree. That day he looked taller as if I was an ant before him. But his shadow was very small, sticking to his feet. During the noontime, the shadows shrink. Before him, his small shadow entered the house.

- Hello!

- Hello and thousands of hellos to sweet Ms. Parvin. How are you, my daughter?

- Thank God.

- Bravo and viva my daughter! Tell me, do you have any new poems? What do you like to talk about?

- Poetry, which is better than anything else!

- Well done! That is right. Of course, you have definitely composed two, three poems, right? After all, the spring has come and spring smells of poetry. Isn't it so?

- Yes. Today I composed a poem about ants. About the efforts of the ants and ...

- Very good! Probably you have been inspired by the things around you in this poem, right?

- Yes, by the ants in the orchard!

- It is very good. Don't forget to read it for me. OK?

- Sure!

- Thank you dear Parvin. Now, will the Poetess of great poems allow me to go to the guests?

- You are most welcome.

Smiling, he went in. Going a little forward, he said: "Don't forget to read the poem for me after lunch."

I said, "I am celebrating Sizdahbedar in the orchard. If you like, you can join me."

- Definitely. After lunch, I will come and sit at your table. Then we will chat, that is, you will read your poems and I will listen. OK, my daughter?'

He left and I thought that my being became full of uncomposed poems. I went towards the orchard and my shrunken shadow, too, followed me. When I was talking to Bahar, I had totally forgotten about my shadow. I said: "Forgive me dear shadow. You know how much I like Bahar. Both the spring season and Mr. Bahar (lit. Spring)."

I sat down and read some of the poems of the great poets I had memorized for my shadow; some verses from Sa'di, Nezami, Hafiz, and Moulavi. I was fond of the verses of these poets. My father used to read their verses for me and I would quickly memorize them. Sometimes I felt that I had already memorized those verses a long time back. I felt that those verses would narrate some latent aspects of my inner being. I felt that those poems did not belong to Hafiz, Sa'di, and Moulavi (Rumi) and they were mine. When I read the poems loudly, I saw the butterflies waving their wings. Whatever I saw, I would inspect carefully. Sometimes I would compose a poem about it. I thought that the butterflies talk to the flowers; the ants with trees and stones with stones, trees with trees and greeneries with flowers and thorns. In short, whatever was around me had a tongue and would talk. Sometimes I would remain silent for some moments and listen to the conversation of flowers with thorns and heard what the breeze would whisper to a red rose! I saw that soil talked to the pomegranate tree. Sometimes I even felt the breathing of the tree under the soil. I heard

the beating of its heart. When I was at home, I would play with the things around me and talk to them. I wished to compose poems about the conversation of those things. I felt that everything was alive; had a tongue, talked, and understood my language. Sky used to listen to my words and when I called it, it would become bluer and would smile. I liked to understand the secrets of everything.

That day the small patches of cloud tried their best to hide the sun, but couldn't do anything. That day was the first day I saw there was no rain on Sizdahbedar; although it would not be bad if it had rained. A long time back when it was drizzling on Sizdahbedar, I and other children would sing traditional folklore and enjoy singing it.

"It's raining; it's raining,

the earth is becoming wetter

Dear Golnesa, things will be better

Dear Golnesa, things will be better— things will be better"

Sources:

1- Ashna Magazine, published by: Islamic Thought Foundation, Translated by M. H. Broomand

2- Parvin Etesami, Published by: Al-Huda International Publications

