The image of utopia in modern Persian poetry from 1941 to 1988

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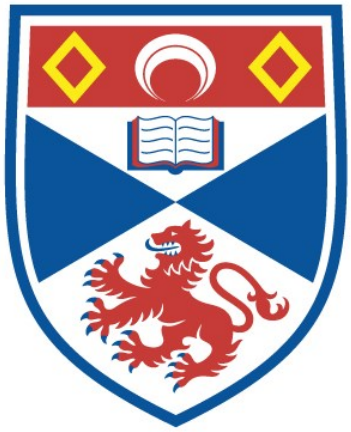
A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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To my generation, the Iranians of the 1980s, who were born into the flames of war, struggled in the throes of hardship and fought their entire lives to keep the flames of hope burning bright.

Acknowledgements

Finishing up this thesis has been quite a big challenge. Moving around the paragraph about the image of an ideal society, it was as if my own life was passing before my eyes. I was born during the Iran-Iraq war. My childhood passed in suffocation and darkness after the war, and I witnessed the social movements in Iran during the past three decades, first as an observer and later as a participant. We have come a long way with the image of a utopia in our minds. As I navigate the final stages of my thesis, the people of my country are in the middle of a big movement (or revolution as they call it), with the slogan 'Woman, Life, Freedom'. Will we finally be able to build the ideal country we wish for? The history of utopianism in Iran is not on our side, but I would rather stay hopeful.

The time I spent at the University of St. Andrews was undoubtedly one of the brightest times of my life, although due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unpleasant events that happened during the past four years in Iran, I feel like I was unable to realize my potential to the fullest. One of the biggest challenges I faced was access to Persian language resources. However, this was partly addressed thanks to my family in Iran, through whom I managed to gain access to a large part of the resources I needed. Therefore, this PhD thesis and associated efforts would not have been possible without my family's support. They deserve nothing but gratitude. I would like to offer special thanks to my supervisor, Dr Saeed Talajooy, who was an invaluable support and provided me with inspiration, guidance and understanding. His generosity in sharing his knowledge and experience with students is greatly appreciated.

Funding

This work was partially supported by Santander 600 PhD Modern Languages Scholarship, for the duration of three years.

Abstract

This thesis explores the portrayal of utopia in modern Persian poetry between 1941 and 1988. The study begins by examining classical utopias in the Persian-speaking world and then delves into the transformations of utopias during the early modern period in Iran. It further investigates the influence of four significant events: the Angelo-Soviet invasion of Iran in 1941 during World War II, the August 1953 coup, the 1979 revolution, and the eight-year Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) on the representation of utopia in modern Persian poetry. Four prominent modern Persian poets are analysed in this study: Mehdi Akhāvan-sāles, Simin Behbahāni, Ahmad Shamlou, and Fereydun Moshiri. The first three poets pioneered new styles in Modern Persian poetry, while the last one is among the most-read poets of Iran.

The analysis reveals that the first three events had a profound impact on the literary nature of utopia and the conveyed themes. The political liberation that followed the occupation of Iran led to the prevalence of utopias with socialist themes in the poetry of these poets. However, with the 1953 coup and the ensuing atmosphere of despair and turmoil engulfing society, the poems shifted towards dystopian themes. Within this context, two approaches to dystopia emerged. Firstly, society was depicted as an unchangeable dystopia, reflecting the concept of the demise of utopia. Subsequently, a concept known as 'loveable dystopia' took shape, as the poets utilized the sense of spatial belonging to portray the dialectical tension between the dystopian environment and their emotional attachment to it.

As social activities intensified and the 1979 revolution approached, hopes for constructing a utopia were rekindled in the poets' compositions. However, this hope fades away quickly. Despite expectations, the eight-year Iran-Iraq war did not have a significant influence on the utopian literature of this period. In their final utopian works, Shamlou and Akhavān-sāles go back to the portrayal of a dystopia from which there is no escape, while Behbahāni and Moshiri embraced a more optimistic stance. They presented their last utopian visions with hopes for their realization of a utopia in an unknown future.

A Note on Transliteration

In transliterating Persian words, I have opted to apply the transliteration scheme of the *Journal of Iranian Studies,* which is a personal choice based on the simplicity of reading, and popularity among scholars of the field of Iranian Studies.

Contents

INTRODUCTION: The Rise and Fall of a Dream

> It was a strange time. The fever of idealism had caught all the young people. Utopia was before us. As if we were so close to it. We had to reach it. We were told to sacrifice everything to reach the goal, sacrifice to reach Utopia.
>
> - *Simin Behbahāni in* A Cup from Forty Years Ago[1]

[1]. Simin Behbahāni, *Majmu'eh-ye Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā* (Tehran: Negāh, 1389 [2010]), p. 141.

Turbulent Century

This thesis is an attempt to delve into the concept of 'utopia' and the portrayal of an ideal society in Persian literature, focusing on modern Persian poetry within the specific period of 1941-1988. The analysis will focus on the works of four renowned Iranian poets: Mehdi Akhavān-sāles (1929-1990), Simin Behbahāni (1927- 2014), Fereydun Moshiri (1926- 2000), and Ahmad Shamlou (1925- 2000), to gain a comprehensive understanding of their utopian perspective. It is important to note that this period was marked by four critical events in Iran, three of which had a significant impact on the poets' perspectives and reflections on utopia.

The first part of this introduction will briefly explain the reason behind choosing this theme, the selection of the poets and their works, and the significance of the period in question. In doing so, it will provide a context for the rest of the dissertation. The second part will introduce key concepts and definitions used throughout the study to clarify the scope and direction of the analysis. By doing this, it will lay a common ground for the readers and help them better understand the discussions presented in the following chapters. Finally, the structure of the thesis will be outlined to give readers a clear idea of how the dissertation is organized.

'Turbulent century'[2] is a term used by Mehdi Akhvān-sāles, in one of his compositions called 'Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh' (The End of Shāhnāmeh), to describe the tormented nature of the century in which he lived. The fourteenth-century AH (March 1922- March 2022) was undoubtedly one of the most challenging periods in Iran's history. It began after the coup d'état on February 22, 1921, which paved the way for the establishment of the Pahlavi monarchy (1925- 1979). Reza Shah, as the founder of the Pahlavi monarchy, imposed strict censorship on the press and limited the activities of political parties, which strongly influenced the utopian works of the period. The poets examined in this research were all born in the early years of Reza Shah's reign, and their utopic thoughts were trailblazing in their lifetime. Despite their difference in style and outlook, these four poets repeat a similar pattern when addressing the issue of utopia. The critical events discussed here, which have had an impact on utopianism, include the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in 1941, the 1953 coup, the 1979 revolution, and the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq from 1980 to 1988.

Any study of modern utopianism in Iran requires an in-depth understanding of classical utopias in the Persian-speaking world since there are many references to classical utopias in the modern

[2]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh* (Tehran: Morvārid, 1378 [1999]), p. 80.

era. Dreaming of an ideal society, one which facilitates as much happiness for its inhabitants as possible, has its origins in mythology, says Northrop Frye. According to him, the origins of utopia can be expressed only in terms of mythology.[3] He considers utopia to be a 'speculative myth' designed to contain a vision for one's social ideas, rather than a theory for connecting social realities. This same idea applies to utopian writing in Iran. The earliest forms of utopia in Iran can be found in Iranian mythology, particularly in Zoroastrian myths, which were later redefined with a high degree of similarity in relation to Iranian-Islamic values and can be seen in various texts. Certainly, utopianism extended beyond myths and mythical narratives, making its way into various other genres such as literature, religion, and philosophy. It's worth noting that in philosophical treatises composed after the rise of Islam, utopianism owes a great deal to Plato and Aristotle, but ultimately, Platonism and Aristotle were adapted to align with Islamic and Iranian beliefs.

Classical utopias in Iran are of two types. The first type is an ideal society created with the help of divine forces to become the locus for the ultimate imaginable happiness and prosperity for human beings. This utopia is believed to have existed in the remote past, when the first sparks of civilization started and will be realized again in the future after the emergence of a saviour, who will create a paradise on earth or even a paradise hereafter. In this sense, utopia was related to a remote past, and postponed to a distant future, or moved to a far-off place. The second type of utopia depicts an ideal society that is possible within the constraints of humanity. In this latter case, the image of utopia finds an inevitable bond with the ideal ruler. In both cases, as will be explained later in the first chapter, the idea of utopia is not separate from religion, and the realization of utopia is conditional on the implementation of religious orders.

With the emergence of modernity in Iran, the concept of utopia gradually evolved from its classical forms and transformed into an ideal society that could be achieved after a period of struggle by the Iranians. In this context, utopia ceased to represent a perfect and flawless society; instead, it became a vision of a society that could be an improvement upon the chaotic reality in which people lived. As a result, the ideal society was no longer considered a gift from the gods or religion, but something that humans themselves were expected to achieve in order to attain happiness. So, religion slowly gave way to modern knowledge and technological advancement. Unlike classical utopias, which remained a relatively stable concept imagined in a consistent manner, utopias in Iran's modern era became an ever-changing phenomenon. In

[3]. Northrop Frye, 'Varieties of Literary utopias', in *Utopias and Utopian Thought: A Timely Appraisal*, ed. Frank E. Manuel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 25- 49 (p. 25).

the works of prominent writers, particularly in poems written after the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979), we no longer find a consistent image of utopia in one author's works. Instead, the image changes repeatedly in response to various historical milestones. The twentieth century in Iran was rife with large-scale events: beginning with the constitutional revolution (1905- 1911), this century included the Russian, Ottoman and British lootings of Iran during the First World War which led to the famine of 1917, the 1921 coup and subsequent fall of the Qājār dynasty in 1925, the occupation of Iran between 1941 and 1946, the destruction of Iranians' hopes for democracy due to the 1953 Coup, the 1979 revolution, the establishment of the Islamic Republic immediately following the revolution, and the eight years of war with Iraq between 1980 and 1988. Though the twentieth century was particularly intense with respect to the number of cataclysmic events that happened in the country, social movements in different dimensions are still ongoing in Iran. Each of these events and their aftermaths has played a crucial role in determining utopian frameworks in Persian literature and dictates an image of utopia/dystopia in a unique, sometimes unprecedented form.

Utopianism in the 20th century was in fact the continuation of an undercurrent that led to the Persian Constitutional Revolution, starting with the ideals of social-democratic parties in Iran. After the Anglo-Soviet occupation of Iran, the formation of the Tudeh Party further promoted these socialist beliefs. Following the coup of 1953, and the suppression of the nationalist party afterwards, a wave of frustration began in Iran. The poetry of this period has been called the 'poetry of defeat'. This wave of despair led to the intensification of dystopian and anti-utopian narratives in literature. Disappointment with utopia and the futility of thinking about utopia became a dominant theme of utopian writings after the 1953 coup. David Bell believes that these kinds of narratives are archetypal examples of anti-utopianism: 'A warning about what may happen inadvertently when we try to change things for the better.'[4] Here, in Iran, the poets' description of anti-utopia is their everyday experience, and it is as if they are shouting: 'See! This happens if you are going to build a utopia. Your dream will eventually face failure and the burden of this failure falls on you and your subsequent generation, as we inherit our fathers' pain'.

During the post-1953 coup era, when the prospect of alternatives appeared bleak, these four poets showed two distinct attitudes toward the concept of utopianism. The first attitude involved the expression of sentiments where their homeland and the authorities, often the

[4]. David M. Bell, *Rethinking Utopia* (London : Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), p. 1.

source of their suffering and the desire to escape, were perceived as being the same. This perception generated a feeling of topophobia among the poets, leaving them trapped in a dystopian reality from which there seemed to be no escape. Regardless of its challenges, these poets developed a profound sense of belonging to their land. This sense of belonging, in turn, gradually transformed topophobia into topophilia. Topophilia, originally defined by Yi-Fu Tuan as the emotional connection between individuals and a place or environment became a significant theme in their work.[5] For as long as they feel attached to this place, they feel safe and secure in their dystopia. This sense of attachment evolves in the works of all of these poets between the coup in 1953 and the 1979 revolution. In this research, I refer to the impact of the duality of this feeling and the feeling of belonging to dystopia as a 'lovable dystopia'. The second attitude involved distrusting the possibility of an alternative for society and rejecting the idea of waiting for saviours, which in the classical utopic writings was the premise for the construction of utopia. This latter attitude gave rise to the idea that I hereby refer to as 'the death of saviour'.

This disappointment did not last. As Judith Shklar once said, the end of utopian literature did not mark the end of hope.[6] During the 1979 revolution, interest in the idea of utopia returned to Persian poetry for a short period, albeit with a more cautious tone. With the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran and the subsequent events, these poets became disenchanted with utopia and their writings took on a dystopian tone. At this stage, the poets can be categorized into two groups based on their utopic views. The first group sees themselves trapped in a dystopia with no possibility of escape, returning to the concept of the 'death of utopia'. The second group, on the other hand, reflects a deep conceptual connection between utopia and hope and assigns the realisation of utopia to an unknown future time.

My argument in this research is that during this period the four poets to be discussed here, display some similar perspectives about utopia despite their fundamental differences in poetic style and intellectual foundation. The difference between utopic and dystopic poems within this period is that their idea of utopias is often reflected in discourses on what has not yet been achieved, while dystopia has a constant presence and is the everyday experience of their lives. As Moylan says, 'For a utopian society to be imagined it must be located somewhere other

5. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
6. Judith Shklar, 'The Political Theory of Utopia: From melancholy to Nostalgia', in *Utopias and Utopian Thought: A Timely Appraisal*, ed. Frank E. Manuel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 101-115 (p. 107).

than the author's own society.'[7] Using this premise, one can say that these four poets had first-hand experience with dystopia but reflected on utopia as a place to be. Inconsistencies in their views were also driven by a change of sentiment brought about within them while living in a dystopia. At times, they attempted to deny the existence of utopia, while at other times, they pondered ways to make dystopia more bearable. Yet, on other occasions, they envisioned an alternative ideal in stark contrast to the dystopia. As a result, the concept of utopia underwent iterative revisions by the four poets within their respective lifetimes. This study aims to explore how these revisions occurred and what factors influenced them.

Objectives of This Thesis

Despite a long history of utopic writings in Iran, few academic studies have been conducted on the subject and most of its numerous aspects have remained unexplored. In studies on utopia in the works of modernist poets, especially Simin Behbahāni, Ahmad Shamlou, Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, and Fereydun Moshiri, changes to their utopic ideas during and within their lifetimes have been ignored. A second issue regarding utopian studies in Iran is that utopias have been investigated outside the framework of current theories in utopian studies and are more like descriptions of the physical structure of the city utopias and social relations than analytical studies of the topic.

In the context of this research, I intend to address these two existing gaps as far as my research framework allows and present a new picture of utopian themes and visions in modern Persian poetry within the scope of current utopic studies. To this end, the period between the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in 1941 and the end of the eight-year Iran-Iraq war in 1988 has been chosen, which, as mentioned earlier, remains one of the most challenging periods in Iran's history. The focus will be the poems of four distinguished poets, who were the most prominent in their respective styles, three of them established new styles in modern Persian poetry.

Simin Khalili, known by her first husband's last name Simin Behbahāni, was a prominent poet, lyricist and activist, and a member of the Writer's Association of Iran (*Kānun-e nevisandegān-e Irān*).[8] She was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1999 and 2002. She was best

[7]. Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*, ed. Raffaella Baccolini (Oxford: Peter Lang AG Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2014), p. 3.
[8]. An organization founded in 1968 by forty-nine notable Persian writers with the objective of promoting freedom of speech and fighting against censorship. (See: Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, 'Protest and Perish: A History of the Writers' Association of Iran', *Iranian Studies* 18, no. 2/4 (1985), pp. 89–229).

known because of her ghazals,[9] and she was given the title of 'Nimā[10] in Ghazal' for her use of unprecedented rhythmic patterns in her compositions.[11]

Ahmad Shamlou was a prominent poet, screenwriter, journalist, researcher, translator, and member of the Writers' Association of Iran. He was the pioneer of free verse (*she'r-e sepid*) in contemporary Persian poetry.

Fereydun Moshiri was a famous poet and lyricist. Moshiri's poetry is an invitation to kindness and love, and the reason for his inclusion in this research is that he is among the most widely-read Iranian poets of his generation.[12]

Mehdi Akhavān-sāles was a prominent modern Persian poet. The epical tone in his poetry is reminiscent of the Khorāsāni style of classical literature.[13] His style is referred to as the 'Neo-Khorāsāni' style.[14]

For this thesis, in addition to the poetical compositions of these four poets, their notes, stories and interviews are also used to provide a clear picture of the utopic ideas in their oeuvre.

Key Concepts

This thesis will explore the notion of utopia by establishing a theoretical framework to research them. The key theoretical underpinnings used for this thesis are:

Utopia and Ārmān-Shahr

The term 'utopia' entered the Persian language in the first decades of the twentieth century through translations of literary and philosophical texts. The first translation of More's *Utopia* into Persian, however, was published in 1982 under the title '*Ārmān-Shahr'*.[15] This

[9]. Ghazal is the most important form of Persian lyric poetry, typically consisting of seven to fourteen lines, with love being the most common theme.
[10]. Nima Yushij (1895- 1960) known as 'pedar-e sheʿr-e no' (the founder of modern Persian poetry). He proposed a radical renewal of Persian poetry, in terms of both content and form.
[11]. Saeid Rezvani, 'BEHBAHĀNI, SIMIN ii. Poetry', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2016, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org> (accessed on 14 December 2022).
[12]. Saeid Rezvani, 'MOSHIRI, FEREYDUN', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2013, available at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/moshiri-fereydun> (accessed on 14 December 2022).
[13]. Khorāsāni style (around 9th to 11th centuries), is defined by Mohamad-taqi Bahār as the initial style of Persian poetry after the advent of Islam, which emerged in Khorāsān (east Iran) where was the centre for revival of Persian culture and literature. (See: Mohammad-Ja'far Mahjub, *Sabk-e Khorāsāni dar She'r-e Fārsi* (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Dānesh-sarā-ye 'Āli, 1350 [1971])
[14]. Mohammad Rezā Shafi'i Kadkani. *Bā Cherāgh va Āyineh dar jostoju-ye Risheh-hā-ye Tahavvol-e She'r-e Mo'āser-e Irān*. (Tehrān: Sokhan, 1390 [2011]), p. 553.
[15]. The translation that Nāder Afshār- Nāderi (1926- 1980) had begun of More's Utopia after the 1979 revolution remained incomplete with his sudden death. Dāriyush 'Āshuri later completed the book and published it in 1982.

combination of words (meaning 'desired city') does not have a long history in the Persian language, and even though it is now more common to use '*ārmān-shahr*' when referring to a utopia, it is not the only suggested translation for the term; '*kamāl-e matlub*' (desired perfection), '*otopiyā*', '*kām-shahr*' (a city wished-for), '*bi-nām shahr*' (nameless city), '*jāmeʿe-ye ārmāni*' (ideal society), and '*shahr-e lā-makān*' (placeless city) are among frequent terms suggested as the equivalents for 'utopia' in Persian. All of these are relatively new, with no precedent in the Persian language. In classical Persian literature, proper nouns are used (more than in any other context) when referring to the most desirable cities for human communities to live in. City names are sometimes bound with the names of their founders, such as Vara Jamkard or Siyāvushkard. In the realm of philosophy and mysticism, however, general terms are more commonly used to refer to an ideal society. Abu Nasr Fārābi (ca. 870? –950), the founder of Islamic political philosophy, used '*madinah-ye fāzeleh*' (virtuous city). After him, Ebn-e Sinā ('Avicenna' in Latin, 980- 1037), when elaborating on the characteristics of an ideal society, referred to his utopia as '*madinah-ye ʿādeleh*' (just city). '*Nākojā-ābād*' (nowheresville), was first used by Sohravardi (1154- 1191), philosopher and founder of the school of Illumination, in one of his treatises entitled *Āvāz-e Par-e Jabreʿil* (The Sound of Gabriel's wing). Additionally, ʿAbd o-Rahmān Jāmi (1414-1492) called his utopia '*shahr-e pākān*' (city of the pure). In modern literature, three of the classical terms were adopted as equivalents for the word 'utopia'. Amir-Hossein Āriyān-pur (1925-2001) Zoroastrian mythology and proposed '*Shahrivar'* (dominion to be chosen) as an equivalent for the term utopia. Shahrivar is the name of one of the benevolent divinities who served as a source of power for Ahura Mazda's kingdom. 'Abbās Zaryāb Khoei (1919- 1995) proposed '*madinah-ye fāzeleh*', and finally, '*nākojā-ābād*' was put forward by 'Ezzat ol-lāh Fulādvand (1935-). None of these terms, of course, perfectly encapsulate the equivocality of the term utopia. At best, they capture one of the two meanings which utopia implies; either, 'no-place' or 'good-place'. Thus, some of them emphasise the imaginary nature of utopia and the impossibility of creating it in the real world, whilst others point to utopia as a flawless and desirable version of society. Despite the wide range of terms suggested in the literature, I have chosen to *ārmān-shahr* in this dissertation as it is the most commonly used by the poets I review. *Ārmān-shahr* and utopia will be used interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

Dystopia and Anti-Utopia

As this thesis regularly deals with the ideal society and its opposite, it is necessary to examine these terms in Persian as well. In contrast to utopia, two terms are commonly used. The first term, 'dystopia', was coined in 1747 as 'dustopia' according to the historian Gregory Claeys who used it in a study, *Dystopia: A Natural History*. In 1748 'dystopia' was defined as 'an unhappy country'.[16] The second term, anti-utopia, as reflected in the prefix, anti, suggests whatever is antithetical to utopia. Utopia and anti-utopia are 'contra concepts' that gain significance from their differences. Krishan Kumar believes that 'anti-utopia is formed by utopia, and feeds parasitically on it'.[17] As Kim Stanley Robinson explains, dystopias are the 'not-concept' of utopias, where things get worse rather than better (and he notes the prevalence of dystopias in contemporary sci-fi). Anti-utopias, however, are a deconstruction of utopia. While utopias rely upon the division of good and evil, anti-utopias mark the impossibility of doing that.[18] In fact, the term anti-utopia is a cognate of utopia. In its modern definition, a dystopia can be apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, or neither, but it must be a utopia turned upside down, a world in which people tried to build a republic of perfection only to find that they had created a republic of misery. This difference between dystopia and anti-utopia is overlooked in Persian literature, more specifically in modern literature.

In the Persian-speaking world, there are terms used to refer to dystopia, but none of them can be regarded as synonymous with anti-utopia. Fārābi defined five types of society in contrast to his ideal society, i.e. *madinah-ye fāzeleh* (virtuous city), including '*madinah-ye Jāheleh*' (ignorant city), '*madinah-ye fāseqeh*' (wicked city), '*madinah-ye mobbadeleh*' (the city which deliberately changed its character), and '*madinah-ye zālleh*' (the city of the misguided, those who missed the right path through faulty judgment). These terms were later used by a few other Muslim philosophers such as Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi. None of these terms, however, were used in the realm of literature. In recent scholarly studies conducted in Iran, the difference between dystopia and anti-utopia has been neglected. In Persian, '*pād-ārmān-shahr*' (anti-ideal-city) is used as the contrast to utopia.

The 1953 Coup

The appointment of Mohammad Mosaddeq (1880- 1967), the popular leader of the National Front (*Jebheh-ye melli*) as prime minister in 1951 led to a period of tension between the Iranian

[16]. Gregory Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 273.
[17]. Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and anti-utopia in modern times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 100.
[18]. Kim Stanley Robinson, 'Dystopias Now', *Commune,* (11. 2. 2018), <https://communemag.com> [Accessed 1, September, 2022]

and British governments as Mosaddeq was the leader of the movement which had nationalised the previously British controlled Iranian oil in March 1951. In August 1953, when the Shah attempted to dismiss the premier, Mosaddegh's followers took to the streets and forced the Shah to leave the country. Following the coup d'etat of 28 Mordād 1332 [19 August 1953], which was 'conceived by MI6 [the British Intelligence Service] and delivered by CIA', Mosaddeq was overthrown.[19] this has led to a deep disappointment, both in the loss of Mossadeq's promised reform and in the defeat of the expression of the people's will by external forces.

Most researchers refer to the Constitutional Revolution of 1905- 1911, the 1953 coup, and the 1979 revolution as the three political events which had the greatest impacts on Persian literature. The despair that dominated modern Persian literature after the 1953 coup, and the reflection of issues such as the failure of the national, constitutionalist movement, the disappointment in the re-establishment of tyranny, and the interference of superpowers in Iran's affairs, led to a rise in literary works that came to be called 'literature of defeat and despair'. This trend has also had a great impact on utopian writings in Iran and resulted in the formation of a huge wave of anti-utopian/dystopian writings.

Tudeh Party in Iran

Iranian acquaintance with socialist ideas began during the constitutional movement. Following the secession of parts of Iran during the Iran-Russia wars of the early nineteenth century (which will be discussed in Chapter 2), many Iranians migrated to the Caucasus and Azerbaijan. The expansion of the oil industry in the Caucasus since the 1870s and the need for cheap workers drew more Iranians to those areas. The first socialist party of Iran, known as the Social Democratic Party, was founded in the Caucasus, in 1904.[20] After that, social democratic ideas were introduced to the Iranian political atmosphere during the Constitutional Revolution and played a crucial role in advancing this revolution. Interest in socialist ideas in Iran increased after the victory of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. The political atmosphere created by Reza Shah during his reign (1925- 1941) disabled the Social Democratic Party's operations inside Iran from 1925 onward. But, after the Anglo-Soviet invasion, the occupation of Iran during World War II, and the dethronement of Rez Shah in 1941, a freer political atmosphere was created and Iranian socialists resumed their activities. The Tudeh party, which, according to

[19]. Mark J. Gasiorowski, 'Coup D'état of 1332 SH./1953', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Vi/4, pp. 354-56.
[20]. Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 76.

Abrahamian, was the only party with a distinctive policy, a coherent structure, and an inclusive organizational charter was formed during this period.[21] The effort to defend the rights of the underprivileged and build a classless society, which was one of the main slogans of the Tudeh party, prompted many intellectuals to join this party.

Dystopian structure of feeling

During the post-1953 coup period, the dystopian atmosphere became the focus of the writings and compositions of the four discussed poets and shifted towards the dystopian atmosphere. A sense of hopeless dystopia prevailed, and the poets passively accepted it as a societal reality. This concept is similar in meaning to what Jill Lepore refers to as the 'dystopian structure of feelings' in her essay 'A Golden Age for Dystopian Fiction'. After analyzing fiction writing in English in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Lepore argues that:

> Dystopia used to be a fiction of resistance; it's become a fiction of submission, the fiction of an untrusting, lonely, and sullen twenty-first century, the fiction of fake news and infowars, the fiction of helplessness and hopelessness. It cannot imagine a better future, and it doesn't ask anyone to bother to make one. It nurses grievances and indulges resentments; it doesn't call for courage; it finds that cowardice suffices. Its only admonition is: Despair more. It appeals to both the left and the right, because, in the end, it requires so little by way of literary, political, or moral imagination, asking only that you enjoy the company of people whose fear of the future aligns comfortably with your own. [22]

Tom Moylan refers to this zeitgeist as the 'dystopian structure of feeling' and asserts that 'the currently prevalent dystopian structure of feeling tends to promote passive resignation rather than stimulate engagement, in the sense of the reduction of the "political" as linked to an increased interest in commodified entertainment'.[23] Later on, the concept of 'lovable dystopia' emerges, from the dystopian structure of feeling.

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[21]. Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 300.
[22]. Jill Lepore, 'A Golden Age for Dystopian Fiction', *the NewYorker*, (May 29, 2017)
< https://www.newyorker.com> [Accessed 24, September 2022].
[23]. Tom Moylan, 'The Necessity of Hope in Dystopian Times: A Critical Reflection', *Utopian Studies*, No. 31 (1), 164–93, (p. 182).

Spatial Belongingness

To understand the concept of utopia discussed in this dissertation, it is important to reflect on the dual nature of the effect of the 1953 coup on the perception of Iran. As briefly mentioned earlier, in the atmosphere of despair following the coup d'état of August 1953, a dual perspective on the homeland emerges. On the one hand, it becomes a dystopia that is a source of discomfort, while at the same time, it is a place where the poets feel a strong sense of belonging. This duality gives rise to a feeling that is referred to in this study as 'lovable dystopia'. In fact, the sense of spatial belonging can be seen as the main source of loving dystopia.

This feeling of belonging is distinguished by the need to establish close and safe ties that generate a sense of security, care, and affection. It is an interpersonal relationship in which the emotional bond with the other becomes significant and necessary for an individual's overall development.[24] It emerges from the individual's experience and interaction with the world.[25]

Yi-fu Tuan, known as the father of humanistic geography, says that 'the structure and feeling-tone of space are tied to the perceptual equipment, experience, mood and purpose of the human individual'.[26] Tuan defined 'place' as a centre of meaning constructed by experience.[27] In characterizing the structure of space, he incorporates time categories. As such, our awareness of spatial relations is imbued with past experiences of movement and time, drawn into the future through perceptual objects. A key to the meaning of place lies in the expressions that people use when they want to suggest that a site carries a greater emotional charge than its location or its functionality. People talk of the 'spirit', the 'personality' and the 'sense' of a place. We can take 'spirit' in the literal sense: 'Space is formless and profane except for the sites that 'stand out' because spirits are believed to dwell in them'.[28] People demonstrate their sense of place when they apply their moral and aesthetic discernment to sites and locations.[29] These themes of longing and belonging to both the physical and the spiritual manifestations of Iran alongside a viewing of its current state as dystopian are a common thread in the poets'

[24]. Peter, M. Z., Peter, P. F. J., & Catapan,A.H. (2015). 'Belonging: Concept, meaning, and commitment', *US-China Education Review*, 5(2), (2015), 95-101, (p. 95).
[25]. Gireesan, A, 'Evolution of Belongingness: Its Past, Present, and Future', In *Handbook of Health and Well-Being*, eds. Deb, S., Gerrard, B.A. (Singapore: Springer, 2022), p. 5.
[26]. Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective' p. 398.
[27]. Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Place: An Experiential Perspective', p. 152.
[28]. Ibid., p. 409.
[29]. Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective', p. 410.

works. Indeed, this spatial element is crucial to understanding their conceptualization of utopia. This concept also is in close relationship with the 'dystopian structure of feeling' in forming the 'lovable dystopia'.

Dystopia Fatigue

The atmosphere before and after the 1953 coup in Iran found echoes in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution, where utopia dominated modern Persian poetry before and shortly after the revolution. However, subsequent events and disappointments once again led literature to be dominated by dystopian concepts. Nevertheless, in the works of some of these poets, one can observe a sense of weariness from dystopia. The term 'dystopia fatigue' appears to have been first used by Linda Holmes in her article 'More Misery! More Death! More Cruelty!: The Onset Of Dystopia Fatigue'. Holmes refers to the term as 'I have dystopia fatigue from too many depictions of humanity that are so cynical and so empty that they cease to speak to me'.[30] In fact, dystopia fatigue refers to the sentiments that make us feel overwhelmed by the dystopic narrations around us. In his article 'Blade Runner 2049: Why Some Science Fiction Writers are Tired of Dystopia',[31] Stephen Humphries argues that some science-fiction writers are tired of the sorts of pessimistic futures depicted in movies and TV shows. His claim is responded to by influential authors such as Neal Stephenson, Cory Doctorow, David Brin, and Kim Stanley Robinson who argue that 'futuristic fiction should, instead, offer an inspiring outlook about mankind's ability to shape its destiny'.[32] This call for creating 'inspiring outlooks' relies on the concept of hope as a force that may bring positive change. In Chapter 6, the concept of fatigue from dystopia is further explained in more detail through examining case studies.

Previous Research

Modern Persian poetry, especially the compositions of Simin Behbahāni, Ahmad Shamlou, Fereydun Moshiri and Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, have been the subject of scholarly research due to the crucial roles they played in the advancement of modern Persian poetry, and the creation of new styles. However, their works have not been examined with close attention to their dystopian, utopian and anti-utopian discourse. This gap is not specific to modern poetry alone,

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[30]. Holmes, Linda. 'More Misery! More Death! More Cruelty!: The Onset Of Dystopia Fatigue', NPR (17 June 2010). <https://www.npr.org> [Accessed 1 Nov 2022].
[31]. Ibid.
[32]. Stephen Humphries, 'Blade Runner 2049: Why some science fiction writers are tired of dystopias', (6 Octobre, 2017), <https://www.csmonitor.com> [Accessed 1 Nov. 2022].

as Persian utopian writing has, in general, remained understudied in English, and the studies that have been conducted in Persian have largely remained neglected outside Iran.

One of the most comprehensive studies on utopias in Iranian literature is Hojat-Allah Asil's *Ārmān-shahr Dar Andisheh-ye Irāni* (Utopia in Iranian Thought, 1380 [2001]). The book's seven chapters offer a good list of Iranian utopias and their characteristics, as depicted in different resources from mythology and classical literature to philosophical treatises and Shia resources on ideal societies. The last chapter is dedicated to the study of utopia in modern Persian poetry, in which one of the compositions of Mehdi Akhavān-sāles is mentioned. The rest of the studies on the subject are in the form of articles in Persian peer-reviewed or general journals and magazines.

Division of the Chapters

In this research, the discussions are divided into six chapters.

Chapter One addresses the image of utopia in classical Persian literature and provides an overview of how utopian writing has evolved in the Persian-speaking world. Based on the similarities in characteristics and narrations, I study the classical utopias in Iran through five different categories. The first section which deals with mythical utopias, mostly discusses utopias that are depicted in Persian-Zoroastrian mythology. The second section concentrates on the golden ages and the narratives that are mostly categorised in the 'mirrors for the princes' genre. The third section studies the image of utopia in Peripatetic Muslim philosophers, whilst the fourth section deals with utopian writings in the philosophical texts of the School of Illumination. Finally, the fifth and last section analyses the image of utopia in Romances of Alexander, which is a genre in Persian literature concerning Alexander's adventure.

Chapter Two explains how in Iran's march towards modernity the image of utopia changed. This chapter examines cases of utopian writing in the decades leading to and after the Constitutional Revolution and discusses the works of some of the genre's most prominent writers. Together, the first two chapters function as an introduction to the evolution of utopian writing in Iran and how this process accelerated after the rise of modernity in the context of the country's encounters with colonial superpowers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The third chapter deals with the image of utopia from the beginning of Iran's occupation in 1941 until the 1953 coup. Written during a period characterised by the dominance of socialist utopias, the writings of this period are particularly socialist in nature. In this period, more than

any other time, utopia appears to be a phenomenon within reach. This chapter begins with a section that introduces my theoretical framework and then examines the images of utopia within the works of each of the four poets in the next four subsections.

Chapter Four delves into the concept of the 'lovable dystopia' within the context of the period marked by failure and despair that overshadowed Persian literature from the aftermath of the 1953 coup until roughly the 1979 revolution. This section elucidates the dual nature of emotions experienced by poets toward the dystopian reality they inhabited. In this chapter, Yi-Fu Tuan's theories concerning the sense of belonging are employed to substantiate the idea of finding dystopia lovable. As in the preceding chapter, subsequent to establishing the theoretical foundations, each section conducts a separate examination of the works of one of the poets from this perspective.

Chapter Five maintains its focus on the literary works of the four poets during the period spanning from the 1953 coup to the 1979 revolution. This chapter further explores the notions connected to the decline of utopianism. The format of the discourse parallels that of the preceding chapter. Following the introduction of the theoretical framework, it scrutinizes poems authored within this timeframe while reflecting on the various aspects under consideration.

Chapter six focuses on the topic of utopia in 1979, during and after the Islamic Revolution, and analyses the most recent utopian perspectives of these four poets. The concept of 'dystopia fatigue' will also be examined in their works.

In the conclusion of this thesis, I will return to the objective of this thesis and will address how the different key concepts were applied to the utopic poems of these four poets. The chapter re-examines the concepts of socialist utopia, anti-utopia, loveable utopia, and dystopia fatigue to further clarify the developments of utopia in contemporary Persian poetry.

It should be noted that while this thesis can be read as a cohesive whole, as it narrates the lives of four poets and the evolution of their utopian ideas in the face of significant political changes in Iran from 1941 to 1988, each chapter can also be approached and understood independently. This is because the perspective presented in each period of this historical account can be examined separately, detached from the broader context.

CHAPTER ONE: Classical Utopias in the Persian-Speaking World

'From Plato to Bellamy, in Western literature, utopias have been visualized largely in terms of a city'.[1] As a result, theoreticians, such as Richard Frye and Lewis Mumford, tend to consider classical utopias in terms of a city-state,[2] with modernization and technological advancement extending this vision to that of a world-state utopia. This theory, however, cannot be fully applied to the image of an ideal society as depicted in Persian myths and classical literature, where utopias have been described in very different dimensions, ranging from the size of a fortress to the size of the whole known world (seven kingdoms). Even though the idea of utopia in Iran has been traditionally associated with urbanism, it is not always limited to city-sized communities. In philosophical writings, discussions around utopia began under the influence of Plato and Aristotle, but it expanded in different directions depending on the religious, cultural and historical circumstances of the Persian-speaking world at the time of writing. Plato's utopia is a self-contained city which must have enough land to feed its inhabitants and make it independent of any other community. Neither Aristotle nor Plato could accept a multinational or poly-cultured community, even if located within a city. Nor could they admit, even as a remote idea, the possibility of breaking down permanent class divisions.[3] Despite Plato and Aristotle's great impact on the formation of Islamic political philosophy, these principles were challenged in the multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religion environment of the Islamic world in general, and Iran in particular. When discussing classical utopias in the Persian-speaking world, two key considerations emerge. Firstly, there is a variety of ideal societal models, varying in spatial form, size, social relationships, and structure, with these differences linked to the genre and historical period. Secondly, within classical Persian literature, there is no comprehensive narrative covering all aspects of utopia. Poets and authors do not identify themselves as utopian theorists but rather as storytellers drawing from well-established narratives. The literary analysis in this chapter builds upon these scattered narratives. In philosophical texts, however, the details and complexities of such a society have been carefully identified. Nevertheless, apart from a few exceptions, such as Fārābi's *Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madinah al-Fāżelah*, most of the texts deal with certain aspects of utopia rather than providing a full picture of all its qualities.

In the present study, I have organized utopias into five different categories by using their physical characteristics and internal dynamics from various sources. I have organized the

[1]. Lewis Mumford, 'Utopia, the City and the Machine', *Daedalus* 94, no. 2 (1965), 271–92, (p. 271).
[2]. Northrop Frye, 'Varieties of Literary Utopias', *Daedalus* 94, no. 2 (1965), 323–47.
[3]. Ibid.

categories and their corresponding case studies in chronological order. Accordingly, classical utopias from the oldest to the most recent are as follows:

1. Mythical utopias: The majority of what is known about mythical utopias has come down to us through Avestan or Middle Persian texts, and Sasanian-based texts written in new Persian or Arabic after the Islamization of Iran. What had been narrated in Zoroastrian mythical and religious texts about utopia has been realistically portrayed after the advent of Islam in books such as Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh* (the book of the king), *Tārikh-e Tabari* (Tabari's History), Biruni's *al-Āsār al-Bāqiya 'an al-Qorun al-Khāliyah* (translated into English under *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*), *Tārikh-e Gardizi* (Gardizi's History), etc.[4]

2. Golden Ages: Advice books and the 'Mirror for Prince' genre address utopia in a different way, in which anecdotes are told about the Golden Ages and the ideal kings who led during these periods. Such texts provide advice for a good life and the effective management of an ideal polity.

3. Utopias from the viewpoint of Peripatetic philosophy: Utopian discussions in a philosophical context in the Islamic period start with Fārābi (ca. 870? –950). As the founder of Islamic political philosophy, he coined the term '*falsafeh-ye madaniyyah*', which can be translated as 'philosophy of society' or 'philosophy of civilization'. When writing about politics, Fārābi is influenced by Plato's writings on the subject but reformulates them in ways that had a great impact on following Muslim philosophers, including Ebn-e Sinā and Khājeh Nasir al-Din Tusi, whose ideas will be discussed here.

4. Utopia in the School of Illumination: Founded in the twelfth century by Sohravardi (1155-1191), Illuminationism is the intersection of philosophy and mysticism in the Islamic context. Although Sohravardi did not speak explicitly about political philosophy, his philosophy is considered to have political dimensions. Utopia in the school of Illuminationism is described in a highly allegorical language. Sohravardi has even confirmed the imaginary and inaccessible nature of his utopia by calling it *nākojā-ābād* (nowhere-land).

5. Utopia in Romances of Alexander: A very different type of utopia in terms of its social structure is perhaps the one depicted in Nezāmi Ganjavi and ʿĀbd al-Rahmān Jāmi's Romances of Alexander. This is an egalitarian utopia in which the state as an institution plays no role, and all people are equal.

[4]. These books are only few of the best-known examples.

Despite their substantial differences, all five categories assert that building a utopia is a task beyond human capabilities. The establishment of an ideal society necessitates human cooperation with divine forces or a connection to the Active Intellect. This is because the laws governing utopia's functioning and ensuring its longevity are instituted by higher authorities than humanity itself. In this context, humans are, at best, the enforcers of divine laws rather than the legislators. To gain a deeper understanding of the nature and progression of utopian thought in the Persian-speaking world, it is prudent to commence with the examination of the oldest mythical utopias.

Mythical Utopias

In Zoroastrian Mythology, the very first utopia is the realm created and ruled over by Jamshid.[5] Before him, people lived in harmony with nature in small primitive communities which did not have the characteristics of an orderly society. At an early stage, people try to discover the world around them and achieve a few significant 'firsts'. According to *Shāhnāmeh*, the first person to call himself a king and gather people around him was Kayumars.[6] During his reign, people lived in caves and wore animal skin.[7] During Hushang's reign,[8] metalwork, carpentry and weaving began.[9] At the time of Tahmures,[10] people were taught the alphabet by demons.[11] They also learned to tame horses and play music.[12] Thus far, there was no sign of urban life. With the reign of Jamshid, however, humanity takes one step further and becomes urbanized. Indeed, the beginning of utopian ideas seems to correspond with the time human societies began to become increasingly distanced from the natural world. The urbanized society is seen as the creation of a king acting in the name of God. To explain using Lewis Mumford's words, the king becomes the 'godlike incarnation of collective power and communal responsibility'.[13] In the Persian-speaking world, utopia is not the city-state per se, rather it is the process of urbanization that comprises the utopia.

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5. Avestan Yima, Old Indic Yama.
6. Meaning 'mortal life'; In Zoroastrianism, he is the first of men who is fashioned forth to assist Ahurā Mazdā in his battle against Evil Spirit. In *Shāhnāmeh*, however, he is the very first king in the world. Tabari, also, introduces him as the first king of Iran.
7. Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, eds. Jalāl Khāleqi-Motlaq, Mahmud Omidsālār, Abū al-Fazl Khatibi, and Ehsān Yārshāter (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1987), I, 21- 22.
8. Father of the Iranians and the founder of the Pishdādiyān dynasty, the first mythical dynasty in Iran.
9. Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, I, 29- 30.
10. Hushang's successor.
11. Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, I, 37.
12. ʿAbd al-Hayy ibn al-Zahhāk Gardizi, *Zayn al-ʿakhbār,* ed. ʿAbd al-Hayy Habibi, (Tehran: Doniyā-ye Ketāb, 1984), p. 32.
13. Lewis Mumford, 'Utopia, the City and the Machine', *Daedalus* 94, no. 2 (1965): 271–92, (p. 280).

Jamshid's Ideal Realm:

Jamshid is introduced in myths and literary writings in various narrations. While he is the fourth king of the Pishdādiyān dynasty in epic histories such as *Shāhnāmeh,* or the fourth Iranian king in *Tabari's History*, etc., he is the first king in Zoroastrian mythology.[14] The term '*shid*' (meaning bright and shining) which is also an adjective to describe the 'sun' is given to him because he was originally the god of the sun.[15] Jamshid was the first man to have spoken to Ahura Mazda.[16] He was also the first to have been offered to act as the conveyor of religion.[17] Jamshid, however, insisted that he 'was not built and prepared for conveying and teaching' God's law and preferred to serve Ahura Mazda and the people in a different way. Ahura Mazda, then, told him to be the 'protector' of His realm, which he accepted.[18] Through the power given to Jamshid, and under his direct supervision, human beings began to tame and channel the forces of nature, established enclosed cities in the wilderness, built the first stable constructions, and developed arts and crafts.[19] Jamshid forced the demons to make bricks and build huge constructions.[20] As the founder of urbanization, he drew clear boundaries between nature and human communities and divided the people into four groups of clergymen, warriors, farmers, and artisans.[21] During his nearly millennium-long rule over a realm that spanned an expanse as extensive as the known world (comprising seven kingdoms), there existed neither illness nor mortality, and the temperature remained free from extremes of heat and cold.[22] The residents are described as living in endless happiness. Since living beings were eternally young and immortal, after 300 years of his reign the earth became too crowded, and Jamshid expanded the earth by one-third of its original size. This happened two more times, and after 900 years the earth was presumably twice its original size. Jamshid assigned himself the role of the highest political and religious authority and declared that people's happiness in both worlds depended on obeying him.[23]

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[14]. Pishdādiyān dynasty is a mythical line of primordial kings featured in Zoroastrian belief and Persian mythology, who are presented as originally rulers of the world. I Islamic histories such as *Ṭabari's History* they are introduced as the first dynasty ruling over Iran's land. See: Zabih Allāh Safā, *Hemāsah-sorāʾi dar Irān*, (Tehran: Amir-kabir, 1333 [1954]), p. 442.
[15]. Zabih Allāh Safā, *Hemāsah-sorāʾi dar Irān*, pp. 440-441.
[16]. The Avestan name with title of a great divinity of the Old Iranian religion, who was subsequently proclaimed by Zoroaster as God. (M. Boyce, 'AHURA MAZDĀ', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I, 7, pp. 684-687)
[17]. Ebrāhim Pur-Dāvud, *Avestā (Vispard, Ḵorda Avestā, Vandidād) Jeld-e Čahārom Nāma-ye Zartosht,* (Tehran: Negāh: 1352 [1973]), pp. 509-510.
[18]. Ebrāhim Pur-Dāvud, *Avestā (Vispard, Ḵorda Avestā, Vandidād) Jeld-e Čahārom Nāma-ye Zartosht,* 510.
[19]. Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, I, 42.
[20]. Ibid., p. I, 43.
[21]. Ibid., p. I, 42.
[22]. Ebrāhim Pur-Dāvud, *Avestā: Jeld-e Chahārom Nāmeh-ye Zartosht*, p. 510; Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, I, 44.
[23]. Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, I, 45.

The myth suggests that all the forces of nature serve the divine-ordained king to enable him to keep the world and all its inhabitants under optimal conditions. Jamshid is among the people who possess *farr*, an integral part of Ahura Mazda's being, in light of which Jamshid was able to create a world of perfect beauty. This force, *farr*, is an inseparable part of Ahura Mazda's being and also belongs to all gods and is entrusted to Ameshāspands,[24] kings, and pious men.[25] A mythical king requires the gods' approval to be able to keep his kingdom in an ideal state. In Ābān-Yasht, all the mythical, *farr*-possessing kings that asked for a blessing to be the king of a perfect realm are listed, but Ardwisur Anāhid[26] granted this favour only to some of them.[27] It is not clear to what extent the realms of these chosen kings looked like the one ruled by Jamshid, but Zoroastrian texts promise that after the appearance of the last saviour of Zoroastrianism, the inhabitants of the world will, once more, experience life in an environment like Jamshid's ideal realm.

Zoroastrian scriptures promise the arrival of three saviours who are all born from Zoroaster's seeds that are preserved in Lake Kayānseh. At the end of each millennium, a chaste girl swims in the lake and is impregnated by Zarathustra's semen. Each saviour fights a group of demons and evil forces and eventually restores peace and abundance to a part of the world. However, at the time of the last saviour, Saoshiyānt, Ahura Mazda completely defeats Ahriman (the Evil Soul), and the world becomes a place of security and comfort for all its inhabitants.[28] The dead will be resurrected,[29] and share in this joy after accepting the religion of Ahura Mazda.[30] Civilization, which began in the form of a utopia, ends in the form of a utopia after many ups and downs.

Vara Jamkard

In Iranian mythology, everything that stands in the way of the infinite happiness of the people is related to Ahriman, including illness, natural disasters, ageing, etc. Thus, until the forces of Evil are completely defeated, every world-state utopia is subject to failure. Myths speak of

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[24]. Meaning 'holy immortal'; Avestan term for beneficial divinities.
[25]. Jalil Dust-khāh, *Avesta (Kohan-tarin Sorud-hā va Matn-hā-ye Irāni)* (Tehran: Morvārid, 1992), 486-487. (Also see: See: Mohammad Jaʿfar Mahjub, *Farhang-e Asātir va Dāstān-vāre-hā dar Adabiyāt-e Fārsi*, (Tehran: Farhang-e Moʿā Ser, 1386 [2007]), p. 608)
[26]. River-godess who was worshiped as a bestower of fertility. Ardwisūr is also held to bestow upon her worshipers possessions such as chariots, arms, and household goods, as well as victory in battle and the destruction of foes.
[27]. Jalil Dust- khāh, *Avesta*, pp. 298- 315.
[28]. Ebrāhim Pur-Dāvud, *Avestā (Yasht-hā 1,2), Jeld-e Dovom Nāma-ye Zartosht*. (Tehran: Negāh, 1352 [1973]), p. 60.
[29]. Ahmad Tafazzoli, *Minovi Kherad*, (Tehran: Bonyād-e Farhang-e Iran, 1353 [1975]), p. 45.
[30]. Ibid., p.188.

ideal cities that provide endless joy and comfort to a limited number of human beings. Of these ideal cities, the first one was again constructed by Jamshid.

In a world of transience, however, all good things must end. Thus, after 900 years of blessing, there comes the threat of an impending disaster. As Saeed Talajooy states, 'Though the reason for the disaster is not clarified, Ahura Mazda's actions to protect his creation suggests that the disaster, a harsh winter that can destroy the whole of creation is the deed of the evil soul, Ahriman'. This is also suggested in that 'Ahura Mazda uses a stratagem to save his creation by warning Jamshid about the arrival of this ice age and giving him clear instructions about how to save His creation from total destruction'.[31] In a meeting in which Ahura Mazda leads the gods and Jamshid leads the best of men, Ahura Mazda gives detailed instructions to Jamshid about building a *vara* (enclosure, or more precisely cavern), in which to keep samples of all of Ahura Mazda's created entities alive before the ice age and in its aftermath.[32] Upon the completion of the city, Jamshid brought pairs of all living beings into the Vara, excluding those with bodily defects. Jamshid followed Ahura Mazda's precise instructions about who to include and not to include:

> 62. Thither bring thou the seed of the cattle, of the beasts of burden, and of men, of dogs, of birds, and of the red burning fires.
> 63. Therefore make thou this circle the length of a race ground to all four corners as a dwelling place for mankind.
> 64. Of the length of a race- course to all four corners for the cows giving milk.
> 65. There collect the water to the length of an Ilatra.
> 66. There let the birds' dwell.
> 67. In the everlasting golden-liued (region), whose food never fails.
> 68. There make thou dwelling-places,
> 69. Floors, pillars, court-yards, and enclosures.
> 70. Thither bring thou the seed of all men and women,
> 71. Who are on this earth the largest, best, and most beautiful.
> 72. Thither bring the seed of all kinds of cattle,
> 73. Which on this earth are the largest, best, and most beautiful.
> 74. Thither bring the seeds of all kinds of trees.
> 75. Which, on this earth are the tallest and sweetest smelling.

[31]. Saeed Talajooy, 'Discussion on Vara Jamkard'. (04/04/2023).
[32]. For details of the event, see Ebrāhim Pur-Dāvud, *Avestā (Vispard, Ḵorda Avestā, Vandidād)*, pp. 511-513.

76. Thither bring the seeds of all foods,

77. Which on this earth are the sweetest and best smelling.

78. Make all these in pairs, and inexhaustible,

79. Even to the men who are in this circle.

80. Let there not be there strife or vexation;

81. No aversion, no enmity;

82. No beggary, no deceit;

83. No poverty, no- sickness;

84. No teeth exceeding the due proportion;

85. No stature exceeding the due proportion of the body;

86. No other of the tokens which are the tokens of Ahra- mainyus, which he has made amongst men.

87. At the upper part of the region make nine bridges;

88. Six in the middle, three at the bottom.

89. To the first bridges bring the seed of a thousand men and women.

90. To the middle, (the seed) of six hundred, to the lowest, of three hundred.

91. Hither (bring) those who are in the enclosure with the golden lance.

92. Hound about this enclosure (make) a lofty wall and a window that gives light within.[33]

It can be inferred from the *Avesta* that this fortress-like city existed miraculously, unaffected by the ice age, and contained all things in the living world. This utopia was a self-sufficient city-state built in layers, one within the others. Every layer is separated by walls of different colours, showing the hierarchical structure which prevails in this city.[34] The number of inhabitants of each social class is carefully determined and is governed by strict rules regarding regeneration. According to *Bondaheshn*, this Vara is located underground in the heart of Iran and is hidden from the rest of the world.[35] Everything that bears the mark of evil has been kept away from this city, and entry into it has been prohibited. After the long and harsh winter, when

[33]. Ebrāhim Pur-Dāvud, *Avestā (Vispard, Ḵorda Avestā, Vandidād)*, p. 514. (Translation by Arthur Henry Bleeck, *Avesta: The Religiouse Books of the Parsees* (Hertford: 1864), pp. 16-17.)

[34]. It is not clear whether such cities had real-world examples, and if so, to what extent these descriptions were similar to cities built in Iran. Herodotus's description of Ecbatana (capital of the Median empire), however, is like that of Vara Jamkard. Herodotus describes the royal complex as a palace, treasury, and military quarters built on a hill and encircled by seven rings of walls so that each outtopped the one beyond it by the height of the battlements. (See: Herodotus, *The histories of Herodotus*, trans. George Rawlinson, and Edward Henry Blakeney, (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1936), p. 52.

[35]. Farnbāgh Dādagi, *Bondaheshn*, tr. to Farsi Mehrdād Bahār (Tehrān: Tūs, 1395 [2016]), pp. 128, 137.

the sun finally shines again, all the people gather around Jamshid and pay homage to him. This day is called '*Nowruz*', which means 'new day'.[36] The Nowruz celebration on the first day of spring remained as the legacy of Jamshid for Iranians, as a thanksgiving for the end of the ice age. At the end of the narrative, Jamshid slips and *farr* separates from him. He is then cut in half by Zahhāk.[37] After Jamshid, there exists not much information about the var, but Zoroastrian religious texts specify that with the appearance of the last saviour, people from Vara Jamkard rush to his aid.[38] One of the sons of Zarathustra, Orvatdanar, rules over this city until the day of resurrection and guarantees the ideal state of this city.[39]

Kangdezh

The most famous mythical utopia of Iran is probably Kangdezh. According to the most repeated account, this city was built by Siyāvush,[40] a Kayāni[41] prince, in the realm of Turān.[42] Narratives about the city suggest that up to a certain point or at a particular time during its history, it may have had its location in the clouds and was carried around on the heads of captive demons. Kay-Khosrow, Siyāvush's son, brought the city to Iran after revenging the death of his father.[43] Mehrdād Bahār, however, argues that it was brought down from heaven to earth.[44] The physical structure of Kangdezh is similar to Vara Jamkard, but it is much larger in size with fourteen mountains and seven navigable rivers.[45] The whole population of Iran and Turān could live in the seven layers of this city, and its land is fertile enough to support the population. Seven birds are the guardians of this utopia.[46] According to the *Shāhnāmeh*, Siyāvush built two cities in

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[36] Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, I, 44.
[37]. Ibid., I, 52.
[38]. In the Shia context, the same story repeats in the context of Islamic eschatological beliefs. In *Behar al-anvār* and *Hadiqa al-Shia* ideal cities, including Khazrāʾ island and Zaherah, are mentioned that are occupied by the descendants and relatives of Mahdi, the promised saviour, and in the same way, its inhabitants are supposed to help him to build his utopia. (For more information about Khazrāʾ island see: Mohammad Bāqer Ebn-Mohammad Taqī Majlesi, *Bihar al-anwār*, (Bairut: Dār Ehyā' al-Turās al-'Arabī, 1983), LII, 159- 160. Information about Zaherah can be found here: Moqaddas Ardabili, *Hadiqah al-Shia*, ed. Sādeq Hassan-zādeh, 'Ali-Akbar Zamāni-nezhād, (Qom: Enteshārāt-e Ansāriyān, 1378 [1999]), pp. 1008- 1014.)
[39] . Farnbāgh Dādagi, *Bondaheshn*, p. 137; Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, II, 308-309.
[40] . Meaning 'the one with black stallions', is the son of Kay- Kāvus. Farr-e Kayāni was with him for a while. (See: Mohammad Ja'far Mahjub, *Farhang-e Asātir va Dāstān-vāreh-hā dar Adabiyāt-e Fārsi*, pp. 496- 497.)
[41]. The dynasty which preceded by the dynasty of the Pishdādiyān.
[42]. Possibly meaning 'hostile, non-Iranian land'. In the Iranian national epic, it refers to the lands beyond Khorāsān and the Oxus river, and regarded as the home of the Turks and other non-Iranian peoples. (See: Clifford Edmund Bosworth, 'ṬURĀN', in *Encyclopædia Iranica* < https://www.iranicaonline.org> [accessed 13, May, 2023])
[43]. Farnbāgh Dādagi, *Bondaheshn*, p. 138.
[44]. Mehrdād Bahār, 'Kangdezh va Siāvushkard', in *Shāhnāmeh Shenāsi: Majmu'eh Goftār-hā-ye Nakhostin Majma'-e 'Elmi-ye bahs darbāreh-ye Shāhnāmeh, dar Ustān-e Hormozgān, 23 tā 27 Ābān 1356*. ([Tihrān]: Bunyād-i Shāhnāmeh-ye Ferdowsi, 1356 [1978]), pp. 261- 267.
[45]. Hojjat-allah Asil, *Ārmān-Shahr dar Andisheh-ye Irāni*, (Tehran: Nashr-e Nay, 1393 [2014]), p. 50.
[46]. Mehrdād Bahār, *Pazhūheshi dar Asātir-e Irān.* ([Tehran]: Āgāh, 1996), p. 221.

Turān, Siyāvushkard and Kangdezh. Mehrdād Bahār, however, believes that these two cities are the same. Siyāvushkard was built even though soothsayers had warned Siyāvush about building such a city.[47] This city, mentioned twice in the *Yashts,* is supposed to be eternal under Pashutan's leadership.[48] Zoroaster's third son, Khorshid-Chehr, is also an army commander in this city.[49] As in Vara Jamkard's case, upon the arrival of the last saviour, people from Kangdezh will come to his aid.[50]

Other cities similar in structure and function to Vara Jamkard and Kangdezh can be seen in myths, including a paradise-like fortress built by Kay-Kāvus.[51] According to *Bondaheshn*, this fortress has the power of rejuvenation and if an old man enters it, he will leave it as a 15-year-old youth.[52] The physical structure of all these cities, as in the case of Vara Jamkard, corresponds to their hierarchical structure. Usually, the colour and material of the walls determine the social class living within each layer (the innermost layer, which is the place of the rulers, has golden walls).[53] These cities are constructed by the *farr*-possessing kings and princes and are ruled by immortal souls after their construction. Temperatures and the length of day and night are kept at an optimal level, and supernatural forces work together to maintain the structure of these cities, as their maintenance is beyond the capabilities of ordinary human beings.

Kang-e Behesht

In Zoroastrian myths, two more 'kangs' are mentioned together with Vara Jamkard and Kangdezh, all made by kings with the power of farr: Kang-e Behesht and Kang-e Dozh-hukht. Although both follow the structural pattern of Vara Jamkard and the same optimal conditions are provided inside these two fortress-like cities, their creators are three human beings who became immortal by the power of Ahriman. Afrāsiyāb, sometimes referred to as the drought demon,[54] built Kang-e Behesht as a fortress with iron walls to the height of a thousand men,

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47. Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, II, 308.
48. According to myths, Zarathustra gave him holy milk and bread and made him immortal. (See: Mohammad Jaʿfar Mahjub, *Farhang-e Asāṭir va Dāstān-vāre-hā dar Adabiyāt-e Fārsi*, pp. 246, 247.)
49. Ebrāhim Pur-Dāvud, *Avestā (Yasht-hā 1,2)*, p. 201.
50. Farnbāgh Dādagi, *Bondaheshn*, p. 127- 128, 142.
51. Kay-Kāvus is a mythical king of Greater Iran and a key character in *Shāhnāmeh*. He is the son of Kay Qobād and the father of Prince Siyāvush. Kāvus ruled Iran for an extended period of one hundred and fifty years, during which he was occasionally assisted by the famous hero Rostam. His grandson, Kay Khosrow, succeeded him as king.
52. Ibid., p. 137.
53. Ahmad Tafazzoli, *Minovi Kherad*, pp. 139- 140.
54. Shahrokh Maskub, *Sug-e Siyāvush (dar marg va rastākhiz)*, (Tehran: Khārazmi, 1351 [1972]), p. 106.

which stands on a hundred pillars and provides everything a person may need.[55] There is little information about the location of Kang-e Behesht, its structure, and its inhabitants and what happened to them after Afrāsiyāb's death. There is also little information about Kang-e Dozh-hukht, which according to *Bondaheshn*'s reports was built by Zahhāk and was probably in or near Babylon.[56] Its name appears along Vara Jamkard and the other two kangs, as wonderful places that their kings made with the power of *farr*.[57] Since there is very little information about these fortresses, it is not possible to judge for sure whether these cities had features that made them similar to mythical utopias or not. Though the reports suggest that these two latter fortress-like cities were advanced in their technical and urban qualities and architecture, however, unlike Vara Jamkard and Kangdezh, they were not eternal. Hamdollah Mostofi, historian and geographer of the late 13th and early 14th centuries, for example, pointed to the ruins that he thought were the remains of Kang-e Dozh-hukht.[58] Regardless of any possible connection to Kang-e Dozh-hukht fortress, Mostofi's report indicates that this city was not believed to be eternal.

In Iranian mythology, utopia is the prototype of a world in which evil forces do not exist. Ageing, disease, drought, extreme heat or cold, famine and death, which are all ascribed to evil, do not exist in mythical utopias. Even when one of the demonic forces, Afrāsiyāb or Zahhāk builds an ideal city, these desired conditions are mentioned. This suggests that these myths emulate a single heavenly model of a society built by Ahura Mazda and kept in the heavens. This city can be simulated on Earth under special conditions or brought down from the heavens like an earthly reflection, but only the ones made by the pure continue to exist after their deaths.

Golden Ages

According to mythology, ideal city-state utopias remain inhabited by the pure and unseen by the common people until Ahura Mazda's final conquest over Ahriman brings peace, happiness, and comfort to the whole world. However, the unreachable status of the mythical city-state utopias and the fact that they do not accommodate all the people on earth does not mean that other forms of utopia are also impossible. As a result, Iranian legends also refer to another form of utopia that presents a more rationalist image of utopia. To use Frank Manuel's definition of

[55]. Ar Christensen, *Les Kayanides*, (Kobenhavn: Andr. Fred. Host & Son, 1932), pp. 87-88. See also: Farnbāgh Dādagi, *Bondaheshn,* p. 138.
[56]. In Shāhnāmeh this kang was located in Jerusalem. (See Ferdowsi, I, 74).
[57]. Farnbāgh Dādagi, *Bondaheshn*, pp. 137- 138.
[58]. Hamdollah Mostofi, *Nezhat al-qolub*, ed. Mohammad Dabir-siyāqi, (Tehran: Tahuri, 1336 [1957]), p. 39.

utopia, such utopian visions are produced so that 'the principles of an optimum society are underlined'.[59] The principles of these utopias are derived from the golden age of Iranian history. Here, the author does not attempt to portray a completely flawless society, but the best that can be achieved within the means of human limits. In this study, from now on, I will refer to these as 'ideal kingdoms', primarily because these guidelines are designed to create an ideal kingdom. In literary and historical works, especially in the genre of 'mirror for princes', and didactic literature, this kind of utopia is more directly addressed.

The discourse about 'ideal kingdoms' does not contain specific utopian narrations, but countless stories and anecdotes that describe the ideal kingship and the internal relationships of an ideal polity. According to the traditional view in the Persian-speaking world, the people tend to look more like their rulers than their fathers. If a king is righteous, the people take after him.[60] For this reason, the primary focus of this type of utopia is by no means the physical structure. It doesn't designate any specific space for an exclusive group of people. Instead, it envisions the entire realm as an ideal polity, offering the highest level of happiness to all its inhabitants, regardless of their social standing. Consequently, in most of these narratives, you won't find detailed descriptions of the physical layout of society. Instead, they emphasize the characteristics of the king, the governmental institutions, and the interactions among the people, both with their rulers and with one another. Pre-Islamic works such as *Andarz Nāmas* (Advisory Books) and *Āʾin Nāmas* (Books of Best Practices)[61] are amongst the pre-Islamic text examples in this genre that have reached us. This tradition continued after Islam too. *Kalileh va Demneh*, a text of Indian origin translated into Middle- Persian in around 500 AH is one of the best examples of this category. This genre continues in books like *Qābus-nāmeh* (Book of Qabus) by Qābus ebn-e Vushmgir (d. 1012), *Siyāsat-nāmeh* (Book of Governance) by Khājeh Nāsir-al-Molk Tusi (1201- 1274), and *Nasihat al-Moluk* (Advice to Princes) by Abu Hāmed Mohammad Ghazzāli (1058–1111). Furthermore, many didactic texts, such as *Bustān* and *Golestān* of Saʿdi (ca. 1210-1292) also have prescriptive accounts of an ideal society.[62]

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[59]. Frank Edward Manuel, in *utopias and Utopian Thought* (London: Souvenir Press, 1973), p. vii.
[60]. Abu Hāmed Mohammad ebn Ahmad Ghazzāli, *Nasihat al-Moluk*, ed. Jalāl Homāʾi, (Tehran: Chāp-khāneh-ye Majles, 1937- 1939), p. 97.
[61]. Textbooks and treatises in Pahlavi language on various topics such as: the court customs; officials of the government and representatives of social classes; rules of games and entertainment; Iranian customs and rituals; celebrations such as Nowruz and Mehregān and religious issues. 'آیین‌نامه' In *Markaz-e Dayerat-ol Maʾāref-e Bozorg-e Eslāmi* <https://cgie.org.ir> [accessed 5, September, 2022]. And also see: 'اندرزنامه', In *Markaz-e Dayerat-ol Maʾāref-e Bozorg-e Eslāmi* <https://cgie.org.ir> [accessed 5, September, 2022])
[62]. There are only few examples of the most famous textbooks in this genre, this list can go on to include many more titles.

The scope of this study does not permit an exhaustive examination of all these narratives. Nevertheless, to offer a general overview, one can argue that three basic principles are essential to an optimal kingdom. First, religion and politics are intertwined. Second, the happiness of the inhabitants of a kingdom depends on having an ideal ruler. Third, the sustainability of this political structure depends on its political and social institutions.

In Zoroastrian religious sources and literary books, ideal kings are mentioned as *farr*-possessors. In Zoroastrian terms, we encounter two different types of *farr*. One is the Iranian *farr*, which is the extraordinary glory and Ahura-Mazdā-created power that always guards Iran against enemies and non-Iranians. This *farr* was also a source of blessing, wealth, and ample livestock to Iran.[63] The second is *kayāni farr*, which causes a king to successfully function as the head of state with glory and authority. In the nineteenth Yasht of *Avesta*, *kayāni farr* is mentioned as 'strong Kingly Majesty created by' and ultimately belonging to Ahura Mazda.[64]

The first person who possessed *kayāni farr* was Hushang, by the power of which he ruled over all seven climes. It was then given to Tahmuras, who ruled over seven climes, demons, and magic.[65] After Tahmuras, Jamshid inherited *kaiāni farr*, but when he lied,[66] this *farr* flew away from him in the form of a bird.[67] This marks the beginning of the fall of Jamshid and his realm. *Farr*, thus, functions like divine confirmation of rulers so that only the chosen ones can function effectively as rulers. It can be also interpreted that success is not possible without the consent and cooperation of divine forces. In this sense, therefore, religion and politics are inseparable. In a more explicit statement, *Nāmeh-ye Tansar* (The Letter of Tansar), written in the third century AD, states: 'Religion and politics are both born of the same belly, never separated from each other, and the good and the bad and the rightness of both have the same temperament'.[68] For this reason, the ideal king is expected to be either the religious authority himself, like Jamshid or someone fully aware of the importance of religious institutions. The social hierarchy also confirms this, as in the Iranian social classification, religious authorities stand right after the king.

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63. Mohammad Jaʿfar Yāhaqi, *Fargang-e Asaṭir va Dāstān-vāra-hā dar Adabiyāt-e Fārsi*, p. 608.
64. Ebrāhim Pur-Dāvud, *Avestā (Yasht-hā 1,2)*, p. 494.
65. Ibid., p. 489.
66. Different sins are attributed to Jamshid as the cause of farr being separated from him, including: killing a cow and making it common to eat meat; claiming to be a deity, and having intercourse with his sister. (See Mehrdād Bahār, *Pazhuheshi dar Asatir-e Irāni*, ed. Katāyun Mazdā-pur, (Tehran: Āgāh, 1381 [2002]), p. 230)
67. Ebrāhim Pur-Dāvud, *Avestā (Yasht-hā 1,2)*, p. 490.
68. Tansar, *Nāmah-ye Tansar be Goshnasp*, ed. Mojtabā Minovi and Mohammad Esmāʾil Rezvāni, (Tehrān: Khārazmi, 1354 [1975]), p. 53.

In the face of all the duties that are defined for the king in an ideal government, the people are not left without a role. The most important duty assigned to the people is to obey the ideal king unconditionally and to take a stand against bad kings. There are many examples in literature where the king has been reprimanded or admonished by ordinary people and his duties have been reminded to him. Thus, it is suggested that a king requires someone who constantly reminds him of his responsibilities.[69] In the system of the ideal kingdom, even the order of nature will be subject to rules. If an ideal leader rules, there will be abundance and blessings in the land not just because of their proper management of natural resources, but also because they are in harmony with natural forces. Without this harmony, all the inhabitants, including humans and animals, may suffer. In this regard, we can refer to a few verses from the *Shāhnāmeh* as an example:

> It is because unjust kings rule the world
> That good of every kind is vanishing.
> No onagers are breeding in their season
> Upon the plains, hawks rear a sightless brood;
> Milk faileth in the udders of the game;
> The water in the springs is turned to pitch,
> And they are drying up throughout the world;
> Musk bags no longer yield the scent of musk;
> All that is right is frayed by villainy,
> And the population faileth everywhere.[70]

As is mentioned here by Ferdowsi, even the cooperation of natural elements with humans is contingent upon having a just and righteous monarchy. Otherwise, natural disasters may occur, and nature will be disrupted from its expected cycle.

An examination of the social and political governance structure of Iranian society reveals that its most significant principle is this hierarchical structure. While the creation of social hierarchy is attributed to Jamshid, its maintenance has been a crucial task of every king thereafter, and any disruption to this structure is believed to result in chaos. In the famous story of Anushirvān[71] and the shoemaker, Anushirvān refuses to allow the shoemaker's son to enter the

[69]. Abu Hāmed Mohammad ebn Ahmad Ghazzāli, *Nasihat al-Moluk*, p. 96.
[70]. Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, II, 253. (Translation from Abu al-qāsim Firdawsi, Shahnama of Firdausi, trans. Arthur George Warner, Edmond Warner (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & CO., 2/ .))
[71]. One of Sasanian Kings who ruled over Iran from 531 to 579.

class of secretaries, even though the shoemaker offers to sponsor his whole army.[72] *The Letter of Tansar* also describes social classes in detail and emphasizes that social mobility can only occur under specific circumstances, and with the accurate examination and approval of the king and religious authorities.[73] Justice, which is the main pillar of society, is also defined not as the equal treatment of all, but as the appropriate behaviour of each group and class in this hierarchy. Later in this chapter, I will theorise this aspect in my analysis of the views of philosophers on utopia.

Zoroastrianism supported this hierarchical system. After Islam, although the religious system did not emphasize hierarchy, and social mobility was easier, the importance of social hierarchy did not diminish, and preserving the class structure of society was highly emphasized in Persian literature. Iranian myths and legends frequently focus on how disrupting this order leads to chaos. For example, in one of the variations of Zahhāk's story, his disregard for maintaining social class leads to chaos.[74] Upon enthronement, Fereydun asked everyone to move back to his own social class and returned all the belongings that Zahhāk had seized from the people.[75] Egalitarian ideas were later promoted by Māni[76] and Mazdak,[77] However, the image of these two in works such as *Shāhnāmeh* remains strongly negative. Most of the literary and historical texts, therefore, specify that the collapse of the hierarchical structure of society leads to turmoil. The only exceptions to this practice occur in Romances of Alexander which I discuss in detail at the end of this chapter.

The two pre-Islamic Iranian kings who are mostly referred to as the ideal king in both pre-Islamic and post-Islamic works are Fereydun and Khosrow Anushirvān. This list expands in the Islamic era and includes more kings such as Ardashir Pāpakān, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, and so on. To provide examples of how the discourse of ideal kings functions, I will examine the cases of Fereydun and Anushirvān in the following section.

Fereydun's Reign

[72]. Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, VII, 140-145.
[73]. Tansar, *Nāmeh-ye Tansar be Goshnasp*, pp. 57- 58.
[74]. Jalāl Khāleqi-motlaq, 'Qate'āti az Ostureh-hā-ye Irani dar neveshteh-hā-ye Gerigur Māgistrus', *Majaleh-ye Dāneshkadeh-ye Adabiyāt va Olum-e Ensāni Dāneshgāh-e Tabriz*, no.109, (1353 [1974]), p. 85. (also see Sajjād Āydenlu, 'Noktehā-ei az Ravāyat-e Pāyān-e Kār-e Zahhāk', *Kāvosh Nāmeh*, no.18 (1388 [2009]), p. 13).
[75]. Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, I, 83.
[76]. The founder of the Manichean religion,
[77]. An Iranian reformer illustrated a message of brotherly love, social justice, and perhaps a form of emancipation of women. He was demonised in Zoroastrian textbooks and Persian literature.

When Jamshid, due to his sin, loses his ideal kingdom, Zahhāk takes over his throne. The period of Zahhāk's rule can be considered as the first Iranian dystopia as he is the embodiment of evil in Persian mythology.[78] Jamshid had abolished the four evil practices of theft, selfishness, atheism, and drunkenness, but Zahhāk made them common again. All of this ultimately laid the groundwork for Fereydun to defeat Zahhāk and seize the throne. After Jamshid, Fereydun is the greatest king and hero of Iranian mythology. The *kayāni farr*, which had separated from Jamshid, joined Fereydoun upon his birth. He eventually succeeded in leading the uprising that Kāveh the Blacksmith had begun, overthrowing Zahhāk and taking his place. Later, he divided the seven kingdoms among his three sons: Iraj, Tur, and Salm. In Islamic texts, Fereydoun is praised for his justice, and he is also considered the initiator of astronomy. Gardizi even credits Fereydoun with the invention of medicine.[79] Fereydoun is considered a symbol of justice, forgiveness, and rebellion against oppression in Persian literature. Ferdowsi says:

> Fereydoun was not born of angels, nor was he created from musk or amber.
> He achieved goodness through justice and wisdom.
> He achieved goodness through justice and generosity.
> You should be just and generous, for you are Fereydoun.[80]

Ferdowsi lists Fereydoun's good deeds in the following order: First, he purified the world from evil. Second, he saved the government from the hands of foolish people. Third, he took revenge for his father's blood. Fourth, he put the world on the right path of truth and righteousness.[81]

Anushirvān's Reign

The second king frequently referred to as *dādgar* (just) is Anushirvān, who assumed power after his father, Qobād, had allowed Mazdak to propagate his idea of a classless society and his egalitarian religion. Qobād initially accepts Mazdak's ideas, but later changes his mind. As narrated in *Bondaheshn*, Anushirvān's rule began with the massacre of Mazdak and his followers.[82] He then suppressed other claimants to the government and eventually brought peace and comfort to the whole territory. He revived traditions that had been neglected and reinforced the ancient laws to guarantee the smooth running of the country. It should be noted that during his reign, the king and the people all had responsibilities and were equal before the

[78]. Mohammad Jaʿfar Mahjub, *Farhang-e Asāṭir va Dāstān-vāre-hā dar Adabiyāt-e Fārsi*, pp. 548- 549.
[79]. Mahmud Gardizi, *Tārikh-e Gardizi*, ed. 'Abd-ol-Hay Habibi, (Tehran: Donyā-ye ketāb, 1363 [1984]), p. 39.
[80]. Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, I, 40.
[81]. Ibid.
[82]. Ebrāhim Pur-Dāvud, *Avestā (Yasht-hā 1,2)*, p. 141.

law. One of these laws was a tax system, which he created after completing a thorough survey of the land and its resources which had begun during Qobād's reign. In Middle Eastern narratives, Anushirvān continued to be a role model of justice, chivalry and mercy. Numerous Arab and Iranian authors used anecdotes describing his efforts to maintain justice. Anushirvān was introduced as a judge and his reputation for justice was such that one of Prophet Mohamad's sayings declared that he was born in the time of 'the just king'.[83]

In both narratives, the three principles mentioned at the beginning of this section are summarized under one word: tradition. As long as tradition is preserved in the realm, in all its dimensions, peace and comfort rule over the land. Chaos will begin as soon as one of the foundations of this tradition is ignored. Tradition is often used as the key structural element of the ideal kingdom in Persian literature.[84]

Utopia from the Viewpoint of Peripatetic Philosophy

In the realm of philosophy, utopian writing adopts a distinct format in which the author critiques human societies and presents an idealized version, not as a speaker of a pre-told story but as a theorist. The theories emphasize the institutions and social relations governing ideal societies, with less attention given to the physical structure of the utopia. Fārābi, regarded as the founder of Islamic political philosophy, is arguably the first philosopher to elaborate on the concept of utopia within an Islamic philosophical context.

Fārābi's Virtuous City

There are not many reliable details about Fārābi's life. He was most probably a Persian philosopher born in 870 in a place called Fārāb or Fāriyāb.[85] In his youth, he moved to Baghdad and in 943 he went to Syria and Damascus. He may have gone to Egypt but died in Damascus in December 950 or January 951. He is also known as the 'Second Master', Aristotle being the first. Although he wrote many commentaries on Aristotle's philosophy, in his reflections about political philosophy, he is not in dialogue with Aristotle's *Politics* but with Plato's *Republic*

[83]. Mohammad ebn Ismāʾil Sa'ālabi, *Tārikh-e Saʿālabi*, tr. into Persian: Mohammad Fazāʾeli, (Tehran: Noqreh, 1368 [1989]), p. 391.
[84]. In my second chapter, I will argue that with the arrival of modernity in Iran, this type of utopia and its traditional basis were attacked more than any other type of utopia.
[85]. Ulrich Rudolph, 'Abû Nasr al-Fârâbî', in *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, *(Volume 1: 8th-–10th Centuries)*, eds. Ulrich Rudolph, Rotraud Hansberger & Peter Adamson, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 526–654.

and *Laws*.[86] Most of Fārābi's theories about utopia can be seen in the two books, *Ārāʾ Aḥl al-Madinah al-Fāzelah* and *Tahsil al-Saʿādah*. Fārābi took Plato's idea about an ideal society and transformed it in such a way as to reflect the requirements of the world he was living in. Unlike the monoethnic city-state that Plato pictures in his *Republic*, Fārābi and his successors embrace the notion of a vast multicultural, and multi-religious empire. In terms of size, the ideal society that Fārābi describes goes sometimes beyond the boundaries of a city-state and takes on different dimensions, from great (the union of all the inhabitable world), to medium (the union of one nation in one part of the world), and small (the union of people within a city in the territory of any nation whatsoever).[87]

In Fārābi's intellectual system, the utopia, or *madinah-ye fāzeleh* (virtuous city) as he names it, is a society in which people experience felicity and have control in matters that lead them to this end. In other words, it is a self-sufficient society where a group of people join to accept rationality and help each other to achieve happiness. The importance of the cooperation of individuals is such that it is only in a utopia that individuals can contribute to the realization of human perfection; this is true even of a philosopher. In Fārābi's school of thought, the construction of a utopia is not the ultimate end. It is a means to achieve felicity and perfection.[88] This system must be subject to the provision of what the philosopher means by felicity. Fārābi distinguishes between 'earthly' and 'ultimate' felicity. He considers ultimate felicity as the result of a man reaching his highest perfection in preparation for the afterlife.[89]

In line with Plato's arguments, Fārābi also sees the class system and social stratification as a necessity in the establishment of a utopia. Comparing an ideal society to a healthy body, Fārābi argues that, just as not all organs within the body are of equal importance, not all people in any given society deserve to be treated equally:

> the parts of the body close to the ruling organ perform the natural functions, in agreement – by nature- with the aim of the ruler, the noblest ones; the organs beneath them perform those functions which are less noble, and eventually, the organs are reached which perform the meanest functions.[90]

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86. Therese-Anne Druart, 'al-Farabi', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta <https://plato.stanford.edu> [accessed 5 September, 2022].
87. Abū Nasr Fārābi, *Al- Fārābi on the Perfect State*, tr. Richard Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 229.
88. Ibid., p. 231.
89. Therese-Anne Druart, 'al-Farabi'.
90. Abū Nasr Fārābi, *Al- Fārābi on the Perfect State*, p. 237.

At the top of this structure stands the leader, who is likened to the heart.[91] After him is the middle class, which is the institution of government, and in third place is the mass of people, among whom there are two groups of intellectual elites and oppositions. The survival of Fārābi's utopia depends on its leadership, as the heart is understood to be the cause of the existence of the other organs and limbs of the body.[92] In fact, he saw the ruler as the main cause of the ideal city's existence, argued that the main burden of maintaining an ideal society rests with its ruler, and provided a comprehensive list of characteristics of the ideal leader. He ultimately changed Plato's notion of the philosopher-king to a prophet-philosopher-king.[93]

In his *Tahsil al-sa'adah*, Fārābi argues that for a philosopher to be a leader in addition to intellectual virtues, he must have the ability to communicate with Active Intellect, learn the divine law and apply it within society.[94] Therefore, a good ruler should be a good orator who is able to rouse other people's imagination and lead them to the path of felicity.[95]

Fārābi argues for two main conditions for the ruler, '(a) he must be predisposed for it by his inborn nature, and (b) must have acquired the attitude and habit of will for rulership which can only develop in a man whose inborn nature is predisposed for it'.[96] On the basis of these two conditions, he then identified twelve inherent and acquired attributes for the ruler of the utopia. In *Ārāʾ Aḥl al-Madinah al-Fāżelah*, he stated the conditions as follows: 1). To have physical perfection, 2). To be astute and have the power of imagination; 3). To have a strong memory; 4). To be smart and intelligent; 5). To be eloquent, 6). To be a lover of learning and studying, 7). Not to be greedy for alcohol and wives or tend towards debauchery and corruption; 8). Be a lover of truth and truthfulness and an enemy of lies and liars; 9). To have dignity and be a lover of dignity; 10). To respect the just and justice and be hostile to oppressors and oppression; 11). To take worthy deeds seriously and not to let his determination and decision be disrupted; and 12). To despise worldly possessions.[97] Aware of the fact that no one can probably meet all these conditions and to increase the likelihood of finding a good ruler, Fārābi then provides a more practical version of *madina* and determines that a reduction to six conditions will

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[91]. Fārābi gives a complete explanation about the ways in which all the faculties of the soul work together. He holds that the ruling organ in the human body is the heart; the brain is a secondary ruling organ subordinated to the heart. (For more information see: Luis Xavier López-Farjeat, 'al-Farabi's Psychology and Epistemology', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta <https://plato.stanford.edu> [accessed 10, Jun, 2021].
[92]. Abū Nasr Fārābi, *Al- Fārābi on the Perfect State*, p. 235.
[93]. Ibid.
[94]. Abū Nasr Fārābi, *Al- Fārābi on the Perfect State*, 240- 245; Abu-Na Sr Fārābi, *Ketāb tahSil al-saʿādah*, (Bayrut: Dār va al-Maktabah al-helāl, 1995), pp. 94-95.
[95]. Ibid., p. 247.
[96]. Abū Nasr Fārābi, *Al- Fārābi on the Perfect State*, p. 239.
[97]. Ibid.

suffice.[98] If, after the death of the first ruler of *madina*, no one with these conditions is found to replace him, the laws and principles that have been established by him must be followed, to maintain the order of the city.[99]

It should be noted that for Fārābi there is only one form of law deserving to govern an ideal polity. This law goes beyond human beings' capabilities. Fārābi also considers the human intellect to have a divine origin. The first ruler of *madinah* is the one capable of communicating with the Active Intellect, who spreads divine wisdom in *madinah*. In this way, the chances of citizens reaching perfection increase. Fārābi still places the main responsibility of the utopia on its ruler. This feature, which has been almost preserved from mythical utopias, gradually fades away in later utopian works, as the other inhabitants of the utopia find an agency.

Ebn-e Sinā's 'Just City'

Ebn-e Sinā, or Avicenna in Latin, (980-1037) was born in Afshāneh, a village on the outskirts of metropolitan Bukhara. During his life, the Samanids (819- 1005) who ruled in Iran's eastern and north-eastern provinces followed a deliberate agenda of Persian revival while contributing to the Arabic-Islamic culture radiating from the centre of the Islamic world, Baghdad. Ebn-e Sinā, who was educated in this intellectually vibrant milieu, became the most distinguished philosopher and physician of his time. Ebn-e Sinā's theories on various subjects went beyond his time and were discussed for centuries in Islamic and non-Islamic (mostly Western) scientific societies.

Unlike Fārābi, Ebn-e Sinā did not write a treatise exclusively on political philosophy. Instead, he discussed the subject under other topics, especially in the books of *Shafā* and *Al-Eshārāt va al-Tanbihāt*. Ebn-e Sinā begins his analysis of politics with the principle that human beings are *madani be-l-tab'* (political by nature). This echoes Aristotle's reference to human beings as political beings who tend to live in a polis. For Ebn-e Sinā, this interpretation is the starting point of the discussion of social life and human relations within it. According to him, the root of human society and civilization is the human need for cooperation to provide for each other's needs.[100] He believed the lifestyle of a scattered group of human beings who do not follow any civil law would produce 'unlikely' human beings.

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98. Abū Nasr Fārābi, *Al- Fārābi on the Perfect State*, pp. 252- 253.
99. Ibid., p. 253.
100. Hossein ebn Abdollah ebn Sina, *Al-Shafa: Elahiyat*, intro. Sa'id Zāyed, (Qom: Ketābkhāneh-ye omumi-ye Ayatollah al-'Ozmā Mar'ashi Najafi, 2012), p. 441.

According to Ebn-e Sinā, the division of labour is a pervasive and permanent principle in the formation and continuation of civil life. He considered the differences between individuals at the point of creation as the reason for this division. It is not only the physical needs of human beings that lead to the formation of *madinah* but also matters of spirituality. In the spiritual dimension, things like knowledge, happiness, and felicity are important.[101] Ebn-e Sinā also sees the optimal state of society as a hierarchical one. The city of Ebn-e Sinā is divided into different social classes and every class has its own subdivisions.[102] Three main social classes are the rulers, the craftsmen, and the guards. People from different walks of life should follow the good habits and morals that the head of society has laid down. Therefore, people who are unable to stay within the framework of laws governing the utopia should be excluded from society and punished if they resist.[103] Due to their differences, all human beings should not be treated the same. As a result, absolute equality disrupts justice and social order, causing aggression and ultimately the destruction of society.

In the discussion of the ruler of *madinah*, Ebn-e Sinā connects the prophet directly with the Active Intellect, while the philosopher is related to it through a mediator. In this way, according to Ebn-e Sinā, the position of a philosopher and a prophet are distinguished, and it is the prophet who is in charge of '*madinah-ye ʿadilah*' or 'the just city'[104] (the name given to utopia by Ebn-e Sinā).

Ebn-e Sinā refers to his preferred political system as the Socratic political system and considers it to include two systems, the politics of the Elite (*siyāsat al-Akhyār*) and the politics of state (*siyāsat al-mulk*). In the former, the people of madinah are involved in achieving worldly happiness and brotherhood, and there is a suitable and favourable position and hierarchy for all the inhabitants of madinah according to their capabilities. In this *madinah*, there are one or more heads who act as if they are one soul. This suggests that such a society is ruled by a governing council, which is to be followed by the people of *madinah* who obey the ruler(s) voluntarily. The person who is given the position of the head of society achieves this status due to his merit. If in the system, the council is replaced by a wise ruler who possesses both theoretical and practical virtues to the fullest, then the political system becomes more complete as the system automatically reaches a status in which only the politics of the state matters.

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[101]. Hossein ebn Abdollah ebn Sina, *Al-Shafa: Elahiyat*, p. 441.
[102]. Ibid., pp. 62- 63.
[103]. Ibid., p. 453.
[104]. Hossein ebn Abdollah ebn Sina, *Tarjomehh va Sharh-e Elahiyat-e Nejat-e Sheikh o-ra'eis Abu Ali-Sina,* tr. into Farsi Yahyā Yasrebi (Qom: Bustān-e Ketāb, 1385 [2006]), p. 382.

Like Fārābi, Ebn-e Sinā links the ideal state of Islam with the ideal state of Plato's philosopher-king. He assigns the prophet a double task: he must ensure good order of the physical world through political government, and that of the spiritual world through philosophy.[105] Ebn-e Sinā considers two types of laws necessary for managing society and enabling men to walk successfully through the path of felicity and happiness. One is the law of human affairs, which is necessary to organize material life, and the other is divine law, which is revealed to the Prophet in the form of revelations. The latter, which are applied in the form of Sharia rules, organize the spiritual life of its residents.[106] Ebn-e Sinā does not consider politics except through the channel of divine law. He defines such law as such:

> The *Falāsifa* [philosophers] mean by law (*namos*) not what the masses think, namely, that it is trickery and cunning ruse, but rather that it is the Sunna, the permanent, certain pattern and the revelation sent down (from Heaven). The Arabs also call the angel, who brings down a revelation, law (*nomos*). Through this part of practical philosophy we know the existence of prophecy (as something necessary) and that the human race needs the *Shariʿa* for its existence, preservation and future life.[107]

He then goes on to point out that such law varies with nation and time. According to him, human beings cannot legislate by relying on his intellect. Therefore, laws are not human inventions but rather come from God. Nevertheless, in his view, divine law determines only the framework of general laws, and thus, mankind must rely on reason and theoretical discussions to achieve partial circumstantial awareness and general rules.

For Ebn-e Sinā in general, politics becomes a divine matter as is the case for an ultimate form of felicity and salvation. He does not separate religion from politics in a sense, and at the same time, he does not associate the concept of divine law with any specific religion.

Khājeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's Virtuous City

Khājeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201- 1274) was a celebrated polymath and vizier, whose significant works in literary, theological, and scientific disciplines later earned him the title of *moʿallem-e sāles*, i.e., the third master (following Aristotle and Fārābi). Evidence shows that Tusi was born to a father who was a Twelver Shia cleric, and he probably practised the same

[105]. Erwin I.J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (Cambridge: The Campribge University Press, 1962), p. 144.
[106]. Hojjat-allah Asil, *Ārmān-Shahr dar Andisheh-ye Irāni*, p. 159.
[107]. Erwin I.J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline*, p. 145.

faith. His religious creed greatly influenced his view of political philosophy. Khājeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi is a commentator on Fārābi's political philosophy and at the same time has his own theories in the field. His political thoughts deal with a world where human beings are purposeful and perfectionists. Tusi's political point of view leads him to consider the ideal society to be a possibility only under the Imamate system.[108]

Khājeh Nasir, as Aristotle and Ebn-e Sinā before, considered social life as a necessity for human survival and argued that mankind is political by nature.[109] In his worldview, because of the perfectionist nature of human beings, they tend to be benevolent and cooperative with others. Furthermore, human felicity can only be achieved through social life and the formation of a political society that itself requires political management. In this utopia, everyone strives for good. Since all manifestations of good originate from 'absolute good' and absolute good is one, such a city is one.[110] There is only one version of an ideal society, where people share opinions and actions because they are all determined to do good. At the same time, the residents of the virtuous city share the same beliefs, because their idea is in accordance with the absolute Truth; so, everyone agrees with each other in these beliefs and everything they have is perfection and moves towards more perfection.[111] The ultimate goal of residents of a utopia is to achieve true perfection, which depends on acting in harmony with each other based on agreed sets of communally beneficial attitudes and practices.

Unlike Fārābi, who considers the head of *madinah* to exist prior to *madinah,* and considers the permanence and existence of the city to be dependent on him, Khājeh Nasir considers the behaviour of the people of *madinah* to be its most obvious feature and without which an ideal city could not be achieved. Here, the head of *madinah* is one of the sages and his power to distinguish and understand political and non-political concepts is stronger than all the people in this city. Being the best in theoretical and practical wisdom, he becomes the leader of *madinah* and the head of the rulers. The leader, then, places the people in five groups to regulate the affairs of society in a way that is just for different groups of people. [112] Enabling each class to function well in its appropriate place is a sign of good leadership and people's obedience to the leader. If some disobedience occurs, there will be disruption in the utopia. The leader has

[108]. Khājeh Nasir al-Din Tusi, *Ketāb-e Mostatāb-e Akhlāq-e Nāseri*, ([Tehran]: Enteshārāt-e ʿElmiyeh Eslāmi, no date), p. 237.
[109]. Ibid.
[110]. Ibid.
[111]. Ibid, p. 238.
[112]. Ibid., p. 243.

four conditions and characteristics: wisdom, connection to Active Intellect,[113] power of vision and persuasion, and the power to repel foreign enemies and oppressors.

Finally, unlike Fārābi and Ebn-e Sinā, who end their discussion with a prophecy and say that the ruler must be a prophet-philosopher, Tusi ends his discussion with the Shia Imamate. In the utopia of Khājeh Nasir, legal necessity is associated with the necessity to guarantee justice in regulating human affairs. The legislator, therefore, must have intellectual and practical superiority over others due to divine inspiration. Using their own interpretation of the ancients, these legislators are the possessors of *nomos*. What he delivers is thus called divine *nomos*. In later explanations, he calls this divine *nomos* the *shariʿa* and his legislation becomes the same as the sharia.

As observed in the above discussion, these philosophers make no distinctions between political philosophy and religion, and their ideal leader is, ultimately, determined by religious beliefs and laws. This also means that, even to philosophers, human capabilities are not sufficient for constructing a utopia, and the laws governing the ideal society come from higher institutions through mediators who can communicate with the 'Active Intellect'.

Utopia in the School of Illumination

School of Illumination or *Hekmat-e Eshrāq*, is an attempt to unify various schools of wisdom in the Islamic-Iranian context to demonstrate the universal truth that lies at the heart of divine religion. This school can be regarded as the synthesis of the rationalistic reflections of Peripatetic philosophy and the Sufi's ascetic inner journey. Unlike earlier mystics in Islam, Sohravardi considered philosophical discourse a necessity for those seeking to pursue the path of illumination. In fact, as Sohravardi puts it, the path of illumination is philosophizing the journey of the soul beginning with purification and ending with illumination.[114]

Sohravardi's Nowheresville

Shahāb al-Din Sohravardi was born in Suhravard in North-western Iran in 1154 and was executed in Aleppo in 1191. Trained as a peripatetic philosopher, he became the founder of the 'Illuminationist' (*eshrāqi*) philosophical tradition. Sohravardi's primary concern is to describe an Illuminationist epistemological system that aims to inform the seekers of the wisdom of a

[113]. Khājeh Nasir al-Din Tusi, *Ketāb-e Mostatāb-e Akhlāq-e Nāseri*, p. 244.
[114]. Mehdi Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the school of illumination*, (Surrey: Curzon Press: 1997), p. XX.

process by which absolute knowledge can be obtained directly. The souls of the divine philosophers and pure ones (*pākān*) will receive the light of God, which will give them power over the 'elemental entities' (*ʿonsoriyyāt*).

Sohravardi's *Philosophy of Illumination* carries a political dimension, but his political philosophy needs to be approached more carefully because, unlike the philosophers before him, he never discussed the principles of political philosophy. As Hossein Ziai explains in detail, none of Sohravardi's philosophical treatises can be described as a text on political or practical philosophy.[115] He also never discussed political rules in relation to a city. The concept of rule for Sohravardi relates to 'divine governance' (*tadbir-e Elah*). For Suhravadi, politics and the political regime are deemed meaningful if actual politics and the political regime embody divine elements.

As with the other philosophers we talked about earlier, Sohravardi also establishes a connection between political authority, just rule, and the ruler's access to divine light. This legitimate rule is said to relate to an entirely different source, the 'unseen realm'. So, a ruler should show a sign of his divine inspiration. This ruler can be the link between the world of sense perception and the world of pure being. Since everyone has the innate ability to seek wisdom, potentially anyone may become a leader. He thinks of a ruler as a demonstrator of superhuman qualities. One can be a legitimate ruler only by command of God.[116] Sohravardi redefined the concept of *farr*, which was discussed earlier in this chapter, as the divine light that was bestowed upon ancient kings. In the *Book of Radiance*, he states it was the Light of Lights that bestowed upon some kings' luminous glory and power (*kharra-ye kayani*); and in the *Philosophy of Illumination*, he states it was the light of the Kingdom of Power (*malakut*) that Kay Khosraw and Zarathustra were able to behold.[117]

Sohravardi, in his epistemological system, speaks of a third realm between the intelligible world and the world of the senses; and an imaginal realm in between that he refers to as '*eqlim-e hashtom*' (the eighth clime; there being seven on Earth). He believes that understanding the imaginal world requires the power of imagination. This world cannot be found in the real sensible world, so, it is not visually accessible to individuals. The ideal community that Sohravardi portrays is not located in the real world but exists in this imaginal world. Sohravardi

[115]. Hossein Ziai, 'The Source and Nature of Political Authority in Suhrawardi's Philosophy of Illumination', in *Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Charles Butterworth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 304- 344.
[116]. Ibid., p. 308.
[117]. Ibid., p. 304.

uses various terms for his utopia, including *Hovarqeliyā*,[118] *Nākojā-ābād*, mount Qāf, (in the *Red Intellect*), and *Jābolqā* and *Jābolsā*.[119] The attribution of these names to an ideal city is his own invention. The details of the imaginal appear in Sohravardi's allegorical treatises. The residents of this imaginal realm travel to the world of the sensible whenever they want. Usually, in the story, someone starts a conversation with a resident of one of these exemplary utopias and enquires about the situation in this city. The speaker tries to explain the concepts with terms that the reader understands, but the relationships that are specified are not straightforward as they are unlike relationships that exist in the real world. In any case, the exemplary city depicted in their allegorical writings is built on a hierarchical system of order and governance. As mentioned in *The Red Intellect*: 'When the king wanted to make his kingdom flourish… he put us to work and ordered the foundation of the twelve workshops!'[120]

In the *Wisdom of Illumination*, Sohravardi mentions the eighth clime, which is the location of a group of seekers who walk over air and water, ascend to the sky with their bodies and associate with some constellations (at the top of all the constellations of Horakhsh, or the sun). In this clime, even death is optional.[121] To prove the probability of such a world and its accessibility, he refers to what Plato, Hermes,[122] or even the prophet Muhammad said about themselves when they claimed to have discarded their physical body and the material world before making their way to this clime.[123]

Sohravardi gives a new form and a new name to utopian writing in Iran. Unlike former writers who tried to dedicate an actual geographical spot to their utopias, Sohravardi used the term 'eighth clime' for his ideal place, and from the very beginning he confirms the imaginal nature of this society, constructing a city where its inhabitants called themselves 'a group of abstract

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[118]. This term was first used by Suhravardi. There are different theories about the origins of the term, and therefore several meanings have been assumed for it. See: ʿAbbās Zahabi, Moharrami, Farideh, 'Mazāher-e ʿĀlam-e Hovarqeliyā dar Falsafa-ye Eshrāq va Maktab-e Shaykhiyya', in Journal of Religious Thought of Shiraz University, no 35 (2010), pp.73- 96.

[119]. A mountain that covers all the lands of the earth and the edges of the sky placed on it. According to Irianian legends and myths, Simorg̃ (the mythical bird) has a nest on this mountain. (See Mohammad Jaʿfar Mahjub, *Farhang-e Asātir va Dāstān-vāre-hā dar Adabiyāt-e Fārsi*, pp. 643- 644.)

[120]. Shahab al-din Yahya Sohravardi, 'the Red Intellect', in *the Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publisher, 1999), p. 29.

[121]. Shahab al-din Yahya Sohravardi, *Tarjomah-ye Hekmat al-Eshrāq*, trans to Persian Jaʾfar Sajjādi, (Tehran: Enteshārāt Daneshgāh-e Tehran, 1998), p. 400.

[122] Hermes or Idris is the name of a prophet in Islamic narrations who has also been called the 'Triangle of Wisdom' due to his possession of the three attributes of prophethood, sovereignty, and wisdom.

[123]. Ibid., p. 400.

ones',[124] and locating it 'in a clime to which no index finger can point'.[125] The mechanisms of the city are explained to him in the form of rituals. While describing this city, the traveller asks the old man to teach him tailoring, which is said to be the main occupation of its inhabitants. He hears this in response:

> This cannot be done by the likes of you. This knowledge is not possible for your species, for our tailoring cannot be translated into the act. […] It is unlikely that you could learn much of God's word while you are in this city [in this world], but I will instruct you in as much as possible.[126]

The old man directly points out that no one can learn what the people of that community have, nor can they be worthy of joining that community. Everything that happens in this clime is of pure reality and in the right shape it should be, and if people on earth knew this fact, they would be ashamed of trying to have things of this world. In *The State of Childhood*, the speaker again encounters an old man in the desert who asks him about the secrets of the world:

> The globe of the earth is 96000 parasangs and the inhabited quarter is 24000 parasangs, each parasang being 1000 cubits. The earth is no more than this. Now consider how many kings there are on that bit of earth that is inhabited. Some of them[rule] provinces, some regions, some whole climes; and every one of them claims a kingdom. If they knew the reality of things, they would be ashamed of their claims.[127]

Sohravardi's utopia, therefore, is not on Earth, and he denies the possibility of having an ideal society in the sensible world. Although this utopia is located outside the sensible world, access to it is not impossible for humans. His utopia is not a place to be built, rather it is ever-present in the imaginal world. This imaginal nature of Sohravardi's ideal society, however, does not make it inaccessible to human beings, and reaching this land requires not a collective effort, but an individual struggle. One needs to abandon everything he/she had in the sensible world and become abstract to be able to reach the eighth clime.

It is true that Sohravardi took utopia out of the sensible world and transferred it to the eighth clime, but after him, his ideas were followed in his mystical sects, especially Shaykhism. In

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[124]. Shahab al-din Yahya Sohrawardi, 'the Sound of Gabriel's Wing', in *the Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises,* trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publisher, 1999) p. 10.
[125]. Ibid.
[126]. Ibid., p. 14.
[127]. Shihabuddin Yahya Suhravardi, 'the State of Childhood', *in the Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, pp. 49- 50.

the realm of philosophy, however, his successors leaned more towards the peripatetic philosophers' understanding of utopianism.

Mulla Sadra's Virtuous City

Sadr al-Din Mohammad Shirāzi (ca. 1571–1636), also known as Molla Sadrā, is the most significant Islamic philosopher after Ebn-e Sinā.[128] Originally acting as a prominent figure in the school of illumination in philosophy, he later established his new philosophical school called Transcendent Theosophy (*al-hikmah al-motaʾāliyah*). In his approach to philosophy, he combined an in-depth understanding of theology with insights from mystical intuitions. Molla Sadrā dealt with politics in his various works, but he discusses the idea of a utopia in *Divine Witnesses* (*Al-Shawidah al-Rububiyyah*), and *The Principle and Resurrection* (*al-Mabdaʾ va al-Maʿād*). He also used the term virtuous city (*madinah-ye fāzeleh)* to refer to his utopia.[129] As in the case of Peripatetic philosophers, Molla Sadrā also thought that living in an ideal polity is a necessity for achieving felicity.[130] His discussion of utopia begins with the argument that human beings are political by nature and repeats Fārābi's argument about the similarity of society to a healthy organism.[131] He also repeats the same arguments made about the necessity of hierarchy in society and the need for cooperation within society. Like Fārābi and Ebn-e Sinā before, he also considers the best form of society to be one ruled by a prophet. Thus, Molla Sadrā's utopia is a city structured on beliefs and convictions in which anyone who shares this belief system, regardless of race or language, is allowed to become a citizen.

The citizens in Molla Sadrā's ideal system all cooperate in enforcing the law and maintaining the structure of the city, but they do not play a role in making laws, because this requires expertise that is typically beyond the capabilities of ordinary men. Molla Sadrā considered the formation of society as a precondition for achieving perfection. Since he saw humanity as inherently obsessed with profiteering, he considered the existence of laws a necessity to confront and control this characteristic in human beings. Nevertheless, he believed that such laws could not be created and enforced by human beings, because human beings are selfish

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128. Sajjad Rizvi, 'Mulla Sadra', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu> [accessed 15, jun, 2022].
129. Mohammad ebn Ebrāhim Sadr al-Din Shirāzi, *al-Mabdā' wa-al-Maʿād*, ed. Jalāl al-Din Āshtiyāni, (Qom: Markaz-e Enteshārāt Daftar-e Tabliqāt-e Eslāmi, 2001), p. 615.
130. Ibid., p. 615.
131. Ibid., pp. 616-617.

and likely to create and enforce laws selectively in their own interests.[132] For this reason, he argues that Shariʿa is ultimately the best source for the law as it originates within a higher institution.

The person who is responsible for leading and enforcing Shariʿa law in society must also have certain characteristics. According to Molla Sadrā, man communicates with the material world through his faculty of senses, to the imaginal realm through his imaginal, and reflective faculty to the world of the intelligible. He argues that the only person worthy of utopia's leadership is the one who has all three faculties to the highest degree of perfection. Certainly, the prophet is one in whom all three powers have been realized to the highest degree.[133] In the absence of the Prophet, he appoints the Imams to this position, and there is no distinction between the rule of the Prophet and the rule of the Imam.[134]

According to Molla Sadrā, the goal and source of happiness for human beings is to reach God. The path to God, however, passes through philosophy and rationalism. Philosophy must be valued in an ideal society, and the rational sciences should be taken seriously. According to Molla Sadrā, philosophy is a science that discusses the state of existence, and by learning and practising philosophical issues, one achieves a degree of resemblance to God.

Utopia in Romances of Alexander

The utopias depicted so far, despite their fundamental differences, have one feature in common: they need a leader who can create and maintain this ideal environment for its inhabitants, and facilitate their path to happiness and felicity. In Romances of Alexander, however, an alternative ideal society is proposed. Alexander and his adventures have been the subject of many romances in the Persian-speaking world. Alexander's adventures were originally inspired by the accounts of Alexander's life, but they gradually evolved to reflect archetypal, folktale and religious motifs in two of the most famous Romances on Alexander, written by Nezāmi-ye Ganjavi and ʿAbd al-Rahmān-e Jāmi. These archetypal elements also highlight how during his journeys, he reaches a utopia. This is particularly interesting as, unlike other utopias in the Persian-speaking world, this utopia is characterised by a classless society in which, once

[132]. Mohammad ebn Ebrāhim Sadr al-Din Shirāzi, *al-Mabdā' wa-al-Maʿād*, p. 627.
[133]. Mohammad ebn Ebrāhim Sadr al-Din Shirāzi, *al-Sawāhed al-rabubiyah*, eds. Jalāl al-Din Āshtiyāni, and Hādi ebn Mahdi Sabzavāri ([Mashhad]: Chāpkhāneh-ye Dāneshgāh-e Mashhad, 1967), p. 341.
[134]. Mohammad ebn Ebrāhim Sadr al-Din Shirāzi, *al-Mabdā' wa-al-Maʿād*, 618.

again, as in the earliest mythical reports of human life, human society becomes more attuned to nature.

Nezāmi Ganjavi's Utopia

Nezāmi Ganjavi (d. 1209) is considered the greatest poet of romantic epics in Persian literature. Nezāmi's account of utopia, which occurs in *The Book of Alexander* (*Eskandar nāma*) begins when Alexander, during his long journeys and after many conquests, reaches the northern borders of the earth. There he builds the Alexandrian Dam and after a long march towards the north, he and his companions reach a paradise-like city that he had heard about before, but no one had ever seen. The initial encounter of Alexander and his companions with this city is full of surprises. Herds are grazing without shepherds and gardens without gardeners.[135] There are no walls or fences in this city. One of his soldiers stretches out his hand to pick fruit, but his hand is frozen on the spot. Another soldier who catches a sheep has a fever on the spot.[136] Alexander asks his companions to refrain from touching anything without permission. When entering the main area of the city, they do not see any gate or gatekeeper. The shops are unlocked. The people of the city, then, greet Alexander in a hospitable manner,[137] and Alexander asks about the odd things that he has seen in the city. The speaker begins by praising the king but does not mention his role in the city.[138] It is as if they are talking only about a ceremonial official as if the king in this land is merely a position devoid of all the responsibilities that are traditionally expected from a king in a utopia. In all aspects of the city, it is emphasized how the citizens cooperate in maintaining the order of the city. The people of this city have built their relationships based on trust and righteousness. They avoid lies, accept divine providence without any question, help each other through suffering and hardship, and are patient in the face of adversity.[139] All are equal in wealth and desires, and no one is higher in rank than the others. If someone violates any of the laws, he will be punished automatically and immediately. Each seed that is sown is left in the hope of God, and 700 seeds are harvested from each one. Even domestic and wild animals cooperate in this order. Those who can live

[135]. Eliyās ebn Yusof Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Eskandar-Nāmeh (Sharaf-nāmeh- Eqbāl-nāmeh),* (Tehran: Qoqnus, 1380 [2001]), p. 1318.
[136]. Ibid., p. 1318.
[137]. Ibid.
[138]. Ibid., p. 1319.
[139]. Ibid.

according to the city's principles have the right to live in this city, and those who cannot are expelled or punished by God.[140]

Looking at this city, Alexander is deeply impressed and puts an end to his many travels and conquests, saying he would never have travelled the world if he had seen the inhabitants of this city sooner.[141] If we consider the goal of human life to be achieving eternal happiness and well-being, this is Alexander's final destination in his journey, where he found the way to this happiness and the society that guides him in this important matter.

Jāmi's City of the Pure

Imitating Nezāmi's utopian account, Jāmi wrote his account of Alexander's quests in which he described an ideal city. He called it the residence of the pure. Again, the traveller who steps into this city is Alexander, and the description of the city is as follows:

The people of this city do not speak nonsense or lie. They are equal in economics, politics, and social status, and there are no rich or poor people in this city. They cooperate with each other in different situations. Everyone has only one house, and a deep well has been dug in front of each house to remind the household of death. There is no theft in the city and people are honest with each other. The abundance of blessings and fertility of the land of this city has made them needless of other people's property. They are satisfied with God's providence and do not ask for more. They believe that because their needs are sufficiently met, there is no need for war. In other words, war is seen as the result of economic goals to gain more wealth and prosperity, and without this need, war is unnecessary.[142]

Government is also absent in this city because the task of any government is to create justice, with justice defined as the opposite of oppression.[143] If there is no oppression in the world, justice will not make any sense, and if people decide not to oppress each other, the need for government disappears. Thus, for the first time in Persian utopianism, one encounters a completely classless society in which there is no need for the state.

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[140]. Eliyās ebn Yusof Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Eskandar-Nāmeh*, p. 1320.
[141]. Ibid., p. 1321.
[142]. Nur al-Din ʿAbd al-Rahmān Ahmad Jāmi, *Masnavi-e Haft Awrang*, eds. Aʿlā khān Afsah-zād, Jābelqā Dād-ʿAlishāh, (Tehran: Markaz-e Motāleʿāt-e Irāni, 1997), II, 496- 497.
[143]. Ibid., II, 497.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I summarized the types of classical utopias that have been discussed in different contexts in the Persian-speaking world. Utopian writers usually take their own societies as a starting point and try to elaborate on their significant elements. Accordingly, depending on their different periods and contexts, utopias take various forms. Iranian utopias, despite their similarities, have disparate specifications. The earliest type appears in the mythical narratives about the rise of urbanism, where a distinct line was drawn between human societies and wild nature. Towards the end of the twelfth century, however, an opposite form of utopia was proposed, in which the boundaries between human society and nature were removed, and the ideal society was imagined as a society which works in harmony with nature. Sometime in between, it was imagined as a society that could be realized, and sometimes a city built outside the sensible world. Sometimes it becomes the size of a city-state and sometimes the whole world becomes a utopia. In the end, utopian authors in Persian rarely looked outside their society and tradition to find the ideal. The most common characteristic of all Iranian utopias is probably their adherence to religion and tradition. Thus, in almost all cases, if the structure and laws governing utopia are in accordance with religious laws, the stability of society is preserved. None of the examined authors was willing to outline an ideal society without the centralization of religion, or outside of their accepted traditions. All the discrepancies between these types of utopias happened within the framework of its two key elements: religion and tradition. These two elements were challenged by the arrival of modernity in Iran, and the roles they played in the construction of the modern ideas of utopia gradually regressed. I will examine this process in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: Utopias in Iran's March Towards Modernity

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the utopias described in classical literature in the Persian-speaking world were closely related to religion. In fact, laws governing utopia, ideals regarding the leader governing this utopia, and in some cases, the force that maintains utopia and preserves its order, all were attributed to an institution higher than humans. Therefore, humans were generally unable to create a society capable of establishing optimal conditions. Their best option was to rely on the help of higher institutions to create and maintain a society that met optimal conditions. Within such a society, the only demands and responsibilities placed upon the social body were to obey the ruling power, which had been selected and backed by these superhuman forces, without any conditions. In these societies, the masses of people played a passive role to the extent that they could not be considered citizens in the modern sense of the word. The relationship between Iran and the West from the nineteenth century onwards, coupled with the onset of modernization in Iran, prompted a re-evaluation of the notion of utopia, leading to a shift in the traditional criteria for utopias. During this period, the path taken by utopianism, although fundamentally distinct from classical utopias, can be more or less related to the 'ideal kingdom' discussed in the previous chapter. This suggests that, in this era, utopia is not a completely flawless society but rather an ideal that human beings can build relying on their own potential. In this sense, utopias are defined within the context of social reform programs. This chapter delves into the nature of the relationship with and the structural changes within utopias during this period. This is examined with regard to a study of the most important utopian works in Iran, before and immediately following the Constitutional Revolution (1905- 1911), which was one of the most significant social and political events in Iran at the opening of the twentieth century.

The fall of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736) led to a series of civil wars in the struggle for Iranian governance. Meanwhile, Iran's neighbours were frequently at war with Iran. For a short period during the reign of Nāder Shah (1688- 1747), the founder of the Afshāriyān dynasty (1736-1747), the country was unified, but generally, the borders of Iran were constantly changing and shifting up until the rise of the Qājār dynasty. After 17 years of being commonly regarded as an undisputed power, Āghā Mohammad Khān Qājār finally eliminated all oppositional claimants to power, reunited the whole country under the same political entity (the Qājārs, 1789-1925) and, in 1796, crowned himself the king of Iran. At this time, due to the lack of communication between different parts of Iran, Iranians were as uninformed about their

countrymen as they were about the lives of people in other countries. The war between Iran and Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century was a wake-up call for the newly established Qājār dynasty. Having lost large swaths of their territory to Russia following a disgraceful defeat, Iranians felt the need for change more keenly than ever, and the quest for modernization began when Crown Prince ʻAbbās Mirzā and a number of other officials started taking measures to modernise the Iranian army to better defend against Russia and other rising European powers. By the end of the century, the domain of modernization extended to almost every aspect of social, political, and cultural life, from the financial system to interior affairs, the press, the judicial system, education, health, agriculture, communication, and so on.[1]

During this era from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, which initiated several modernization plans and political and social movements, different aspects of culture gradually became the subject of evaluation and transformation. Ideologues and intellectuals living abroad wrote against the despotism of the government and foreign bodies, especially British and Russian influence over Iranian affairs, and fought for Iranian independence, the rule of law, and democracy.[2] Politically speaking, these oppositional activities took different forms, such as the protest against the British tobacco monopoly in 1882, the assassination of the Qājār king Nāser al-Din Shah in 1896, and the constitutional revolution of 1905–11, with the latter resulting in Iran becoming (at least on paper) a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system.[3]

The advent of modernity brought with it a new type of ‘Others’ (mostly Western Europeans), and a concept of ‘Self’, that Iranians defined in contrast with older Turkic and Arab concepts of ‘Others’. This new Western ‘Other’ contributed to a transformation of utopian ideas. Following unsuccessful confrontations between Iran and the Russian and British Empires in 1812, 1828 and 1848, they attempted to rebuild their image. As society moved away from its old-fashioned practices and beliefs and began to redefine traditions in the process of modernization, utopic literature simultaneously underwent changes, both in terms of form and content. Until the nineteenth century, the dominant genre in utopian writing was either epic, like parts of *Shāhnāmeh* (the Book of Kings), or fictional genres, such as religious or moral

1. Sādeq Zibākalām, *Sonnat va Moderniteh: Risheh-yābi ʻElal-i Nākāmi-ye Esāhāt va Nosāzi-ye Siyāsi dar Irān-e ʻasr-e Qājār* (Tehran: Rowzaneh, 1378 [1999]).
2. Claus Valling Pedersen, ‘Utopia and Dystopia in Early Modern Persian Literature: Representation of the Advent of Modernity to Iran’, In *Novel and Nation in the Muslim World: Literary Contributions and National Identities*, ed. Elisabeth Ozdalga & Daniella Kuzmanovic (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 186.
3. Ibid.

tales like Suhravardi's *fi Haqiqat al-ʿEshgh* (On the Reality of Love), or *Eskandar-nāmeh* (the Book of Alexander) by Nezāmi Ganjavi. However, in the nineteenth century, with the translation of European plays and the secret distribution of Mirzā Āqā Tabrizi's Persian plays in 1872, a new genre was introduced in Persian literature.[4] Soon, the novel, which, as a genre, had begun its rise in the previous century in Europe also entered Persian literature and became the dominant genre of utopic writings. The purpose of the first novels written in Persian was to criticize the administrative and social situation in Iran, with the outline of these novels written in the form of a travelogue, inspired by Nāser al-Din Shah's numerous travelogues.[5] Two of these works were of interest to and had an impact on awakening the minds of Iranians: *Siyāhat nāmeh-ye Ebrāhim Beyg* (Ibrahim Bey's Travelogue, 1903) and *Masālek-al-Mohsenin* (The Path of Benevolent, 1905).

Based on their shared elements, utopic writings produced between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be studied in two periods: before and after the constitutional revolution. During the years leading to the Constitutional Revolution (which is widely regarded as the age of hope), utopia was imagined to be an at-reach phenomenon. Relying on two different sources, intellectuals thought that they had the formula for the construction of a utopia. For them, utopia was assumed to be a recreation of Iran's golden age, and the task of all Iranians was to revive that glorious past when Iran's power rivalled that of the greatest powers of the world. Nevertheless, it was equally important for them to repeat this utopian glory by joining and contributing to the flow of technological advancements that seemed to determine the nature of life in their contemporary world. More than anything, the idea of the rule of law in a more democratic system of governance dominated the theme of utopic writings, as the writers were largely of the impression that changing Iran's political system to a parliamentary system would help realize the utopia. This was so that utopia became equal to the rule of progressive law in a democratic society. In the second period (after the failure of Constitutionalism), however, dystopic writings gained in frequency wherein there lies no glimmer of hope on the horizon. It is also interesting that despite the frequency of dystopic writings, and science fiction never became a common genre in Persian, the first utopic science fiction, *Majma'-e Divāneh-gān* (Council of Madmen) in 1924, was written in this period.

4. Parviz Nātel-khānlari, 'Nasr-e Fārsi dar Dowreh-ye Akhir', in *Nokhostin Kongereh-ye Nevisandegān-e Irān* (Tehran:n.p, 1326 [1947]), 128- 175. p. 144.
5. Ibid., p. 144.

Historical texts do not contain much evidence to allow for an evaluation of the influence of classical utopias on social movements in Iran before the advent of modernity. However, the influence of modern utopic writings on social uprisings of the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century has been researched. In his *Tārikh-e Mashruteh-ye Irān* (History of Constitutionalism in Iran), for instance, Ahmad Kasravi (1890- 1946) argues that these works had a great impact on the awakening of Iranians and were extremely hated by corrupt courtiers and religious authorities. Both groups saw fundamental social reforms, especially the modernization of the country, as detrimental to their own interests and stood firmly against it, even attempting at times to halt it altogether. During this period, the West, especially Europe, remained a source of inspiration for Iranian intellectuals who yearned for Iran to be as strong as Western European powers. They saw this as the most effective means to neutralise the colonial antics employed to exploit Iranian resources. As Talajooy puts it, this contradictory combination of admiration and resentment became increasingly more bitter in the twentieth century as British, American, and Soviet interventions deprived Iranians of several opportunities to modernise the country's political institutions. Equally important were the two World Wars, the 1953 coup, and the Cold War. These vicious wars, propagated by European countries without any qualms about involving neutral countries, demonstrated the emptiness of their claims to be the torchbearers of modernity and humanism. The coup that 'they initiated to maintain their control over Iranian oil and the Cold War also distorted the course of Iranian history by pushing the Shah to engage in an undue suppression of constitutionalists and socialists and to give a free hand to the clergy to protect the country from communism'. [6]

Working based on this historical context, in the rest of this chapter I will examine how Iranian utopic literature distanced itself from its classic forms, and how it represented Iran's turbulent history whilst the country was in the process of modernization. It's worth mentioning that two significant sources contributed to the changes in the concept of utopia during the period of modernization in Iran. The first source was the idealized golden past envisioned for Iran, and the second source was the West, which was idealised due to its technological advancements and social situation that were far superior to Iran's. These two sources played a crucial role in bringing about changes in the genre of utopian writing in Iran.

[6]. Talajooy. Discussions on Modernity and Cultural Disillusionment.

Returning to the Values of the Golden Age

During the mid-nineteenth century as Iran's modernization was gaining momentum, several authors began to formulate and disseminate a proto-nationalist ideology which glorified pre-Islamic Iran as a golden age. Though the influence of Iranian cultural traditions and religions, be it Zoroastrianism or Islam, are observed in classical utopias in Iranian literature, they did not emphasize a specific nationality, or a specific religion. In the modern period, however, the keywords used to describe utopias changed, and the term '*vatan'* (homeland) became one of the most important keywords. In this latter interpretation, utopia's extent is equivalent to the area of the homeland that Iranians must build and defend with their lives. Historical and archaeological research projects, which gained popularity in the early nineteenth century, contributed to a new perception of Iran's history. When combined with mythological narratives and heroic histories like the *Shāhnāmeh*, they emphasized Iran's illustrious past. One of the sources cited in presenting this golden historical image of Iran is the book of *Dasātir*. As Ebrāhim Pur-dāwud explained on the origins of this book, *Dasātir* was most likely written by a Zoroastrian cleric called Āzar-Kayvān, who was born in Fars province in Iran during the reign of Safavids, but migrated to India during the reign of Akbar Shah (1542- 1605).[7] Akbar Shah was in search of a new eclectic religion which he called 'divine monotheism',[8] and invited the religious authorities of different religions to participate in this challenge.[9] This religious movement provided a suitable ground for writing a book like *Dasātir*. After he migrated to India, Āzar-Kayvān and his followers resided in Patna and established a school inspired by the school of illumination and wrote pieces like *Dasātir*, *Shārestān-e Chahār- Chaman*, *Dabestān-e Mazāheb*, and *Aein-e Hushang.*[10] In their works, Āzar-Kayvaniyān (Āzar-Kayvān and his successors) claimed the superiority of Iranians over other races.[11] In addition, the history of Iran is taken to a time far beyond the history depicted in the *Shāhnāmeh*, and Iranians are introduced as the first people on Earth. The Āzar-Kayvaniyān believed that *Dasātir* was a compilation of God's revelations to fifteen prophets and one king. Each section claimed to contain the words of God directed to one of these chosen sixteen individuals, and the name of the section corresponded to the name of the prophet or king. It is worth noting that, apart from

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7. Ebrāhim Pur-dāvud, 'Dasātir', *Farhang-e Irān-e Bāstān,* ed. Bahrāh Farah-vashi, (Tehrān: Enteshārāt-e Dāneshgāh-e Tehrān, 1355 [1976]), 17- 51, pp. 46- 47.
8. Ibid., p. 29.
9. Mohhamad-taqi Bahir, *Sabk Shenāsi* (Tehrān: Zavvār, 1381 [2002]), pp. 284-5.
10. Ebrāhim Pur-dāvud, 'Dasātir', p. 47.
11. Bahrām Bizhan and Khodā-dād Mubadār, *Kolliyāt-e Shārestān-e Chahār Chaman*, (Mumbai: Chāp-Khāneh-ye Mozafari, 1279 [1900]), p. 54.

Zoroaster, none of these sixteen individuals were recognized as established religious figures and were not known to belong to any major religion.[12]

Āzar-Kayvān's and his followers' books, including *Dasātir,* found their way to Iran when they were printed after the establishment of the printing industry in India in the early nineteenth century. Though they had already found some readership, they received more attention when Manekji travelled to Iran in 1854 to investigate the overall situation of Zoroastrians.[13] Mirzā Fath-Ali Ākhund-zādeh, a pioneer of modern utopian writing in Iran, received a letter from Manekji on April 25, 1876, in which he praised the book of *Dasātir* as the best Persian book and a treasure of divine secrets.[14] Although archaeological and historical findings question the authenticity of the narratives present in these books, the impact they had on Iranian utopian literature in the transitional phase from classical to modern utopias, is undeniable. This was particularly the case in Ākhund-zādeh's works, especially *Maktubāt* (*Letters*, 1865) Pro-modern intellectuals of this period had the predisposition to imagine Iran as an empire that had declined and argued that implementing modern reforms would help the country regain its ancient glory and become a modern empire, much like its European counterparts. These books written by Āzar-kayvān and his disciples were among the most influential books in promulgating this idealized image of pre-Islamic Iran.

Utopian Image of the 'Other'

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the encounter of Iranians with the West at the beginning of the nineteenth century was not particularly interesting. Iranians saw themselves as inferior to the West, and it was not a matter they could easily overlook. For this reason, searching for the roots of this backwardness became one of the main concerns of the elite during this period. In the years leading up to the Constitutional Revolution, intellectuals argued that the decadence of Iranian society in the modern era was a result of the suffocation and disillusionment of the Iranian spirit. They traced the root of this decadence along social, political, economic, and cultural lines to the numerous invasions of Arab, Turk, and Mongol tribes. While criticizing this process, their ultimate target of criticism was the Qājār government. Every utopic writing in this period commenced with a dystopic image of Qājār

[12]. Amin Shah-verdi, 'Goftāri dar Bāb-e Modda'iyāt-e Dasātir', *Jāvidān Kherad*, no. 39 (1400 [2021]), pp. 235-236.
[13]. Manekji Limji Hataria. Emissary of the Parsis of India to the Zoroastrians of Iran from 1854 to 1890.
[14]. Fath-'Ali Ākhund-zādeh, *Alefbāba-ye Jadid va Maktubāt* (Baku: Nashriyāt-e Farhangestān-e 'Olum Jomhuri-ye Sosiyalisti-ye Āzarbāyjān, 1963), p. 430.

Iran. The general template for these utopic writings included investigating the roots and manifestations of Iran's backwardness and suggesting short-term and long-term measures to set the country on a path to progress. The first generation of utopian writers proposed two general approaches to escape the prevailing dystopian conditions. The first approach suggested a return to Iran's glorious past by applying the laws and rules that governed society as a model for building an ideal society in the present. The second approach offered a more pragmatic solution by looking at successful contemporary governments and adapting their methods to optimize their own society. Both, however, considered Western European countries as the best examples of ensuring a successful transition from a state of decadence to that of scientific and cultural progress. As a result, modern utopian writing in Iran, both before and after the Constitutional Revolution, was heavily indebted to modern Western utopianism, as well as the socio-political and cultural changes that occurred in Western European countries in the nineteenth century. It should be noted that as Crane Brinton discussed, most utopias before the nineteenth century did not aim for ends that can be called libertarian, egalitarian or anarchic. In contrast to the classic, modern Western utopias tend toward a more democratic end.[15]

The first generation of modern utopic authors in Iran was trained in intellectual centres that were either outside Iran or under the influence of such foreign centres. The first influential centre of this kind was Tbilisi, a cosmopolitan city with a vibrant intellectual and cultural life, which contributed to the rejuvenation of Armenian, Persian, and Azeri literature and culture.[16] Compared to the situation in Iran, Tbilisi was a safe haven for everyday living and allowed these intellectuals to flourish by becoming familiar with the Russian and French languages, its literature, along modern Western European ideas, especially those associated with the Enlightenment. Another important centre was Cairo, which after the French invasion of Egypt in the late eighteenth century had become a major centre of learning about and contact with Western ideas and technology. Iranian interaction with this centre, especially the publication of influential Iranian journals in Cairo, provided a basis for the introduction of many Iranian intellectuals and political elites to Western ideas.[17] The same was true of Calcutta which, due

[15]. Crane Brinton, 'Utopia and Democracy', p. 51.
[16]. ʿAbd-ol-Rezā Seyf et. al., 'Roshanfekrān va Adabiyāt-e Mashruteh', *Majaleh-ye Dāaneshkade-ye Adabiyāt va Olum-e Ensāni Dāneshgāh Tehrān*, no. 171, (1384 [2005]), 103- 123, (p. 105).
[17]. Ibid., p. 104.

to the presence of Britain and the existence of the Parsis[18] as a point of contact with Iranians provided an environment for the formation of new ideas amongst Iranians.[19]

Iranian's contact with the West was not always indirect. ʿAbbās Mirzā[20] (1789- 1833) sent two Iranian students to England in 1811 to study art and medical science. A second group of Iranian students were sent abroad in 1816.[21] Later, Paris during the reign of Mohammad Shah Qājār (1808- 1848), became another common and preferred destination. The establishment of Dār-al-Fonun by Amir Kabir (1807- 1852) [22] in 1851 played an important role in the gradual rise of interest and knowledge about modern technology and science in Iran. French language and literature, alongside mathematics, engineering, medicine, natural sciences, music, and military strategy were taught at this school.[23]

Cultural changes and reform activities initiated by these contacts meant that literature, especially utopic literature, was exposed to new aspirations and forms. In this regard, one of the most influential factors underpinning the intellectual movements of the time and the evolution of Persian literature was an increase in the number of travelogues written by Iranians about their travels to European countries. Equally important, however, was the rise of the newspaper, which became increasingly important in the second half of the nineteenth century.[24] Another factor was the translation of historical, literary, dramatic, and later, scientific texts from European languages into Persian. This translation movement had already begun in 1810 when the first printing workshops were established in Iran, but their reception was limited, with translated texts not being as popular and ubiquitous at first. The establishment of Dār-ol-Fonun, however, increased the number of readers as those who studied at the school read and recommended such books to others and engaged in more translations.[25]

Exposure of Iranians to technological, political, military, economic and cultural advancements of modern Europe, and the appearance of various sources for studying these subjects, led to a discourse comparing Iran and the West, in which the West was often introduced as a utopic role model for Iran. This issue goes so far that Mrizā Malkam Khān (1833- 1908), one of the

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18. Descended from Persian Zoroastrians who emigrated to India in different intervals, after the advent of Islam.
19. ʿAbd-ol-Rezā Seyf et. al., 'Roshanfekrān va Adabiyāt-e Mashruteh', p. 105.
20. The son of Fath-ʿAli Shah and father of the line of Qājār rulers from Mohammad Shah on.
21. Go'eil Kohan, *Tārikh-e Sānsor dar Matbu'āt-e Irān* (Tehrān: Āgāh,1360 [1981]), p. 10.
22. Amir Kabir was the Chief minister to Nāser al-Din Shah Qājār for the first three years of his reign. Darolfonun was the oldest Western-style institute of higher learning in Iran.
23. Go'eil Kohan, *Tārikh-e Sānsor dar Matbu'āt-e Irān*, p. 30
24. Parviz Nātel-khānlari, 'Nasr-e Fārsi dar Dowreh-ye Akhir', p. 133.
25. Ibid., p. 143.

intellectuals of the Qājār era, states that civilization works like a clock and all its parts are interconnected, and one cannot take a part of it and ignore the rest. Hence, if we imitate Western principles, order, law and bureaucracy in Iran, 'we can progress as much as three thousand years in only three months'.[26]

Before the Constitutional Revolution, there was a high degree of optimism about the possibility of achieving utopia in the near future, given the two proposed approaches for rebuilding society. This optimism is visible in the works of the first generation of modern utopian writers in Iran. Although these writers were aware of the dystopian conditions of the country, they did not view the escape from them as impossible.

Pre-Constitutional Revolution Period

Mirzā Fath-Ali Ākhund-zādeh (1812- 1878), the pioneer of modern utopian writing in Iran, is also known as one of the earliest and most outspoken atheists to appear in the Islamic world.[27] He introduced new terminology in utopic writing. Ākhund-zādeh was strongly influenced by the writings of Āzar-Kayvaniyān. One of the chapters of *Dabestān-e Mazāaheb* (mentioned earlier in this chapter), is called '*Ahkām-e Farhang*' (Cultural Laws), which serves as a description of the golden age of ancient Iran. Ākhund-zādeh translated this chapter completely and included it in the first chapter of his *Maktuāt* (letters). [28] *Maktubat* (1865) is Ākhund-zādeh's most important utopic writing. In this book, he created a fictional epistolary dialogue between two princes, Kamāl al-Dawleh, an Indian prince travelling in Iran, and Jalāl al-Dawleh, an Iranian prince. Kamāl al-Dawlah, who knows himself to be of Iranian descent, mourns the lost glory of ancient Iran and relays his observations of the nation's deplorable situation: 'Today, Iran is backward […]. The land is ruined and its people are ignorant […] and all of these things have happened because its kings do not know anything about progress in the world […] They are arrogant and greedy and believe in lies and superstitions.[29]

What Ākhund-zādeh emphasizes in his work is mostly related to laws that governed society during that golden age. The law he refers to is one in which both the king and the people share equal accountability. He writes, 'The king had great power, but he did not deviate from the

[26]. Hojjat allāh Asil, *Zendegi va Andishe-ye Mirzā Malkam Khān-e Nāzem ol-dowleh* (Tehrān: Ney, 1376 [1997]), pp. 68-9.
[27]. H. Algar, 'ĀḴŪNDZĀDA', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I, 7, pp. 735-740; an updated version is available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org.> [accessed on 13 May 2023].
[28]. Hojjat allāh Asil, *Zendegi va Andishe-ye Mirzā Malkam Khān-e Nāzem ol-dowleh,* p. 174.
[29]. Fath-'Ali Ākhund-zādeh, *Maktubāt* (n.p: Shātgin, 2021), p. 82.

cultural norms and generally applied them equally to all subjects'.[30] Taxes were collected fairly,[31] and the elderly and disabled were supported by the polity.[32] In every city, welfare services and government hospitals were built for the poor, and every effort was maintained to ensure that no one was poor and homeless. The king always consulted wise men and scholars to discuss various issues pertinent to the period and develop informed decisions. As Ākhund-zādeh claims, in Iran, there was no parliament, but there was a council of advisors who consistently advised the Shah against taking any further steps regarding the Cultural Pact.[33]

Ākhund-zādeh considers Iran's history to be separated into two periods, before and after Islam. For him, the latter period does not reflect the achievements of the former and constitutes a break from Iran's golden culture and civilization of the former era.

The second most significant text produced in the same decade was *Siyāhat-nāmeh-ye Ebrāhim Beyg* (Ebrahim Beyg's Travelogue, 1903) by Hāj Zayn-al-ʿĀbedin Marāgheʾei (1840-1910). In Marāgheʾei's story, Ebrāhim Bayg, the son of an Iranian merchant, born and raised in Egypt, decides to travel to Iran to fulfil a requirement in his father's will to see first-hand the glory of Iran. His Iranian friends in Egypt try hard to change his mind, telling him that what he has heard about Iran does not exist anymore, but he has set his mind on going. His journey is extremely disappointing, whereby he encounters a dystopia that is completely at odds with Iran described by his father. Ebrāhim discovers a poverty-ridden society where both the people and their governors live in a state of ignorance, higher 'principals of life' are abandoned, and people are wholly absorbed in unimportant matters.[34] During his travels to different parts of the country, he talks about the tyranny of its rulers, the prevalence of religious corruption, loss of moral virtues, decadence and obsession with luxury among the elites, the state's undue interference with business affairs, and its encroachment on people's properties and livelihoods. The outsider observer, therefore, expresses his extreme displeasure. According to Ahmad Kasravi (1890- 1946), this book had a great impact on awakening Iranians during the years leading to the Constitutional Revolution: 'Iranian masses, who were accustomed to the terrible

30. Fath-'Ali Ākhund-zādeh, *Maktubāt* (n.p: Shātgin, 2021), p. 80.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., pp. 80-81.
34. Zayn-al-ʿĀbedin Marāgheʾei, *Siyāhat-nāmeh-ye Ebrāhim Beyg* (Tehran: Sadaf, 1344 [1965]), p. 40.

situation and corruption of those days and could not think of any other way of life except their own miserable existence woke up after reading this book as if they were deeply shaken'.[35]

The next significant utopic writing of this period was written by Tālebof (1834- 1911) and called *Masālek al-mohsenin* (The Pathways of the Benevolent, 1905),[36] which contains direct criticism of religious, political, and social institutions and practices. The book records the conversion of a group of educated elites on an imaginary trip to Mount Damāvand in search of ice resources.[37] They pass through cities and villages, talk to local people, and learn about the weaknesses and strengths of the land. During these conversations, the protagonist compares Iran's society to the West, discusses the causes of Iran's backwardness, and proposes a remedy. Upon their return, the protagonist reports his observations to the king, Mozafar al-Din Shah (1853- 1907), the fifth shah of the Qājār dynasty. However, what he hears from the king surprises him, simply because he did not expect such insight from a king, who is assumed to be the cause of Iran's backwardness:

> As your king, I should confess that Iran's administration is chaotic. Citizens complain about their situation and emigrate from the country with hatred and have scattered all around the world because of the rulers' misbehaviour and citizens' petitions never reach us because administrators betray us […].[38]

The king then signs the constitutional charter and promises a bright future through the incorporation of a parliamentary system, as this is central to the protagonist's political dream. The protagonist awakes and finds out that all this has been a dream, and he finishes the story whispering to himself: 'What can I do in the darkness of night? Where should I go?'[39] Then, concluding that there is no hope, he goes back to sleep.

All these three pieces offer intense critiques of Iran's economic, semipolitical and cultural conditions. Although political and social criticisms were not unprecedented in Iran, harsh critiques that attacked all social and political elements of society and proposed a new type of

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[35]. Ahmad Kasravi, *Tārikh-e Mashruteh-ye Irān* (Tehrān: Amir- Kabir, 1363 [1984]), p. 45. Kasravi was an influential social thinker, a prominent historian, a pioneer of Iran's linguistic studies, and well-known social and religious reformer with a sense of prophetic mission. (Ali Rezā Manafzadeh, 'Kasravi, Ahmad, i. Life and Works', in *Encyclopædia Iranica* < https://iranicaonline.org> [Accessed, jun 15, 2022]).

[36]. It has been suggested that the book is an imitation of the Consolations in Travel, or The Last Days of a Philosopher (London, 1830) by the British chemist and inventor Humphry Davy (1778-1829). (Cyrus Masroori, 'Ṭālebuf, ʿAbd-al-Rahim', in *Encyclopædia Iranica* < https://iranicaonline.org> [Accessed, jun 15, 2022]).

[37]. The highest mount in Iran and scene of a number of Iranian mythological and legendary events.

[38]. ʿAbd al-Rahim Tālebof, *Masālek al-mohsenin* (Tehran: Sherkat-e Sahāmi-ye Ketāb-hā-ye Jibi, 1347 [1968]), p. 291.

[39]. Ibid., p. 293.

political system were one of the consequences of the reformists' call for modernization. Perhaps one of the main reasons for such explicit critique was that much of this literature was published outside Iran, where writers were largely immune from political censorship and threats of execution or imprisonment. Essential to these utopic writings was a constant need to question everything that they had previously taken for granted. While concerned with many different aspects of life, these critical revaluations were mostly in three major fields: (1) the country's political system and corruption of the court, (2) people's ignorance and superstitious beliefs, and (3) religion and religious authorities. In response to these three categories of criticism, they constructed a utopian vision in which the autocratic ruling system was replaced with a parliamentary system, superstition and ignorance were eliminated through modern public education and religion was eliminated or underwent complete reformation.

For these writers, 'utopia' was not an imaginary ideal in an unseen place or unknown period; it was an accessible idea with a practical model already established in some European countries. These works were, thus, intended to urge people to collaborate and contribute to the realization of a utopian vision, and enable Iran to join the modern global community of developed countries. In other words, since 'there is no social integration and no real change without social subversion'[40] the leading dissenting intellectuals of the era tried to use their utopian ideology to deconstruct the status quo and create a more progressive system. Although Ākhund-zādah, Tālebof, and Marāgheh'ei tried to provide detailed roadmaps for exiting Iran's socio-political and economic dead-ends, their vision could be summarized with two key expressions: Iranians must (1) put aside the causes of backwardness, and (2) copy the perfect model of Western European Countries. The underlying goal behind all of their proposed reforms was to detach the people from their passive role in political affairs and teach them the principles of citizenship and an active role. By doing so, they could rely on the power of people who were aware of their rights to advance society towards a democratic space. In this regard, the main solutions given to save Iran from the existing conditions in these books could be studied along three general categories: eliminating religion, creating an ideal system of governance, and finally educating residents.

Religion as an Obstacle

[40]. Phillip E. Wegner, *Imaginary Communities: utopia, the nation, and the spatial histories of modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 18.

In all classical utopias in Iran, God(s) and religion have a crucial role. Creating laws that govern utopia was previously assumed to be beyond the capabilities of humans, and the realization of the ideal society is either conditioned by the direct intervention of the god(s) or associated with the observance of religious orders. Thus, the whole complex of ideas, sentiments, and institutions was formed around religious laws. Among the qualities promised to the residents of the classical utopias, abundance, and ease of obtaining basic life necessities need priority as they are prerequisites to any form of happiness. However, to realize them, divine protection was considered essential. As Brinton explains, this means that in these works, the 'almost too familiar facts of technological progress in communication, transportation, public health, in short, the human ability to achieve the satisfaction of perennial needs, are often, in pure and misleading rhetoric, called miracles'.[41] With the gradual spread of Enlightenment, however, the boundaries of miracles, the 'other-world,' the supernatural, were pushed far outside the range of daily life of most human beings.[42] Thus, religion gradually lost its position in utopian thinking.

As a result of the medley of superstitious beliefs, obsession with the afterlife, and priests' prerogatives and opportunism, proving to be increasingly more questionable, religion was among the first inherited cultural constructs to be challenged during Iran's modernization era. Regarding religion, three different approaches were undertaken. Ākhund-zādah argued that the Arab invasion of Iran and the country's Islamification was the starting point for the decline of Iranian civilization and its loss of values which, in turn, ruined the strength of Iran as a great empire and one of the world's most powerful countries.[43] When the Catholic philosopher, Thomas Molnar, described utopias as 'perennial heresies' concerning doctrinal orthodoxy, he believed that: 'Important utopian writers are heretics from the point of view of Christian doctrine'.[44] The same notion applies to modern utopian literary works in Iran when examined from the viewpoint of Shia Islam. Although Ākhund-zādeh clearly considers Islam to be the main cause of the country's decline and people's ignorance, his problem was not just with Islam but with religion in general.[45] In his opinion, an ideal society is a secular one. Ākhund-zādeh defined a liberal person as 'an absolute free-thinker [who] is not subject to religious terror and does not believe in what is beyond reason and outside nature's laws [*qānun-e tabi*

[41]. Crane Brinton, 'Utopia and Democracy', *Daedalus* , Vol. 94, No. 2, (Spring, 1965), 348- 366, (p. 356).
[42]. Ibid., p. 356.
[43]. Fath-'Ali Ākhund-zādeh, *Maktubāt*, p. 82.
[44]. Thomas Molnar, *Utopia: the Perennial Heresy* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), p. 16.
[45]. Fath-'Ali Ākhund-zādeh, *Maktubāt*, p. 88.

ʿ*at*]'.[46] He also, stresses the impossibility of being liberal while maintaining religious beliefs.[47] He says:

> Freedom from the rulers' despotism is not possible except with knowledge. And knowledge is not obtained except by progress and progress is not possible except by being liberal. And it is not possible to be liberal except by freeing yourself from the shackles of beliefs. … Your religion and beliefs prevent you from being liberal.[48]

In fact, the protagonist, Kamāl al-Dawleh, considers atheism superior to any creed and eagerly argues for the replacement of religious faith with science and intellectual inquiry.

Unlike Ākhund-zādeh, Tālebof does not argue for the omission of religion from society, but he also sees it as unsuitable for the modern era and talks about fundamental changes in jurisprudence to make it more appropriate to the modern era.[49] In a brief theological discussion, Talebof suggests that the main principles of all religions are the same. According to Tālebof, religious reform is a necessary step for constructing an ideal society. He says the laws that are not directly Quranic were created by humans for their own convenience and within the confines of their era, and after more than a thousand years, those laws need to be changed.[50] Tālebof confronts superstition, the mistreatment of the Babis, the lifestyle of high-ranking clergymen, and their opposition to modern sciences. He neither presents pre-Islamic Iran as a golden age to the extent that Ākhund-zādeh does nor does he consider Islam the cause of Iran's underdevelopment. However, he also places a significant portion of the blame for the backwardness of Iranians on the Arabs. He maintains that Western civilization owes much of its principles to Iran, but these same principles have been removed from Iran itself. He says, 'Everything we had has been Arabized, lost, and eradicated. […] The ancient Iranian religion was patriotism and loyalty to the king, but now it is treason and selling out the homeland.[51]

Marāgheʾei also does not express any opposition towards religion itself, nor does he propose any changes to Islam's principles; however, he considered the ulema (or, the clergies) to be one of the main causes of ignorance in the broader populace. He believed that religion had declined in Iran and that neither the people nor the scholars implemented the true orders of Islam as they should. All three books featured ideas that were considered unacceptable to the

[46]. Fath-'Ali Ākhund-zādeh, *Maktubāt*, p. 75.
[47]. Ibid.
[48]. Ibid., p. 101.
[49]. ʿAbd al-Rahim Tālebof, *Masālek al-mohsenin*, pp. 94-95.
[50]. Ibid., p. 94.
[51]. Ibid., p. 174.

ulema and were boycotted.[52] Their unorthodox beliefs with respect to religion made them suspicious in the eyes of the religious clergy. Besides, blaming Islam, and more importantly ulema and the way Islam was practised at the time of the fall of Iran, Ākhund-zādeh, Marāgheh'ei and Tālebof were inclined to view Iran's history nostalgically, and as reminiscent of a lost utopia. In this way, utopianism often defined itself in contrast to traditional Islam of the day. Consequently, their understanding of modernity was characterised by a new conception or a rejection of religion.

Parliamentary system and the rule of law

The emergence of a new perspective on religion in utopian writings led to religion and its laws losing their role as the ideal legal form of the utopian city. Consequently, in the absence of religious laws, an institution needed to step in that would accept this role and take on the responsibility of creating ideal laws for society. In this way, many writers of the period suggested that the path to an ideal society required the establishment of a parliament and the passing of new laws that took into account the interests of all people and ensured that all individuals were equally accountable to the law. Within this suggested system the king's power was to be severely limited and all major political decisions were to be made by representatives of the people.

As it was mentioned earlier, the primary concern of these literary works was to explore the root causes of Iran's backwardness, and they often found the country's system of governance particularly problematic. Ākhund-zādeh saw the issue with authorities not being accountable to any laws or institutions. When discussing Iran's glorious past, Ākhund-zādeh referred to a code of conduct for Iranian kings, called *paymān-i farhang* (the treaty of culture) and argued that as long as the kings acted in accordance with it, order, peace and comfort reigned throughout the country. Ākhund-zādeh believed that reinstating laws that echoed this treaty and following the values that it promoted could save Iran from its dystopic situation. On the one hand, Ākhund-zādeh attacked religion, especially Islam, as a cause for the country's backwardness. On the other hand, he sought to revive some values of ancient Iran, whilst also promoting human values of modernity.

[52]. Ahmad Kasravi, *Tārikh-e Mashruteh-ye Irān*, p. 45.

Tālebof, unlike Ākhund-zādeh, did not see Islam as a starting point of decline. Instead, he thought that 'we [Iranians] were good until two centuries ago'.[53] He accuses the Qājār governors of being oppressive, selfish, and incompetent.[54] In a rather bold statement, he even attacks the monarchy by ridiculing the longstanding analogy that presented the king as God's shadow on the earth.[55] He looks to the West to find a solution, argues for Iran's modernization in all dimensions of life and states that if Iranians do not discover and adopt the driving forces that led to progress in the West, then the country will go extinct.[56] He identified two major driving forces for the flourishment of the West. 'One was the ascent of science and technology as a primary means to determine social change, and the other was the rule of the law, which the people themselves established to organize their affairs and the government assigned to implement them'.[57] Tālebof qualifies his advocacy of adopting Western political institutions and economic models by drawing the readers' attention to the fact that, despite Europe's general prosperity, the poorer people there also live a wretched life. He warns, furthermore, that the unqualified imitation of European manners and customs could be detrimental to Iran's progress. Marāghe'i also directs his criticism against the rulers of Iran:

> This misfortune is unique to Iran and Iranians. Nowhere else on this planet, rulers are like this. Everywhere, the tasks of the rulers and the duties of the people are clearly set except in Iran, where we, the unfortunate ones, are captives of rulers, subject to the sensual desires of this handful of pharaohs.[58]

He also criticised the state for not being accountable to any law. He constantly compares Iran with other countries, especially the West, and criticises various aspects of life and governance in Iran. Marāgheʾei wished that Iran might attain the equitable standards of Europe; however, he saw the situation as too dire for it to ever become a reality. As mentioned in chapter one, in Persian classical literature, utopia was imagined in various sizes, ranging from a fortress or city-state to the whole world. Similarly, in the nineteenth century, many Iranian intellectuals thought about a world utopia and considered Europeanization as a way to participate in constructing an ideal society as vast as the whole world.

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53. ʿAbd al-Rahim Tālebof, *Masālek al-mohsenin*, pp. 94-95.
54. Ibid., p. 76.
55. Ibid.
56. Mortezā Fallāh, Leylā Ja'fari, 'Didgāh-e Tālebof Darbāreh-ye Raviyeh-ye Tamaddon-e Borzhuāzi-ye Gharb', *Majaleh-ye Zabān va Adayāt-e Fārsi-ye Daneshgāh-e Sistān va Baluchestān*, (Winter 1386 [2007]), p. 58.
57. ʿAbd al-Rahim Tālebof, *Ketāb-e Ahmad* (Tehrān: Shabgir, 1356 [1977]), p. 42.
58. Zayn-al-ʿĀbedin Marāgheʾei, *Siyāhat-nāmeh-ye Ebrāhim Beyg*, p. 66.

Throughout its history, Iran faced invasions by various nations, with the Greeks, Arabs, Turks, and Mongols being the most prominent. In each of these encounters, the preservation of Iranian culture and the drive to 'Iranianize' the invaders remained a resilient aspect. However, in the process of modernization, some intellectuals took a converse approach.[59] Tālebof was not as fascinated by the West as Ākhund-zādeh and did not idolize it to the same degree; however, he also believed that the best path towards progress was the adoption of whatever was good from Europe.[60]

Bauman speaks of Plebiscitarianism as one of the core parameters of modernity, which consists of the active engagement of the masses within the political process. Through this, the people now become 'citizens' of the state instead of subjects of a prince.[61] Almost all constitutional intellectuals insisted on modern Western-style education and argued that intellectual transformation was possible only through the dissemination of knowledge equally among all social classes.

Mass education

To transform people who have lived for centuries under the title of 'subjects of the king' into citizens, encourage them to have an active role in politics, and ultimately enable them to contribute directly and indirectly to the creation of laws, can only be achieved through education, as stated in the utopian writings of the pre-Constitutional Revolution period. As Claus Pedersen notes, the introduction of Western democracy in Iran was often accompanied by a push for educational reform.[62] This emphasis on mass education as the main means of progress was not unique to Iran. As H. Stuart Hughes argues, contemporary democracy and contemporary mass culture are two sides of the same coin, and our discussions of the latter phenomenon, now and in the future, will go nowhere until we recognize this simple equation and its corollaries. As a result, a part of utopian writings in this period focused on the necessity of educating people and how to achieve it, something that was almost absent in all classical utopian writings and had not been addressed before.

59. ʿAbd al-Rahim Tālebof, *Masālek al-mohsenin,* p. 101.
60. Ibid., p. 94.
61. Zygmunt Bauman, *Socialism: Active Utopia* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1976), p. 41.
62. Claus Valling Pedersen, 'Utopia and Dystopia in Early Modern Persian Literature: Representation of the Advent of Modernity to Iran', p. 189.

Following the example of Frederick the Great, Ākhund-zādeh suggested compulsory education and insisted that a child should be forced to read and write from the age of nine to fifteen.[63] He also argued that 'learning about European ideas should take precedence over learning different forms of craftsmanship and trades'.[64] Tālebof compared the Iranian educational system with that of the West to emphasise the necessity of universal education. He even pointed out that schools for educating deaf and blind children had been established in the West four hundred years ago so that even these people would not be left uneducated. [65] In Iran, the majority of society were illiterate. Cognisant that European progress was the result of modern education and science, he emphasised the need for facilitating these paths of education and acquisition of knowledge for all people, and believed that the freedom of nations is only possible through the promotion of sciences: 'Today's power is due to knowledge, but what we have is an unfortunate abundance of beggars and ignorant people'.[66] He believed that if we promote science and technology, we can make the best use of our natural resources and overcome problems caused by poverty and scarcity.[67] He even criticized religious scholars for not learning modern sciences and for being content with religious subjects alone.[68] He believed the presence of knowledgeable people was necessary for the burden of the country, and high schools should be built to educate the masses.[69] Maragheh'ei also severely criticized the state of Iranian schools and lamented that new sciences were not taught to students.[70]

In the pre-Constitutional Revolution utopian writings, especially in the works of Ākhund-zādeh, Tālebof, and Marāgheh'ei, which were examined here, there was great optimism about the realization of a utopia in Iran in the not-too-distant future. Their optimism stemmed from the fact that they felt they had the formula for reaching utopia in hand or at least could start moving in a direction that would lead to it. They regarded the West as a relatively successful example of utopia and therefore, even if not one hundred per cent, accepted it as a model as far as they deemed it worthy of emulation. Above all, the education and the democratic government systems of the West were to the taste of the writers of this period, and they saw in them a way to firstly, educate people and make them aware of their rights, and secondly,

63. Fath-'Ali Ākhund-zādeh, *Alefbāba-ye Jadid va Maktubāt,* p. 158.
64. Fereydun Ādamiyat, *Andisheh-hā-ye Mirzā Fath-'Ali Ākhund-zādeh*, (Tehrān: Khwārazmi, 1349 [1970]), p. 165.
65. 'Abd al-Rahim Tālebof, *Ketāb-e Ahmad*, (Tehrān: Shabgir, 1356 [1977]), p. 85.
66. Ibid., pp. 123 125.
67. 'Abd al-Rahim Tālebof, *Ketāb-e Ahmad*, pp. 134-135.
68. 'Abd al-Rahim Tālebof, *Āzādi va Siyāsat* (Tehrān: Sahar, 1357 [1979]), p. 113.
69. Ibid., p. 219.
70. Zayn-al-'Ābedin Marāgheh'ei, *Siyāhat-nāmeh-ye Ebrāhim Beyg*, pp. 44- 45.

prevent the oppression and tyranny of the kings by entrusting legislation to a democratic institution and obliging the king to implement the law like other citizens and treat them as ordinary members of society. Eventually, part of their demands were realized during the Constitutional Revolution, and the first parliament was established in Iran.

Post-Constitutional Revolution period

The Constitutional Revolution in Iran was the first time Iranians participated in politics to limit the king's absolute power, reduce foreign influence, and achieve social justice. Inspired by Western political ideas, it aimed to catch up with modern achievements such as parliament, political parties, and citizenship rights. [71] However, internal issues and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which divided Iran into spheres of influence for Britain and Russia, led to severe crises and the failure of the constitutional system. Before the Revolution, Britain's policy was to decrease Russian influence and support constitutionalists due to the fear of a Franco-Russian drive on India. Despite Napoleon's downfall, Britain remained concerned about its control over India. After the Revolution, Britain faced threats from Germany and social and political movements in India, leading to an agreement with Russia in 1907 and a policy shift towards Iran. Meanwhile, differences between parliament members and political and religious factions eventually led to the closure of parliament and the dissolution of Iran's first parliament or *majles* as it is called in Persian.

The first *Majles* (National Consultative Assembly) in Iran was dissolved by Mohammad-Ali Shah (1987- 1925) in 1908. However, five months later, constitutionalists managed to conquer Tehran and re-establish the second parliament. During World War I, while Ahmad Shah Qājār (1898- 1930) was in power, the constitutional government of Iran faced its weakest period. Iran was in a state of chaos, with an unstable political situation and foreign interventions that had brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy and dependency on foreign powers. In the chaos of the First World War and the Russian Revolution, Qājār rule was mostly extinct for approximately four years. Despite Iran's neutrality declaration, Allied forces entered the country from the north and south. As a result of Britain's occupation of Iran and the plundering of Iranian resources by the occupying army, as well as the onset of a major famine in Iran

[71]. 'Ali-akbar Khedri-zādeh, 'Payāmad-e siyāsat-e Engelestān bar Enqelāb-e Mashruteh-ye Iran pas az Qarārdād-e 1907', *Pazhuhesh-nāmeh-ye Tārikh*, no.13, 1387 [2009], 31-46, p. 32.

(1918-1920), a large part of the Iranian population died. In the chaos of the First World War and the Russian Revolution, Qājār rule was mostly extinct for approximately four years.

On February 22, 1921, a military coup was launched, not against the Qājār monarchy itself, but against the cabinet of Sepahdār-e Aʿzam Fath-Allāh-e Akbar and the oligarchy of landowners and bureaucratic officials that controlled the regime. The coup was led by Sayyed Ziyāʾ-al-Din Tabātabāʾi and Colonel Reza Khān Mir Panj, an officer in the Cossack brigade, who would later become Reza Shah Pahlavi. The 1941 coup d'état resulted in the collapse of the Qājār dynasty and the rise of Pahlavi rule. After the coup, Reza Khān initially continued his activities as the Minister of War and then as the Prime Minister. The political environment in Iran was, however, fragmented, and very violent (as it had been during the first parliamentary period). Some historians argue that in the ensuing chaos, the political elite wished for a strong leader who could control the situation.[72] In 1926, Reza Khān crowned himself as Reza Shah Pahlavi, beginning an age of dictatorship. He pursued this project of modernizing the country at a rapid pace.

In Iran, the failure of constitutionalism and the chaotic situation during and after World War I created a wave of despair. Under these new circumstances, although the utopian authors of the post-constitution era considered the West a potential model, Europeanization was no longer proposed as the path to creating a utopia. At this time, the realization of the utopia became a dream postponed to a later future. Mortezā Moshfeq Kāzemi's (1902- 1978) ultimate suggestion for exiting Iran's chaotic situation was to establish a stable government so that the country could survive. Sanʿatizādeh depicted his ideal society far in the future where technological advancements enabled humans to build a utopia; where discrimination was obsolete and the whole world could be described as a utopia.

The important point about utopian works after the Constitutional Revolution was that the role of religion, both as a saviour as portrayed in classical literature or as one of the reasons for backwardness as mentioned in works before the Constitutional Revolution, was eliminated. Religion no longer had a significant presence in utopian works after the Constitutional Revolution, neither positively nor negatively. As a result, utopia became a human-made phenomenon, with no intervention from institutions higher than humans.

[72] Pedersen, 'Utopia and Dystopia in Early Modern Persian Literature: Representation of the Advent of Modernity to Iran',

Tehrān-e Makhuf (Appalling Tehran)

The first famous utopian novel of this period of despair was *Tehrān-e Makhuf* (Appalling Tehran). This was the first novel of social criticism in Iran, which narrates the events of 1921's coup d'état in a melodramatic story. This story revolves around Farrokh's love for his cousin Mahin. Farrokh is from a poor family, while Mahin's family became rich due to a series of very fortunate events. Mahin's family opposes this marriage. In the meantime, a prince proposes that Mahin marry his wayward son, Siyāvush Mirzā, and Mahin's father, who has lost his position in the ministry, agrees to this marriage in the hope of regaining his former position. Siyāvush Mirzā is injured by one of the members of the Cossack Brigade in a brothel and Farrokh saves his life. Farrokh also rescues ʿEffat, a poor, educated woman whose husband has given her to higher officials for career promotion. Farrokh asks Siyāvush Mirzā to give up marrying Mahin in return for his help. Siyāvush rejects this request. Mahin's parents send her to Qom to get her away from Farrokh, but Farrokh kidnaps her mid-journey, and they both return to Tehran. Farrokh's opponents arrest and banish him, while Mahin and Siyāvush's marriage is cancelled due to Mahin's pregnancy. Mahin gives birth to a son, but dies in childbirth. On his way to exile, Farrokh escapes with the help of villagers and goes to Baku, where he experiences the early months of the Russian Revolution. Farrokh returns to Iran with revolutionaries he acquainted in Baku, and after their defeat in Rasht, he joins the Cossacks and enters Tehran with coup plotters in 1921. After the coup, as traitors and corrupt officials are arrested, Farrokh arrests Mahin's father, who is then tried and sent to prison by ʿEffat's husband.

When Syed Ziyā's cabinet fell one hundred days later, prisoners of that period were released. Due to the fall of the cabinet, Farrokh decides to stay at home to raise his son and marries ʿEffat. He then looks at his son and thinks that the best way to help the country overcome the ensuing anarchy is that 'all members of the country strive to first reform themselves and then society. It is certainly not a one-person job […] If I raise a good son and do not let the corrupt society make him lazy and disinterested in his country, I have taken a step for my country.'[73]

In this novel, the privileged sections of society prefer not to see or understand what is unfolding, and they are represented as resistant to any form of change that might bring relief to those suffering from poverty and degradation. The story shows how all characters struggled for

[73]. Mortezā Moshfeq Kāzemi, *Tehrān-e makhuf* (Tehran: Ebn-e Sinā, 1340 [1961]), p. 290.

survival as a result of the chaos before and during the 1921 coup d'état, and exist with little hope for the foreseeable future.

The Council of Madmen (*Majma'-i Divānigān*)

The plots of all the utopian literary works that I have discussed so far in this chapter took place in contemporary Iran. ʿAbdolhossein Sanʿatizādeh (1895- 1973), however, deployed a completely different approach to produce the first utopian science fiction in Persian. The plot of Sanʿatizādeh's novel revolves around a group of madmen escaping a madhouse. The escape is organized by one of their members, a wise old man called '*Pir'*, whose name is a Sufi term for master. The old man, who had been silent in the madhouse, suddenly starts talking and likens everywhere to a madhouse: 'Everywhere is a madhouse. This society and environment we live in is a dark and small prison cell [...] and humanity is trapped in this dungeon and bound by chains. Thus, it can be said that there is no free person or happy body anywhere in the world.'[74]

Using a technique called magnetic sleep, he teleports his companions to a world two thousand years later in which a real world-state utopia has been achieved through strict adherence to science and technology. Pir communicates with three individuals, who are identified by their numbers in the madhouse rather than by their names.[75] Being located in Mount Jabal in Lebanon, the utopia is made of glass and china so that the authorities can have control over the citizens. The first person Pir sees is number 152. He reports that the inhabitants of this utopia speak very fast, men and women are equal, all citizens work and play voluntarily, and crime and death are absent. The City-state controls all aspects of life, with most of the work done by machines. In exchange, people happily pay their taxes.[76] He refers to ten different state departments, their subsections, and explains how, together, they govern this utopia.

Number 57 arrives, soaring with his artificial wings over Mount Jabal. He spots a lovely girl and serenades her with a romantic poem, likening her to a delicate flower. Alarmed, the girl summons the authorities, who swiftly apprehend number 57. They inform him that his actions are deemed insane in this utopian society and declare that he 'must be promptly taken to a mental asylum'.[77] Number 32 arrives during New Year's celebrations and hears a national

[74]. ʿAbdolhossein Sanʿatizādeh Kermāni, *Majma'-e Divānegān* (Tehran: Māniyā Hunar, 1398 [2019]), p. 19.
[75]. Ibid., p. 22.
[76]. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
[77]. Ibid., p. 30.

hymn that recites the creed of the utopian society: 'We are humans. We are the nobility of creation. Truth and affection are our ways. Science is our guardian. We are all brothers. Equality is for all of us'.[78] The fourth person, number 39, witnesses residents of this utopia communicating with other planets and mentions this detail to *Pir*. At the end of the story, the old man brings them all back and the madmen 'find themselves in the hands of ignorant tormentors under the whip of tyranny and oppression'.[79]

According to Sanʿatizādeh, Utopia's greatest achievement was equality, truth, righteousness, and the advancement of technology. Living under the chaotic conditions of the 1921 coup where there was no hope for the future, Sanʿatizādeh portrays a utopia in a distant future, where technological advancements enabled human beings to achieve peace and comfort. However, the most essential characteristic of this utopia is that it is ruled by a totalitarian state that has abolished human emotions and exerts severe control over the lives of its citizens.

Conclusion

Lucy Sargisson argues that speaking of utopia and dystopia stimulates thought: 'If dystopic fiction can raise awareness, stimulate debate and perhaps even trigger an action if it can draw attention to behavioural trends and issues that need to be addressed, then dystopia definitely matters.'[80] The scholars of nineteenth-century Iranian history all acknowledge the role that literature played in educating and raising people's awareness, both before and during the Constitutional Revolution. To demonstrate the significance of these authors, Kasravi finds it sufficient to say that both religious and political authorities opposed their ideas.[81]

In contrast to classical utopias, every utopic piece in this period starts with social criticism as part of the general quest for identifying the roots and causes of Iran's backwardness. Then the image of utopia is presented in contrast to the dystopia they are criticising. Raymond Ruyer asserts this as one of the most important characteristics of a modern utopic piece, saying 'Social and political criticism is the most obvious element of modernity: dissatisfaction with society, with the political regime, and the obstacles to happiness'.[82] These modern utopic and dystopic

78. ʿAbdolhossein Sanʿatizādeh Kermāni, *Majma'-e Divānegān*, p. 31.
79. Ibid., p. 41.
80. Lucy Sargisson, 'Dystopia Do Matter', in *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*, ed. Fátima Vieira, (Tyne England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), p. 41.
81. Ahmad Kasravi,. *Tārikh-e mashruteh-ye Irān*, p. 320.
82. Thomas Molnar, *Utopia: Prennial Heresey* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), p. 8.

pieces, therefore, reflect the rise of a deep-set modern perspective that prioritises doubt and aspires to change society by questioning inherited beliefs and practices.

'Why is Iran a backward country in comparison to the West?', 'When did we lose our glorious past?', 'How can we bring back our lost dignity?' All of these are questions that utopic authors raised and tried to answer. As Lefebvre puts it, 'The birth of 'modernity' coincided with the beginnings of doubt and questioning'.[83] The start of Iranian modernity was marked by a series of comparisons and contrasts with a new 'Other' in a cross-cultural context that placed a premium on questioning and criticism, lasting for decades.

As explained in the previous chapter, whether in hierarchal class-based utopias or the classless utopia that was introduced in Alexander Romances, no agency was defined for the common people, and their characteristics were hardly mentioned. It is, however, clear that none of those utopias was intended to be egalitarian, democratic, or anarchic in the modern sense of the word; their dynamism and survival depended on a small group of elites. In Romances of Alexander, we do not see any reference to a group of people, responsible for the maintenance of the utopia, instead, it is an institution higher than humans that maintains order in the utopia. Again, there is no agency defined for the people of the utopia to participate in the construction or maintenance of that society. Thus, the democratic participation of ordinary people in making laws and governing their utopia was never an option at any point, and the main responsibility of the residents of utopia was to unconditionally follow the predetermined rules of utopia.

With the advent of modernity, however, new ideological trends dominated Iranian utopianism and classical utopian concepts were challenged and eventually eliminated from the genre. The first change was the shift towards a purely secular and humanistic vision of utopia, without the need for divine intervention. Religion was viewed as a negative force in society, hindering progress, and replaced by science and knowledge as the means to achieve utopia. Additionally, the previously essential role of the king in creating a utopia was replaced by the principle of limiting the monarch's power and requiring them to follow the same laws as everyone else. Ideal societies were characterized by the active participation of the population in political affairs and the collective formulation of laws, replacing the need for an ideal ruler. These changes led to a complete break between classical utopias and the new Iranian utopian literature.

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[83]. Quoted by Phillip E. Wegner, *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2002), p. 24.

There has been ample discussion on why during the modern era, in contrast to the classical era, utopian visions tended towards democratic ends. Brinton believes that democracy, in its modern sense, substitutes for the Judaeo-Christian concept of original sin; a concept of the natural goodness and/or reasonableness of man, supplemented by the corollary that evil is a result of a bad environment. By social environment, he means 'the broader institutional environment- church, state, class organization, and formal, institutional education- rather than the more intimate environment of family, early training, neighbourhood, and vocation'. Moreover, 'though the necessary changes in the bad environment must be planned and preached by an enlightened minority', they are, in a democratic system, 'to be ratified by the majority of people' and 'be initiated by them'. He continues to say that 'though the new democratic society will be orderly, this order will not depend on compulsion, save perhaps for a very few criminally disposed of'.[84] As a result of the establishment of democracy, liberty, equality, and fraternity would turn into a creed.[85] Iranian intellectuals during the Constitutional era, although they disdained using these same exact terms, ultimately held similar aspirations. For this reason, they relied heavily on concepts of freedom, equality, and citizenship rights.

As to reasons for the popularity of democracy in the aforementioned utopian writings, all signs indicate an emulation of what these writers saw as the success of Western democracies in engaging more people to contribute to the progress of their societies. By challenging long-established norms and traditions, and pushing for an elitist, democratic system, the utopian writers of the era hoped to promulgate a system that prioritised the establishment of modern institutions, modern education and the rule of progressive law. In other words, they aspired to establish a democratic system of top-down development because they felt that common Iranians were ignorant, irrational, uncultured, and superstitious and thus the first step toward an ideal society would be to turn them into educated responsible citizens.

The greatest change in utopian thinking can perhaps be seen in the field of law-making. In fact, for the first time, ordinary people were presented with a role in the establishment and maintenance of an ideal society, and equality became the predominant demand, with the assertion that every person has the right to determine their future as a citizen. All individuals were to be aware of their vital rights and oppose the power of the state if the state tried to deprive them of their human rights. These democratic ideas urged writers to try to define the role of citizens in utopian writings, and consequently, the role of religion in making and

[84]. Brinton, 'Utopia and Democracy', p. 355.
[85]. Ibid.

implementing laws was diminished and even disappeared. The gods were now replaced by science and technology, and legislation, which was formerly seen as beyond people's capability, was now supposed to be enacted by elected elites, and implemented only if ratified by the people. Indeed, in one of his boldest statements, Ākhund-zādeh specifies that human reasoning stands above revelation.[86]

Utopian visions of this period displayed clear anti-religious sentiments and specified that religion, or the way it was practised in their era, was an obstacle to the realization of an ideal society. Animosity with religion and its practice in nineteenth-century Iran became one of the most central elements of utopian discussions, especially in the works of first-generation utopian authors like Ākhund-zādeh.

Nevertheless, a main accomplishment of these early modern utopias in Iran was their introduction of liberty and equality as the main pillars of utopia. Utopian thinkers of this era and the intelligentsia who read their works understood the ideals of a utopic society in a way that echoed the qualities of an ideal Western democracy. After the failure of constitutionalism, however, it was clear that something had simply gone wrong, and thus they no longer had confidence in social movements or their ability to implement change in a semi-democratic society that was constantly under attack from opportunist insiders and colonial outsiders. Some of the most sensitive of them, including Moshfeq Kāzemi, turned to anti-utopian writing in a style that is characterised by a detailed combination of facts and fact-based fiction that simply show that things are bad, this is how they have become through pursuits of utopia and will get worse. A similar pattern is seen again in utopic writings before and after the August 1953 coup. Utopian works before the coup display a strong hope for creating a utopia in the near future, but literary works after the coup suggest how this hope is diminished. The process suggests how, like a vicious circle, with each era of failure, utopian writing falls into the trap of dystopian writing.

[86]. Fereydun Ādamiyat, *Andisheh-hā-ye Mirzā Fath-'Ali Ākhund-zādeh*, p. 174.

CHAPTER THREE: Utopia Now!

Introduction

The Constitutional Revolution was a crucial milestone in introducing the idea of democracy to the Iranian population. However, despite its initial success in establishing a parliament and bringing about some democratic reforms, the revolution ultimately failed to lead Iran towards becoming a successful democratic state. Shortly after the revolution's victory, a series of events and disasters unfolded that led to the 1921 coup and the establishment of the Pahlavi monarchy. This regime replaced the aspirations of constitutionalism and democracy with a 'modern autocracy',[1] which fulfilled the dreams of stability and rapid modernization at the expense of political reform towards a stable democratic system. The 1921 coup had severe consequences, including the confiscation of the press, accompanied by threats to silence opposition voices. When newspapers resumed publication, the government allowed no room for critical voices or dissenting opinions. The process ushered in an era of systematic political suppression in which expressing social criticism became increasingly more challenging. The establishment of the Pahlavi monarchy in 1925 further exacerbated this issue, making it even more difficult to voice dissenting opinions. As it is mentioned by Karim Soleymāni, Reza Shah did say: 'In the future, I will break the pens of the opposition, cut their tongues'.[2] The regime was known for its strict censorship policies and its crackdown on any form of dissent, resulting in the suppression of free speech and the restriction of civil liberties.

The Pahlavi regime was initially characterized by its military nature, and under Reza Shah's reign, its political, military, and security structures were developed accordingly.[3] After his coronation, Reza Shah embarked on a series of reforms and modernization efforts, which transformed Iran into a highly centralized state. However, his reign is often viewed from two contrasting perspectives. In the eyes of outsiders and some Iranians, the new state brought about law and order, discipline, central authority, and modern amenities, leading to what was perceived as 'development', 'national integration', and 'modernization'. Others, however, see his rule as oppressive, corrupt, characterized by excessive taxation, and lacking legitimacy,

[1]. Afshin Matin-asgari, 'From Social Democracy to Social Democracy: The twentieth-century odyssey of the Iranian Left', in *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, Taylor and Francis Group, 2004), 49- 76, p. 41.
[2]. Karim Soleimani, 'Press censorship in the Reza Shah era, 1925–41', in *Culture and Cultural Politics Under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran*, ed. Bianca Devos, Christoph Werner (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 181.
[3]. Ibid., p. 184.

with a security apparatus typical of police states.[4] For instance, Ahmad Kasravi, in a series of articles in his paper, *Parcham* (flag), evaluated the pros and cons of Reza Shah's reign. He commended Reza Shah for creating a centralised state, controlling unruly tribes, disciplining the superstitious clergy, promoting the Persian language and replacing many of the Arabic words used in Persian with Persian ones, opening new schools, improving the status of women, eliminating titles and undermining feudal structures, introducing military conscription, building modern towns and factories, and striving to unify the country with one language, one culture, and one national identity, he criticized him for disregarding the constitution, flouting the fundamental laws, favouring the military over the civilian administration, assassinating progressive leaders, and most importantly, accumulating wealth and thereby fostering a culture of corruption.[5]

The reign of Reza Shah was marked by severe restrictions on the activities of different political groups, particularly leftists in Iran. Leftists became the primary targets of repression, with the passage of the 1931 law that declared membership in 'collectivist' organizations punishable by up to ten years imprisonment. The Communist Party and leftist trade unions were uprooted, and the 'Group of Fifty-three' faced a sensational political trial in 1937, resulting in long prison sentences for propagating Marxism.[6] These restrictions and suppressions continued until the Anglo-Russian invasion and occupation of Iran during World War II.

During World War II, despite Iran's declaration of neutrality, its failure to heed Allied warnings to expel the German community from the country, which had been present in Iran since 1939 following the expansion of cultural and economic ties between Tehran and Berlin, led to the occupation of Iran by Russian and British forces. The Iranian army surrendered to the Allies on August 27, 1941, and a new government led by Mohammad Ali Forughi (1877- 1942) was formed.[7] Reza Shah was removed from office on September 16, 1941, and subsequently exiled

[4]. Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 130.
[5]. Ibid., p. 137.
[6]. A group of political prisoners in Iran were detained during the reign of Reza Shah in 1937 and were imprisoned in Qasr Prison. Bozorg 'Alavi (1905-1997), a prominent Iranian leftist politician, writer, novelist, and journalist, who was one of these fifty-three people, in his book called *Panjāh o Seh Nafar* (Fifty-Three People), narrates his own imprisonment and that of these individuals. (Also see: Ervand Abrahamian, *Turtured Confession* (Barkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999)).
[7]. Iranian politician.

to Mauritius and later Johannesburg, where he passed away in 1944. The Crown Prince, Mohammad-Reza, succeeded his father and pledged to uphold democracy in Iran.[8]

Reza Shah's abdication took place with the agreement that his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi would assume kingship. Foroughi's diplomatic skills guaranteed a smooth succession, which initiated a period in which the 22-year-old began to preside over an occupied country with constitutionalist politicians trying to reinstate the control of the parliament and its elected premiers over the day-to-day running of the country. Accordingly, there was a notable increase in freedom of expression and press in Iran, and the parliamentary elections became more democratic. In the first few months of the new monarchy, people were able to voice their opinions without fear of persecution, and a wide range of ideas were published. The release of political prisoners also created an opportunity for the formation of parties, groups, and factions.

One of the first parties to be established in this new political atmosphere was the 'Tudeh party', which was formed one month after the Allied invasion by a group of recent graduates from European universities and former political prisoners led by Iraj Eskandari, one of the prominent members of 'Group of Fifty-Three'. In its initial stage, the party declared adherence to constitutionalism, nationalism, democracy and reformist socialism, not Marxism–Leninism.[9] Soon, however, the party became a communist party, which declared its loyalty to constitutional monarchy and its determination to work within the limits of the law and use peaceful means to achieve its goals.[10]

Though, at first, it enjoyed great support among the intelligentsia and the masses, its pro-Soviet policies meant that after the refusal of the Soviets to leave Iran in 1946 and the conflicts over Azerbaijan and Kurdistan (1946), the support for the party drastically dwindled. This provided an opportunity for Mohammad Mosaddeq's party, the National Front of Iran (1949-) to replace the Tudeh Party in leading the mass movements of the early 1950s. Mohammad Mosaddeq had been involved in various aspects of Iranian governance since the Constitutional Revolution. He had served as a parliamentary deputy, provincial governor, and cabinet minister before being

8. Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, 'The Political and Social Background of the Litrarture of the Period (1900- 1940)', in *Literature of the Early Twentieth Century: From the Constitutional Period to Reza Shah*, ed. Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab (London, New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2015), pp. 1-29, p. 20.
9. Afshin Matin-asgari, 'From Social Democracy to Social Democracy: The twentieth-century odyssey of the Iranian Left', p. 41.
10. Homa Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki: The Human Face of Iranian Socialism* (La Vergne: Oneworld Publications, 2018), pp. 30- 31.

forced into retirement by Reza Shah.[11] National Front of Iran was founded in 1949 with nationalist, secular, and democratic mottos and won unique popular support when it proposed and pursued the nationalization of the oil industry in Iran.

The Tudeh Party's main social base was a coalition of modern urban middle and working classes.[12] Other middle-class activists, like those within the National Front, were primarily focused on the reinstatement of national sovereignty and constitutional governance. The Tudeh Party put issues such as labour law reforms, equal pay, and voting rights for women on the national agenda.[13] Both the Tudeh Party and, later, the National Front played a leading role in the mass movements of the 1940s and 1950s in Iran. The Tudeh Party's initial success was largely due to its conscious revival of the social democratic tradition and the progressive perspectives that it put forward in the early 1940s. Its failure, however, was the inevitable result of its blind support for the Soviets.

Among all the political groups and parties active between 1941 and the 1953 coup, the Tudeh Party had the most lasting intellectual and cultural influence. The party introduced the concept of mass politics, mass participation, and mass organizations, with party cells and branches, conferences and congresses, and party newspapers, politburos, and central committees. Others readily adopted such terms as 'democratic centralism' and 'mass democracy'.[14] Homa Katouzian argues that the Tudeh party brought many refreshing ideas to Iranian politics, culture and society and continued to be the most popular and the best-organized party in the country for several years. He goes as far as claiming that nearly all Iranian intellectuals below the age of forty became members of or at least had sympathy towards the party.[15] Their growing press and publications not only provided forums for modern politics but also became vehicles for the publications of young and enthusiastic intellectuals.[16]

The utopian writings of this period were also heavily influenced by the Tudeh party and had an abundance of socialist themes. Ahmad Shamlou, Simin Behbahāni, Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, and Fereydun Moshiri, the four poets whose works I examine were between 14 and 18 in 1941 and started writing and publishing their poems in the 1940s. The new democratic momentum

[11]. Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, p. 157
[12]. Afshin Matin-asgari, 'From Social Democracy to Social Democracy: The twentieth-century odyssey of the Iranian Left', p. 42.
[13]. Ibid., p. 42.
[14]. Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, pp. 155- 156.
[15]. Homa Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki: The Human Face of Iranian Socialism*, p. 31.
[16]. Ibid., p. 32.

which led to the formation of political parties in the era provided these young poets with an opportunity to express their utopian ideals in writing. The influence of the Tudeh party and its social-democratic ideals is evident in their works. Yet whereas the first three poets tended towards the party and portrayed socialist utopias in their early works, Fereydun Moshiri did not display such tendencies in any of his works during this period and did not publicly express a desire to join any political parties. As reflected in my analysis, below, however, all of them, engaged with questions that suggest direct awareness of the political issues of their time and in some cases, one can identify clear signs of the socialist utopia that they propose in their poems.

Socialism as Utopia

The utopian writings that emerged in Iran between the occupation of Iran and the 1953 coup were primarily influenced by the political climate of the time and tended towards socialist ideals. Zygmunt Bauman's view is that a socialist utopia represents a different social reality, characterized by the potential for existence rather than the actuality of past accomplishments.[17] According to Bauman, socialism has been and still is, to some extent, the utopia of the modern era.[18] Socialism and utopia were once thought to be closely associated, if not synonyms.[19] Adam Ulam referred to socialism and communism as the vision of the final and, frankly, utopian phase of social development.[20]

While the interest in socialism grew significantly during the 19th and 20th centuries, its origins can be traced back to the classical utopian ideal, including the concept of communal property, as exemplified in works like Plutarch's depiction of the Spartan state, Plato's Republic, and More's Utopia.[21] Gregory Claeys argues that socialism is based on this utopian ideal. Specifically, he suggests that the growth of poverty and hunger under the old regime and the failure of the French Revolution to establish democracy and political stability were key factors that contributed to the emergence of socialism in the 19th century.[22] The emergence of socialism can be attributed to the inability of radical republicanism and liberal democracy, which were the main competitors of socialist ideologies, to adequately address poverty during

[17]. Zygmunt Bauman, *Socialism the active utopia* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1976), p. 37.
[18]. Ibid., p. 36.
[19]. Adam Ulam, 'Socialism and Utopia', in *Utopias and Utopian Thought*. P 116.
[20]. Ibid., p. 117.
[21]. Gregory Claeys, 'Socialism and Utopia', in *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World* (Oxford; New York: New York Public Library; Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 207.
[22]. Ibid., p. 208.

the 19th century. This was primarily because access to political power remained in the hands of the rich under a system in which ownership of private property was the main source of influence. Socialists were, thus, left with no alternative but to turn to the utopian program of the community of property in one form or another.[23] However, it should be noted that referring to socialist utopias does not mean that socialism is a specific blueprint for an alternative society with immediately recognizable features.[24]

How can we label a utopian vision socialist if it does not specify a clearly defined path towards achieving its goals? In his book, *Socialism, the Active Utopia*, Zygmunt Bauman argues that the key characteristics of socialist utopias include an inherent critique of the present and its inevitable result of having a future-oriented perspective. This makes it difficult to describe socialism in terms of a fixed social program that can be defined once and for all.[25]

Bauman's explanation of the role of utopias in modern socialism can be summarized as follows:

1) Utopias serve to provide a critical perspective on the present by highlighting its limitations and exposing its partiality. This enables individuals to adopt a critical attitude and engage in activities that can transform the current state of affairs. The presence of a utopia and the ability to imagine alternative solutions to current problems is necessary for historical change.[26]

2) Bauman argues that utopias are an integral part of contemporary cultures and they envision possibilities that can be extrapolated from the present. However, they often remain closely linked to the current reality and do not venture too far from it. Essentially, utopias reflect the ideas that already exist in society. According to Bauman, the central question that utopias seek to address is not 'What can I do?' nor 'What ought I do?'; it is rather 'What may I hope?'[27]

3) Utopias fracture the unified reality into a range of competing ideas and evaluations. The reality that underlies utopias is not impartial towards the conflicting perspectives that arise from social conflicts. In essence, utopias challenge the future with a collection of solutions that are influenced by social class, debunking the notion that there is only one way forward from

[23]. Zygmunt Bauman, *Socialism the active utopia*, p. 206.
[24]. Ibid., p. 49.
[25]. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
[26]. Ibid., p. 13.
[27]. Ibid., p.14.

the present. Utopias represent the future as a collection of competing initiatives and thus disclose the role of human intervention and collaborative effort in shaping it.

4) Utopias can have a significant impact on historical events. They can quickly become part of political practice, merge into conservative ideologies, or remain as guides for social action. They can also serve as reminders of the gap between promised ideals and reality. The presence of utopia in human action is a test of its degree of realism, which can only be determined through the occurrence of a massive social effort. There is no method to establish the truth or untruth of utopia in advance; its practicability can only be discovered through action.[28]

In Iran, particularly between 1941 and 1953, the Tudeh Party was the main promoter of left-wing ideas and a significant player in introducing new political concepts. According to Abrahamian, 'they published the first Persian-language political dictionary, which popularized terms such as colonialism, imperialism, fascism, united front, bourgeoisie, aristocracy, oligarchy, reactionary, progress, masses, and toilers'.[29] The party also promoted the idea of class identity, class conflict, and class dynamics to the extent that even conservatives began to use such language, claiming that 'benevolent' and 'paternalistic' landlords were the best protectors of peasants and workers.[30]

In addition, Tudeh reinforced the belief that the state had a moral responsibility to provide citizens with their basic needs. The party's popular slogan was 'Work for All, Education for All, Health for All.'[31] Social democracy became associated with rights more than laissez-faire liberal democracy. Furthermore, Tudeh reintroduced the idea of land reforms which had been put forward as one of the ideals of Iran's social democrat party in 1909. It called for a complete transformation of landlord-peasant relationships by advocating for 'Land to the Tiller'. Finally, the party reintroduced the debates about women's political rights, particularly the right to vote.[32] In their party statement, they express their goals as follows:

> Our primary aim is to mobilize the workers, peasants, progressive intellectuals, traders, and craftsmen of Iran. Our society has two major classes: those who own the main means of production; and those who have no significant amounts of property. The latter

[28]. Zygmunt Bauman, *Socialism the active utopia*, pp. 16-17.
[29]. For more, see Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, p. 113.
[30]. Ibid.
[31]. Ibid.
[32]. Ibid.

> included workers, peasants, progressive intellectuals, craftsmen, and traders. They work but do not receive the fruit of their labour. They are also oppressed by the oligarchy. They have little to lose but much to gain if the whole social structure were radically transformed and the main means of production were owned by the people . . . When we say that our aim is to fight despotism and dictatorship, we are not referring to specific personalities but to class structures that produce despots and dictators.[33]

During this era, utopian poems served as a vehicle for criticizing the social order of the early 20th century while expressing aspirations for the groundwork to form a utopia in various forms. The poems also praised protests and considered them the only viable means of escaping the present world. The continuity of these themes in the works of the four poets whose works I examine is tied to their affiliation with the Tudeh Party and later leftist discourses and their belief in the possibility of effecting change. In this context, the spectrum of the political tendencies of the four poets extended from Ahmad Shamlou on the left to Simin Behbhāni and Mehdi Akhavān-sāles respectively each one step closer to the centre-left and Fereydun Moshiri closer to the centre or centre right.

City of the People: Ahmad Shamlou's Utopia

Among the four poets analysed in this research, Ahmad Shamlou was the most politically active. Born in Tehran in 1925 to a military family, Shamlou spent his childhood in various cities due to his father's occupation. He attended elementary school in Khāsh, Zāhedān, and Mashhad in eastern Iran, and high school in Birjand, Mashhad, and Tehran. In 1942, his family relocated to Gorgān in northeast Iran, where Shamlou began his political activism and was later arrested in Tehran for having pro-German sympathies and sent to a Soviet prison in Rasht.

After his release from prison, Shamlou and his family relocated to Urmiya. During the conflicts over the secession of Azerbaijan in 1946, he and his father were arrested by the authorities of the Azerbaijani Democratic Party and were held at gunpoint for two hours until the higher authorities of the party intervened, released and sent them to Tehran. After so much up and down, he finally abandoned his studies and began working at a bookstore. In 1947, he got married for the first time and became the father of four children in a marriage that lasted until 1957. In the same year, 1947, he also published his debut poetry collection titled *Āhang-hā-ye*

[33] Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, p. 150.

Farāmush Shodeh (Forgotten Songs), which, ironically, he later hoped would be forgotten. Over the next few years, he wrote for newspapers, worked as an editor-in-chief for a magazine, wrote fiction, and translated works. In 1951, he started working as a cultural advisor at the Polish Embassy in Iran for two years. During the same year, he published the collection *Qat'-Nāmeh* (Manifesto), which introduced his first 'free verse' compositions. Later in life, he described his youth in the following words:

> Consider a boy who spent his first fifteen years in a military family, amidst political turmoil and intellectual stagnation during the reign of Reza Shah. Suddenly, he awakens from a nightmare, without any sense of understanding, of the social and political crises of the 1940s. With the enthusiasm of absolute ignorance, he picks up a gun with no bullet and becomes a member of a group more foolish than himself. Ignorantly, though sincerely, he tries to disrupt the affairs of the Allied forces by insisting that "The enemy of our enemy is our friend", and thinking of aiding Hitler's gangsters. That experience was a valuable lesson, so that in the future he would be 'less' deceived and would not consider any nonsensical slogans to be liberating.[34]

During this period, Shamlou viewed poetry as a means to express his beliefs and political commitments. He criticized his earlier romantic poems found in the collection *Forgotten Songs* and openly transformed his poetry into a political tool.[35] A significant portion of the poems he wrote between 1947 and 1953 were dedicated to workers and individuals who lost their lives in the struggle for equal rights. He also made these figures the central subjects of his poetry, sanctifying them as heroic and sacrificial figures. Shamlou often mentioned the precise date of his poem compositions, emphasizing the connection between poetry and social events. For instance, he titled one poem '23', directly referencing the demonstrations held by Tudeh Party supporters in various parts of Iran on the 23rd of Tir, 1330 SAH (July 15, 1951).[36] The poem praises the victims who went dancing towards death to create a new history:

اما تو!
تو قلبات را بشوی
در بی‌غشی جام بلور یک باران،

[34]. Ahmand Shamlou, 'Mosāhebeh-ye Shamlou bā Majaleh-ye Ādineh', < http://shamlou.org> (assceed September, 20, 2021)
[35]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā* (Tehrān: Negāh, 1398 [2019]), p. 33.
[36]. The supporters of the Tudeh Party held demonstrations in different parts of Iran on July 15, 1951, in response to the arrival of Aurel Hermann in Iran. During these protests, 20 people lost their lives in Tehran, and 17 were killed and 151 were injured in Khuzestān.

تا بدانی
چگونه
آنان
بر گورها که زیر هر انگشت پای‌شان
گشوده بود دهان
در انفجار بلوغ‌شان
رقصیدند،
چگونه بر سنگ‌فرش لج
پا کوبیدند
و اشتهای شجاعت‌شان
چگونه
در ضیافت مرگی از پیش آگاه
کباب گلوله‌ها را داغداغ
با دندان دنده‌هاشان بلعیدند.

But you!
Wash your heart
In the purity of the crystal bowl of a raindrop,
So that you know
How
They
Danced,
In the momentous explosion of their puberty,
On graves that had opened their mouths
Under each of their toes.
How they pounded their feet
On the cobblestones of persistence,
And how
The appetite of their courage
In a feast of death that they knew was coming
Swallowed the barbecued bullets with the teeth of their rips…[37]

The poem clearly praises a death that has been consciously chosen, which is the first characteristic of Shamlou's utopian poetry in this period of his life. In contrast to classical utopias in the Persian-speaking world and early modernization in Iran, there is hardly any

[37]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, pp. 44-45.

mention of the process of building a utopia. Instead, Shamlou focuses on the process of forming an ideal society. He views the social movements of the late 40s and early 50s in Iran as the path to liberation and the transformation of the governing system into a better one. Having been involved in political activities since his youth and even facing execution, he sees no other way than the revolutionary path to achieve the ideal society, and thus he pays tribute to the martyrs.

This process continues until Shamlou's third collection of poems called *Havā-ye Tāzeh* (Fresh Air- 1957). In 'Nocturnal Songs for the Alleys' (1952), which was written for the anniversary of the defeat of the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, a group that later Shamlou believed he had considered a revolutionary movement due to his political immaturity, he says:

آنان آسمان بارانی را به لبخند برهنه‌گان و مخمل زرد مزرعه را به رویای گرسنه‌گان پیوند می‌زند. در برف و تاریکی بودند و از برف و تاریکی می‌گذشتند و فریاد آنان میان همه بی‌ارتباطی‌های دور، جذبه‌ای سرگردان بود:
آنان مرگ را به ابدیت زیست گره می‌زدند.

They meld the rainy sky with the smiles of the destitute and the golden fields with the aspirations of the famished. Through snow and darkness, they journeyed, amid all the distant disconnections, their cries were a wandering ecstasy:
They were uniting death with the eternity of existence...[38]

The second characteristic of Shamlou's utopian poetry in this period is that his utopianism was not limited to Iran. For him, there was no difference between Iran and any other place in the world at this moment and the whole world was to demand this transformation. His poetry transcends the confines of specific locations. In 'A Poem for the Humans of Bahman (February 1950)', composed on the anniversary of the assassination of Taghi Arāni, an Iranian Marxist politician and chemist, Shamlou dedicates the poem to those who endure torture or lose their lives due to it. He believes that even in death, their voices resonate in society, inspiring others to take action. He envisions these voices as timeless and placeless, with echoes reverberating through history and across the globe. Referencing various cities and countries, he seeks to broaden the poem's reach. While he expresses admiration for Vietnam, he also addresses the protests in Ābādān, a city in southern Iran.

و راه می‌رود بر تاریخ، بر چین

[38]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 247.

بر ایران و یونان
انسان انسان انسان انسان... انسان‌ها...
و که می‌دود چون خون، شتابان
در رگ تاریخ، در رگ ویتنام، در رگ آبادان
انسان انسان انسان انسان... انسان‌ها...

He walks on history, on China
On Iran and Greece
Human, human, human, human...humans…
And he runs rushing like blood,
In the vein of history, in the vein of Vietnam, in the vein of Ābādān,
Human, human, human, human...humans…[39]

While reciting poetry for Iranian activists, he dedicates a poem to a Korean communist activist, Shen Chu. He considers dictators to be of the same kind, wherever they may be in the world, and says: 'Your enemy, is my enemy'.[40]

The third characteristic of Ahmad Shamlou's utopian poetry is that he sees himself as the voice of the voiceless people, those who have been neglected in classical utopias and excluded from playing any crucial role in constructing a utopian society. One important aspect of his poetry, therefore, is to give voice to the marginalized and downtrodden and to shine a light on their struggles. In another part of 'Nocturnal Songs for the Alleys', he says:

من برای روسپیان و برهنگان
می‌نویسم
برای مسلولین و
خاکستر نشینان،
و برای ان‌ها که به خاک سرد
امیدوارند
و برای آنهاکه دیگر به آسمان
امید ندارند.

I write
for the prostitutes and the destitute,
For those battling tuberculosis,
For the dwellers of ashes,

[39]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 63.
[40]. Ibid., p. 77.

For those who hold on to hope

on the frigid earth,

And those who've lost hope

in the sky above.[41]

Although a large part of Shamlou's poetry during this period is linked to social and political events, and they reflect Shamlou's ideals, the poems '*Roxana'* and '*Pariyā'* (Fairies) can be considered as two of his best utopian works.

'Roxana' is the first poem in which Shamlou presents a full version of his utopian vision. The poem's setting is a secluded coastal cottage. The first two lines express the pains and sufferings that the poetic persona has endured since the first day he stepped into the wooden cottage, which symbolises the world. Due to the intensity of his suffering, he has sewn his shroud with 'hopeful haste', dug his grave, and accepted death,[42] but the speaker does not want others to know anything about his suffering:

بگذار هیچ‌کس نداند، هیچ‌کس نداند تا روزی که سرانجام، آفتابی که باید به چمن‌ها و جنگل‌ها بتابد، آبِ این دریایِ مانع را بخشکاند و مرا چون قایقی فرسوده به شن بنشاند و بدین‌گونه، روحِ مرا به رُکسانا ــ روحِ دریا و عشق و زندگی ــ باز رساند.

Let no one know, let no one know until the day when at last, the sun, destined to bathe the meadows and woods, resolves to dry the waves of this hindering sea. To ground me like a weathered vessel on the shore, and in this fashion, my spirit reunited with Roxana- the soul of the sea, of love, and life.[43]

The speaker is sitting in his gloomy corner, waiting for his saviour. His saviour is a woman named Roxana, who has a Greek name with Iranian roots. Roxana is the Hellenised form for *Roshanā* or *Roshanak*, meaning 'shining'. In this piece, Roxana, 'who is the spirit of the sea, love, and life', cannot stay in the wooden hut by the shore. Therefore, the speaker asks her to let him join her. Eventually, on a stormy night, with a red cloak on and fire in his heart, he tries to follow her to the sea. 'The wind was trying to stop me from moving forward...,'[44] but she declares that he cannot do so as the gap between them has widened, and the chance of their unification has been lost. As if Roxana, in a way, plays the role of a speaker who constantly reminds us that utopia shall remain a forever unattainable phenomenon.

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41. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 248.
42. Parvin Salājegheh, *Naqd-e Sheʿr-e Moʿāser, Amirzādeh-ye Kāshi-hā 'Ahmad Shamlou'* (Tehrān: Morvārid, 2013), p. 254.
43. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 255
44. Ibid., p. 257.

The speaker knows that the only way to escape this stormy sea is to cross it. His tomorrow's peace of mind depends on passing through today's storm. He has to take risks and cross the storm to be able to join Roxana.

و می‌دیدم که اگر فانوس را به آب افکنم و سیاهیِ شب را به فروبستگیِ چشمانِ خود تعبیر کنم، به بودای بی‌دغدغه مانندەام که درد را از آن روی که طلیعه‌تازِ نیروانا می‌داند به دلاسودگی برمی‌گزارد.

اما من از مرگ به زندگی گریخته بودم.

And I saw that should I cast the lantern into the sea, perceiving the night as if my eyes were sealed shut, I would resemble the serene Buddha, embracing suffering with equanimity, believing it to be the prologue to Nirvana.

I, however, had fled from death to life.[45]

Shamlou does not specifically discuss any particular religious context. In general, he does not show any signs of belief in a specific religion in his poems, so he has no hesitation to refer to Nirvana to demonstrate his concept and the idea that pain and suffering are a prelude to eternal comfort, just as the path of struggle is to utopia. This hardship will be a prerequisite for future peace:

یک چند، سنگینیِ خُردکننده‌ی آرامشِ ساحل را در خفقانِ مرگی بی‌جوش، بر بی‌تابیِ روحِ آشفته‌یی که به دنبالِ آسایش می‌گشت تحمل کرده بودم: ــ آسایشی که از جوشش مایه می‌گیرد!

و سرانجام در شبی چنان تیره، به‌سانِ قایقی که بادِ دریا ریسمانش را بگسلد، دل به دریای توفانی زده بودم.

و دریا آشوب بود.

For a while, I had endured the crushing weight of the shore in the suffocation of a passionless death and the restlessness of an anxious soul that sought solace: — a solace that takes its source from passion!

And finally, on such a dark night, I had set sail into the stormy sea like a boat whose rope had been torn by the wind.

And the sea was tumultuous.[46]

In clear contrast to what Utopia may have promised, now the poetic persona has abandoned the peace in which he had lived and set out in search of his ideal in the heart of the stormy sea.

[45]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 258.
[46]. Ibid., p. 259.

Shamlou does not make a distinction between utopia and revolution or utopian peace and death. As mentioned earlier, Shamlou portrays the path of constructing a utopia instead of focusing on the utopia itself. This path is accompanied by unrest, rebellion, and bloodshed. He envisions the end of this path as a utopia and considers stepping onto this path, even if it leads to death, preferable to a life that appears to be calm on the surface. the speaker conceals behind a thick curtain everything he has endured from love and suffering, and does not discuss it with anyone. He yearns to merge with the spirit of love and life as one. A stormy path is supposed to be taken, in which some will die, but their death is the cause of life itself:

فریاد کشیدم: «رُکسانا!»

اما او در آرامشِ خود آسوده نبود

و به‌سانِ مهی از باد آشفته، با سکوتی که غریوِ مستانه‌ی توفانِ دیوانه را در زمینه‌ی خود پُررنگ‌تر می‌نمود و برجسته‌تر می‌ساخت و برهنه‌تر می‌کرد، گفت:

«ــ من همین دریای بی‌پایانم!»...

«ــ من همین توفانم من همین غریوم من همین دریای آشوبم که آتشِ صدهزار خواهشِ زنده در هر موجِ بی‌تابش شعله می‌زند!»

"I cried out, 'Roxana!'

But she was not at ease in her calmness.
Like a moon distraught by the wind, with a silence that made the drunken cries of the mad storm in the background more vibrant, prominent and obvious, she said:

"-I am this endless sea!"[47] …

"- I am this storm, I am this cry, I am this tumultuous sea, and in each of my restless waves flare the flames of a hundred thousand of living desires!"[48]

While the poetic persona may not find inner peace, his sole desire is to unite with Roxana, who associates herself with the turmoil. Shamlou's speaker envisions himself within his own utopia and believes that as long as the world around him is in tumult, his struggle in the storm provides him with everything he has always desired, Roxana. He does not differentiate between the process of building utopia and utopia itself. Roxana, however, much like her name rooted in

47. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 260.
48. Ibid., p. 261.

the centuries before, resounds with centuries of struggle in pursuit of utopia, asserting that it remains unattainable. She disappoints him with the stark truth that he cannot weather the storm:

«ــ اگر می‌توانستی بیایی، تو را با خود می‌بردم.
تو نیز ابری می‌شدی و هنگامِ دیدارِ ما از قلبِ ما آتش می‌جَست و دریا و آسمان را روشن می‌کرد...
در فریادهای توفانیِ خود سرود می‌خواندیم در آشوبِ امواجِ کف کرده‌ی دورگریزِ خود آسایش می‌یافتیم و در لهیبِ آتشِ سردِ روحِ پُرخروشِ خود می‌زیستیم...
اما تو نمی‌توانی بیایی، نمی‌توانی
تو نمی‌توانی قدمی از جای خود فراتر بگذاری!»

"If you could come, I would take you with me.
You would become a cloud and when we met, fire would sparkle from our hearts and light up the sea and the sky...
In our stormy screams, we would sing anthems, and in the turmoil of our far rushing foamy waves, we would find peace, and in the cold flames of our roaring souls, we would live...
But you cannot come, you cannot.
You cannot take a step farther from where you are!"[49]…

Having failed to join Roxana, the poetic persona returns to his wooden hut, hopeless and broken-hearted. He cries out with his last breath and pleads in deadly silence. It is no longer a scream but rather silence, defeat, and despair. Having failed his sea journey, which was to save him from suffering in a world of relief, he is now in more pain as people now consider him mad.

In Shamlou's words, Roxana was his ideal, clear-minded, bright, fresh, free and hopeful woman whom he discovered in his beloved Āyda.[50] A presence that is hazy, elusive, or perceived in dim light, the distant idea of a phoenix or one who has the alchemy of existence. This same image is what creates this poem. Shamlou introduces a female saviour into his poetry, an element that later provides everything the poet needs to bring life to him in the form of love (see chapter four).

'*Pariyā*' (Fairies) is the second important utopian poem by Shamlou, composed in 1953, and it was published in the collection titled *Fresh Air.* The poem narrates the story of a few fairies, standing at the border between two dystopias. In front of them is a dystopia where slaves are

[49]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 261.
[50]. Ibid., p. 1062.

chained, and behind them is a mythical black castle where fairies once lived. The coldness and darkness of this castle are signs of the suffocating and dystopian atmosphere prevailing in it, possibly explaining the fairies' departure. It is as if having escaped a history of pain and suffering in the black castle, they have come to encounter another dystopia, a situation that has led to their incessant crying:

رو به روشون تو افق شهر غلامای اسیر
پشت‌شون سرد و سیا قلعه‌ی افسانه‌ی پیر

Before them, upon the horizon,
Was a city of enslaved captives
Behind them, black and cold
Sat the old, fabled castle.[51]

The speaker steps forward and attempts to lift the fairies' spirits. He starts by inquiring about the cause of their sorrow and then tries to open up a path of conversation to give them hope.

«--پریا! گشنه‌تونه؟
پریا! تشنه‌تونه؟
پریا! خسّه شدین؟
مرغ پر بسّه شدین؟
چیه این های های‌تون
گریه‌تون وای وای‌تون؟»

Hey, are you fairies hungry?
Are you fairies thirsty? Or tired?
Are you like entrapped birds?
What is this moaning, fairies, what is this crying?[52]

The silence of the fairies and the continuation of their weeping show that they need something more than what was said. The poetic persona invites them to his own city, known as '*shahr-e mardom'* (the people's city). The name of this city distinguishes it from classical utopias. As discussed in the first chapter, utopias were considered to belong to a specific group of people, such as Jāmi's 'City of the Pure' or virtuous city in Zoroastrian scriptures or Islamic philosophy, and so on. However, Shamlou, who identifies himself as the voice of the voiceless, considers this city to belong to all people, irrespective of any characteristics they may possess

[51]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 195.
[52]. Ibid., p. 196.

or lack. At this point, Shamlou elevates the poetic persona to the stature of a saviour, riding on a white horse and takes the opportunity to describe his utopia:

پریا!
قد رشیدم ببینین
اسب سفیدم ببینین
اسب سفید نقره نل
یال و دمش رنگ عسل،
مرکب صرصر تک من!
آهوی آهن رگ من!
گردن و ساقش ببینین!
باد دماغش ببینین!

Hey, fairies!
See how tall I am
See my white horse
With its silver horseshoes and honey-coloured mane and tail,
My swift-running, wind-like stallion
My iron-veined deer
See its muscular legs and neck
See its proud nose and breathing![53]

In the people's city, a celebration is underway, and the sound of cheers and joy is heard everywhere. The city is now an ideal city because:

امشب تو شهر چراغونه
خونه‌ی دیبا داغونه
مردم ده مهمون مان
با دامب و دومب به شهر میان
می‌رقصن و می‌رقصونن
غنچه‌ی خندون می‌ریزن
نقل بیابون می‌ریزن
های می‌کشن
هوی می‌کشن
«--شهر جای ما شد!»

The demons' house is ruined

[53]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 197.

The county people are our guests tonight.
They are coming, Dom, Dom, Dom
They are drumming Pom, Pom, Pom
They are laughing,
They are dancing and make others dance
They are singing:
The city is ours![54]

In this section, similarities with classic utopias can be seen. Anything that makes life difficult, and challenging is attributed to demons, here can be interpreted as dictators and their tyranny. People managed to free themselves:

عید مردماس، دیب گله داره
دنیا مال ماس، دیب گله داره
سفیدی پادشاس، دیب گله داره
سیاهی رو سیاس، دیب گله داره

People celebrate, the demon complains,
The world is ours, the demon complains,
Whiteness reigns supreme, the demon complains,
Darkness is hiding in shame, the demon complains.[55]

Shamlou puts the demon and the people on two opposing sides, representing the extremes of blackness and whiteness. The demon's downfall brings happiness back to the people, signifying that peace and comfort have returned to the city. This story bears a resemblance to the tale of Fereydun and Zahhāk, which brought about a golden era in Iran's mythical history with the defeat of Zahhāk (See Chapter One).

The poetic persona, without being aware of the fairies' magic, invites them to the 'City of People' and tells them that they should take the opportunities while they still can and save themselves now that the castle's doors are locked. Because the city is transforming and the long night is about to end:

پریا!
دیگه توک روز شیکسّه
درای قلعه بسّه

[54]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p.197.
[55] Ibid., pp. 197- 198.

اگه تا زوده بلن شین
سوار اسب من شین
می‌رسیم به شهر مردم، ببینین: صداش میاد
جینگ و جینگ ریختن زنجیر برده‌هاش میاد.
آره! زنجیرای گرون، حلقه به حلقه، لا به لا
می‌ریزن ز دست و پا.
پوسیده‌ن پاره می‌شن،
دیبا بی‌چاره می‌شن.

Oh Fairies, heed my call! The day is ending,
And the castle's gates are closed.
If thou get up as there is still time,
And join me on my horseback,
Together we'll reach the People's City.
Listen: the joyous sound of the breaking of its slaves' chains can be heard,
As link by link and chain by chain,
They fall and shatter from the wrists and feet,
The chains are old and weak, no longer binding,
And the demons will soon be helpless.[56]

This city belongs to all those who have been neglected in classical utopia. To the voiceless people and those who, bound by chains, do nothing but what they have been told to do. Chains are one of the most important symbols used in poetry to describe the lives of people in dystopias. But these chains have become old and easily break apart. People who are bound by chains, and have been deprived of their freedom.

عوضش تو شهر ما... (آخ نمی‌دونین پریا!)
در برجا وا می‌شن؛ برده‌دارا رسوا می‌شن
غلوما آزاد می‌شن، ویرونه‌ها آباد می‌شن
هرکی که غصه داره
غم‌شو زمین می‌ذاره
قالی می‌شن حصیرا
آزاد می‌شن اسیرا
اسیرا کینه دارن
داس‌شونو ورمی‌دارن
سیل می‌شن: شر شر شر!

[56] Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 198

آتیش می‌شن: گر گر گر!
تو قلب شب که بدگله
آتیش‌بازی چه خوش‌گله!

Instead, in our city [Oh Fairies! You have no idea!]
Towers open their gates,
Slave owners face disgrace.
Slaves gain their freedom,
The ruined houses are rebuilt.
Whoever is distressed,
Set aside their sorrows.
Wickers become rugs,
Captives break free.
Captives want revenge ,
They take their sickles,
They become a flood and flow!
They become a fire with a roaring blaze!
In the depths of the ugly night,
How beautiful is the firework![57]

With a positive and supportive perspective towards workers' protests for their rights, the poetic persona passionately defends their cause. As part of his belief in social change, he sees revolution and protest as inevitable and necessary to achieve a brighter future. He even references the sickle, a symbol of the Communist Party, and also a symbol of peasants who were among the most downtrodden people, to illustrate his belief in the power of collective action. Nevertheless, the fairies continue to weep...

پریا هیچ چی نگفتن، زار و زار گریه می‌کردن پریا
مث ابرای باهار گریه می‌کردن پریا...

The fairies remained silent, weeping bitterly,
Shedding tears endlessly like clouds in spring...[58]

The speaker addresses the fairies, acknowledging their origins in the world of fairy tales but reminding them that the city he resides in is the real world, where both good and evil coexist. Here, the speaker once again emphasizes the nature of modern utopias, which diverge from

[57]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 198.
[58].Ibid., p. 200.

fairy tales and remain elusive in their pursuit of absolute happiness. In this world, the coexistence of good and bad necessitates our human effort to build a society where everyone can experience a degree of shared happiness:

دنیای ما قصه نبود
پیغوم سر بسه نبود.
دینای ما عیونه
هرکی می‌خواد بدونه:
دنیای ما خار داره
بیابوناش مار داره
هرکی باهاش کار داره
دلش خبردار داره!
دنیای ما بزرگه
پر از شغال و گرگه!
...
خوب پریای قصه!
مرغای پر شیکسّه!
آب‌تون نبود، دون‌تون نبود، چایی و قلیون‌تون نبود،
کی بتون گفت که بیاین دنیای ما، دنیای واویلای ما
قلعه‌ی قصه‌تونو ول بکنین، کارتونو مشکل بکنین؟»

Our world is not a fairy-tale,
No hidden messages or happy endings prevail.
Our world is clear as it is,
Whoever wants to know:
Our world has thorns.
In its deserts, it has snakes,
But whoever lives in our world knows this.
Our world is big,
And it is full of jackals and wolves!
[…]
So, folktale fairies! Wing-broken birdies!
Why did you come here? Did you lack water, did you lack food?
Did you lack tea or shisha pipes?
Who urged you to come to our world? Our crazy chaotic world?

Why urged you to leave your folktale castle, and make your life difficult?[59]

Finally, the speaker approaches the fairies and tries to touch their shoulder kindly to encourage them to leave, the true essence of the fairies is revealed as if they had intended to deceive the speaker from the beginning, and now their magic has become ineffective. In Zoroastrian mythology, fairies are portrayed as female demons, with beautiful looks but evil nature. The fairies scream and shriek and after several transformations into different things with the plan of confusing the speaker or dazzling him to stop his mission, they disappear.

دس زدم به شونه شون
که کنم رووونه‌شون--
پریا جیغ زدن، ویغ زدن، جادو بودن دود شدن، بالا رفتن تار شدن، پایین اومدن پود شدن، پیر شدن، گریه شدن، جوون شدن خنده شدن، خان شدن بنده شدن، خروس سر کنده شدن،میوه شدن هسته شدن، انار سر بسته شدن، امید شدن یأس شدن، ستاره ی نحس شدن...

I touched their shoulders to encourage them to leave—
They started to scream and shriek,
They were magical. They turned into smoke, went up and faded.
They descended and became like threads, became old, became tears, became young, became laughter, became masters, became slaves, became headless roosters, became fruit, became seed, became hope, became despair, became a star of bad omen…

In the end, the magic of the fairies is ineffective, and as it has no effect, one of them turns into wine, one into a sea, and one into a mountain. The speaker drinks the wine, crosses the sea and climbs and passes the mountain to see the people on the other side celebrating in happiness. The piece ends with the joyful song that the people of the city are signing together:

ما ظلمو نفله کردیم
آزادی رو قبله کردیم
از وقتی خلق پا شد
زنده‌گی مال ما شد.
از شادی سیر نمی‌شیم
دیگه اسیر نمی‌شیم.

We destroyed injustice,
Worshipped and quested for freedom.
Since the people took a stand,

[59]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, pp. 200- 201.

Our life became ours to command.

We will never get fed up with this happiness

We will never be enslaved again.[60]

Parvin Salājeqeh argues that this poem refers to people's temporary victory before the August 1953 coup.[61] The date of the poem's composition further emphasizes this point. During this period, Ahmad Shamlou perceives utopia as an accessible phenomenon on the horizon, a time when freedom has embraced the people and the city is filled with light and song, the two elements that Shamlou consistently associates with utopia. The most significant aspect of Shamlou's utopia in this poem is that it no longer belongs exclusively to a privileged few or a select group of elites, but to all the people. It is the voiceless people who are finally heard and celebrated in this utopia.

Ārmān-shahr on the Horizon: Simin Behbahāni's Utopian Perspective

After Shamlou, the strongest attachment to the Tudeh Party can be seen in the works of Simin Khalili also known as Simin Behbahāni. Simin Behbahāni was born in 1927 in Tehran into an intellectual family. Her father, ʿAbbās Khalili, was a poet, writer, and newspaper editor, and her mother, Fakhr-ol-Zamān Arghun, was a successful poet and member of *Jamʿiyat-e Nesvān-e Vatankhāh* (the Women's Patriotic Organization). Before Simin's birth, her parents had separated, and she lived with her mother. She finished her high school education in Tehran and subsequently enrolled in a midwifery school. However, two years later, she faced false accusations of sending a complaint letter to the school, resulting in her expulsion. In 1946, Simin entered into marriage with Hassan Behbahāni and adopted his last name as her pen name. The couple had three children together but later divorced in 1970.

Simin, like Shamlou, had a youthful admiration for Hitler when she was thirteen or fourteen years old. She saw him as a figure who would punish wicked individuals according to their actions. In one of her writings titled 'From Childhood to...', she mentions a rumour that portrayed Hitler as the promised saviour.[62] Similarly, she places greater emphasis on the process of establishing utopia rather than the concept itself, justifying acts of violence as necessary for achieving utopia. Reflecting on her own sentiments, she remarks that when individuals succumb to collective indoctrination, they engage in actions that they would never

[60]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 203.
[61]. Parvin Salājeqe, *Naqd-e She'r-e Mo'āser, Amirzādeh-ye Kāshi-hā: Ahmad Shamlou*, p. 285.
[62]. Simin Behbahāni, *Majmuʿeh-yi Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā* (Tehrān: Negah, 1389 [2010]), p. 326.

have imagined on their own. This is when violence, crime, and bloodshed become normalized and acceptable in the eyes of ordinary human beings.[63]

Simin in her initial perspective, welcomed the social and political atmosphere that emerged after the occupation of Iran and considered it a sign of freedom and said:

> Soldiers and foreign officers would come and go in the streets and didn't interfere in people's lives, but the newspapers were extremely interesting and spoke of freedom. Political prisoners who had survived were released, exiled activists returned to the country, and we had 'freedom'. Years later […], I realized that in our country 'freedom' is the result of the weakness of the ruling power, and that powerful rulers and freedom do not seem to go together.[64]

She considers freedom to be the most important and primary feature of an ideal society, and she considers it in opposition to a centralized autocratic government. Hence, she aligns herself with the proponents of socialist and separatist movements in Iran, explicitly endorsing the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan and advocating for the need to grant freedom to oppressed people.[65] Her interest in the Tudeh Party and later her membership in this party was the result of her first love. She refers to the Tudeh Party as the most popular and serious party in Iran:

> Doctor Mohammad Ali,[66] who was still a medical student, had become a staunch supporter of the Tudeh Party. He encouraged me to join the Tudeh Party too. He preached and brought books to the point that I became a Tudeh member as well.[67]

The events that happened to Simin during her high school years and her studies at the midwifery school drove her more than ever towards the Tudeh Party, and afterwards, led her to dedicate her poetry to social concepts: 'I completed my high school years in about four years, doing two-year grades in each year, and before receiving my high school diploma, I entered midwifery school. The school's authorities were aware of my involvement in the Tudeh Youth Organization'.[68] This awareness and the knowledge that she writes for newspapers led to a situation in which a bad review that had been written about the school was attributed to her,

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63. Simin Behbahāni, *Majmu'eh-yi Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p. 327.
64. Ibid., p. 329.
65. Simin Behbahāni, *Bā Mādaram Hamrāh: Zendegi-Nāmeh-ye Khod-nevesht tā 1345* (Tehrān: Sokhan, 1390 [2011]), p. 592.
66 Her step-father's nephew, and her first love.
67. Simin Behbahāni, *Bā Mādaram Hamrāh: Zendegi-Nāmeh-ye Khod-nevesht tā 1345*, p. 565.
68. Simin Behbahāni, *Majmu'eh-yi Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p. 76

and she was expelled from the school, which made her dedicate her poetry to the struggle against oppression and arguing for the freedom of women:

> From that time on, the goal of my poetry was to fight against oppression. Wherever I could, I depicted and humiliated the face of this oppression. I considered freedom as the prerequisite for poetry and did not bow down to any authority or power.[69]

Years later, when Simin spoke of her emotions during that period, her words bore similarities with Shamlou's about his early poems as they both did not see themselves in a place or time where there could be an opportunity for talking about love and romance. A storm was raging that was supposed to guide them towards their utopia. So, the best solution was to accompany this storm and sacrifice other aspects of life until reaching the desired result. None of them thought it was going to take long! Simin Behbahāni explicitly uses the word ārmān-shahr for the ideal society, and for her, it was no longer an idea, but the reality of her time.

> It was a strange time. The fever of idealism had seized all the young people. *Ārmān-shahr* (the utopia) was ahead of us. It seemed as if it was within our reach, and we had to reach it. We had been told, "Everything must be sacrificed to reach the goal, to reach ārmān-shahr (the city of ideals)". Falling in love? What a great sin when inequalities, injustices, oppression, and greed have plunged society into chaos. Can one fall in love when others are in flames? Getting married, wearing nice clothes, and thinking only of your small unit are wrong when you must think about the entire society. Someone who has a husband, a child, or is in love cannot devote their existence entirely to their sacred ideal. One must be free from any constraints, from any attachments.[70]

The ideal city that Simin refers to in her works echoes the ideals promoted by the Tudeh Party, which she supported at the time. As she puts it directly, 'I was a teenager. I demanded social justice and the liberation of the people.'[71]

ای ملت فقیر و پریشان چه می کنی
ای توده گرسنه و نالان، چه می کنی
سرمایه دارها همه در کاخ زرنگار
تو در میان کلبه اَحزان چه می کنی

Oh, hungry and moaning masses, what are you doing?

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[69]. Simin Behbahāni, *Majmu'eh-yi Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, pp. 77, 89.
[70]. Ibid, p. 141.
[71]. Simin Behbahāni, *Bā Mādaram Hamrāh: Zendegi-Nāmeh-ye Khod-nevesht tā 1345*, pp. 593-594.

Oh, poor and anxious nation, what are you doing?
The rich are in the palaces of cunning,
You are in the huts of sorrow, what are you doing?[72]

Simin calls upon the people to actively participate in constructing a classless society, as she highlights the existence of social stratification.

During this period, Simin makes the courageous decision to become the voice for the voiceless. Although Simin generally speaks about the freedom and liberation of the masses, specifically she focuses on women in her poetry and sees them as more oppressed. She critiques more than anything else the instrumental view of women in society during this period. She challenges the freedoms denied to women and complains about the fact that women do not have the same presence in social activities as men. She composes:

مرا زین چهره‌ی خندان مبینید!
که دل در سینه‌ام دریای خون است.
به کس این چشم پر نازم نگوید
که حال این دل غمدیده چون است
[...]
مرا عار آید از کاخی که در آن
نه آزادی نه استقلال دارم

Do not look at me with this smiling face
My heart is a sea of blood
Do not tell my coquettish eyes
How is the state of this grieving heart?
[…]
I am ashamed of a palace in which
I have neither freedom nor independence.[73]

Simin always considers the conditions of women in her criticism, both within the home and in society, and sees women being oppressed in both places. She also condemns poverty and ignorance.[74] Simin perceives utopia as a concern that goes beyond her geographical region, considering it a global matter and emphasizing the need for her to have a global perspective.

[72] Simin Behbahāni, *Bā Mādaram Hamrāh: Zendegi-Nāmeh-ye Khod-nevesht tā 1345*, p. 594.
[73]. Simin Behbahāni, *Majmu'eh-ye Ash'ār* (Tehrān: Negāh, 1393 [2014]), p. 90.
[74]. Simin Behbahāni, *Bā Mādaram Hamrāh: Zendegi-Nāmeh-ye Khod-nevesht tā 1345*, p. 566.

Despite using different expressions to convey their ideas, Shamlou and Simin Behbahāni share notable similarities in their perspectives on utopia during this period. They both emphasize the process of utopia rather than its specific formulation, view utopia as a global issue rather than confined to a particular geography, and consider themselves advocates for the voiceless. These themes can also be found in Simin's poetry. Both poets exhibit a stronger connection and fondness for political parties, particularly the Tudeh Party, compared to the other two poets, and this sentiment is reflected in their poetic works. However, after the 1953 coup, this theme gradually diminished in their subsequent poetry.

Rainless Cloud: Mehdi Akhavān-sāles's Disbelief in Political Movements

Mehdi Akhavān-Sāles was born in 1929 in the city of Mashhad in northeast Iran to an herbalist father. He completed his secondary education in blacksmithing at Mashhad Technical School in 1947-1948 and joined the 'Khorāsān Literary Association' in the same year. He also became a member of the Tudeh Party Youth Organization during this period. Afterwards, in 1948 and 1949, he went to Tehran and became a teacher. In 1950, he married his cousin Irān (Khadijeh) and had two daughters and four sons. In the interim between the fall of Reza Shah in 1941 and the transformation of Mohammad Reza Shah's reign into an autocratic one in 1953, Akhavān-sāles, like many other intellectuals, political activists, and patriots, found an opportunity to express his views more openly. According to Yadollāh Qarāei, in this period 'Akhavān beamed like a bright spirit of enthusiasm and emotions. The political events that were taking place in the country had made him so hopeful and enthusiastic that he was like spring birds rushing to a mulberry tree'.[75]

Like Shamlou and Simin, Akhavān-sāles displayed leftist tendencies and pursued a leftist utopian vision. Themes similar to those of the former two poets also occur in Akhavān-sāles's idea of the ideal city. The conflict between social classes and the issue of social inequality is also central to his poems. He calls on the masses to revolt and sees revolution and protest as the inevitable way to escape the current situation and achieve an ideal society.

The poem '*Khofteh*' (Asleep), from the collection entitled *Zemestān* (Winter, 1956), which was composed a year after his membership in the Tudeh Youth Organization, provides the best example to examine Akhavān-sāles' utopian views during this period. The poem starts with the

[75]. Hāfez Musavi, *Luli-vash-e Maghmum: Zendegi, She'r va Andisheh-ye Mehdi Akhavān-Sāles* (Tehran: Negāh, 1396 [2017]), p. 37.

news of the arrival of spring, which in Iranian culture symbolizes blooming and rebirth as if a new life is to be given to the dead society. However, the arrival of spring is accompanied by turmoil, possibly a reference to the protests that were taking place in Iran at that time:

آمد به سوی شهر از آن دور دورها
آشفته حال باد سحرخیز فرودین
گفتی کسی به عمد بر آشفت خاکدان
زان دامنی که باد کشیدیش بر زمین

Came to the city from far away,
The disrupting late *Farvardin* morning breeze. [76]
It was as if someone intentionally disturbed the dust
With a skirt that was sweeping the ground with the wind.[77]

The speaker hears the voices of those who seem like the walking dead as they seem to have come out of their graves and are only concerned with their livelihoods:

آمد مرا به گوش غریوی که می‌کشید
نقاره با تغنی منحوس و دلخراش
ناقوس شوم مرده دلان است، کز لحد
سر بر کشیده‌اند به انگیزهٔ معاش

I heard a clamour in my ear,
A mournful and discordant sound.
It was the bell tolling for the dead hearts,
Whose bodies rise from their graves, only to earn a living.[78]

He picks up his book and leaves the hustle and bustle of the city, taking the country road ahead. There, he encounters someone who, despite the city's commotion, has fallen asleep:

دیدم به پای کاخ رفیعی که قبه‌اش
راحت غنوده به دامان کهکشان
خوابیده مرد زار و فقیری که جبه‌اش
غربال بود و هادی غم‌های بیکران

I saw at the foot of a lofty palace, whose dome
Rested comfortably on the skirt of the galaxy
A sorrowful and poor man lying asleep, whose cloak

76. Farvardin (21st March to 21st April) is the first month of spring and the first month in the Iranian calendar.
77. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Zemestān* (Tehrān: Morvārid, 1387 [2008]), p. 20.
78. Ibid., p. 22.

Was like a sieve, sifting and letting through the endless sorrows.[79]

The gap between the rich and the poor are illustrated in the next section as the speaker asks himself how one can be indifferent to this issue:

کاخی قشنگ، مظهر بیدادهای شوم
مهتاب رنگ و دلکش و جان پرور و رفیع
مردی اسیر دوزخ این کهنه مرز و بوم
چون بره‌ای که گم شده از گله‌ای وسیع
از کاخ رفته قهقههٔ شوق تا فلک
چون خنده‌های باده ز حلقوم کوزه‌ها
وان ناله‌های خفته کمک می‌کند به شک
کاین صوت مرد نیست که آه عجوزه‌ها

A beautiful palace, embodying ominous crimes of injustice,
Moon-coloured, charming, soul-warming, high and sublime,
A man captive in the hell of this ancient land,
Like a lost sheep that has wandered away from a vast herd.
From the palace, a guffaw of eager laughter reaches the sky,
Like the drunken laughter of wine from the throat of torpedo jars,
The painful moans of the sleeping man trigger my doubts
This is not a man's voice but an old woman's sigh.[80]

The incessant laughter of one and the obvious sufferings of the other are clear signs of injustice:

تعبیر آه و قهقهه خاطر نشان کند
مفهوم بی عدالتی و نیش و نوش را
وین پردهٔ فصیح مجسم عیان کند
دنیای ظلم و جور سباع و وحوش را
آن یک به فوق مسکنت از ظلم و جور این
این یک به تخت مقدرت از دسترنج آن
این با سرور و شادی و عیش و طرب قرین
و آن با عذاب و ذلت و اندوه توأمان

A proper understanding of the sighs and the laughter indicates
The meaning of injustice and the proximity of pain and pleasure.
This eloquent painting tangibly depicts

[79]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Zemestān*, p. 23.
[80]. Ibid.

The world of oppression and the tyranny of ferocious beasts.
One is at the height of poverty due to the tyranny and cruelty of the other,
The other is on the throne of power due to the toil of the first.
One is paired with merriment, happiness, games and pleasures,
The other is bound with agony, humiliation, and grief.[81]

Finally, the speaker wakes the sleeping man from his silence and invites him to take action for himself. He likens his sleeping to death and tells him that improvement of the situation cannot be expected unless he joins others in these conditions and creates a revolution:

همدرد من! عزیز من! ای مرد بینوا
آخر تو نیز زنده‌ای، این خواب جهل چیست
مرد نبرد باش که در این کهن سرا
کاری محال در بر مرد نبرد نیست
زنهار، خواب غفلت و بیچارگی بس است
هنگام کوشش است اگر چشم واکنی
تا کی به انتظار قیامت توان نشست
برخیز تا هزار قیامت به پا کنی

My companion of suffering! My dear! O poor man,
After all, you too are alive, what is this sleep of ignorance?
Be a warrior as in this ancient abode,
No task is impossible for a warrior.
Beware, this sleep of ignorance and misery is enough,
It's time to endeavour if you open your eyes.
How long can one wait for the day of resurrection?
Rise and create a thousand resurrections.[82]

In the last line, Akhavān-sāles employs the precise words of Farrokhi Yazdi (1889- 1939), an Iranian poet, journalist, and prominent politician during the Constitutional Revolution and the Reza Pahlavi era, to echo the same message and rally his contemporary movements in pursuit of the Constitutional Movement's ideals. His enthusiasm for social movements, however, did not last as long as Shamlou's and Simin Behbahāni's. He quickly lost faith in political parties, and political movements to be the way of building a utopia. As if he sees the failure a lot sooner than the others. Akhavān-sāles, then, concluded that their protests and movements were

[81]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Zemestān*, p. 24.
[82]. Ibid., p. 25.

useless. In 1952, four years after composing the poem ‘Asleep’, he wrote ‘*Setarvan’* (Sterile), which is a reference to the National Front party and Mosaddeq’s movement. Despite the interest that he shows in Mossadeq in his poetry, during this period, he completely distrusted him. ‘Setarvan’ begins with a depiction of a group of thirsty people with their eyes fixed on the sky, waiting for rain clouds. The black clouds cover the sky and announce rain for the thirsty:

سیاهی گفت
اینک من، بهین فرزند دریاها
شما را، ای گروه تشنگان، سیراب خواهم کرد
چه لذت بخش و مطبوع است مهتاب پس از باران
پس از باران جهان را غرقه در مهتاب خواهم کرد

Blackness said: “Here I am, the best child of the seas,
I will quench your thirst, O group of thirsty ones!
How delightful and pleasant it is, the moonlight after the rain,
After the rain, I will immerse the world in moonlight…”[83]

The clouds, however, are nothing but deception and falsehood, and they themselves know it:

زبردستی که دایم می‌مکد خون و طراوت را
نهان در پشت این ابر دروغین بود و می‌خندید
مه از قعر محاقش پوزخندی زد بر این تزویر
نگه می‌کرد غار تیره با خمیازهٔ جاوید

A trickster who perpetually drained blood and vitality
Lurked concealed within that deceptive cloud, chuckling.
The moon, from the depths of its concealment, sneered at this deception,
And the dark cave was gazing with eternal yawning.[84]

The thirsty people put all their hope in these black clouds, but an old reaper sees through the deception:

گروه تشنگان در پچ پچ افتادند
دیگر این
همان ابر است کاندر پی هزاران روشنی دارد
ولی پیر دروگر گفت با لبخندی افسرده:
فضا را تیره می‌دارد، ولی هرگز نمی‌بارد

The group of thirsty fell into despair: “These are

[83]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Zemestān*, p. 46.
[84]. Ibid.

the same clouds that hold thousands of lights within them."
But the old reaper said with a bitter smile:
"The sky may darken, but it will never rain."[85]

People wait for a long time by the rivers for rain, while the clouds promise rain with thunder and lightning. But when it does not rain, people begin to doubt:

گروه تشنگان در پچ پچ افتادند
آیا این
همان ابر است کاندر پی هزاران روشنی دارد؟
و آن پیر دوره گرد گفت با لبخند زهرآگین
فضا را تیره می‌دارد، ولی هرگز نمی‌بارد

The thirsty people began whispering, "Is it really the
cloud that holds the promise of thousands of shining lights?"
And that old reaper said with a sneering, bitter smile,
"It will darken the sky, but it will never rain."[86]

Here, on one hand, Akhavān draws upon the ancient belief that natural forces are also shaped by societal circumstances (as discussed in chapter one). In their dystopian reality, the prospect of rain is bleak. On the other hand, he likens the behaviour of the clouds to that of political activists who deliver impassioned speeches with thunderous roars, making promises of brighter tomorrows and improved days, yet ultimately taking no concrete action. He also initially holds high hopes for political and social movements through which the class divisions among people can be eliminated and an ideal society can be created. He invites all people to join the movements to be part of this joy. However, the course of political developments in Iran quickly makes him distrustful of these movements and political parties, considering them as mere commotion without substance. As a result, the optimism that is prevalent among others fades away, and he soon distances himself from the works of Akhavān-sāles, making him one of the most pessimist poets of Iran in this period.

Fereydun Moshiri's Silence

Fereydoun Moshiri was born in Tehran in 1926. He spent his early years in Tehran and Mashhad and studied Persian Literature at the University of Tehran, but he dropped out a

[85]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Zemestān*, p. 46.
[86]. Ibid., p. 48.

couple of years into his studies. At the age of 18, he was employed by the Ministry of Post and Telegraph and worked in an office job until he retired thirty-three years later. Alongside his job, he also continued writing as a poet and journalist. Like his life, Fereydoun Moshiri's poetry does not reflect any interest in political activities. In his poems, he hardly ever refers explicitly to significant socio-political events. Unlike Shamlou and Akhavān-sāles, who usually mention the date of their poems, he rarely mentions the date of his poems. For this reason, finding grounds to link Moshiri's poetry to current events is much harder.

Nevertheless, Moshiri takes a clear stance against the autocracy and oppression prevailing in Iran and considers himself a resident of an era he calls 'the era of autocracy' and 'the era of bloodshed'. Contrary to the other three poets, during this period, Moshiri avoided preaching the necessity of violence and used every opportunity to promote non-violent measures against tyranny. Moshiri does not explicitly refer to utopia and does not see himself on a path to utopia. Nevertheless, since his poems revolve around love, friendship, and kindness, he seems to promote a vision of humanity which is mildly utopian in essence.

The poems that Moshiri wrote in this era mostly revolved around praising life and detesting death. Although he is not indifferent to social issues, natural disasters occupy more centrality in his poetry. Later, however, his focus changed, and he began to more directly engage with contemporary utopian movements.

Conclusion

As evident in this section, when considering the four poets examined in this research, the prevailing political ideologies, and the poets' alignment with these ideologies, significantly influence the character of their utopian visions – or their absence, as in Moshiri's case. It appears that beyond the bounds of this political milieu, there exists no framework for conceiving an ideal society, or that existing outside of these political currents obviates the need for utopian ideals. In other words, the utopian vision that has some validity is the one directly embroiled in politics. In any other context when the word 'utopia' appears in everyday discourse, it is usually in a phrase that condemns an idea, a project, or an expectation as 'merely utopian'. The phrase is also used in a way that marks the end of an argument rather than the beginning of a debate.[87] The utopias depicted by these four poets, just as in the utopias before

[87]. Zygmunt Bauman, *Socialism the active utopia*, p. 9.

them, begin with a sharp critique of society, and five major characteristics in all the poems they produced in this era.

Firstly, these utopias do not refer to a specific place. The subject of these utopias is universal. Thus, there is no difference between what is happening, for example, in Korea and what is happening in Iran, and key figures contributing to this utopian vision are admired or considered important regardless of their origins. This is particularly evident in Ahmad Shamlou's poetry.

Secondly, in these utopias, the main subject is not the elite class, but rather the people who were previously voiceless and did not play a central role in any utopia. Workers, the poor, and the barefooted people are all keywords indicating a population that now facilitates the wave of revolution and the movement towards utopia. The focus of this socialist vision, therefore, is not the form of ownership, but the activities of the masses and the Marxian notion of socialism as the final act of human liberation. Such a vision has not been specific to Iran. For instance, Bauman also emphasizes the role of workers in a socialist utopia saying that the workers must be taught, and their teachers are intellectuals who must elevate workers to the highest level of culture.[88] He thinks hat the education of the masses requires the creation of a socialist government, and the establishment of a socialist government requires a social movement, or revolution to use a better term. This line of thought takes us to the next point.

Thirdly, the concept of utopia in this period is closely linked to the concepts of revolution and widespread protests with no other alternative. Like the socialist movements of 19th century Europe, but with a more universal vision, which seems to be in dialogue with the beginning of the Cold War era, revolution is presented as an inevitable way to create a utopia. As Mohammad Mokhtāri puts it: '[In Iran], there was no opposition in the sense of political objection and party politics based on discussion, vote and opinion. This is a country of bloody struggles'.[89] For this reason, death becomes a subject of glorification, and although writers display an awareness of the ugliness and cost of war and conflict, it is viewed positively as a necessity. They do not believe that their utopian ideals can be achieved within the existing political establishment, and thus, they call for a complete transformation of the political and social structure. For this reason, they predict and often approve of a revolutionary path to the establishment of utopia.

[88]. Zygmunt Bauman, *Socialism the active utopia*, p. 69-70.
[89]. Mohammad Mokhtāri, *Ensān dar She'r-e Mo'āser* (Tehrān: Tus, NI), pp. 272, 273.

Fourthly, none of these utopian visions provides any details about the physical features or political organizations that govern the imagined utopia. Technological advances which are manifestations of civilization do not form the basis of their utopias. Humans are chained together, the way to build a utopia is to break the chains, and, unlike what was seen in previous utopian visions (see chapter two), scientific, industrial and technological advances have no role in what is to come. Now, the missing links of equality and brotherhood in human relationships form the basis of utopia, and more emphasis is placed on the concepts that must be valued in utopia. Thus, equality and freedom become the key foundations for the formation of utopia.

Finally, they do not consider utopia to be related to a remote past or distant future. Utopia is a phenomenon that is currently occurring, and they consider themselves to be part of a current that is flowing towards utopia. In other words, utopia is no longer yesterday's problem nor tomorrow's project, but the reality of society. As a result, the major poets of this era wanted to be a part of this reality and help to realize it with the help of their poetry as the only tool they had. They saw themselves in a critical moment of life, where everything that distracts them from thinking about their utopian ideal must be put aside.

This chapter delved into the poets' optimistic interpretation of utopia. It is important to know that in modern Iranian literature, utopia is depicted as a realistic vision of societal improvement rather than an ideal and flawless community. However, the 1953 coup signifies a turning point, bringing an end to this optimism. As we will explore in the next chapter, this event transforms hope into despair.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Dystopia ‘We’ Love

Introduction

> When you are young and full of energy, you never think that you are facing Turkestan with the desire of the Kaaba in your heart.[1] Khan was gone,[2] and blood spilt on the wall and the floor. Others had made an effort as well. And they asked us for help. We didn't help; It was said: 'There is no command'! When the khan came back - with the support of the thugs and prostitutes - we, the simple-minded, were still waiting for a 'command'. Whenever the wind blew 'whiff' in the attic, we thought that the riders - fellows - arrived and that was their roar. It was, however, nothing but the wind... For years, we kept silent. It was us and the years of silence; and the poets who shouted against oppression, darkness, and despair in the *Land of Death*, without their voices being heard. They warned about the forthcoming night, without any eyes having ever seen the promised day, except in the imagination. [3]

The struggles of the forties and the events of the early fifties in Iran led to a disastrous situation in which most of the expectations of the majority of Iran's intellectual elite were negated and suppressed. The 1953 coup not only resulted in the restoration of a royal dictatorship, but also gave the United States complete control over major decisions relating to Iran's political and economic development. The coup highlighted the ineptness of the Tudeh Party's leadership, despite its large membership and covert Officers Organization consisting of high-ranking military officers and commanders.[4] Although the Tudeh Party had initially opposed Mosaddeq's National Front, they changed their stance after a July 1952 uprising and supported the prime minister. However, the Tudeh leadership failed to seek the support of its military personnel and party members to confront the coup forces or stage a counter-coup. Instead, they fled to the Soviet Union after Stalin's death and the perceived weakness of the new Socialist bloc leadership, leaving their members and military personnel vulnerable to the regime. Following the coup, Mosaddeq was sentenced to three years in prison and then placed under house arrest in Ahmadābād until he died in 1967. The National Front, the diverse alliance led

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[1]. A proverb; meaning that you are in a wrong path, in what you are doing.
[2]. Referring to the Shah's departure on August 16, 1953, first to Baghdad and then to Italy, and his return to the country after the August 19, coup.
[3]. Simin Behbahāni, *Majmu'eh-yi Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p. 48.
[4]. Vahabzadeh, *A Guerrilla Odyssey: Modernization, Secularism, Democracy, and the Fadai Period of National Liberation in Iran, 1971–1979* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010), p. 2.

by Mosaddeq, was quickly dismantled by the military, and its leaders were incarcerated. Additionally, Dr Hossein Fatemi, Mosaddeq's foreign minister, was executed.[5]

With the coup d'état on August 15 1953, and the defeat of the Nationalist party in Iran, the dream of rapid changes in society and the construction of a 'utopia' in the near future disappeared. As a result, the literary atmosphere of Iran went through a phase of forced silence and despair. Shafiʿei Kadkani argues that the conflict between hope and despair emerged as one of the dominant themes in the poetry of this era with Mehdi Akhavān-sāles acting as the pioneer.[6] Esmaeil Khoei used 'poetry of defeat' to describe the poetic ambience of this period. The 1953 coup affected these four poets' social and private lives, creating a situation in which they distanced themselves from political activities for years. In this way, talking about utopia, or more precisely dystopia, forged a new path. Rather than imagining an ideal society, the dystopia in which the poets lived became the focal point, seen from two different perspectives. This chapter and the next will examine these two perspectives. My focus in this chapter is not just how the dystopia was depicted in this period, but rather that the further they get from the coup, a new notion of dystopia develops, which I call 'lovable dystopias'. If we agree that the purpose of dystopian literature is to critique and/or satirize sociopolitical failures, a 'loveable dystopia' creates an ambivalent effect, since its critical potential is inevitably masked by the dialectical tension created due to the mystifying sense of emotional pleasantness. The idea of 'lovable dystopia' which I use here and the functions that I suggest for it is inspired by Miguel Sebastián-Martín's idea of 'beautified dystopia' [7] and its functions.

To explain the nature of a loveable dystopia and what is likeable about it, I will go through those aspects of the dystopia that make it a safe place for these poets. In the suppressive atmosphere of the post-coup era, particularly between 1953 and 1970 any utopian hope had vanished, and all that can be seen has to do with the presence of a dystopia with no hope of change. It was as if all the glimmers of hope had been extinguished forever. However, as time passed, poets began to display contradictory feelings towards the dystopia they lived in. While believing that they lived in a dystopia, they expressed their love for the place in different ways. In their poems, this is best revealed in the sense of belonging and attachment that they feel

[5]. Peyman Vahabzadeh, *A Guerrilla Odyssey: Modernization, Secularism, Democracy, and the Fadai Period of National Liberation in Iran, 1971–1979*, pp. 2-3.
[6]. Mohammad-Rezā Shafi'ei-Kadkani, *Advār-e She'r-e Fārsi az Mashrutiyat tā Soqut-e Saltanat* (Tehrān: Sokhan, 1381 [2002]), p. 63.
[7]. Miguel Sebastián-Martín, 'The Beautification of Dystopias across Media: Aesthetic Ambivalence from We to Black Mirror', in *Utopian Studies*, Volume 32, Number 2, (2021), pp. 277-295.

towards their society, which inspires contradictory feelings and makes them use words like 'love' to describe their feeling towards the dystopia.

In other words, although reflecting on social malice, horror, or undesirability is central to their dystopian poems, they create images that evoke a sense of belonging and attachment. The society that the poets describe (in an apparent paradox) is a safe haven in which they feel protected. Thus, they find a degree of satisfaction in being in Iran and admire the country. Nevertheless, they also insist that the prevailing conditions of this society have turned it into an imperfect, unbearable and at times horrifying society which puts lots of pressure on the poets. Although Moshiri's poetry did not engage with the idea of socialist utopias before the coup, and his poetry did not express hope for immediate change, his works in the post-coup era reflect the same features that suggest the idea of a loveable dystopia. This is also interesting that, unlike the other three poets, his personal life was less impacted by the post-coup events, his family life was more stable, and despair never became a prevalent theme of his poetry.

Immediately following the coup, the poetry of these poets suggests that they viewed the country and the authorities responsible for their suffering as the same. In a 'lovable dystopia', the most immediate object of social critique is also the object of emotional attachment: both states exist, in a deeply ambivalent fashion. In this context, what makes dystopia a lovable place, and what makes it, despite all its problems, the only place these poets like to live in, depends more than anything on their sense of belonging, which Abraham Maslow sees as a common theme in literature.[8] Here, using the arguments around the idea of spatial belonging, I explore how these poets deal with the issue of utopianism and how their sense of belonging makes the dystopia a home which they love.

My claim in this chapter is *not* that the analysed poems are devoid of what is 'strictly dystopian'. Rather, I argue that *while* dystopian writings critique their society, 'the sense of belonging', projected in them may generate contradictory reading experiences. This argument will be mostly based on the ideas of Yi-Fu Tuan, the father of humanistic geography.

Spatial Belonging

Gireesan defines belongingness as a social construct that all of us strive to achieve one way or the other. It is also considered to be a fundamental aspect of being human that makes them 'a

[8]. Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and personality* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970), p. 43.

part of something greater than themselves'.[9] Belongingness, a concept that has been there with us since the time human civilization began, is also presented as one of the fundamental motives for human beings to live.[10] The feeling of belonging is distinguished by the need to establish close and safe ties that generate a sense of security, care, and affection. It is a relationship between individuals where the emotional connection with the other person becomes crucial and essential for the holistic growth and development of an individual.[11] Derived from personal experiences and engagements with the surrounding environment, the concept of belonging encompasses communal connections, cultural frameworks, shared values, behavioural norms, and power dynamics that are integral to one's affiliation with a community.[12] Individual involvement, shared language, and collective expressions are transmitted across generations as an ongoing process of passing down communal heritage.[13]

Belongingness is a dynamic concept that can be studied on three levels: (1) social locations, (2) identification and emotional attachment to various groups, and (3) ethical and political value systems.[14] Within these aspects, social locations and emotional attachments to various groups play central roles in making a dystopia lovable. Given the inherent diversity in human societies, it is natural for individuals to identify with various categories that hold specific positions within the social hierarchy. Therefore, when individuals express a sense of belonging, they are essentially displaying their attachment to a specific social position or location.[15] Yi-fu Tuan says 'The structure and feeling-tone of space are tied to the perceptual equipment, experience, mood and purpose of the human individual'.[16] He defined 'place' as a centre of meaning shaped by an individual's experience.[17] By incorporating temporal elements, he examines the temporal aspect in the description of spatial structure. Consequently, our understanding of spatial relationships is shaped by past experiences, extending into the future through perceptual objects. The essence of a place can be grasped through the language people employ to convey a profound emotional significance that goes beyond mere location or functionality. Therefore we may hear about the 'spirit', 'personality', and 'sense' of a place.[18]

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9. Anjali Gireesan, 'Evolution of Belongingness: Its Past, Present, and Future', p. 97.
10. Ibid., pp. 98-99.
11. Peter, M. Z., Peter, P. F. J.,&Catapan,A.H., 'Belonging: Concept, meaning, and commitment', in *US-China Education Review*, No. 5(2), (2015), pp. 95.
12. Gireesan, 'Evolution of Belongingness: Its Past, Present, and Future', p. 99.
13. Peter, M. Z., Peter, P. F. J.,&Catapan,A.H 'Belonging: Concept, meaning, and commitment', p. 96.
14. Gireesan, 'Evolution of Belongingness: Its Past, Present, and Future', p. 99.
15. Ibid., 100.
16. Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective', p. 398.
17. Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Place: An Experiential Perspective', Geographical Review, 65 (1975), 151- 165 (p. 152).
18. Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective', p. 409.

‘People demonstrate their sense of place when they apply their moral and aesthetic discernment to sites and locations.’[19]

Tuan defines spaces based on the extent of sensory experience one can have within them. He then distinguishes between ‘places within the home’, ‘home’, ‘city’, ‘neighbourhood and region’, and the ‘nation-state’.[20] Among the mentioned spaces, the sense of belonging to home, country, and to a much lesser extent, the city, contribute to the construction of the concept of ‘lovable dystopia’. The understanding of each of these spaces, as Yi-fu Tuan portrays them, differs from one another. According to him, the places within the house are the most personal and provide and create a bond between the place and us as the inhabitants.[21] He emphasizes that home serves as a nurturing shelter where individuals can openly and comfortably acknowledge their vulnerability and physical needs. It provides protection not only from harsh weather conditions and predators but also shields individuals from intense sunlight and public eyes.[22] Cities are places and centres of meaning par excellence.[23] The city is more than just a collection of places; it holds intrinsic meaning that is uniquely assigned by individuals.[24] The nation-state, which covers a much greater area than all the aforementioned spaces, is less capable of being directly and unanimously experienced. To its citizens, however, the nation is certainly a place, a centre of meaning, a focus of loyalty and deep attachment. The nation is spoken of as home, the home country.[25] The means to elevate national consciousness are entirely symbolic. Given its vast size, the nation remains beyond the personal experience of the majority of its citizens. Therefore, it is primarily comprehended conceptually through symbolic representations such as the flag, national anthem, ethnocentric history, geography, and other similar elements.[26]

The above discussion highlights that the strong need to have a sense of belonging creates a stable environment for both the individual and society.[27] In the post-coup situation, in the middle of the wave of despair that prevailed in the lives of the intellectuals, a sense of belonging to a solution evolves among the intelligentsia that makes dystopia tolerable and life a little more

[19]. Yi-Fu Tuan, ‘Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective’, p. 410.
[20]. Yi-Fu Tuan, ‘Place: An Experiential Perspective’, Geographical Review, 65 (1975), 151- 165, (p. 153).
[21]. Ibid.
[22]. Ibid., p. 154.
[23]. Ibid., p. 156.
[24]. Ibid.
[25]. Ibid., p. 159.
[26]. Yi-Fu Tuan, ‘Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective’, p. 160.
[27]. Gireesan, ‘Evolution of Belongingness: Its Past, Present, and Future’, p. 124.

bearable for these poets. In Shamlou and Behbahāni 's poetry, it is at first the sense of belonging to 'home' which makes the dystopia bearable; later the notion expands to embrace the whole country. At the same time, Moshiri and Akhvān-sāles use national belonging more as a means of tolerating the dystopia.

Ahmad Shamlou's 'Temple'

Shamlou officially joined the Tudeh Party after the coup. His membership, however, lasted only two months; because he was immediately arrested and in prison, as he puts it: 'I realized what a freaking piece of garbage the party is. This is how I got out of that party. I tried to learn from the currents'.[28] Shamlou spent about 13-14 months in prison. In the meantime, he lost some of his manuscripts, and a few of his close friends were executed. At the same time, his private life had many ups and downs. A few months after his release in 1956, he left his first wife and children. The following year, he fell in love and got married for the second time and later, after not paying alimony to his first wife, was placed in jail, again. He later used the word 'failure' to describe his first two marriages.[29]

The post-coup world for Shamlou was not any different from the preceding atmosphere. What he sees is frustration and darkness. This can be seen repeatedly in Shamlou's poems and stories. Shamlou in a short story called 'True Origins in a Few Legends'[30] refers to a city which is possessed by the jinns.[31] The story was written in 1955, after his release from prison. In the story, the speaker's grandfather sees the jinns in the bathroom and realizes that invisible beings have been present in the village for a long time. Gradually, Jinns' characteristics begin to appear among humans and soon people become like Jinns to the extent that men are no longer satisfied with their wives, and women are not faithful to their husbands. Mothers sleep with their sons and fathers steal their sons' possessions.[32] People's adherence to the ideals of bravery and chivalry dwindles, and goodness gives its place to wickedness and indolence. Human beings become so contaminated that they seem to be competing with the devil. As in classical

[28]. 'A. Pāshāei, *Nām-e Hameh-ye She'r-ha-ye To: Zendegi va She'r-e Ahmad Shamlou 'Bāmdād'* (Tehrān: Sāles, 1378 [1999]), II, 605.
[29]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Mesl-e Khun dar Rag-hā-ye Man: Nāmeh-hā-ye Ahmad Shamlou beh Āydā* (Tehrān: Cheshmeh, 1394 [2015]), p. 17.
[30]. Ahmad Shamlou, 'Risheh-hā-ye Haqiqati, dar Chand Afsāneh', in *Dar-hā va Divār-e Bozoeg-e Chin* (Tehrān: Morvārid, 1376 [1997]), pp. 41- 54.
[31]. The jinn were angelic creatures made of fire who initially worshipped God but later became disobedient and caused corruption on Earth. See Mohammad Jaʿfar Mahjub, *Farhang-e Asāṭir va Dāstān-vāre-hā dar Adabiyāt-e Fārsi*, pp. 279- 280)
[32]. Ahmad Shamlou, 'Risheh-hā-ye Haqiqati, dar Chand Afsāneh', p. 48.

utopias (see Chapter One), the evil deeds of humans also affect nature: 'The trees all dried up, and the water springs all turned into mud. Purity vanished from the city. People turned to garbage, and the entire province became a filthy garbage dump [...] Finally, a stranger comes to the city. Although he looks like a jinn (wearing a mask), he behaves in a good manner. It seems that even in his solitude, he recites a poem indicating the duality of his inner and outer self. One day, ill-wishers and miscreants go there while he is bathing in the city's public bath, and break the masquerade that makes him look like the other citizens. Having lost his mask, he cannot get out of the bath, as he looks very different from others. Thus, he stays there for three days and on the fourth, he is killed by the jinn.

The story delves into the horrifying reality of a society possessed by a dystopian ideology, where every individual has no alternative but to conform to its oppressive values, resulting in a homogeneous and conformist population. Those who dare to resist the pervasive moral corruption of the era face dire consequences. Elsewhere in a poem entitled '*Dād-Khāst*' (Petition, 1959), Shamlou saw himself as a prisoner with no way to escape:

من همه‌ی خدایان را لعنت کرده‌ام
هم چنان که مرا
خدایان.
و در زندانی که از آن امید گریز نیست
بداندیشانه
بی‌گناه بوده‌ام.

I have cursed all the gods
And have been cursed by
the gods.
And in a prison from which there is no hope of escape
Maliciously
I have been innocent. [33]

Shalmou not only employs this dystopian characteristic to critique society but also extends it to his concept of 'home'. It's as if he has no refuge, and he perceives every place as an indistinguishable dystopia from which he longs to escape. This sentiment is vividly conveyed

[33]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā* (Tehrān: Negāh, 1398 [2019]), p. 376.

in his poem '*Mesl-e In Ast*' (It is like…, 1959), where he poignantly portrays how his own home has ceased to be a sanctuary of peace and comfort:

مثل این است که در آتش روز
ظلمت سرد شب‌اش مستتر است
مثل این است که از اول شب
غم فردا پس در منتظر است
خانه ویران! که در او حسرت مرگ
اشک می‌ریزد بر هیکل زیست!
خانه ویران! که در او هرچه که هست
رنج دیروز و غم فردایی است!

It is like in the fire of the day
The cold darkness of the night is hidden
It is like from the beginning of the night
Tomorrow's sadness is waiting at the door
Ruined house! in which the regrets of the death
Shed tears on life
Ruined house! that everything in it is,
Yesterday's suffering and tomorrow's sorrow.[34]

He neither denies the horrible aspects of this dystopia nor sees it as a virtue to be able to bear the situation. Unlike the poems of the previous era (1941-1953), the poems display no desire or will to change society. In this situation, he creates an image of utopia that is different from what was found in his works before the coup. Written in 1953, the poem, '*Meh'* (fog) reflects this new image by comparing the atmosphere that dominates society with fog. Fog seems unnatural for a desert, as he did not expect the situation to turn this way:

بیابان را سراسر مه گرفته‌ست.
چراغِ قریه پنهان است
موجی گرم در خونِ بیابان است
بیابان، خسته
لب بسته
نفس بشکسته
در هذیانِ گرمِ مه، عرق می‌ریزدش آهسته از هر بند.

[34]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 315.

«ــ بیابان را سراسر مه گرفته‌ست. [می‌گوید به خود، عابر] سگانِ قریه خاموش‌اند.

The fog has spread all over the desert.

The village light is concealed

A warm wave runs in the desert's blood

The desert weary,

With sealed lips,

Out of breath

In the fog's warm delirium, sweats slowly from all of its joints

'– The fog has spread all over the desert,' [murmurs the passer-by]

'The village dogs are silent.[35]

As mentioned before (see Chapter Three), Shamlou's image of utopia was bound to the image of a woman. Here again, the image of a woman emerges in his poetry; however, the foggy atmosphere of the desert, where deathly silence prevails and even the dogs are silent, is contrasted with a 'house'; a 'home' where Golku is waiting and greets the speaker with a smile. The silence of the night is broken by Golku's voice, and at the same time, outside the house:

در شولای مه پنهان، به خانه می‌رسم. گل‌کو نمی‌داند. مرا ناگاه در
درگاه می‌بیند، به چشمش قطره اشکی بر لبش لبخند، خواهد گفت:
«ــ بیابان را سراسر مه گرفته‌ست... با خود فکر می‌کردم که مه گر
همچنان تا صبح می‌پایید مردانِ جسور از خفیه‌گاهِ خود به دیدارِ عزیزان بازمی‌گشتند.»
بیابان را
سراسر
مه گرفته‌ست.

Hidden in the fog's mantle, I reach home. Golku does not know. She'll see me suddenly at the threshold. A teardrop in her eye, a smile on her lips, she'll say:

'– The fog has spread all over the desert . . . I thought, should the fog persist till dawn, the daring men would return from their hideouts to visit their loved ones.'

The fog

Has spread all over

The desert. […][36]

[35]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 114

[36]. Ibid., pp 114- 115.

In contrast to the external dystopia, during two distinct periods and following his second and third loves, Shamlou depicts the image of a female saviour. This remarkable woman possesses the ability to transform a simple house into a comforting 'home', defiantly pushing back against the darkness of the external dystopia. This theme gains increasing prominence in his poetry after his second love, spanning from 1957 to early 1959. While it briefly recedes into the background after the failure of his second marriage, it later resurfaces and matures from 1962 onward when Āydā Sarkisiyān enters his life. Consequently, Āydā gradually assumed a more dominant and enduring presence in Shamlou's poetry, starting in 1962. Following their marriage in 1964, she takes on the role of a saviour, personifying the very essence of 'home', offering solace to the poet within a world filled with dystopian elements. Shamlou repeatedly delves into the concept of 'home' as a sanctuary, a place where he seeks refuge from the outside world, always with his beloved by his side. Reflecting on 1957, the year he married Tusi Haeri, he eloquently articulates:

من در تو نگاه می‌کنم و در تو نفس می‌کشم
و زنده‌گی
مرا تکرار می‌کند
به سان بهار
که آسمان را و علف را.
و پاکی آسمان
در رگ من ادامه می‌یابد.

I look at you and breathe in you
and life
repeats me
Just as the spring
repeats the sky and the grass
and the purity of the sky
continues in my veins.[37]

In this way, at a time when he did not see any potential hope to change the dystopia and did not show any motivation to do so, he created a world parallel to this dystopia to save himself

[37]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 380.

from bitterness and despair. 'Cold City'[38] and 'Dark City'[39] are the names given to the dystopia in his poem '*Az Shahr-e Sard*' (from the Cold City).

و آنگاه سپیده دمان را دیدم که نالان و نفس گرفته، از مردمی که دیگر هوای سخن گفتن نداشتند دیاری ناآشنا را راه می‌پرسید و در آن هنگام با خشمی پر خروش به جانب شهر آشنا نگریست و سرزمین آنان را به پستی و تاریکی جاودانه دشنام گفت

And then, I saw the dawn,
moaning and out of breath, asking people, who no longer felt like talking, about the way to an unfamiliar land. And at that time, he looked at the familiar city with a raging wrath and cursed their land for being in eternal darkness and meanness.[40]

The dark and deadly atmosphere of this 'familiar' city refers to the general ambience of the country in 1959. A city where women, men and children, the three elements of human life, move between straw-mat and the cemetery. In the next part of the poem, the speaker is separated from the people of this deadly city, and the pronoun 'ma' (we) refers to those outside the space. Here, the constant use of 'we' shows that the speaker sees himself as attached to not only the space of the house but to another person, with whom he finds himself comfortable. Then 'I', the poetic persona, in his separation from 'dawn' again takes shelter in the warm dress of his beloved, 'you': 'We will not return to the dark city//And I will summarise the whole world gather the whole world under your warm dress'.[41]

In '*Bāgh-e Āiyneh*' (Garden of Mirrors, 1959), Shamlou puts love against all that is ugly:

چراغی در دست، چراغی در دلم.
زنگار روحم را صیقل می‌زنم.
آینه‌ای در برابر آینه ات می‌گذارم
تا با تو
ابدیتی بسازم.

A light in my hand, a light in my heart
I polish the rust of my soul.
I place a mirror in front of yours
to make an eternity,

[38]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 382.
[39]. Ibid., p. 383.
[40]. Ibid., p. 382.
[41]. Ibid., p. 383.

with you.[42]

Gradually, in contrast to this endless darkness and oppression, a concept of 'home' emerges in Shamlou's poetry as if it is a refuge for escaping from this darkness. As he writes in '*Dar-e Basteh*' (Closed Door, 1959), he finds this 'home' as everything he needs to be happy in life and love as everything that is missing from the world to make it perfect:

دیرگاهی است که دستی بداندیش
دروازه‌ی کوتاه خانه‌ی ما را نکوفته است...
به آنان بگو که با ما
نیاز شنیدنشان نیست.
با آنان بگو که با تو
مرا پروای دوزخ دیدار ایشان نیست

It's been a long time since a malicious hand
Has not knocked at the short gate of our house...
Tell them that we
Have no need to hear them.
Tell them that with you
I have no interest in the hell of meeting them.[43]

Shamlou begins to elaborate more and more on the concept of 'home' in relation to love and tries to create places in the house in his mind and depict memories within these places. Shamlou falls in love twice during this period and each time he sees home as a refuge opposite the dystopian world in which he lives. As Yi-fu Tuan argues about the house, he tries to make places in the house that are special for the inhabitants. Tuan as the examples of places in the house says: 'The hearth, rocking chair, and bed within the home are recognizable places once they are pointed out'. Shamlou also creates recognizable places in the house:

باغچه از بهاری دیگر آبستن است
و زنبور کوچک
گل هر ساله را
در موسمی که باید
دیدار می‌کند.
حیاط خانه از عطری هذیانی سرمست است
خرگوشی در علف تازه می‌چرد.

[42]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p 390.
[43]. Ibid., p. 380.

و بر سر سنگ، حربایی هوشیار

در قلمرو آفتار نیم‌جوش

نفس می‌زند.

The flowerbed is pregnant from another spring

And a little bee

visits

every year's flower

In its due season.

The yard is intoxicated with a delirious fragrance

A rabbit grazes on the fresh grass.

And on the rock, an alert chameleon breathes

In the realm of the half-boiling sun.[44]

As time passes, Shamlou finds a way to overcome dystopia not only in poetry but also in the real world. All the imagery he creates of the saviour and a home in his poems and stories is finally realized in a permanent relationship with his love for Āydā. Scholars almost unanimously agree that his third marriage was a turning point in his life. Shamlou met Āydā in April 1962 and fell in love with her soon:

> I once thought that loneliness would never leave me and that boredom would eternally plague my soul. But then you came into my life and love returned, poetry blossomed, and the dove of happiness once again returned flying. Loneliness and fatigue fell away. Now that I am with you, empty mirrors are once again filled with love and hope. You have rekindled my passion for poetry. I love you and am grateful to you. Our future home will be a place where poetry and music are forever intertwined with literature in an eternal bond. [45]

It is as if the woman who was depicted in Shamlou's utopia before in a piece like Roxana, has now taken on a real face. In the series of letters to Āydā, he asks her to bring back warmth and light to his home. Shamlou tries to make his house a real 'home' with Āydā's love. Yi-Fu Tuan discusses places in the home and the home itself as salvatory places. With Āydā in his house, Shamlou gives the name 'temple' to the house he is living in, and his house turns into a home, a place of belonging, a temple.

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[44]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p 379.

[45]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Mesl-e Khun dar Rag-hā-ye Man: Nāmeh-hā-ye Ahmad Shamlou beh Āydā*, p. 17.

Shamlou constantly presents an image of a house that is his saviour, a utopian space that supports him and his poetry against the outside world. 'What dreams I do have for our tomorrow… That distant rainbow that is our home, where poetry and music kiss each other's lips and melt in each other's presence'.[46]

خانه‌یی آرام و
انتظارِ پُراشتیاقِ تو تا نخستین خواننده‌ی هر سرودِ نو باشی.
خانه‌یی که در آن
سعادت
پاداشِ اعتماد است
و چشمه‌ها و نسیم
در آن می‌رویند.
بامش بوسه و سایه است
و پنجره‌اش به کوچه نمی‌گشاید
و عینک‌ها و پستی‌ها را در آن راه نیست.

A quiet house and
Your eager patience to be the first reader of every new song.
A house where
Happiness
is the reward of trust
And springs and breezes
grow in it.
Its roof is kisses and shades
And its window does not open to the street
And glasses and mean deeds have no way to it.[47]

Now that he is moving away from idealism for the whole society, his utopia is getting smaller and smaller until it becomes the size of his home. As Tuan puts it,

> Home is at the centre of an astronomically determined spatial system. A vertical axis, linking heaven to the underworld, passes through it. The stars are perceived to move

[46]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Mesl-e Khun dar Rag-hā-ye Man: Nāmeh-hā-ye Ahmad Shamlou beh Āydā*, p. 16.
[47]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, pp. 468- 469.

around one's abode; home is the focal point of a cosmic structure. Such a conception of the place ought to give it supreme value; to abandon it would be hard to imagine.[48]

Thus, Shamlou uses a more sacred word for his home and calls it a temple, in his poem called '*Jādeh, Ān Suye Pol*' (A Road, on the Other Side of the Bridge, 1964) he calls himself a monk who has found his temple:

مرا دیگر انگیزه‌ی سفر نیست.
مرا دیگر هوای سفری به سر نیست.
قطاری که نیم‌شبان نعره‌کشان از دِهِ ما می‌گذرد
آسمانِ مرا کوچک نمی‌کند
و جاده‌یی که از گُرده‌ی پُل می‌گذرد
آرزوی مرا با خود
به افق‌های دیگر نمی‌برد.
[...]
انسان
به معبدِ ستایشِ خویش بازآمده‌است.
انسان به معبدِ ستایشِ خویش
بازآمده‌است.
راهب را دیگر
انگیزه‌ی سفر نیست.
راهب را دیگر
هوای سفری به سر نیست.

I am no longer eager to travel.
I have no wish to travel.
A train that roars past our village in the middle of the night
Does not minimize my sky
And the road that passes on the back of the bridge
Does not take my wishes away
to other horizons.
[…]
Mankind
Has returned to the temple of his worship.
Mankind has returned

[48]. Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective', p. 149

To the temple of his praise.
The monk
Is no longer motivated to travel.
The monk no longer wishes to travel.[49]

With his new life, Shamlou adapts a new sense of spatial belonging so as to revalue what society devalued: love, honesty, trust, and so on. The poetry of Shamlou may be read as an extended reflection on this theme of home as the site for self-fashioning and rebuilding a sense of belongingness. Here by use of the house, a more expansive term of a home is suggested, a total environment or world, that moves outward from the self in concentric 'circles of hominess', ever-widening social relationships: from family to neighbourhood, to nation as homeland.[50] From this point onward, Shamlou's view of his hometown also changes in his poetry, and he uses language about his home country and its cities that he did not in the past.

Unlike the other three poets, Shamlou spent some periods of his life abroad. He gave the name *Tarāneh-hā-ye Kuchak-e Ghorbat* (The Little Songs of Estrangement) to the collection of poems that he composed in his first period abroad (1977-1980). 'Ghorbat' means being away from home. Away from one's 'place'. One of the collection's motifs is 'vatan' (homeland), often depicted in poems titled '*Hejrāni*' (Separation, 1978). Even though he still protests against the socio-political conditions of Iran, he does not want to escape the country or deny his roots. He feels so attached to the country that he detests living anywhere but there.

چه هنگام می‌زیسته‌ام؟
کدام مجموعه‌ی پیوسته‌ی روزها و شبان را
من –
اگر این آفتاب
هم آن مشعلِ کال است
بی‌شبنم و بی‌شفق
که نخستین سحرگاهِ جهان را آزموده است.
چه هنگام می‌زیسته‌ام،
کدام بالیدن و کاستن را
من

[49]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, pp. 503- 504.
[50]. Owen E. Brady, 'Socrates Fortlow's Odyssey: The Quest for Home and Self', in *Finding a Way Home A Critical Assessment of Walter Mosley's Fiction*, ed. Owen E. Brady, and Derek C. Maus (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), p. 18.

که آسمانِ خودم
چترِ سرم نیست؟ ــ
آسمانی از فیروزه نیشابور
با رگه‌های سبزِ شاخساران،
همچون فریادِ واژگونِ جنگلی
در دریاچه‌یی،
آزاد و رَها
همچون آینه‌یی
که تکثیرت می‌کند.
بگذار
آفتابِ من
پیرهنم باشد
و آسمانِ من
آن کهنه‌کرباسِ بی‌رنگ.
بگذار
بر زمینِ خود بایستم
بر خاکی از بُراده‌ی الماس و رعشه‌ی درد.
بگذار سرزمینم را
زیرِ پای خود احساس کنم
و صدای رویشِ خود را بشنوم:
رُپ‌رُپه‌ی طبل‌های خون را
در چیتگر
و نعره‌ی ببرهای عاشق را
در دیلمان.
وگرنه چه هنگام می‌زیسته‌ام؟
کدام مجموعه‌ی پیوسته‌ی روزها و شبان را من؟

When have I lived?
Which continuous set of days and nights
Have I lived in—
If this sun
Is the same unripe
Dewless and twilight-less torch,
That has experienced the first dawn of the world.
When have I lived,
Which flourishing and falling

Have I seen, I,
Whose own sky
Does not shelter my head?-
A sky of turquoise from Neishabour
With green veins of lush branches,
Like the cry of a hanging forest
In a lake,
Free and unrestrained
Like a mirror
That multiplies you.
Let
my sun
be my shirt.
And my sky
be that old colourless canvas.
Let me
Stand on my own earth
On a ground of diamond dust and the shiver of pain.
Let me feel my land
Under my feet
And hear the sound of my growth:
The da-dum- of blood drums
in Chitgar[51]
And the roar of love-hungry tigers
in Deilamān.[52]
Otherwise, when have I lived?
Which continuous set of days and nights have I lived in?[53]

He uses the memories and references to significant events to create a sense of belonging to his homeland. Referring to turquoise he remembers his afternoon nap under the doom, with blue

[51]. Chitgar Forest Park, located in west of Tehrān, is a large urban retreat featuring biking trails, skate areas, and a garden complex that includes orchards, ponds, and various decorative birds and resident deer. It was a place in which executions were carried out before the revolution.
[52]. A city in Gilān province in northern Iran. This alludes to the Siahkal event, a guerrilla operation against Pahlavi government organized by Iranian People's Fadaee Guerrillas.
[53]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, pp. 809- 810.

tiling, which gives the blue a sense of homeland.[54] By referring to the sun that shines on Iran, to artistic symbols, and to the memories he had in this place, he suggests that the years he lived away from his homeland have not been part of his life.

Shamlou perceives his love for Iran as a justification for seeking a single, permanent place to live. Despite all the challenges he has encountered in the country, he feels a sense of belonging to this land and yearns for a cherished place to call home, regardless of its location in the world. Iran, despite being a dystopia, holds a special place in his heart. Even though he had never explicitly mentioned his love for the country, once he embraced it, this love became more apparent in his poems.

My Home: Simin Behbahāni's Refuge from Dystopia

During the coup, Simin, who was a mother of two, started to work as a teacher in a school. She had already distanced herself from political activities, but in her poetry, she also used 'darkness' to express her feelings towards the post-coup situation. As she states, 'People were waiting for the arrival of freedom, but they saw that within a few hours, the desks of the newspaper kiosks were empty of newspapers, magazines and any other writings, this suffocating situation continued after August 15th for a while. The sun turned black.[55] Upon widespread arrests and cancellation of all the meetings and demonstrations, as Simin reports, there was no sound coming from party comrades. Sometimes she wrote a poem, but she 'had no place to publish it nor did she have a gathering to present it. I used to miss my days'.[56] In this situation, Simin had lost one of the most important aspects of attachment in her life, the circles of poets. After the coup, Simin was arrested but she saw one of her influential acquaintances in the police station but with the 'deadly silence' that 'prevailed across society', she could not do much.[57]

In her autobiography, Simin describes the post-coup events that were happening around her: 'Victory and defeat happened in only three days. For several weeks, the front desks of the newspaper kiosks were empty. They had nothing, not even a black line! The prisons were

[54]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Daftar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 791.
[55]. Simin Behbahāni, *Bā Mādaram Hamrāh: Zendegi-Nāmeh-ye Khod-nevesht tā 1345*, p. 773.
[56]. Ibid., p. 774.
[57]. Ibid., p. 781.

full'.[58] She, also, uses the expression 'the silenced city' to refer to the condition of society in this period:

> There was no voice except for the wind under the rooftops, the trials of Mosaddeq and the others were sensational. Feverish bodies were handed over to the execution squad. Some took off their blindfolds and opened up their arms to the bullets. Many were on the run – from house to house. A few of the supporters of that "utopian government"[59] fled to foreign countries and left many to the tail of disaster. They came back from abroad and went to prison directly. Pregnant women were beaten and gave birth to defective children. Strong men were tortured and became blind, deaf and disfigured. The weather was fine, and I was confused and worried about my surroundings.[60]

Simin then corresponded with a young scholar who was shot to death shortly after. But, she had some of his letters and a few books, which caused problems for Simin. 'I somehow managed to escape persecution, but I realized that there was nothing beyond those ideals written in books in gold. I vowed not to be deceived anymore.'[61]

Simin also lost her old beliefs about utopia and came to consider it a deception. Like Shamlou, she found herself trapped in an unfavourable situation without any hope of changing it. The further she got from the coup, the more she used caustic terms to criticize the dystopian conditions of her country. She also used 'night' and 'darkness' to refer to the situation. In one of her compositions, titled '*Chashm-e La'li Rang-e Khargushān*' (The Ruby Eyes of Rabbits), featured in the collection *Rastākhiz* (Resurrection, 1971), she says:

تشنه می‌میرم که در این دشت، آبی نیست نیست
وین همه موج بلورین، جز سرابی نیست نیست
خنده‌ی این صورتک‌ها گریه را پنهانگر است:
این همه شادی به جز نقش نقابی نیست نیست
هرچه می‌بینم سیاهی در سیاهی ــ کوه کوه ــ
در پس این تیرگی‌ها، آفتابی نیست نیست

I am dying of thirst as in this plain, there is no water no water
And all these crystalline waves are nothing but mirages

[58]. Simin Behbahāni , *Majmu'eh-yi Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p. 145.
[59]. Here she refers to Soviet Union.
[60]. Ibid.
[61]. Ibid., pp.145- 146.

The laughter on these masks hides the crying
All this happiness is nothing but painting on a mask
All I see is blackness in blackness – mountain, mountain -
There is no sunshine behind these darknesses[62]

Simin employs a metaphor about people wearing masks, which bears a resemblance to the one Shamlou uses in his story, 'True Origins of a Few Legends'. In '*Shahr-band-e Sokut*' (Locked in Silence) in *Resurrection*, she also considers herself trapped in silence due to being a resident of a city where nothing but indecency is allowed, and anyone who wants to speak is silenced:

ز هیس هیس زبان شما، توان دانست
که خلق را به فغان من آشنایی نیست
روا مباد سخن گفتنم که می‌دانم
روا به شهر شما غیر ناروایی نیست

From the hush-hush of your tongues, one can know
People are not familiar with my lamentation
I do not want my speech to be acceptable as I know
Nothing is acceptable in your city, but injustice and duplicity.[63]

She also uses the phrase 'despair swamp' to describe the social situation and says: Let my world be 'isolated' in the greatness of this despair swamp.[64]

She does not feel much different in her personal life, since she experiences a similar feeling about her home and her country. She, on the one hand, considers her country to be far from ideal, but, due to her attachments, she feels it is the only place she would like to live in. Her children became the source of her attachment to her marriage, and her home was the source of her attachment to her country. She gradually tried to attach herself to the house and create spirit for her house by doing things that made her happy. She picked a corner to play her instrument; 'I could freely play my violin in this house'.[65] 'I stayed and had a child, and that was when I forgot loneliness and confusion. Now there was someone for whom I had to live, try, love, and believe in life.[66] She expands her sense of attachment to a community by holding a new literary association in her house and enters the circle of literary scholars and poets of her own time.

[62]. Simin Behbahāni, M*ajmu'eh-ye Ash'ār,* p. 430.
[63]. Ibid., p. 433.
[64]. Ibid., p. 438.
[65]. Ibid., p. 623.
[66]. Simin Behbahāni, *Bā Mādaram Hamrāh*, p. 684.

She composed a poem for her home, calling it '*Donyā-ye Kucha-e Man*' (My Small World) again in *Resurrection:*

وقتی که سیم حکم کند، زر خدا شود
وقتی دروغ داور هر ماجرا شود
وقتی هوا، هوای تنفس، هوای زیست،
سرپوش مرگ، بر سر صدها صدا شود
وقتی در انتظار یکی پاره استخوان
هنگامه‌ای ز جنبش دم‌ها به پا شود
وقتی به بوی سفره‌ی همسایه، مغز و عقل
بی اختیار معده شود، اشتها شود
وقتی که سوسمار صفت پیش آفتاب
یک‌رنگ، رنگ‌ها شود و رنگ‌ها شود....
بگذار در بزرگی‌ی منجلاب یأس
دنیای من به کوچکی انزوا شود!

When silver rules, gold becomes God
When lies become the judge of all events,
When the air, the air of breathing, the air of life,
Becomes a lid of death on hundreds of sounds
When for a piece of broken bone
There is a riot of shaking tails
When with the smell of a neighbour's table, the brain, the mind,
Involuntarily turns into the stomach.
When lizard-like under the sun
One colour becomes colours and colours change...
[…]
Let in the magnitude of this hopeless sewage,
My world shrinks to the size of isolation. [67]

Thus as the whole nation was silent and entangled with confusing thoughts, she observed in surprise that 'not one of them raises his head' to complain. As she puts, it 'I was a poet, however, my words would stay on my desk until they rotted. Those years were years of meditation. Years of hidden thought. The result of that thinking is presented today in the form

[67]. Simin Behbahāni, *Bā Mādaram Hamrāh*, p. 438.

of writings, books, magazines, speeches, arguments, and so on'.[68] The school and her students gave Simin another reason to be attached to the dystopia: 'With my students, I forgot all the sorrows, I left all the problems outside the classroom'.[69] This feeling was so strong that she believed she 'spent the best time' of her life with her 'students as a teacher'.[70] All these dependencies help Simin to feel a sense of belonging to this space and to love it, despite her dissatisfaction with the general conditions of society.

Besides the references to her home, there are also multiple references to the neighbourhood, city, and country in Simin's writing and these places are significant because they are important and full of memories of happiness and belonging for Simin.

She also gradually extended the scope of this sense of belonging to the whole country:

> The world is my larger home, and Iran is my small cosy home and my lovely birthplace. I like it all over the world, but I am more attached to my small home and familiar birthplace. I feel safe in Iran, although sometimes this hope is endangered to the point of death. I love my compatriots, although sometimes a few of them hurt me with deadly hostility.[71]

The contradiction of her emotions towards society and the dystopia she experienced is also evident in her personal life, particularly with her first husband. Despite her discontentment with the social situation, she has an affection for her homeland as the only place she desires to reside in. Similarly, despite her dissatisfaction with her married life, she chooses to remain in the marriage, saying: 'Although I feel sometimes drawn in water and sometimes burning in fire/ I am happy with you my beloveds'.[72] Even when she found out about her husband's affair and received the divorce papers, she felt betrayed and not happy about being forced to leave that life. Simin sees herself in her social and private life as a prisoner of circumstances that she must deal with. In this situation, with the sense of belonging that she created around herself, she finds the situation tolerable and even lovable, in both cases.

With her second marriage in 1970, Simin's dualistic feelings towards her personal life diminished, and with the occurrence of the 1979 revolution, the dystopian atmosphere present

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[68]. Simin Behbahāni , *Majmu'eh-yi Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p. 314.
[69]. Ibid., p. 330.
[70]. Simin Behbahāni, *Bā Mādaram Hamrāh*, p. 818.
[71]. Simin Behbahāni, *Majmu'eh-yi Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p. 337.
[72]. Simin Behbahāni, *Bā Mādaram Hamrāh*, p. 363.

in her poetry transformed once again. This marriage does not have a clear influence on her utopic poems.

Sacred Island: Akhavān-sāles's Utopia

Akhavān spent periods of imprisonment both before and after the coup. The first, which lasted only for a couple of days, happened because he had sheltered a friend in his house. The second, however, happened due to the publication of *Arghonun* in 1951when he was arrested and spent about a year in prison.[73] After the coup, however, he was imprisoned for political activities. During this period, Akhavān-sāles was falsely accused of composing critical poetry about the Shah, and as a result, he spent a year in prison.[74] His first child, a daughter, was born during his imprisonment. The family situation of Akhavān was not good either, mostly because they were facing severe financial problems. He quotes his wife's words: 'Did you come back drunk and empty-handed, again?'[75]

Following the coup, his burning desire for a bygone time of free expression and political liberty earned Akhavān-Sāles's works the designation 'defeat poetry'– a symbol of despair that captured the mood of the late 1950s. Akhavān's poems, '*Zemestān'* (the Winter, 1955) and '*Nāder yā Eskandar*' (Nāder or Alexander, 1955), perhaps more than any other poem written in the era, depict the mood of his society following the 1953 coup. He 'unambiguously links the helpless submission of freedom-loving individuals in his generation to the post-coup repression – those whom he brilliantly called 'exile[s] in [their] homeland' (*dar vatan-e khish gharib*)'.[76]

He uses, in Nāder Or Eskandar, words such as '*mazar-ābād*'[77] (grave-land) and '*shahr-e bi tapesh*'[78] (beatless city or lifeless city) to describe his society and the number of people killed and executed, and the prevailing silence afterwards. He then goes on to say that in this city there is not even an owl's 'whoop', to demonstrate that the situation is worse than one might imagine. According to traditional Iranian beliefs, owls live in ruins, but even owls are silent in the city depicted in Akhavān's poem. He even called himself and his companions

[73]. Hāfez Musavi, *Luli-vash-e Maghmum: Zendegi, She'r va Andisheh-ye Mehdi Akhavān-Sāles* (Tehran: Negāh, 1396 [2017]), p. 37.
[74]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Sedāye Heirat-e Bidār* (Tehran: Zemestān, 1382 [2003]), p. 216.
[75]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh* (Tehrān: Morvārid, 1378), p. 19.
[76]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh*, p. 147.
[77]. Ibid., p. 20.
[78]. Ibid.

dishonourable in this poem, which, according to Reza Barāhani, is his acceptance of the narrative attributed to the opposition by the government.[79] All the chaos and excitement of the coup era have been buried in an endless silence, and now he looks at what happened with disbelief and anger, sees all hopes lost and wishes that Alexander rather than Nāder would show up.[80] As mentioned in the earlier chapter, following the Safavid rule, the territorial boundaries of Iran experienced constant shifts and changes until the Qajar era. However, it was during the reign of Nāder that, albeit briefly, the entire territory of Iran was united under a single political entity. In contrast to Nāder, Alexander the Great is portrayed as a contrasting figure, as his invasion of Iran marked the downfall of the Achaemenid Empire, the most magnificent empire in Iranian history. Akhavān, devoid of hope for a potential saviour or reformer like Nāder, contemplates that it might be preferable for Alexander to come and disrupt everything.

He does not see any reason to hope that the situation will improve, he even does not see enough power in himself to shout against the situation. In his poem, Nāder or Alexander, he writes, 'Sometimes I think of clamouring/ then I see my voice is too low'.[81] He perceives everything to be bleak and sees this as a justification to seek shelter in a pub. As Shafiʿei Kadkani puts it, 'as a result of this sentiment and the theme of death and despair, another theme grew along with the two; that is, to seek refuge in a pub, get drunk, and escape from consciousness and fighting'.[82] His poem, 'Winter', which is the best depiction of this situation, opens with:

سلامت را نمی خواهند پاسخ گفت
سرها در گریبان است
کسی سر بر نیارد کرد پاسخ گفتن و دیدار یاران را
نگه جز پیش پا را دید، نتواند
که ره تاریک و لغزان است
وگر دست محبت سوی کس یازی
به اکراه آورد دست از بغل بیرون
که سرما سخت سوزان است
نفس، کز گرمگاه سینه می آید برون، ابری شود تاریک
چو دیوار ایستد در پیش چشمانت

[79]. Rezā Barāhani, *Talā dar Mes*, (Tehrān: Author, 1371 [1992]), p. 1024.
[80]. Alexander the Great, who put an end to Achaemenid rule in Iran. Nader Shah, who governed Iran from 1736-47 (as shown in Figure 1), started from an unknown background and managed to gain control of an empire that, albeit briefly, extended over Iran, northern India, and some regions of Central Asia
[81]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh*, p. 23.
[82]. Mohammad-Rezā Shafi'ei-Kadkani, *Advār-e She'r-e Fārsi az Mashrutiyat tā Soqut-e Saltanat,* p. 61.

نفس کاین است، پس دیگر چه داری چشم؟
ز چشم دوستان دور یا نزدیک

No one wants to answer your greetings,
the heads are tucked in collars.
None raises his head to meet and greet friends,
The eyes do not see beyond the next step,
For the path is dark and slippery.
If you stretch out a caring hand to another,
He will reluctantly show his hand,
For the cold is brutally burning.
Coming out of your warm chest, your breath becomes a dark cloud,
Standing like a wall before your eyes blocking your vision.
When your exhale is like that,
What do you expect from your close or distant friends?[83]

The poem's imagery of winter clearly paints an ambience of retreating into private life due to the brutal cold of repression. It depicts precisely how activists withdrew from public life out of fear of post-coup reprisal. Old friendships were no more, and people were hiding in their homes immersed in everyday life. Thus, the poem concludes:

حریفا! رو چراغ باده را بفروز، شب با روز یکسان است
سلامت را نمی خواهند پاسخ گفت
هوا دلگیر، درها بسته، سرها در گریبان، دستها پنهان
نفسها ابر، دلها خسته و غمگین
درختان اسکلتهای بلور آجین
زمین دلمرده، سقف آسمان کوتاه
غبار آلوده مهر و ماه
زمستان است.

My friend! Go light up the goblet of wine, for night and day are the same.
No one wants to greet you back,
The air is choking, doors are shut, heads tucked in collars, hands concealed,
Breaths are clouds, hearts fatigued and broken,
Trees crystal-wrapped skeletons
The ground lifeless, the sky's ceiling low,

[83]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Zemestān* (Tehrān: Morvārid, 1387 [2008]), p. 97.

Dust-covered are the sun and the moon,

It is winter.[84]

Seeing no hope of change, he sees everything trapped in absolute darkness forever. He does not even have faith in any of the old promised saviours. In the poem '*Gozāresh'* (Report,1955) in which he directly addresses God and complains about the situation, he says: 'Ali is gone, farr-owner Zarathustra is asleep,[85]/ Your shepherd is lost, [86] and pure Buddha hid in the night of Nirvana'. He keeps asking, what is the point in keeping such a chaotic world?[87]

He considers even the attempt futile and now he sees two possibilities in front of him. The destruction of what remains, like what we see at the end of the city of 'Nāder or Alexander', or to leave this society and go somewhere unlike this land. He describes this in detail in a piece called '*Chāvushi'* (Leaving Song, 1955). This poem is narrated by a wayfarer who finds himself at the beginning of a journey. He sees three paths in front of him: the first is the path of comfort and happiness, which, though polluted with shame, ends in a safe 'Greenland'. The second is the half-shame path, where, as long as you keep your head down, everything is going to be fine. The third path is the road of no return and no end. In the beginning, the poet does not give any reason for his departure, but later he recounts his reasons: 'My heart is straitened here,/ every instrument I see is out of tune'.[88] The poem suggests that he is living in a society that he is tired of. He does not have a clear destination and uses words that emphasize this aimlessness. These include, among others, expressions such as getting on 'the road of no return', and the 'road of no end' to see if the sky everywhere has the same colour. The poem, however, suggests that he defined his homeland as a dystopian place, but he does not hope to find a utopia anywhere. Akhavān here shows a form of topophobia. He just wants to go somewhere that 'is not here'.[89] He wants to renounce this place, to flee from it to a place that once again makes the blood flow in his veins and frees him from the decay in which he is trapped.[90] The joy he is seeking is to once again feel warm and alive. It seems that he proposes escaping as a way to eschew the 'real world' or all human societies.

But little by little, a calm prevails in the atmosphere of this dystopia which is not caused by the improvement of the situation. It rather signifies an acceptance of the prevailing conditions. In

84. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Zemestān*, p. 99.
85. See Chapter 1.
86. Reffers to Jesus.
87. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Zemestān*, p. 102.
88. Ibid., p. 144.
89. Ibid., p. 150.
90. Ibid., p. 146

contrast to the boredom in which he is trapped and his awareness of living in a land where he is 'scared of being caressed as well as being hurt',[91] he is looking for a land that no one has ever seen before:

به سوی سبزه زارانی که نه کس کشته، ندروده
به سوی سرزمین‌هایی که در آن هر چه بینی بکر و دوشیزه ست
و نقش رنگ و رویش هم بدین سان از ازل بوده
که چونین پاک و پاکیزه ست

To the green meadows that no one has ever planted or reaped,
To the lands where everything is pristine
And its looks and colours have been the same from the beginning of time,
Where everything clean and pure.[92]

At the end of the poem, he asks the reader to pack up and start the journey with him:

بیا ای خسته خاطر دوست! ای مانند من دلکنده و غمگین
من اینجا بس دلم تنگ است
بیا ره توشه برداریم
قدم در راه بی فرجام بگذاریم

Come, you tired-hearted friend
You, who are fed up and sorrowful like me
My heart is badly straitened here
Let's take our bundle
Let's step onto the endless road.[93]

He prefers to leave than stay in that situation. But will he find happiness in another land? The poem does not answer this question, and the speaker's departure does not seem to lead to liberation. During the same month (April 1956), Akhavān wrote a short story, entitled *Hunted Man*,[94] which centres on the notion of 'loveable dystopia' and shares many elements with this poem. The story begins when Ebrāhim, the main character of the story, wakes up from his afternoon nap to find that the sounds around him, including his wife's words, seem meaningless to him. He starts talking to his wife but ends up surprised by the look on her face. As this situation continues, his mood goes from surprise to frustration and finally to anger. He cannot

[91]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Zemestān*, p. 150.
[92]. Ibid.
[93]. Ibid., p. 151.
[94]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, 'Mard-e Jen-zadeh', in *Mard-e Jen-zadeh* (Tehrān: Morvarid, 1380 [2001]), 21- 101.

understand why his wife speaks to him in a strange language. Then, Ebrāhim's parents come to their house, and he explains the events to his mother, but when he is faced with her mother's terrified look, he realizes that it is he who is no longer able to communicate in their language. Neither prayer nor magic nor medical science, none of them helps to heal Ebrāhim. He becomes a drunkard, but drunkenness does not save him from the pains of his entrapment. When he goes to the city, he does not understand people's conversations, cannot understand what is written in the newspapers, and is unable to communicate with anyone. He wants to go to his friends' hangouts but is afraid of facing them.

Three months later, everything is still the same. Ebrāhim's situation is terrible and unbearable. Most of his family and friends have left him, and some of his friends and acquaintances have gotten used to his new condition. One day after saying goodbye to his acquaintances, he leaves home, goes to the train station and boards the first train that passes by, not knowing where the train is heading. The last station of the train is a port, hot and humid. Ebrāhim goes to the beach excited and hopeful. He is amazed by the greatness of the sea and, amongst the waves, he sees 'his whole being full of freedom and happiness'.[95]Then, while sitting on a tree stump on the beach, he suddenly hears a beautiful song coming from the sea and sees a young man coming from that direction and singing a song that Ebrāhim can understand:

دور از اینجا،
در اقلیم بزرگ آب‌های آزاد،
در اقیانوس بی‌کرانه و پایاب،
که از خدا بزرگ‌تر است و از تو کوچک‌تر،
جزیره‌ای است مقدس، سرزمین ما مردم آبی.
مانند شهری آسمانی که از بهشت فرو افتاده باشد.

Far from here
In the great transboundary waters
Which is greater than God and smaller than you
There is a sacred island, the island of us, the blue people.
Like a heavenly city that fell from paradise.[96]

[95]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, 'Mard-e Jen-zadeh', p. 81.
[96]. Ibid., p. 84.

Ebrāhim starts talking to the young man, Chidāl, who tells him about the beauty of the sacred island. Chidāl invites Ebrāhim to the island and they both leave the port for the place where Ebrāhim thinks he can live comfortably among the people with whom he can communicate.

We can relate the discussion here to what Tuan says about the relationship between culture and space. According to him:

> Home, neighbourhood, and the nation-state are all delimited spaces and culture itself frees humans to the extent that it confines and channels their energies. Basic humanity is nurtured in the confined spaces of home and neighbourhood, family and community. Even when people feel threatened at home and escape boldly across an ocean or a continent to freedom, their purpose is still to reestablish a bounded world in which they can pursue a familiar way of life.[97]

Failing to create such a space for himself, Ebrāhim is unable to establish a link between himself and the sacred island and departs the island for the port. A year later, while sitting on the same tree stump on the beach, he sees Chidāl again. They start talking and this time Chidāl asks Ebrāhim why he could not live on the island. Ebrāhim states 'I had lived here for a lifetime, among these people. Everything about your people is different from ours. You were of a different type'.[98] 'What is different?' Chidāl asks. Ebrāhim responds, 'For example, your music, your books, your way of life, your customs, your food, even your weather. Even the smallest things in your life are different..., everything is different from the norms I am used to'.[99] Finally, Chidāl goes to the island, and Ebrāhim stays alone on the tree stump, facing the sea, watching the sunset.

Tuan believes that 'the city or land is viewed as a mother, and it nourishes; the place is an archive of fond memories and splendid achievements that inspire the present; the place is permanent and hence reassuring to man, who sees frailty in himself and chance and flux everywhere'.[100] Connections of a profound but often unconscious nature can develop through familiarity and comfort, providing a sense of care and safety. They arise from memories of familiar sounds and smells, shared experiences, and the simple joys of home that accumulate

97. Yi-Fu Tuan, 'A View of Geography', p. 104.
98. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, 'Mard-e Jen-zadeh', 97.
99. Ibid, p. 97.
100. Tuan, 'Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective', p. 154

over time. Expressing such attachments in words can be challenging.[101] Here, for the protagonist, even the complete absence of communication with his familiar community is more comforting than trying to adjust himself to a new ambience.

Although Akhvān does not openly use the word 'love' for the dystopia he lives in, he sees it as the only place he knows how to live in. Three years later, Akhavān explained the relationship between himself and the society in which he lived in another way in the poem '*Miras'* (Legacy). More than the narrative of the current state of society, this poem expresses the legacy that Akhavān took from his predecessors. The poem starts as such: 'I have an old fur cloak'.[102] He does not reveal what this fur cloak is until the end of the poem as if leaving the judgment to the reader. Nevertheless, the poem tells a lot about the cloak. The speaker talks about his roots and his ancestors, his father's effort to replace this cloak with a new one and his failure. The speaker states that he and his comrades tried to change the cloak, but the same thing happened. In the end, he asks his daughter to take good care of the cloak, because they will never find a better-fitting one.[103] Akhavān considers the feeling of belonging to and having familiarity with the society enough for one's lifetime, even when mutual understanding between the individual and society becomes impossible.

Green Hell: Fereydun Moshiri's Lovable Dystopia

As it was said earlier, following the coup, Moshiri's quality of life did not decline, and his poetic subjects did not change much either. Nevertheless, the ambivalence towards society appears in his poems too. Moshiri sometimes shows this ambivalence in naming utopia/ dystopia. In one instance, he uses the phrase '*Jahannam-e Sabz*' (Green Hell) for the place where the most miserable people on the earth live and uses the phrase 'distant mirage' to describe the place where everything is pure and bright. The poetry of defeat never became central in Moshiri's poetry, and the tone and themes of his poetry did not change that much compared to the period before the coup. In his poetry, he is aware of being in a dystopian land, describes this dystopia with terms such as '*malāl-ābād*' (distress-land), and uses terms like 'night', 'winter' and 'crag' to describe the dystopian conditions of the world around him:

در کجای این ملال آباد من سرودم را کنم فریاد؟

[101]. Tuan, 'Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective', p. 159
[102]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh,* 33.
[103]. Ibid., p. 40.

Where in this distress-land, can I sing my song?[104]

Or in '*Sorud-e Gol*' (Florwer Song) in *Believe in Spring* (1968), he composed:

ما که دل‌های‌مان زمستان است،
ما که خورشیدمان نمی‌خندد،
ما که باغ و بهارمان پژمرد،
ما که پای امیدمان فرسود

We whose hearts are winter,
We whose sun does not laugh,
We whose garden and spring withered,
We whose feet of hope are worn out.[105]

The notion of a 'loveable dystopia', however, becomes more apparent in his poems much later than the others in the 1970s, particularly in the context of his communications with his friends who have migrated.

Moshiri, as stated before, did not usually date his poems, which makes it difficult to find textual references that would help find the date a poem was composed. But among the few cases where the composition date is mentioned, one is the poem '*Risheh dar Khāk*' (Rooted in the Earth). Written in response to a friend, who wanted to emigrate to the USA in 1973 and encouraged Moshiri to join him:

تو از این دشت خشک تشنه روزی کوچ خواهی کرد و
اشک من ترا بدرود خواهد گفت

You will migrate from this dried, thirsty plain,
And my tears will say farewell to you.[106]

As the speaker, he lists the reasons for his friend's departure ralating to the social and political situation, and does not deny how hard it is to live in this dystopia:

تو را این ابر ظلمت گستر بی رحم بی باران
تو را این خشک سالی های پی درپی
تو را از نیمه ره برگشتن یاران
تو را تزویر غمخواران

[104]. Fereydun Moshiri, *Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān: Kolliyāt-e Ash'ār* (Tehrān: Cheshmeh, 1380 [2001]), I, 465.
[105]. Ibid., I, 486- 488.
[106]. Ibid., I, 726.

ز پا افکند

This merciless, rainless, darkness-spreading cloud
These successive droughts,
The friends who left you halfway,
The deceitful grief devourers,
Wear you down![107]

Moshiri's poetic voice is aware that it will not be easy for his friend to leave his homeland: 'To pluck your heart off this land, is pluck off your soul'. Moshiri's voice, then, tries to enumerate his reasons for staying but seems to be unable to offer any convincing reason except his deep sense of belonging. The poem concludes with the follwing lines:

من اینجا ریشه در خاکم
من اینجا عاشق این خاک، اگر آلوده یا پاکم
من اینجا تا نفس باقی است می مانم
من ازاینجا چه می خواهم،نمی دانم
امید روشنائی گر چه در این تیرگی ها نیست
من اینجا باز در این دشت خشک تشنه می رانم
من اینجا روزی آخر از دل این خاک ،با دست تهی
گل بر می افشانم
من اینجاروزی آخر از ستیغ کوه،چون خورشید
سرود فتح می خوانم
و میدانم
تو روزی باز خواهی گشت

I am rooted in the land.
I love this land, whether impure or pure.
I will stay here as long as I breathe.
I don't know what I want from here!
There is no sparkle of hope in this darkness, but
I am riding in this dry and thirsty plain.
One day, from the heart of this land, with my empty hands
I will raise flowers.
One day at the mountain top, like the sun.
I will sing the song of conquest,

[107]. Fereydun Moshiri, *Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān*, I, 727.

And I know
One day, you will come back![108]

Moshiri's life was ever challenged by a tension between his desire to stay and his impulses to leave. He describes his interest in his homeland with words of love and attachment. Three years after 'Rooted in the Land', another friend of his, Mohammad Tafazzoli wrote to him from Munich, stating: 'Here, everything is pure and bright, but I look like a perplexed person who can't rest anywhere but his homeland'.[109] This gives Moshiri the chance to once again depict the image of a loveable dystopia in '*Teshneh dar Āb*' (Thirsty in Water). Comparing his friend to a goldfish, he considers his place of residence to be similar to a fish tank, pretty and clean:

امّا در این حصار بلورین،
یک ماهیِ هراسان زندانی ست!
هر چند آب پاکش،
مانند اشک چشم.
هر چند در بلورش،
آوازهای آیینه،
پروازهای نور!

But in this crystal barrier,
A frightened fish is imprisoned.
Although the water is clear, like tears
Although its crystal is filled with,
Mirror's songs and flying lights.[110]

He gets impatient with the frightened look of the fish, takes the tank out and frees the fish in a bigger moss-covered pool, outside:

این آبدان اگر نه بلورین،
وین آب اگر نه بلورین
وین آب اگر نه روشن مانندِ اشک چشم،
اما جهانِ او، وطن اوست.

This water pool, if not of crystal
And this water, if not as clear as tears

[108]. Fereydun Moshiri, *Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān*, I, 728
[109]. Ibid., I, 711.
[110]. Ibid., I, 712.

Is its [the fish] world, its homeland.[111]

Moshiri's poetry refers to landmarks, national figures, and cultural values repeatedly. Tuan believes that these visible signs serve to enhance people's sense of identity; 'They encourage awareness of and loyalty to a place.'[112] But a strong attachment to the homeland can emerge without any explicit concept of sacredness; 'it can form without the memory of heroic battles won and lost and without the bond of fear or superiority vis-a-vis other people'.[113] Although the element of religion is not strong in Moshiri's poems, and there are not many references to religion, when he talks about his attachment to the homeland, Zarathustra's name appears along with the other national figures. In 'Prayer', Moshiri speaks directly to his homeland:

آفتابت - که فروغ رخ «زرتشت» در آن گل کرده‌ست
آسمانت - که ز خمخانه «حافظ» قدحی آورده‌ست
کوهسارت - که بر آن همت «فردوسی» پر گسترده‌ست
بوستانت - کز نسیم نفس «سعدی» جان پرورده‌ست
همزبانان من‌اند.
مردم خوب تو، این دل به تو پرداختگان
سر و جان باختگان،
غیر تو نشناختگان
پیش شمشیر بلا قد برافراختگان،
سینه سپرساختگان
مهربانان من‌اند.
نفسم را پر پرواز از توست
به دماوند تو سوگند
که گر بگشایند بندم از بند
ببینندکه: آواز از توست!
همه اجزایم با مهر تو آمیخته است
همه ذراتم با جان تو آمیخته باد

Your sun, in which Zarathustra's radiance blossomed,
Your sky, which brought a cup from Hafez's winehouse,
The mountains on which Ferdowsi's endeavours are spread wide,
Your gardens which resurrecte with Saadi's breath,
They are all my fellow speakers.

111. Fereydun Moshiri, *Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān*, I, 714.
112. Tuan, 'Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective', p. 159.
113. Ibid., p. 159.

Your good people, those who are devoted to you.
Who give their head and their lives for you, against the sword of calamity
Who knows no one but you,
They are all my kind people….
May my every cell be filled with your love,
May all my particles be mixed with your soul, [114]

Moshiri's poems rarely refer to belonging to a house, city, or neighbourhood. Instead, he is more concerned with national belonging. Among the different types of spatial belonging that Yi-fu talks about, the sense of national belonging is frequent in Moshiri's poetry. Among the factors that Yi-fu states for national belonging, more than anything else, dependence on history, language, art and literature and human communities are observed in Moshiri's poetry.

Conclusion

As was discussed here, loveable dystopia is a notion that arose from ideological tensions of the post-coup environment. Lovable dystopia provided a means by which society could be represented in a dialectical manner. 'Lovable dystopias' have an inherent ambivalence, creating dynamics between mystifying effects and subversive effects. Here, the object of criticism is the same as the object of belongingness. I cannot claim that this type of dystopian writing was only produced at this time, but can argue that the post-coup events in Iran heightened the need for developing the forms that created such dystopic writings.

In the post-coup period in Iran, while the mood of despair prevailed across society, the sense of spatial belonging came to the rescue to make the situation bearable. What can be seen in the dystopian poems of this period are all the attributes of darkness, harsh winter, mirages, etc. All the words deny the existence of hope in this situation. There is no news of the energy and hope that was abundantly seen in utopian poems in the pre-coup era. In this situation where society is under the control of those who do not tolerate those who have different attitudes and where people believe that 'our suffering cannot be relieved by political projects',[115] those who do not want to leave their homeland, holding on to the sense of belonging is the best way to endure. The sense of belonging to the house, neighbourhood and city is not seen in the poems of these four writers, but the sense of belonging to the homeland is something that all four poets have

[114]. Fereydun Moshiri, *Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān,* I, 703- 705.
[115]. Tom Moylan; 'The Necessity of Hope in Dystopian Times: A Critical Reflection', p. 166.

talked about in different ways. The reason might be that ‘attachment to the homeland is a common human emotion. Its strength varies among different cultures and historical periods. The more ties there are, the stronger the emotional bond’.[116]

One of the most important reasons that has paved the way for the concept of ‘loveable dystopia’ is the despair of creating a utopia and transforming society into a better state. This concept can be attributed to the ‘death of utopia’ and/or the ‘death of the saviour’ in the poetry of these poets, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

[116]. Tuan, ‘Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective’, p. 158

CHAPTER FIVE: The Redeemer Is Gone!

Introduction

'The Twentieth century was supposed to have been the epoch of completely fulfilled utopias,' said Leonidas Donskis.[1] In Iran, there have been centuries of continuous efforts to theorize an ideal society, and at times it seemed as if utopia was within reach. Each time, however, the realities of Iranian and international relations, politics and economy shattered the dreams as in the case of the Constitutional Revolution (1905-11) or the years leading to the 1953 coup and the fall of Mosaddeq's cabinet. The idea of a lovable dystopia, which was discussed in chapter four, was just one aspect of the broader concept of utopian thinking reflected in the post-coup works of Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, Simin Behbahāni, Ahmad Shamlou, and Fereydun Moshiri. Indeed, their pursuit of a 'loveable dystopia' stemmed from their disappointment in the potential for attaining utopia or effecting significant change within the prevailing dystopian circumstances. When all sources of hope were blocked, they discovered a means to accept and cherish that very dystopia.

The day after the 1953 coup, a military government was established in all cities. The military governorate immediately issued orders to prevent the publication of newspapers that supported Mosaddeq and the Tudeh Party. Mosaddeq was tried in a military court and sentenced to three years of solitary confinement. During the trial, popular protests in defence of him were suppressed in various cities across the country. After his release from prison, Mosaddeq was exiled to his hometown of Ahmadābād (Karaj). Hossein Fatemi, Mosaddeq's Minister of Foreign Affairs was sentenced to death by the military court and executed. Fatemi who was an ardent supporter of the campaign for the nationalization of the oil industry had advocated for the formation of a republic and went into hiding in one of the Tudeh Party's safe houses after the coup. He defended the alliance between the Tudeh Party and the National Front. The Tudeh Party also faced harsh repression, with 43 members being killed or executed between 1953 and 1956. In addition, around 144 were sentenced to life in prison, and many to 1-15 years in prison. The party, which was declared illegal in 1953, continued its secret activities after the coup, and many of its leaders, members and supporters left the country for the Soviet Union and East Germany.

[1]. Donskis, Leonidas. 'The End of Utopia?', *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 79, no. 1/2 (1996): pp. 197–219.

The mistakes of the leaders of political groups which led to extreme conflicts, the fate of the leaders of socialist and nationalist movements, the violence used to suppress these movements, and ultimately the defeat of the parties in their attempts to introduce structural change into the ruling system, led to disillusionment with and antagonism towards party politics as a means for introducing change in society. Akhavān-sāles had already lost faith in political parties before the coup, while Behbahāni and Shamlou came to a similar conclusion and regretted joining or supporting political parties, particularly the Tudeh Party, after the coup. The socialist, communist, and nationalist movements in Iran all suffered from 'utopian' illusions, and opposition to these ideas and events correspondingly exhibited anti-utopian characteristics. In fact, disbelief in these movements led to the sentiment that society was incapable of changing for the better and achieving true utopia, at least not soon.

This form of anti-utopian sentiment appeared in various forms in literature. In some cases, it involved denying the existence of a saviour, which was an integral part of utopianism in classical utopias, be it in the form of an ideal leader in literary and philosophical contexts or a divinely ordained saviour in religious texts. In later writings, however, writers began to criticise utopian ideas directly and finally concluded that the idea of constructing a utopia was futile and dangerous. It can certainly be argued that, in the context of a lovable dystopia, these poets began to reconsider the concept of utopia and reassess the foundations of their utopian thinking, and vice versa.

'Why does a dystopian theme prevail in their poetry?' The answer can be found in George Kateb's discussion on the enemies of utopia. In his book *Utopian and Its Enemies*, George Kateb examines the reasons for anti-utopian views, categorizing them into three general categories. Specifically, with regard to the Western utopian tradition, he attributes the emergence of anti-utopianism to the changes in human ideals brought about by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. In a broader perspective, he breaks down the reasons for attacking utopianism into three imperative categories, each of which is expressed in general, summary terms: first, reasons related to how to access and create utopias; second, reasons related to the methods of maintaining utopias; and third, reasons that target utopian ends.[2]

Attaining a Utopia

[2]. George Kateb, *Utopia and Its Enemies* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 18.

The primary reason for abandoning the idea of utopianism, despite its inherent value, is the absence of a viable path from the real world to utopia. If such a path exists, it would likely involve violence, which is either excessively costly or inherently unreliable.[3] Utopias, as depicted in literature, are often presented to the reader as fully established entities, with the initial challenges and uncertainties of their creation left unexplored or overlooked entirely.[4]

In the classical utopias in the Persian-speaking world, the idea of utopia and its creation has been approached in several ways. Firstly, utopias were created in virgin land: an unused piece of land with all the necessary natural resources for building a utopia, where a city was constructed accordingly. Mythical utopias like Vara Jamkard and Siyāvushkard fall into this category. Secondly, an ideal leader or saviour initiates the action for the construction of the city, takes control of the kingdom and begins driving society towards utopia by making necessary changes. Mythical utopias like the realm of Jamshid and those belonging to the Golden Ages fall into this category. In the third category, there is no mention of how utopia is built. Occurring mostly in philosophical texts that discuss the principles of an ideal society or in works such as the Romances of Alexander, in this type, the reader learns about a distant utopia without knowing how this society reached this point of perfection.

In early modern utopia, although before the Constitutional Revolution, replacing Iran's autocratic monarchy with a democratic system was considered the ultimate solution to the country's problems, there were little pragmatic debates about how exactly the system should be replaced. After the constitutional revolution, in San'ati-zādeh's science fiction novel *Council of Madmen*, technological advancement enables mankind to turn the whole world into a utopia. What is described is a smoothly working society for an indefinite period, a kind of heaven that is easy enough to live in once you are there.

As George Kateb argues, the weakness of all utopias is that they dodge the real difficulty of how to transform this present world into something better.[5] In Iran, this issue took on a chaotic form when the idea of utopia was imagined in a way that suggested an accessible phenomenon and utopian writers found themselves on a path to create a utopia. What was witnessed in the poetry of Shamlou, Akhavān, and Simin before the coup was not solely the depiction of a dystopia, but rather a portrayal of the challenging journey towards the construction of utopia—a journey fraught with bloodshed and struggle. In their subsequent works, they expressed

[3]. George Kateb, *Utopia and Its Enemies*, p. 18.
[4]. Ibid., p. 22.
[5]. Alexander Gray, *The socialist Tradition, Moses to Lenin* (Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2010), pp. 76- 77.

remorse for regarding this path as a costly endeavour in their pursuit of building a utopian society.

Maintaining Utopia

The second reason for giving up on the visions of utopianism, though it may be a worthy vision, is that there is no way to ensure the maintenance of its ends without an oppressive political regime. Classical utopias are often closed spaces in which the amount of change must be minimized for them to remain functional. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges in classical utopias is how we can make the utopia immune to change. In classic utopias in the Persian-speaking world, the issue of the survival of utopia has been explored in two main ways. The first type mostly includes mythical utopias and utopias that Sohravardi described in the *eighth clime* or utopias mentioned in the Romances of Alexander. In these realms, forces beyond ordinary men are responsible for maintaining order in the city. The second type includes utopias mentioned in philosophical texts and the golden ages. Here, as with creating the utopia, maintaining order is the responsibility of the ideal ruler. In both cases, the order of society must be maintained as it is, and any changes in the institutions and hierarchy governing the city are by no means accepted.

In modern Persian poetry, the reasons for rejecting utopianism, specifically in terms of its maintenance, are primarily rooted in historical experiences. Even a good government will eventually come to an end, and transience becomes the defining characteristic of a utopia. Moreover, history has shown that failure and defeat are more plausible than a golden age of utopia.

The Ends of a Utopia

The Third reason for giving up the idea of utopianism was because the vision consists of unacceptable ideals or ideas that though acceptable in the abstract, are destructive in practice. In classical Iranian utopias, what has been promised above all is abundance. What they are seeking in the form of a utopia is a world permanently without strife, poverty, and illness. In Modern times, human rights and egalitarian values were added to the list. All of these matters are ultimately supposed to bring happiness to humans, but the means to achieve them have different meanings for people. None of the four poets studied in my thesis refers to stable ideals that they expect in society or the goal that must be achieved. Shamlou shows a shift in his ideals, especially the ideal type of government. He initially sees socialism as the only way to

achieve an ideal society and emphasizes equality and freedom, but as years pass, he focuses more and more on freedom and ultimately sticks to democratic government.

In the subsequent sections, I will delve into the poetry of these four poets between 1953 and the early 1970s, which coincides with the emergence of the concept of 'lovable dystopia'. During this time, the poets explored the interconnectedness of this concept with utopianism. They addressed one or more of three topics in their poems to illustrate the reasons behind the futility of utopia and thereby assert their stance against utopianism.

The Disappointed Saviour of Ahmad Shamlou

As discussed in chapters three and four, Shamlou's utopia has an undeniable connection to the idea of the saviour. From Roxana, who takes him to the heart of the sea to the rider who goes to the crying fairies, to Āydā, who seems to be the realization of the saviour who saves Shamlou from the boredom of living in a dystopia. In the same way, Shamlou's dystopic poetry is bound with the image of a saviour, a redeemer who is unable to fulfil his/her role.

In 1959, six years after the saviour riding on a white horse visited the *fairies* and invited them to the 'city of the people' to celebrate its freedom,[6] Shamlou composed the story of '*Dokhtarā-ye Naneh Daryā*' (Daughters of Mama Sea) and used more or less the same motifs. This poem tells the story of a land where love has died, and people, who are the prisoners of their own painful tiring lives, await a miracle that never happens. The story starts as such:

یکی بود یکی نبود.
جز خدا هیچی نبود
زیر این تاق کبود،
نه ستاره
نه سرود.

Once upon a time.

There was nothing but God

Beneath this azure dome,

No stars,

No anthems.[7]

---

[6]. See chapter 3
[7]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 399.

This poem, like Fairies, begins with a phrase that is used at the beginning of children's stories. From the beginning, the story screams out the painful lives of the people in a dystopian world: people who have neither fortune nor happiness on Earth. 'Not having a star' in Persian literature is interpreted as not having good fortune. The absence of singing and music in a place indicates that there is no joy in that region. This atmosphere can be compared to the one described in 'Fairies' about the city of people, where the space was filled with the sound of music.[8] The speaker of this dystopian folk poem is Amu Sahrā, whose name can be translated as Uncle Desert or Uncle Countryside. Sitting in front of his cold garden in sadness, Uncle Desert tells the story of his sons in a manner that suggests he may be considered a symbol of Iran, which has its largest part covered in deserts or semi-arid lands:

«- عمو صحرا! پسرات کو؟»
«- لب دریان پسرام.
دخترای ننه دریا رو خاطرخوان پسرام.»

- Uncle Desert! Where are your sons?
- My sons are by the sea.
They are in love with the daughters of the Mama Sea."[9]

The initial description that Uncle Desert provides of his sons is like a report about the hard lives of labourers. The dry countryside is reliant on the rain to have a life, and so are the sons of Uncle Desert who are in love with the daughters of Mama Sea and are waiting for rain. Their lives revolve around two main themes: the present, which is tough and exhausting, and the future, which is linked to the daughters of Mama Sea. Uncle Desert goes on about his son's life:

خسته و مرده، میان
از سر مزرعه‌شون.
تن‌شون خسّه‌ی کار
دل‌شون مرده‌ی زار
دسّاشون پینه‌ترک
لباساشون نمدک
...
طفلیا شب تا سحر گریه‌کنون
خوابو از چشم به در دوخته‌شون پس می‌رونن

8. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 203.
9. Ibid., p. 400

توی دریای نمور
می‌ریزن اشکای شور
می‌خونن- آخ که چه دل‌دوز و چه دل‌سوز می‌خونن! -

Weary and fatigued, they come
From their fields.
Their bodies are broken from work,
Their hearts are filled with misery.
Their hands are rough from toil,
Their clothes are made of felt. …
The poor things cry until dawn,
They keep the sleep away from their anticipating eyes,
They head to the salty sea
And shed salty tears of anguish.
They sing - oh, how heart-wrenching and heart-rending they sing![10]

They put all their hope in the daughters of the Mama Sea to save them from this burden:

- دخترای ننه دریا! کومه‌مون سرد و سیاس
چش امیدمون اول به خدا بعد به شماس.

- Daughters of the Mama Sea! Our hut is cold and dark.
Our hope lies first with God, and then with you."[11]

In the next part, they depict their dystopia in contrast to a lost utopia. In this section, Shamlou uses the past tense, as if the conditions were not always like this and the dystopia happened in a moment in the past. Life in this land is cold, empty, and dark.

کوره‌ها سرد شدن
سبزه‌ها زرد شدن
خنده‌ها درد شدن.
از سر تپه، شبا
شیهه‌ی اسبای گاری نمیاد،
از دل بیشه، غروب
چهچه سار و قناری نمیاد

The furnaces have gone cold
The grass has turned yellow

[10]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, pp. 400-401
[11]. Ibid.

Laughter has bent to pain.

From the hilltops at night

The neighing of cart horses has disappeared

From the heart of the meadow at sunset

The singing of the larks and canaries has disappeared.[12]

But the most important part of the story is not that life is all suffering, it is that the saviours have left this land and there is no longer any hope of their coming:

دیگه از شهر سرود

تک سواری نمیاد.

From the City of Song

No longer comes a brave rider.[13]

In the next stanza, Shamlou describes this dystopian space as a land surrounded by despair, which echoes his personal life after the coup. Like many other poems written in the era, the poem uses the sun and night as his two main symbols. The boys address Mama Sea's daughters:

دلا از غصه سیاس

آخه پس خونه‌ی خورشید کجاس؟

قفله؟ وازش می‌کنیم!

قهره؟ نازش می‌کنیم!

[...]

مگه زوره؟ به خدا هیچ‌کی به تاریکی شب تن نمی‌ده

The hearts have turned black from sorrow,

Where is the house of the sun?

Locked up? We'll break the locks open!

Sulking? We'll make it happy!

[…]

What is this nonsense compulsion? By God, no one likes to surrender to the darkness of night.[14]

The boys describe this dystopia as a land where love has turned into myth, the heroes, both old and new, have all left the land, and the people shed each other's blood. They ask the Girls to help them change the dystopia. In one instance, the sons even talk about a murderer on the

12. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 401.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., pp. 402-3

gallows staring at the sky, people wondering what might be going on in the murderer's head and why he is looking at the sky. People think that perhaps the murderer, too, in the last moments of his life, was hoping for rain: 'Oh, only if it rains...'[15] The people of this dry land are all eagerly awaiting a life-saving rain. Once more, therefore, Uncle Countryside's sons ask Mama Sea's daughters to save them from this situation:

بذارین برکتِ جادویِ شما
دِهِ ویرونه‌رو آباد کنه
شب‌نمِ مویِ شما
جیگرِ تشنه‌مونو شاد کنه
شادی از بویِ شما مَس شه همین‌جا بمونه
غم، بره گریه‌کنون، خونه‌یِ غم جابمونه.

Let the blessing of your magic,
Revive the ruined village,
Your hair's dews
Cheer our thirsty souls,
Let happiness be intoxicated with your scent and stay here,
Let sorrow depart crying and leave its home here.[16]

Mama Sea's daughters are not so happy either. Sitting at the bottom of the sea, with their hearts filled with sorrow, they ask the sons to stop crying because if Mama Sea knows about their love, she will use her magic to curse and trap them in eternal separation.

At the end of the story, black clouds cover the sky, and the sound of thunder and lightning announces this eternal separation. Mama Sea's daughters cry from within the water as they too are in love with Uncle Desert's sons, but Mama Sea does not approve of this love. Thus, the girls' voices fade away. What remains is darkness, silence, and tears.

نه ستاره نه سرود
لب دریای حسود،
زیر این تاق کبود
جز خدا هیچ‌چی نبود
جز خدا هیچ‌چی نبود!

[15]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 404
[16]. Ibid., pp. 404-405.

No stars, no anthems,
By the envious seashore,
beneath this azure dome,
There was nothing but God,
There was nothing but God![17]

The poem concludes with almost the same phrases that it started with, thus turning the fate of this dystopia into an eternal loop from which there is no escape. Since Shamlou's utopia depends on the rise of a saviour, the absence of this saviour also entangles society in an eternal dystopia and leaves no solution other than accepting the permanence of a dystopian status. This cycle is repeated in other works of Shamlou as well, especially in his poem '*Lowh'* (Tablet).

Focusing on the idea of saviours, the poem uses descriptions such as 'stone-paved', 'circular square', 'surrounding chambers of the square', 'dark staircase', to evoke the historical image of the main squares of in ancient Iranian cities:

چون ابر تیره گذشت
در سایه‌ی کبود ماه
میدان را دیدم و کوچه‌ها را
که هشت‌پایی را مانند بود از هر جانبی پایی به خستگی رها کرده به گودابی تیره.
و بر سنگ‌فرش سرد
خلق ایستاده
به انبوهی،
و با ایشان
انتظار دیرپای
به یاس و خستگی می‌گرایید.

When the dark cloud passed by,
Under the azure shadow of the moon,
I saw the square and the alleys,
Which looked like an octopus that had let its weary legs stretch on every side to a dark swamp.

And on the cold cobblestones,
A crowd had gathered,
In great numbers,

[17]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 408.

And with them,

A long-standing anticipation

Tends to change to despair and weariness.[18]

The crowd in the square are waiting for the arrival of the saviour. The poem, however, depicts a gloomy atmosphere with 'dark clouds', 'weary streets', and people's exhaustion suggesting the absurdity of the idea of waiting. The speaker, then, comes down from the square with a dust-covered tablet in his hands. The image resembles the image of Moses descending from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments in his hands.

و خلق را دیدم

به انبوهی

که حجره‌ها را همه

گرد بر گرد میدان

انباشته بودند

هم از آن گونه که صحن را؛

و دنباله‌ی ایشان

در قالب هر معبر که به میدان می‌پیوست

تا مرز سایه‌ها و سیاهی

ممتد می‌شد

و چون مرکب آب‌دیده

در ظلمت

نشت می‌کرد

و با ایشان

انتظار بود و سکوت

بود.

And I saw the crowd,

in great numbers.

packed tightly together,

with their cells,

around the square

Just as a yard of a shrine,

And their ques extending

In the shape of every passageway leading to the square,

[18]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 578.

To the edges of shadows and darkness.
Like diluted ink
Leaking
into the dark.
With them
was
waiting and silence.[19]

The speaker then raises the tablet in his hand and says, 'Although it may be stained with the filth and blood of many wounds, it speaks of mercy, friendship and purity'.[20] Everything that people need to know is in this tablet, and there is nothing else, he continues. The speaker, who has demonstrated his reverence for the prophets, becomes angry at the people's indifference. It seems to him that people enjoy the act of waiting rather than working to change their conditions. He shouts angrily to declare that the era of waiting for Messiahs is over, and now they are their saviour, whoever takes a step towards salvation, is a redeemer:

فریاد برداشتم:
«- شد آن زمانه که بر مسیح مصلوب خویش به مویه می‌نشستید
که اکنون
هر زن
مریمی است
و هر مریم را
عیسایی بر صلیب است
بی تاج خار و صلیب و
جلجتا
بی پیلات و قاضیان و دیوان عدالت. -
عیسایانی همه هم‌سرنوشت
عیسایانی یک‌دست
با جامه‌ها همه یک‌دست
و پاپوش‌ها و پاپیچ‌هایی یکدست - هم بدان قرار-
و نان و شوربایی به تساوی
[که برابری، میراث گران‌بهای تبار انسان است آری!]
و اگر تاج خاری نیست
خودی هست که بر سر نهید

[19]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, pp. 579- 580.
[20]. Ibid., p. 581.

و اگر صلیبی نیست که بر دوش کشید
تفنگی هست،
[اسباب بزرگی
همه آماده!]
و هر شام
چه بسا که «شام آخر» است
و هر نگاه
ای بسا که نگاه یهودایی.

I cried out:
"- Gone are the days of mourning for your crucified Christ,
As today
every woman
is another Mary
And every Mary
has a Jesus upon the cross
albeit with no Crown of Thorns, no Cross,
no Golgotha
No Pilate, no judges and no court of justice. -
Jesuses all with the same destiny,
All uniform,
With the same clothes,
The same sandals and footwraps,
With equal shares of bread and gruel
[As equality is the precious legacy of the human race, yes!]
And though you have no crowns of thorns,
There are helmets to wear on the head
And though you have no crosses to bear on your shoulders
There are rifles.
[The means of greatness
Are all at hand]
And every supper
May well be 'The Last Supper
And every glance

Perchance that of a Juda.[21]

The speaker continues with even more anger and tries to make people aware that they should not wait for a saviour to bring them felicity because they, themselves, have everything they need. However, people's indifference makes him more agitated than before. The process, therefore, suggests that the speaker is determined to eliminate the traditional idea of the saviour and replace it with a new conception in which people are to save themselves, but no one listens to him as they prefer the same old-fashioned idea of an omnipotent saviour. Someone who has a book instead of a tablet (like the prophets) or someone who comes to their rescue with the horn of the mythical cow (referring to Fereydun in Persian mythology). The speaker becomes disheartened and hopeless:

پس من بسیار گریستم
- و هر قطره‌ی اشک من حقیقتی بود
هر چند که حقیقت
خود
کلمه‌ای بیش نیست.-
گویی من
با گریستنی از این گونه
حقیقتی مایوس را
تکرار می‌کردم.
آه
این جماعت
حقیقت خوف‌انگیز را
تنها
در افسانه‌ها می‌جویند

So I wept a lot,
- and every tear of mine was a truth,
Though the truth
itself
is nothing but a word. -
As if I,
by weeping thus,
repeated a hopeless truth.

[21]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, pp. 582-583.

Oh,
this group
only
seeks the terrifying truth
in myths.[22]

The crowd ultimately disappoint the speaker, and the poem ends with him acknowledging his failure. Shamlou, thus, argues that waiting for a saviour is pointless, and anyone can be a saviour today. However, the people whom he addresses seem to be still looking for a religious or grand-scale type of saviour, and, as a result, no one pays attention to his words. People still believe in the support of Heaven, and this is very painful for the speaker.

Shamlou questions the feasibility of creating a utopia by suggesting that the conditions of its realization are dependent on factors that are impossible to occur or create. Similarly, he has no specific views on maintaining utopia as he does not seem to believe that it has ever been realized. However, he reviews the goals of utopia for himself. Without denying other factors, he emphasizes the necessity of liberty as the ultimate goal of any desirable society, but he also suggests that with liberty, other ideals such as equality will become easier to achieve.

تمامی الفاظ جهان را در اختیار داشتیم و
آن نگفتیم
که به کار آید
چرا که تنها یک سخن
یک سخن در میانه نبود:
- آزادی!

We had all the words of the world at our disposal, and
We did not say
what was needed,
Because only one word,
only one word was not in the middle:
Freedom![23]

However, according to Shamlou, preserving freedom in a tyrannical society comprised of conflicting groups and classes with divergent interests is a challenging task. The difficulty

[22]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 585.
[23]. Ibid., p. 747.

arises from the fact that in such a society, everyone claims to uphold freedom, but only a few truly comprehend its fundamental requirements. This is because freedom is not an absolute social concept, but rather its social content is relative to the circumstances and social foundations of the various groups and classes within society. The meaning of freedom is shaped by history, the overall progress of humanity, and the specific conditions of a particular society at any given time. From this perspective, freedom is an accomplishment, an irreversible reality that holds absolute value and is not subject to relativity.[24]

The Dead Saviour of Mehdi Akhavān-sāles

Anti-utopianism became a theme of Akhavān-sāles's poetry far before it appeared in the poems of the other three poets. He became distrustful of political movements before the 1953 coup, and his disillusionment with utopian ideas continued for a longer period. Utopia became nostalgia for Akhavān-sāles, something that happened in the remote past and was not likely to happen in the future. He expressed his pessimism in the form of despair about the coming of the saviour and the inability of human beings to maintain a utopia if they ever built one. The dystopian narratives of Akhavān-sāles have a strong connection to the myths and golden ages of Iranian history and often depict environments that echo the qualities of these spaces.

One of the most dystopian images created by Akhavān-sāles's poetry can be seen in 'The End of the Shāhnāmeh', which was written four years after the coup and published in a collection of the same name. The poet here begins his story as a speaker by talking about a lyre in the hands of a dreamy lyrist and then allowing the lyre to tell its story within the main narrative. This story, however, is not linear. The lyre is dreaming, and the narratives are its dreams and imagination. It is as if the lyre has witnessed the history and now recounts it until it reaches the contemporary era of human frustration and defeat:

این شکسته چنگ بی قانون
رام چنگ چنگی شوریده رنگ پیر
گاه گویی خواب می‌بیند
خویش را در بارگاه پر شکوه مهر
طرفه چشم‌انداز شاد و شاهد زرتشت
یا پریزادی چمان سرمست
در چمنزاران پاک و روشن مهتاب می‌بیند.

This broken, unruly lyre

[24]. Ahmad Shamlou, 'Bogzār Tā Chonin Bāshim…', *Ketāb-e Jom'eh*, no.14 (November 1358 [1979]), pp. 3-5.

Tame to the hands of the old ashen-faced lyrist,
Sometimes seems to be dreaming.
It sees itself at the sun's luminous court
A wondrous sight, joyous and witness to Zarathustra,
Or as a fairy, striding raptly
Over chaste, moonlit meadows.[25]

It seems that this lyre has been thrown from a glorious past era to the present, and therefore, it uses the word '*ghorbat*', a place where a person does not belong and feels like a stranger. It tells the sad story of '*ghorbat*':

«هان، کجاست
پایتخت این کج‌آیین قرن دیوانه؟
با شبان روشنش چون روز،
روزهای تنگ و تارش، چون شب اندر قعر افسانه.
با قلاع سهمگین سخت و ستوارش،
با لئیمانه تبسم کردن دروازه‌هایش، سرد و بیگانه.

Alas! Where is the capital of this crazy, creed-distorted century?
With its bright nights looking like days,
Its dark days, like a night in the depths of a legend.
With its strong and sturdy grim castles,
With the wicked and sardonic smile of its cold and unfamiliar gates.[26]

The century is like a castle that is very difficult to get out of. The lyre is looking for its capital, or in other words, the centre of gravity of this century. It refers to human advancements. This century is the century in which humans have succeeded in orbiting the moon, but have still managed to move further away from *mehr* (in Persian both 'love' and 'sun'). Akhavān-sāles describes the characteristics of this century in more detail. He describes the century as one in which young and old are all subject to oppression and fighter jets are like birds whose droppings crush people, homes and cities. The lyre, thus, asks again, 'Where is the capital of this century?'

In the following section, the plot of the poem depicts the lyre riding on a ship hoping to conquer this century. It asks the watchmen to be alert and not to fall asleep:

بر به کشتی‌های خشم بادبان از خون

[25]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh*, p. 79.
[26]. Ibid., p. 80.

ما برای فتح سوی پایتخت قرن می‌آییم.

On the ships of fury, with bloody sails,

We come to conquer the capital of this century.[27]

Ahavān-sāles refers to the wars and revolutions that have taken place in the modern era, bloody revolutions that were aimed at conquering the 'Land of Nothingness'. He categorises all movements and struggles under the same title and whispers their futility. Yet, simultaneously, these movements emerge to challenge and combat tyranny, transcending the barriers of time and spanning across centuries. He uses the word *div* (demon) for the oppressive rulers these events tried to topple. Demons are evil mythical creatures that are to be subdued or destroyed when utopias are to be achieved. The lyre recounts how they headed towards this end:

شیشه‌های عمر دیوان را
از طلسم قلعه‌ی پنهان، ز چنگ پاسداران فسونگرشان،
جلد برباییم.
بر زمین کوبیم.

Let's agilely seize

The demons' bottles of life,[28]

From the spell of the hidden castle, from the grip of their bewitching guards

Let's shatter them on the ground.[29]

He and his companions intend to put an end to the lifespan of dictators. They aim to remove anyone who stands in the way of this goal. We can do this because:

ما
فاتحان قلعه‌های فخر تاریخیم،
شاهدان شهرهای شوکت هر قرن.
ما
یادگار عصمت غمگین اعصاریم.
ما
راویان قصه‌های شاد و شیرینیم.

We are

The conquerors of the proud castles of a glorified history,

The witnesses of the splendid cities of every century.

---

[27]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh*, p. 82

[28] There is a belief that mythical creatures, especially demons, have a glass bottle that they call their 'bottle of life'. The demons carefully keep this bottle hidden in a cup, and if a human being obtains it, they become the owner of the demons' life and can rule them around or destroy them.

[29]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh*, p. 82.

We are
The memorials of the sad chastity of the ages.
We are
The speakers of happy and joyful tales.[30]

Then the lyre refers to the motifs of some of these happy tales such as 'flowing light, water', 'the stories of the happiest messages', and 'the caravan of cups and lyres' before doubting again and stopping to ask 'Where is the capital of this century?' and stating that 'We are coming to conquer its 'Land of Nothingness'. Then, the speaker, intervenes again, with words that combine self-criticism and critiquing the lyre, as if he wants to stop the lyre from being carried away with dreams. The speaker now calls the lyre the 'thinker of the impossibles'. The speaker asks the lyre to change the act as the *pur-e Das*ān (son of Dasān) cannot escape from the trap of his dishonest brother.

Pur-e Dastān, Rostam, is the greatest mythical hero of Iranian legends and one of the main characters of *Shāhnāmeh*. Acting like a saviour, he frequently appears in tight corners to save kings, princes and other Iranians from demonic and human enemies.[31] Akhavān-sāles calls Rostam the protector of hope in Iranian lands.[32] The allusion reminds the readers of Rostam's death as a symbol of the end of Iranian grandeur. What is significant, however, is that it also specifies that Rostam's death did not occur during a battle and by the hand of enemies, that it was his treacherous half-brother who dug a well along Rostam's path and filled it with upright spears, that Rostam and his glorified horse Rakhsh died in that well, and that before his death, Rostam shot an arrow that killed his half-brother with a spear and takes his revenge. In Persian literature, he is depicted as a saviour. Akhavān-sāles, therefore, uses Rostam's death to suggest the result of internal conflict, the end of Iranian grandeur and potential for growth and the end of the era of saviours. Such a motif also occurs in his '*Khān-e Hashtom*' (The Eighth Labour) where Akhavān states that Rostam could save himself and escape the well his brother had dug for him, instead, he welcomed his death.[33] He, thus, presents the image of a saviour who no longer desires to fulfil his historical role.

[30]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh*, p.83.
[31]. Mohammad Jaʿfar Mahjub, *Farhang-e Asātir va Dāstān-vāre-hā dar Adabiyāt-e Fārsi*, p. 394.
[32]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *She ketāb: dar Hayāt-e kuchak-e Pāeiz dar Zendān, Zendegi Miguyad Amā Bāz Bāyad Zist, Duzakh Amā Sard* (Tehrān: Zemestān, 1374 [1995]), p. 81.
[33]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh*, p. 87.

The speaker, in 'The End of the Shāhnāmeh' asks the lyre to tell the story of another Rostam, '*pur-e Farrokh-zād*' (Farrokhzad's Son). This Rostam, who was one of the Sasanian military commanders and provincial rulers, died leading the Sasanian army at the Battle of Qādesiya during the Arab-Islamic conquest of Iran.[34] His death marked the end of the glorious history of ancient Iran. It is as if Rostam's voice is coming from a deep well saying:

«آه، دیگر ما
فاتحان گوژپشت و پیر را مانیم.
بر بکشتی‌های موج بادبان از کف،
دل به یاد بره‌های فرهی در دشت ایام تهی بسته،
تیغهامان زنگخورد و کهنه و خسته،
کوسهامان جاودان خاموش،
تیرهامان بال بشکسته.
ما فاتحان شهرهای رفته بر بادیم.

Oh we are now
Like hunchbacked and old conquerors,
On ships with foamy sails,
Happy with the memories of happy lambs in the meadows of empty times
With our blades rusted, old and tired,
With our drums eternally silenced,
With our arrows wing-broken…
We are
The conquerors of the cities are gone with the winds.[35]

Grief and despair have permeated the entirety of the poem as the narrative suggests that we cannot make any changes. If we could at some point, now we are no longer those conquerors. Sometimes we think it is a dream from which we aim to wake up, but:

گاهگه بیدار می‌خواهیم شد زین خواب جادویی،
همچو خواب همگنان غار،
چشم می‌مالیم و می‌گوییم: آنک، طرفه قصر زرنگار صبح شیرینکار.
لیک بی مرگ است دقیانوس.
وای، وای، افسوس.

[34]. The Sasanians were the last Iranian empire before the Arab invasion in the seventh century. The battle of Qādesiyyeh took place in 636 CE between Iranians and Arab Muslims. It resulted in the defeat of Sasanian army and paved the way for their subsequent conquest of Iran.
[35]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh*, p. 85.

Sometimes we long to wake from this enchanting dream,
Like the Companions of the Cave,
We rub our eyes and say: "Behold! That wondrous golden palace
On this graceful morning,
Yet, immortal is Decius,
Alas, alas![36]

Akhavān, thus, suggests that history has witnessed our inability to build a utopia and even if we did, we have failed to maintain it.

Akhvān's poetry constantly refers to ancient utopias or other forms of grandeur that Iranians may glorify but rather than focusing on their qualities, he reveals their failures so that we know exactly what is hidden behind every utopian thought. He also argues that our problem is not just the absence of saviours or the failure of potential saviours to lead us to utopia, but the fact that there is no magical formula to construct a utopia and any attempt to make them will lead to disaster.

The metaphor of the tablet, observed in Shamlou's poetry, appears in a different form in the Akhavān's. In the poem '*Katibeh*' (Inscription) he talks about people who are tied together by chains of destiny or chains of shared suffering. However, unlike Shamlou, Akhavān-sāles does not see people as resistant to change. He introduces them as striving individuals who, despite being chained together, move towards the path of salvation, but the path is illusory.

Akhavān inscribes a historical source as an introduction to the poem in the form of the proverb, 'Greedier than the Rock Over-turner'. Awfi (d. 1241), a Persian historian and philologist, mentions the anecdote related to this proverb as follows.

> There was a man from the Arab tribe of Bani Maʿd, whose name was Atmaʿ men Qaleb al-Sakhrah (meaning, greedier than the man who turns the rock around). One day during a journey to Yemen, he saw a rock on his way with an inscription in Hebrew, saying: "Turn me around so that I can benefit you!" Driven by greed, the poor man, made a great effort to turn the rock over, but the inscription on the other side of the rock said, "Oh greedy one, your greed is like rust on the mirror of your soul. Upon seeing this, he suffered greatly and hit his head against the rock until his soul departed from his body.[37]

[36]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Ākhar-e Shāhnāmeh*, p. 86.
[37]. Sadid al-Din Mohammad ʿUfi, *Javameʿ al-Hekayat va Lavameʿ al-Ravayat*, ed. Jaʿfar Shaʿār (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Āmuzesh-e Enqelāb-e Eslami, 1363 [1984]), p. 287.

Akhavān, then, starts the story of the inscription by referring to two opposite places: 'here' where a crowd of tired people are in chains, and 'there' where a rock as large as a mountain lays:

فتاده تخته سنگ آنسوی‌تر، انگار کوهی بود.
و ما اینسو نشسته، خسته انبوهی.
زن و مرد و جوان و پیر،
همه با یکدیگر پیوسته، لیک از پای،
و با زنجیر

Further to the other side, there was a rock like a mountain,
And here, we, a multitude, were sitting, exhausted.
Men, women, young and old, all together, but only because were attached on the feet,
Bound by a chain.[38]

In the weariness of everyday life, these chained people hear a voice like a whispered inspiration, but they never react to it or try to identify the source:

ندایی بود در رویای خوف و خستگی‌هامان،
و یا آوایی از جایی، کجا؟ هرگز نپرسیدیم
چنین می‌گفت:
-«فتاده تخته سنگ آنسوی، وز پیشینیان پیری
بر او رازی نوشته است...»

There was a call in our dreams of fear and fatigue,
Or a voice from somewhere, where? We never asked
It said:
"On the rock that lies over there, an old man of ancient times
Has written a secret…[39]

Akhavān suggests that the chained crowd had been hearing the voice for a long time, but they refused to pay attention to its message or its source until:

شبی که لعنت از مهتاب می‌بارید،
و پاهامان ورم می‌کرد و می‌خارید،

[38]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Azin Avestā* (Tehrān: Morvārid, 1375 [1996]), p. 9.
[39]. Ibid., p. 10.

یکی از ما که زنجیرش کمی سنگین‌تر از ما بود، لعنت کرد
گوشش را نالان گفت: «باید رفت»

One night when the moonlight shed curse showers,
And our feet were swollen and itching,
One of us, whose chain was a little heavier than others, cursed his ears
And stated: "We must go".[40]

Finally, the chained people decide to check the inscription together.

یکی از ما که زنجیرش رهاتر بود، بالا رفت، آنگه خواند:
- «کسی راز مرا داند
که از این رو به آن رویم بگرداند.»

One of us, whose chain was looser, climbed up and read:
"Only the one who turns me over
Will know my secret."[41]

Excited with pleasure and constantly repeating this sentence, the crowd engaged in the laborious task of turning the rock over. Despite their fatigue, they are inspired by hope:

عرقریزان، عزا، دشنام - گاهی گریه هم کردیم.
هلا، یک ، دو، سه، زینسان بارها بسیار.
چه سنگین بود اما سخت شیرین بود پیروزی.

Sweating, mourning and, cursing, we even cried at times.
Hey, one, two, three, over and over again.
It was heavy, but the victory was so sweet.[42]

When the crowd finally succeeds in turning the rock over, one of them goes up to read the message, but as soon as he sees it, he falls silent as if shocked. Then, upon the repeated requests of his chained companion, he reads it to them:

- «نوشته بود
همان،
کسی راز مرا داند،

40. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Azin Avestā*, pp. 10-11.
41. Ibid., p. 11.
42. Ibid., p. 12.

که از این‌رو به آن‌رویم بگرداند.»
نشستیم
و
به مهتاب و شب روشن نگه کردیم.
و شب شط علیلی بود.

It was written:
"Only the one who turns me over
Will know my secret."
We sat and gazed at the moonlight and the bright night,
And the night was a crippled river.[43]

This poem, which ends with an emphasis on the continuation of the night, can be compared with '*Setarvan'* (Sterline) and '*Pustin'* (Fur cloak) which were discussed in chapters three and four, respectively. As in those poems, Akhavān sees any attempt to change the conditions of society as doomed to failure and considers dystopia an endless darkness which none of the ideologies and ideas that he sees around him can resolve.

In general, Akhavān seems to argue that we can't build a utopia through any of the traditional solutions and that even though we have no means to build a utopia, we must also not assume that a saviour will appear to do so for us as all the would-be saviours are either dead or do not have any desire to fulfil such a role. He also seems to highlight the cost of attempting to create utopias by showing how it requires a lot of violence and bloodshed which automatically defeats the purpose and makes the idea of utopia doubly pointless. He also uses poetic allusions to historical events and myths to indicate that even if a society displays qualities that suggest it has utopian features, it will ultimately not be eternal and will be destroyed either by external pressures or internal contradictions.

Simin Behbahāni's Bloody House

Simin Behbahāni's opposition to utopianism is primarily concerned with the absurdity of attempting to construct utopias. Unlike Shamlou and Akhavān, Simin does not refer to mythical or historical saviours, and her critique of utopian ideas is more directly focused on the events that she witnessed in her lifetime. She uses her own experience as her main argument against utopianism. Her disillusionment with the idea of saviours due to the escape of the leaders of

[43]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Azin Avestā*, p. 13.

the Tudeh Party from the country and her increasing concern with violence played an important role in her rejection of utopian ideas. Though the question of violence did not engage her mind before the coup, it became very prominent for her when she observed the violence of the coup and its aftermath as she realized how utopianism can be used to rationalize violence.

Poems and narratives that reflect on dystopia are scattered in Simin's compositions and so, unlike Akhavān and Shamlou, one cannot focus on one or two of her works to analyse her views. Nevertheless, it is possible to gain a clear picture by examining her writing. As suggested above, before the coup, violence was not a major subject for her. When the news of WWII broke, she was 12, and when Iran was invaded by the Allies, she was 14, but the awareness of the impacts of the war gradually made her conscious of its devastating violence.

> I was barely twelve years old when the news of the war broke and plunged the world into terror. However, I neither knew what war was nor had any remorse for its impacts. I was obsessed with excitement, for me, war was a football field: which side could shake the opponent's goal more so that I could cheer them? But a little later, when my mother heard the speech of Paul Reynaud and his sad farewell in French on the radio and cried along with his sobbing, I knew that war was not a game, it was an injustice that human beings inflicted upon themselves, and it was destruction and devastation.[44]

Despite this early awareness, originally she somehow accepted that war and violence were inevitable on the path to utopia.[45] With time, however, Simin realized how social indoctrination makes a person justify violence:

> The individual conscience differs greatly from the collective conscience, when a person is under the influence of group indoctrination, they may do things that they never imagined doing alone. This is when violence, crime, and even bloodshed may become normal, acceptable, and sometimes even desirable for an ordinary person.[46]

After the coup, Simin and her companions were hesitant and awaited 'commands'. However, their hesitation wore off when they witnessed the firing squads executing men one by one, as she counted them: 'Twelve men, twelve songs, twelve bullets, and then twelve more and twelve more...'[47] In the aftermath of the chaos, Simin expressed her dissatisfaction with the party

[44]. Simin Behbahāni , *Majmu'eh-ye Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p. 335.
[45]. Ibid., p. 45.
[46]. Ibid., p. 327.
[47]. Ibid., p. 48.

leaders who had managed to escape, referring to them as 'puppet panthers' who 'had fled to the mountainside while the brave lions were put before the hail of bullets'.[48] She then lost her faith in any form of belief in saviours and in one of her compositions called '*Javāb'* (Reply) spoke about the reason behind her pessimism:

دلم یاران ز غم در اضطراب است،
امیدم نقش بی حاصل بر آب است.
دگر از چشمه‌ی خورشید قهرم
که آبش - آنچه دانستم - سراب است.
حریف آشنایی‌های غریب است؛
همای نیکبختی‌ها غراب است.

Friends, my heart is troubled with grief and anxiety.
My hopes are futile drawings on water.
I have turned my back to the spring of the sun,
Cos its water- as I understood- is a mirage.
The companion of intimacies is a stranger.
The bird of promised fortune is a crow.[49]

She, then, directly, states: 'You sing the story of hope in my ears, but that is just a tall tale'.[50] The voice of Simin's poems no longer believes in any sort of change and says: 'My friend, stop your advice and stories. My soul is tormented by these words'.[51] So she tries to stay hopeful within the boundaries of a dystopia.

Simin's poetry also suggests that the imposition of violence either corrupts the imposer and renders them unfit to undertake utopian reforms, or engenders counterviolence and thus forces on the revolutionaries measures which prevent the later realization of utopian reforms.[52] The more she witnessed the consequences of violence, the more she turned against it:

خانه ابری بود روزی، خانه خونین است اینک
آن چنان بود، این چنین شد، حال ما این است اینک
مرده‌واری، طیلسان بر دوش و خون آشام و شبرو
تشنه ی خون با دو دندان چو دو زوبین است اینک

48. Simin Behbahāni , *Majmu'eh-ye Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p.48.
49. Simin Behbahāni, M*ajmu'eh-ye Ash'ār*, 280. (crow is the symbol of misfortune in Iranian culture.)
50. Ibid., p. 281.
51. Ibid..
52. George Kateb, *Utopia and Its Enemies*, 16.

The house was cloudy one day, the house is bloody now:
It was like that, it became like this, this is our status now!
A walking dead man, with a cloak on his shoulders like a nocturnal vampire,
He is bloodthirsty with two sharp fangs.[53]

Another point about Simin's poetry is that she talks about two wars, an external war against terrible bad social conditions and an internal one within families, and in both wars, women have to fight for their basic rights as even the utopian ideas in circulation are patriarchal.

Cave, Mountain, Jungle: Moshiri's Utopia

Moshiri's reflections about the end of utopia are different from the other three poets. As mentioned previously, he had no affiliation with any political party, and his life was not drastically disrupted by the events before and after the 1953 coup. As a result, he sees the end of the impossibility of utopia not in relation to his geographical location, but as a global phenomenon. Moshiri does not see a utopian future for humanity.

Contrary to classical utopias that depict the future of humanity as an eternal utopia built by a saviour, Moshiri believes the opposite. The best example of Moshiri's anti-utopian poetry is a poem called '*Kooch'* (Migration). The poem begins as follows:

بشر دوباره به جنگل پناه خواهد برد!
به کوه خواهد زد!
به غار خواهد رفت!

Humans will seek refuge in the forest again!
Will escape to mountains!
Will return to caves![54]

As discussed in the first chapter, the beginning of utopianism coincided with the construction of the first cities. Utopianism started when a clear border was established between wild nature and complex human communities, particularly cities. In the utopias depicted in Alexander's romances, this border is lifted, and humans and wild nature live in harmony and alongside each other, without harming one another. The physical structure of the city is still preserved and just the walls around the cities are eliminated. Moshiri, however, takes a step further, believing that humans will return to the mountains and forests, to the stage before the start of utopias.

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[53]. Simin Behbahāni , *Majmu'eh-ye Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p. 281.
[54]. Fereydun Moshiri, *Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān: Kolliyāt-e Ash'ār*, I, 514.

Moshiri sees war, killing, and slaughter as the only creed that humans follow. To escape this situation, there is only one way left, to flee to the mountains, forests, and caves:

تو کودکانت را، بر سینه می‌فشاری گرم
و همسرت را، چون کولیان خانه به دوش
میان آتش و خون می‌کشانی از دنبال
و پیش پای تو از انفجارهای مهیب
دهان دوزخ وحشت گشوده خواهد شد
و شهرها همه در دود و شعله خواهد سوخت
و آشیان‌ها بر روی خاک خواهد ریخت
و آرزوها در زیر خاک خواهد مرد!

You press your children warmly to your chest,
And drag your spouse like a wandering nomad
Through fire and blood,
And before you, due to terrible explosions
The mouth of dreadful Hell will open,
And all the cities will burn in smoke and flame.
The nests will fall on the ground,
And dreams will die under the earth![55]

Moshiri's apocalyptic vision extends beyond Iran as he sees the whole world moving on a path towards destruction:

صدای ضجه‌ی خونین کودک عدنی‌ست،
و بانگ مرتعش مادر ویتنامی،
که در عزای عزیزان خویش می‌گریند،
و چند روز دیگر نیز نوبت من و توست،
که یا به ماتم فرزند خویش بنشینیم!
و یا به کشتن فرزند خلق برخیزیم!
و یا به کوه،
به جنگل،
به غار،
بگریزیم!

The sound of the bloody cries of Aden's children,
And the shaking shouts of the Vietnamese mothers mourning their loved ones,

[55]. Fereydun Moshiri, *Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān: Kolliyāt-e Ash'ār*, I, 515.

And a few more days, it will be
To either sit in mourning for our child,
Or rise determined to kill the children of others,
Or escape
To the mountains,
To the forests,
To the caves.[56]

Violence is the main issue that discourages Moshiri from having any faith in utopia as almost all slaughters are done in the name of obtaining freedom, preserving freedom or creating a paradise on earth. This is not even a war between good and evil; because the moment a war starts it entraps everyone. By making frequent use of irony and sarcasm, Moshiri indicates that the most sorrowful part of the story is that all these bloodsheds are done with the excuse of freedom and happiness:

- «... هزار و ششصد و هفتاد و یک نفر امروز
به زیر آتش خمپاره‌ها هلاک شدند!
و چند دهکده‌ی دوست را هواپیما،
به جای خانه ی دشمن گلوله باران کرد!...»
گلوی خشک مرا بغض می‌فشارد تنگ
و کودکان مرا لقمه در گلو مانده است
که چشم آنها، با اشک مرد، بیگانه است.
چه جای گریه، که کشتار بی دریغ حریف
برای خاطر صلح است و حفظ آزادی!
و هر گلوله که بر سینه‌ای شرار افشاند
غنیمتی است که دنیا بهشت خواهد شد.

"Today, a thousand six hundred and seventy-one people
Were killed under the fire of missiles,
and several friendly villages were with bullets assuming they were enemy's houses!..."
A lump of extreme sorrow is pressing my dry throat
And my children are choking on their food.
As their eyes are not accustomed to seeing tears in a man's eyes.
No time for crying, where the endless slaughter of the enemy

[56]. Fereydun Moshiri, *Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān: Kolliyāt-e Ash'ār*, I, 515- 516

Is for the sake of peace and the preservation of freedom!
And every bullet that inserts fire into a chest
Is a war trophy that makes the world a paradise![57]

Ultimately, he sees humans as pathetic creatures who cannot live peacefully with their kind.

بیا، به حال بشر، های های گریه کنیم
که با برادر خود هم نمی‌تواند زیست.
چنین خجسته وجود کجا تواند ماند؟!
چنین گسسته عنانی کجا تواند رفت؟
صدای غرش تیری دهد جواب مرا:
به کوه خواهد زد!
به غار خواهد رفت!
بشر دوباره به جنگل پناه خواهد برد!

Let's lament the plight of humans,
Who cannot even live with their own brothers
Where can such a blessed essence remain?
Where can such a reign-torn creature go?
The roar of a bullet answers me:
He will escape to the mountains!
He will go to caves!
Humans will seek refuge in the forest again![58]

Moshiri sees civilization and technological advancements not in terms of means that facilitate human happiness, but rather as tools of destruction. He does not believe in the possibility of ending the vicious circles of inherited and opportunistic violence and concludes that the only way that humans have left is to escape from this bloody fate by resorting to a more basic and perhaps pre-civilization way of life. For Moshiri, the death of humanity began with the first symbolic murder of history, when Cain killed Abel. He portrays the history of the decline of humanity in his poem 'A Drop of Tear in the Passage of History':

از همان روزی که دست حضرت قابیل
گشت آلوده به خون حضرت هابیل،

[57]. Fereydun Moshiri, *Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān: Kolliyāt-e Ash'ār*, I, 517- 518.
[58]. Ibid., I, 519.

از همان روزی که فرزندان «آدم»
زهر تلخ دشمنی در خون‌شان جوشید؛
آدمیت مرد!
گرچه «آدم» زنده بود.

Since the day the hands of Cain
Became tainted with the blood of Abel,
Since the day the bitter venom of enmity began to boil
in the blood of Adam's children,
Humanity died
Even though 'Adam' [both Adam and Humanity] remained alive.[59]

Moshiri considers the century in which he lives as the century in which humanity's death has been revealed, and without envisioning a horizon for humanity, he considers it condemned to live in this century. The violence that is the direct result of the loss of affection and love among people is seen by him as the greatest obstacle to achieving better conditions for people.

Conclusion

The consequences of the 1953 coup had far-reaching effects on utopianism in Iran, and the failure of the country's elite to create a functioning democratic system raised concerns that questioned utopianism in general. Thus, questions like, 'Do we really need a utopia?' 'What if this is the extent of it?' 'Is there really going to be a better future?' became prominent among those who had considered the possibility of taking action to create a better future. The courses of events demonstrated to them that utopian projects are unlikely to lead to a better society.

Utopianism in Iran has never been completely detached from the classical utopias and some of the elements are still preserved in the modern utopias. The events of the years between 1941 and 1969, therefore, created a situation in which utopianism was either discarded or distanced itself further from the classical utopias, particularly in questioning the roles of saviours and the means of attaining utopia. The first element that was reviewed in this period was the process of constructing the utopia, and the role of would-be leaders or saviours in this process. This role in contemporary movements was given to the political parties and their leaders. In this context, the failure of political parties and the flight of their leaders caused the little freedom

[59]. Fereydun Moshiri, *Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān: Kolliyāt-e Ash'ār*, I, 490.

that was established after the occupation of Iran to disappear and the idea of following or believing in saviours was challenged.

In the next stage, as the poets and their friends, companions, and relatives were subjected to violence, death, or execution, they began to question the idea of justified violence and the way utopian jargon was used to rationalise conflicts and suggest dying for one's ideals as sacred. Though they had, on occasion, sanctified death in their pre-coup works or works that they produced during and immediately after the coup, they gradually came to see violence as an unacceptable phenomenon rather than a means for constructing an ideal society. However, what they presented in the form of anti-utopian ideas was more about the past than about the future. In other words, they focused on criticising what happened in the past as they were concerned about repeating them in the future. This anti-utopian perspective remained prevalent among these poets until a new wave of revolutionary idealism and pushing for regime change began to emerge in Iran in the 1970s and led to the 1979 Revolution.

To quote Judith Shklar, 'The end of utopian literature did not mark the end of hope; on the contrary, it coincided with the birth of historical optimism'.[60]

[60] Judith Shklar, 'The Political Theory of Utopia: From melancholy to Nostalgia', in *Utopias and Utopian Thought: A Timely Appraisal*, ed. Frank E. Manuel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 107.

CHAPTER SIX: Oh, My Homeland! I'll Rebuild You…

Introduction:

The emergence of the 1979 revolution brought a significant shift in the collective consciousness of Iranians. It represented a new era of hope and promise, where the country could finally move towards a brighter future. This newfound optimism had a profound impact on creative writers and poets, including those studied in this research. The concept of 'loveable dystopia' and the sense of hopelessness that accompanied it began to dissipate with the movements leading to the revolution. The country was believed to be on a path towards utopia, and this belief was reflected in the literature of the period. The utopian themes that had been absent from their works for years resurfaced, and the sense of longing for a better future was palpable in their writing once again.

The shift in the poets' perspectives was not a complete rejection of their previous dystopian themes. Instead, it was an evolution in response to the changing societal conditions. The optimism of the revolution was not without its challenges, and this was reflected in their works. However, the overall tone was one of hope, as if the poets were finally able to glimpse a way out of the darkness that had engulfed their society for so long. It is important to note that this renewed sense of hope was not limited to poetry. It was a sentiment that was shared by many Iranians at the time. While the challenges that accompanied the revolution were not ignored, the overall tone of their works was one of hope, as if they could finally see a way out of the dystopia that had plagued their society for so long.

The most noticeable change in literature during this period, particularly in the poetry of the poets under study in this research, was the replacement of words such as 'night' and 'winter' used to describe the society with words such as 'dawn' and 'spring'. This marked the end of a dystopian era and the beginning of a bright future that they envisioned. This sense of hopefulness reached its peak during the winter of 1979, especially February and March, and began to fluctuate in the following months as the hopes for the establishment of a free society went through several stages in the following two years.

The revolution led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic, which adheres to a unique Shi'a Islamic ideology and the political doctrine of Velāyat-e Faqih (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist).[1] The government imposed strict regulations on cultural production and

[1]. The concept of 'Wilayat al-Faqih' is a fundamental tenet of Twelver Shi'a Islamic jurisprudence. It asserts that until the reappearance of the 'infallible Imam' (who is believed to return before Judgement Day), some of the 'religious and social affairs' of the Muslim world should be governed by righteous Shia jurists.

literature and declared religion as the sole defining aspect of Iranian identity. To promote Islamic ideology and monitor society, the state created institutions that officially defined the boundaries of religion. This intense politicization of religion and the dominance of fundamentalist factions caused disappointment among writers and artists, including those who had participated in the revolution. As Said Amir Arjomand argues, it is very surprising that the rise of theocracy happened through a revolution in a country which had passed through several stages of modernization,[2] and consequently, the results of the revolution shocked most of those who expected a gradual move towards a free, democratic society. Thus, the new conditions which were even more distant from the poets' vision of an ideal society than the previous regime began to be reflected in the poetry of many leading poets.

This time, however, the results were led uniformly as each of them began to imagine a utopian future of his or her own. The poetic views of Ahmad Shamlou, Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, and Simin Behbahāni regarding utopia between 1978 and 1988 recall their hopefulness prior to the August 1953 coup, and their disappointment and pessimism after the coup. As in the previous decades, Fereydun Moshiri's poems are slightly different from the other three as the hopeful tone of the other three poets was produced in 1979. However, even in his case, like the other three poets, one can see that the conditions of the country caused him to examine some utopian and dystopian subjects. In the section that follows, I examine each poet's utopian views before and after the 1979 revolution and argue that these years mark the occurrence of the very last images of utopia/dystopia in the poetry of these four poets.

Ahmad Shamlou's Liberator Art

Ahmad Shamlou spent the years between 1976 and 1979 intermittently outside of Iran and therefore was not present in Iran during the revolution. Shamlou himself stated that the reason for his sojourn abroad was that he and many others were unable to do or publish anything significant in Iran and that he left Iran to be able to write and speak more freely.[3] in a poem written in March 1979, right after the victory of the revolution, he used the metaphor of spring for the post-revolution period with a hopeful yet cautious tone.

بهاری دیگر آمده است

[2]. Said Amir Arjomand, The Turban for the Crown: the Islamic Revolution in Iran (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 3.
[3]. Ahmad Shamlu, 'Nayāmadeh-am keh az Enqelāb Sahmi Barāye Khoam Dast o Pā konam', *Ayandegān*, Esfand, 29, 1357 [March 20, 1979].

آری
اما برای آن زمستان‌ها که گذشت
نامی نیست
نامی نیست.

Another spring has come.
Yes,
But the winters that passed
Have no name,
Have no name.[4]

In March 1979, in an interview with the *Ayandegān* newspaper, Shamlou discussed his return to Iran and his views on the revolution by stating that he returned because, under the current circumstances, he was told that everyone could speak freely. Shamlou believed that the revolution had not been finished, but that it had only removed the main obstacle to victory.[5] He saw the effort for the victory of the revolution as just beginning and was hopeful that this time the revolution might end in establishing a democratic government in Iran. Shamlou's optimism, however, did not last long, and soon he lost faith in the possibility of any positive change. In July 1979, in an interview, he says:

> It's unbelievable! Where did these strange people come from? How is it possible that a society that emerged victorious from that bloody revolution accepts them as the founders of their new institution? They can't even speak their everyday language properly and when they open their mouths, I want to disappear from embarrassment. They can't see the tip of their nose and their maximum worldview is to offer a 'scientific' explanation for a woman's hair covering and make absurd comments about the radiation of waves that women's hair emits. Or they talk nonsense about female voices being sexually provocative. How is it possible for such a revolution to fall into such misery, and for the fate of the revolution to fall into the hands of elites whose banal worldliness is unimaginable and whose greatest concern is their trite animal instincts? And we hear everywhere that these revolutionaries are also among the main faces in the "Council of Revolution"[6]. Can anyone easily believe such a thing?[7]

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[4]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 821.
[5]. Ahmad Shamlu, 'Nayāmadeh-am keh az Enqelāb Sahmi Barāye Khoam Dast o Pā konam'.
[6]. A group formed by Ayatollah Khomeini to manage the Iranian Revolution on 10 January 1979, shortly before his return to Iran.
[7]. Ahmad Shamlu, 'Barnāmeh-ye Tolu'e Khorshid Laghv Shodeh Ast', Ahmad Shamlu's Official website, <http://shamlou.org> [accessed March 8, 2023]

Almost at the same time, on July 22, 1979, he wrote a poem describing a new dystopia that had emerged in Iran. He titled this poem '*Dar In Bon-bast*' (In this Dead-End) as if he had once again returned to the 'death of utopia', and lost hope for a way out with the poem's name:

دهانت را می‌بویند
مبادا گفته باشی که دوستت می‌دارم.
دلت را می‌بویند
روزگار غریبی است نازنین

They smell your mouth,
Lest you have said I love you.
They smell your heart
Such a strange time it is, my dear.[8]

Shamlou opens the poem with startling and unsettling ideas about the dystopian conditions of Iran, without directly addressing the source of these ideas or who is responsible for the situation. He then gives more details about this dystopia:

و عشق را
کنار دیرک راه‌بند
تازیانه می‌زنند.

And love,
Is being flogged,
At the checkpoint.[9]

Love was Shamlou's refuge and the source of his salvation in the dystopian era before the revolution, but now even love, the most intimate human feeling, is being punished. This means that even the most private aspects of life, such as what is hidden in the heart, are being interrogated. Life has been drained of its soul and meaning.

عشق را در پستوی خانه نهان باید کرد.

Love must be hidden in the larder.[10]

Shamlou retreats to his sanctuary, his home, and his temple, and conceals his beloved there. It seems as though Shamlou's speaker is reliving the same despair that they experienced in the post-coup era emotions, feeling trapped in a dystopia with no apparent way out. He, thus,

[8]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 824
[9]. Ibid.
[10]. Ibid. p. 824

suggests that everyone has had to shrink their utopia down to the size of a small storage room in the back of one's home where love can be preserved.

He then goes on to say:

به اندیشیدن خطر مکن.
روزگار غریبی است، نازنین
آن که بر در می‌کوبد شباهنگام
به کشتن چراغ آمده است.
نور را در پستوی خانه نهان باید کرد.

Do not risk pondering.
Such a strange time it is, my dear.
The one pounding on the door at night
Has come to kill the lamp.
The light must be hidden in the larder.[11]

In the following stanzas of the poem, Shamlou delves deeper into the dystopian atmosphere, portraying how people's smiles and desires are taken away as if life is drained of all meaning and spirit. In this dystopia, violence reigns and happiness is surgically removed from lips.

آنک قصابانند
بر گذرگاه‌ها مستقر
با کنده و ساتوری خون‌آلود
روزگار غریبی است، نازنین
و تبسم را بر لب‌ها جراحی می‌کنند
و ترانه را بر دهان
شوق را در پستوی خانه نهان باید کرد

And there are the butchers,
Manning the streets,
With chopping blocks and bloodied cleavers
Such a strange time it is, my dear.
With a scalpel, they excise smiles from lips
and songs from mouths.
Joy must be hidden in the larder.[12]

[11]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 824.
[12]. Ibid., p. 825.

As we saw before in the poem 'Faries', poetry and song are two major sources of joy and bliss in utopia, and a sign that the utopia is here. Under the new state, however, these elements have come under attack and have been subjected to a frightening image of surgery. The poem concludes with a description of the devil's happiness with these conditions:

ابلیس پیروزمست
سورعزای ما را به سفره نشسته است.
خدای را در پستوی خانه نهان باید کرد.

Drunk with victory,
Satan is sitting at our funeral feast,
God must be hidden in the larder.[13]

These were the most terrifying dystopian images that Shamlou had ever produced in his writing. Their mere presence, therefore, suggests that whereas until now he was able to seek refuge in love, poetry, and song, now he sees all of them in danger to the extent that he finds it necessary to hide them in the larder of one's home. This also shows how from Shamlou's perspective, with the Islamic Republic, even the idea of home as a private space and a refuge and sanctuary lost its sense and that Shamlou was confused and constantly thought about how one can escape the pressures of such a dystopia.

Perhaps the biggest reason for Shamlou's suggestion was that the hope for freedom, equality and democracy and their positive products, happiness, love, songs, productive work, and unity had now been indefinitely postponed. As mentioned in the previous chapter, after 1953 Shamlou gradually distanced himself from radical socialism, cultural emancipation, and democratic reforms as the best option for an ideal polity. He continued to have similar ideas after the Islamic revolution in Iran. As the editor-in-chief of the weekly literary miscellany, *Ketāb-e Jom'eh* (Firday's Book) from July 26, 1979, in his editorials explained his views on freedom and democracy. Shamlou, just as he carries the elements of utopia down to the lowlands, also conceals his dream of utopia within himself. He believes that it's not the extent of it, and the situation can get even worse, saying:

> Dark days are ahead. The era of dignity. An era of misery, which logically cannot last for a long time, has already revealed its hidden, dark essence and seeks to establish its rule on the basis of rejecting democracy, nationality, and civilizational, artistic and

[13]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 825.

cultural achievements. Such an era will inevitably not remain for long, and the force of history will undoubtedly crush it under its heavy roller.[14]

From Shamlou's perspective,

> Democracy is the structured and institutionalized revelation form of freedom in history. From a phenomenological point of view, democracy is a type of social system that guarantees all human achievements in relation to freedom. Democracy, from this point of view, is the desirable system of human conscience, not the desirable system of this or that specific social class. With democracy, humanity experiences a type of social system that is based on eternally valuable historical achievements. In this social system, all human beings have fundamental rights that represent the social elements of the concept of historical freedom.[15]

Approximately one year after the poem 'In this Dead-End', on Jun 14th 1980, Shamlou composed 'Khatābeh-ye Āsān dar Omid' (An Easy Address on Hope). In this poem, he talks about the possibility of hope as the only saviour from the prevailing dystopian conditions. He envisions a world that must regain order and tranquillity:

وطن کجاست که آواز آشنای تو چنین دور می‌نماید؟
امید کجاست
تا خود
جهان
به قرار
باز آید؟
هان سنجیده باش
که نومیدان را معادی مقدر نیست!

Where is the homeland that your familiar voice seems so far away?
Where is the hope,
That the world itself
May return to order?
Oh, be aware,
For there is no resurrection for the hopeless people.[16]

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[14]. Ahman Shamlu, 'Bogzār tā Chenin Bāshim', *Ketāb-e Jom'eh*, no 1, (Mordād 1358 [July 1979]), 3.
[15]. Ibid., pp. 3-5.
[16]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā,* p. 829

It is worth noting that while hope is not a prominent theme in Shamlou's utopian and dystopian poetry, he does not completely abandon it. This may be partly due to the concept of 'dystopia fatigue', a term coined by Linda Holmes in her 2010 article 'More Misery! More Death! More Cruelty!: The Onset of Dystopia Fatigue'. This term refers to the idea that we have been exposed to so many depictions of dystopian societies that we have become disheartened and exhausted by the pervasive sense of dystopia in our daily lives, and this, in turn, has made it difficult for us to tolerate another pessimistic portrayal of society. Shamlou's expertise in portraying dystopia is evident throughout his poetic career, and is repeated again and again in his post-revolutionary poems, including one of his 'Nocturnes' written in 1984:

به فریادی خراشنده
بر بام ظلمت بیمار
کودکی
تکبیر می‌گوید
گرسنه روسپی‌ای
می‌گرید
آلوده‌دامنی
از پیروزی بردگان دلیر
سخن می‌گوید

In a screeching cry,
On the roof of the sick darkness,
A child
Shouts God is Great.[17]
A hungry, whore
Weeps.
Someone with a tainted skirt (an unchaste or guilty person)
Speaks of
The victory of brave slaves.[18]

The opening lines of the poem describe a dystopian society where cacophony, disorder and disharmony prevail. The first image is that of a child reciting 'Takbir', a phrase usually reserved for adults. The child is standing on the rooftop of the darkness, which represents the pinnacle of darkness. The second image is that of an emaciated sex worker who is crying due to hunger

[17]. The Takbir means remembering God with Greatness and is often expressed as 'Allahu Akbar' and is an Islamic slogan. The Takbir has been a part of the call to prayer (Adhan), and Muslims use it as a slogan in many situations.
[18]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā,* p. 896.

or an inability to earn a living. For someone whose livelihood depends on their appearance and ability to smile, this is a fatal condition. Finally, a person with a 'tainted skirt' speaks of the brave conquerors who have achieved victory, but the expression suggests that they may have been involved in violent or unsavoury activities. As Sājeqeh puts it, the three contradictory images highlight the confusion and chaos of the society depicted in the poem.[19] In the next part, the poem reads:

لجه‌ی قطران و قیر
بی کرانه نیست
سنگین گذر است
روز اما پایدار نماند نیز
که خورشید
چراغ گذرگاه ظلماتی دیگر است:
بر بام ظلمت بیدار
آن که کسوف را تکبیر می‌کشد
نوزادی بی‌سر است.
و زمزمه‌ی ما
هرگز آخرین سرود نیست
هرچند بارها دعای پیش از مرگ بوده است.

The sea of tar and pitch
Is not infinite,
it is heavy and slow passing.
The day, however, doesn't last,
For the sun,
Is a passage-lantern to another darkness:
On the roof of alert darkness
The one who declares the Takbir of an eclipse
Is a headless infant.
And our murmuring
Is never the last anthem,
Although,
It has often been a prayer before death.[20]

[19] . Parvin Salājegheh, *Naqd-e Sheʿr-e Moʿāser, Amirzādeh-ye Kāshi-hā 'Ahmad Shamlou'*, p. 387.
[20]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, pp. 896- 897.

In the second stanza of the poem, Shamlou refers to the race of hope. The day is not eternal, just like the night because the sun passes through the dark alleys and takes the light to another place. Absolute darkness, which is now dominant in society, is not eternal, but it passes slowly and gradually, and the people, who do not give up singing, even if this song has been a prayer before death, are not likely to stop. The experience of repeated failures does not prevent them from being hopeful. As stated before, this ongoing anthem, which embodies the desire for freedom and light, is also a constant element of Shamlou's utopias.

Towards the end of his life, Shamlou expressed a different perspective on the role of utopias in an interview with the Kurdish-Iraqi poet Behruzh Ākerehei. While he still believed that democracy is the most ideal form of governance that can offer the highest level of freedom, he emphasized the importance of art as a criterion for the leaders of a utopian society. According to Shamlou, anyone who possesses a deep understanding of art can effectively guide society towards an ideal direction:

> The ultimate aim of art is to elevate humanity, yet some superstitious individuals who aim to keep society uninformed, label the idealism in art as a 'political inclination' and accuse idealistic artists of having 'politicized' works. These same individuals believe that the sole duty of art is to create beauty, even if it means pursuing 'pure beauty' to the point of extremity. However, such an approach to art does not appeal to me.[21]

He continues to say that a piece of artwork can be praised for the beauty it creates; however, Shamlou has the feeling that a piece of art should be the display of forgotten people, those who must be remembered with sympathy. An artist can use his art to help us, to help the people who hope to move towards a better tomorrow. Even when such a tomorrow seems delusional, such noble and sublime possibilities must not be overlooked. After all, the poets themselves are drops from this ocean of hope.[22]

In this manner, Shamlou presents his proposed solution to the issue of an ideal society. By 'ideal', he does not imply a flawless or perfect society, but rather the best possible society considering the limitations of human abilities and the circumstances of the era he lived in. His solution involves placing trust in governors who value art and aesthetics. He believes that being a politician by nature means having the ability to be oppressive:

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[21]. Ahmad Shamlu, 'Bā Takhallos-e Khunin-e Bāmdād' interview by Behruzh Ākereh-ei, September 11. 1992, published in *Ahmad Shamlu's Officail Website*, ,http://shamlou.org> [accessed August 25, 2022]
[22]. Ibid.

> Only those who can recognise the necessity of art can save the world! For instance, you could potentially be the world's saviour as one can say with a high degree of certainty that you cannot be a politician because you cannot be an executioner. Politics and the thirst for power are essential for each other and can only be played by those who have no respect for spirituality and are ready to engage in lying, deception, massacre and destruction. In politics, any cruel and disgraceful act can lead to an advantage for the person to such an extent that a person like Shah Abbas Safavi could achieve the title of Great partly due to his bloody massacres. Politicians do not value human life and view people as mere means to their ends, entities that can be sacrificed for them. […] However, it must be acknowledged that in a world where lunatics and thugs are in control and humanity is not respected, it is unrealistic to expect art, including poetry, to act as agents of salvation, even if the ideal of art is to elevate and save humanity.[23]

Shamlou proposes that the only way for politicians to not fall into the trap of politicking and for art to be truly liberating is through the rule of wisdom. He argues that if wisdom governs politics, it may regain its constructive function, and the ideas that are currently tainted with the hypocritical connotations that unscrupulous politicians have used them for can be used to achieve a worthy and humane order characterised by moderation and benevolent support of different groups of people.[24] Nevertheless, my analysis suggests that Shamlou is not very optimistic about the possibility of wisdom ruling over society and the formation of a society in which leaders appreciate art and human values. He does not even seem to consider such a society achievable even in the distant future. He is referring to a highly unlikely scenario that those who love humanity should continue to uphold without resorting to violence.

The final utopian poem of Shamlou was written a year before his death in April 1999. It portrays the cycle of life and the cycle of national change, with an image of a human being starting as a fetus and ending in old age. Here, once again he shows humanity trapped in a vicious circle of infinite darkness and futile hope. Though he tries not to view hope for a better future and an ideal society as futile, ultimately he sees the entire world's machinery in such a way. The poem begins with this theme:

نخستین
از غلظه‌ی پنیرک و مامازی سر برآورد
(نخستین خورشید...

[23]. Ahmad Shamlu, 'Bā Takhallos-e Khunin-e Bāmdād'.
[24]. Ibid.

بی خبر...)
و دومین
از جیفه‌زار مداهنت سر بر کرد.

The first,
Brought forth its head from the density of curdled milk[25] and meconium
(The first sun…
Unaware...)
And the Second,
He raised its head from the carcass land of foul flattery.[26]

Each sun represents a stage of human life. Shamlou depicts the rise of the seven suns as follows: The first stage, which is childhood, passes in ignorance. In the next, one is inevitably forced to flatter others for social relations. The third sun was the 'sorrow of waiting unaware of the sorrow of waiting,' the fourth was the 'wonder of fruitlessness' more fruitless than the 'wonder of fruitlessness', and the fifth sun was like a 'black sigh'. The sixth was, on the other hand, recurrent boredom: the pendulum of an unfinished moon hanging from the broken fake china bowl of the sky. The seventh sun:

خورشید هفتمین در اشکی بی‌قرار غوطه می‌خورد:
اشکی بی‌قرار،
بدری سیا قلم
جویده جویده ریخته واریخته.

The seventh sun rolled in a restless tear:
A restless tear,
A full round one drawn with black ink,
Chewed and over-chewed spilling and scattering.[27]

Shamlou's lines, then, move from the individual situation to a collective one that does not seem to suggest hope. He speaks of "us" who await the rise of the eighth sun, and "our" lives that pass in anticipation of its arrival. However, instead of the eighth sun, the first sun rises:

هشتمین خورشید را چشم همی داشتیم:
(شاید را و مگر را
بر دروازه‌ی طلوع)-

[25]. It is referring to the crudled like spit-up of a baby.
[26]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 1050
[27]. Ibid., p. 1051.

که خورشید نخستین
هم به تکرار سر برآورد
تا عرصه کند
آسمان پیرزاد را
به بازی بازی
در غلظه‌ی بوناک پنیرک و مامازی.

We were longing for the eighth sun:
(With maybe and probably no
Waiting at the gate of dawn) -
But the first sun
Rose again in repetition,
To spread out
In the old-born sky
in a playful way
in the stinking density of curdled milk and meconium.[28]

Shamlou has described old age and infancy with a phrase that not only captures the cyclical nature of life but also alludes to the human incapacity in old age. In his final utopian statement, Shamlou once again expresses his belief that hope is vain and futile. While Shamlou acknowledges and portrays those who cling to hope in his other poems, including the untitled one composed a month prior on March 3, 1999, which begins with 'The first that I saw in the world',[29] he ultimately concludes that hope does not lead to any meaningful destination. For Shamlou, the world remains a dystopia, forever trapped in darkness. Shamlou passed away on July 23, 2000, fourteen months after composing this poem which closes the case of his utopian visions.

I Will Rebuild You: Simin Behbahāni's Last Utopia

Simin Behbahāni also adopted a hopeful tone towards society in 1978, as a result of the changes and movements she observed in Iran, which made her assume it was one step closer to her ideal utopia. She wrote 'We irrigated the soil with blood. All the flowers are red and smell of blood[30] and continued that 'this blood must not be allowed to run in vain', which, for her, meant that significant changes must take place in society so people can approach their ideal of freedom

[28]. Ahmad Shamlou, *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār, Dafar-e Yekom: She'r-hā*, p. 1052.
[29]. Ibid., 1048
[30]. Simin Behbahāni, *Majmu'eh-yi Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p. 311

and justice. On February 14, 1979, three days after the victory of the revolution, Simin Behbahāni wrote:

امسال، فروردین　　شاید توانم دید
باغی که آذینش　　گلهای پرپر نیست
این عطر آزادی است　　کز راه می‌آید
آری نیسم اینسان　　هرگز معطر نیست.

This year, perhaps in, we may see,
A garden that is not adorned with petal-less flowers,
This fragrance is the scent of freedom that comes our way,
Indeed, no breeze has ever been this perfumed.[31]

Simin Behbahāni eagerly describes the revolution era as a 'spring,' a symbol of hope for freedom. As to her understanding of the situation, unlike Shamlou who was hopeful but considered the revolution only a step towards better conditions, she initially viewed the revolution as a crucial and potentially final step towards realizing an ideal society that would bring about freedom, as the most crucial aspect of her utopian vision for society.

Like Shamlou, however, her enthusiasm soon wavered, and in March 1979, she wrote a poem titled 'I Cannot See' after witnessing horrifying images of the dead and the executed. The trials and executions carried out in the name of justice made her question the notion of justice itself, causing her to doubt the beliefs of the revolution:

عدال است این که تیغش　　نهفته در آستین است!
ز عدل هم می‌گریزم　　که خود نمودار ظلم است
به عدل آنجا نیاز است　　که ظلم مسندنشین است

Is this justice which has a hidden sword concealed in its sleeve?
I flee from justice for it is the epitome of tyranny,
Justice is needed wherever tyranny sits on the throne.[32]

This understanding of justice corresponds to Jāmi's portrayal of Utopia, as explored in chapter one. In his utopian concept, justice is defined in opposition to oppression, and if there is no oppression or oppressor present in society, the need for justice and the institutions that uphold

[31]. Simin Behbahāni, M*ajmu'eh-ye Ash'ār*, p. 594.
[32]. Ibid., p. 596.

it becomes obsolete. According to Jāmi, in an ideal society, the absence of oppression renders justice and its governing bodies unnecessary.

Simin Behbahāni's skepticism towards the revolution and its ideals reached its peak with aftermath of Kurdish rebellion in Iran, for which she composed the poem 'Doubt, Doubt, Doubt' in August 1979:

حق پاک... حق ناب... حق محض — در یک زمین بود و یک روز
و آمیزه‌ی حق وباطل — در هر زمین هست و هرگاه
در خانه‌ی کوچک چشم — تردید چون لانه گیرد
باور به انکار خیزد — حق رو نماید ... اگر ... گاه

The pure right... the genuine right... the sheer right
Existed in a land and one day,
And the mixture of right and wrong
Exists in every land and every time.
When in the small house of the eye,
Doubt dwells,
Belief in denial arises,
If… the right appears.... sometimes.[33]

Thus, the poem suggests that once more she changed her mind about promoting utopian goals as a political project. In her opinion, 'the only way to ensure freedom in our country is to limit the power of the government and to give the people a say in how the country is run.'[34] She sees democracy as the key to achieving an ideal society that values justice and freedom. She also believes that it is only through this system that the people can have a voice and have their rights respected. Nevertheless, as reflected in her later poems, the revolution and its aftermath made her sceptical of the possibility of achieving such a society in Iran.

Simin wrote a lot of poems about the Iran-Iraq war. She addresses the defenders of the borders and the ugliness of war and its consequences such as death and destruction. She even writes poetry about the impacts of the war on people's lives and the reconstruction of the country. However, her utopian perspective remains largely unaffected by the war. In fact, it can be said that her utopian poetry during this period is an extension of what existed before. Although she sees her homeland in ruins, both figuratively and literally, Simin remains optimistic that this

[33]. Simin Behbahāni, M*ajmu'eh-ye Ash'ār*, p. 600.
[34]. Simin Behbahāni, *Majmu'eh-yi Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p. 329.

country will be rebuilt from scratch. This hope for reconstruction can be attributed to Simin's utopian tendencies. She wrote one of her most famous poems on this subject in March 1982, titled 'I Will Rebuild You, My Homeland'.

دوباره می‌سازمت وطن! اگرچه با خشت جان خویش
ستون به سقف تو می‌زنم اگرچه با استخوان خویش
دوباره می‌بویم از تو گل به میل نسل جوان تو
دوباره می‌شویم از تو خون به سیل اشک روان خویش
دوباره یک روز روشنا سیاهی از خانه می‌رود.
به شعر خود رنگ می‌زنم ز آبی آسمان خویش

I will rebuild you, oh my homeland,
Even if with bricks of my life.
I will erect pillars to support your roof,
Even if with my bones.
I will once again smell the fragrance of flowers,
Grown to the desire of your youth.
I will wash off the blood from your body
With the flow of my tears.
On a bright day again
Darkness will leave this house.
I will paint my poems again
With the blue of my sky.[35]

The determination to remain hopeful continued as a major feature of Simin Behbahāni's poetry for the rest of her life. Nevertheless, it is difficult to call any of her poetry utopian from a strict point of view as her post-revolutionary poetry is unlike her poems of the period between the coup and the revolution where utopian ideas and dystopian expressions of despair were more prevalent in her works. She also sees the country as a captive of dystopian conditions, but adopting a hopeful tone, she chooses to confront this dystopia and sees a path for rebuilding the country. This hope, however, is no longer idealistic and does not seem to be optimistic about achieving utopian conditions in the near future. Simin Behbahāni had a full life and passed away at the age of 87 on August 19, 2014.

[35]. Simin Behbahāni, M*ajmu'eh-ye Ash'ār*, P. 711.

Land of Nothing-ness: Akhavān's Last Utopia

As in the case of the former two poets, Mehdi Akhavān-sāles's poetic voice became more hopeful between 1978 and 1979. In his poem entitled '*Gham Makhor Jānam To Tanhā Nisti'*, (Don't Grieve, My Dear, You're Not Alone Here…) in the collection *Life Says We Must Live, Must Live*, which was published in 1978, he depicts a conversation among several prisoners. The poem portrays prisoners who, in some cases, have even forgotten their own names. One of the prisoners expresses a preference for death over this life, and a conversation between him and the speaker takes shape in the poem. The image of people who are imprisoned together is reminiscent of Katibeh (Inscription) (see chapter 5), but instead of the despairing tone seen in the former poem, here Akhavān-sāles takes a hopeful tone and hope is given a central role in the poem:

هی فلانی دل به غم مسپار، نومیدی بران از خویش.
دور دار از جان خود تشویش.
تو درختی، ناامیدی آتش قهار.
با شتاب و بی امان گستر
هان مشو تسلیم نومیدی،
که نماند از وجودت غیر خاکستر.
جای شکرش باز هم باقی است.
تو هنوز اینجا مرا داری،
من ترا دارم.

Hey you! don't surrender your heart to grief,
Keep away from hopeless distress.
You are a tree, and despair is a raging fire,
That spreads fast and relentlessly.
Don't surrender to despair,
As it will leave nothing of you but ashes.
You should be still thankful because,
You still have me here,
And I have you.[36]

Akhavān uses the same hopeful tone in the introduction to his next poetry collection, which was published in the same year, called *Duzakh Amma Sard* (Hell but Cold):

[36]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Seh Ketāb* (Tehran, Zemestān, 1374 [1995]), p. 221.

When the book was printed, and I reviewed the table of contents and a final glance at the structure, I realized something about myself - that was probably rooted in my spiritual and intellectual status. In this book, I have written more about "dawn" than before. The description of dawn in this collection is more than in my other collections. For example, in the *End of the Shāhnāmeh*, I had only one "tolu' " (Sunrise), but in this book, I have several sunrises and dawns with various names, interpretations, and insights, in different styles of ancient, new, and so on.[37]

It's worth mentioning that even the title of the book, 'Hell but Cold', reflects a change in Akavān's utopian ideals. It seems as if he doesn't view it as a complete dystopia, even though it's described as a 'hell' that is now 'cold'. This could be interpreted as a somewhat positive sign within the country's dystopian context, possibly serving as a hopeful indicator of better days to come.

In the two collections, *The Life Says We Must Live, Must Live* and *Hell but Cold*, Akhavān refrains from writing the history of the poems, and there are few clear signs to understand when the poems were composed. However, the collection itself was first published in April 1979. In a poem called '*Āhāy Ba To'am...*' (Hey, I Am Talking to You…) from the collection *Hell but Cold*, the speaker reflects on the night and the silence that prevails, which he has not yet become accustomed to. He cannot forget the sound of the recent explosions. Thus, the poem serves as a reminder of the past, rather than providing peace of mind during the night:

و تو می‌دانستی ای والاترین کلمه، ای روشن‌ترین،
که بی خوابی شبهای مرا چه ستمگرانه تاراج می‌کند.
زیرا گوشهایم هنوز هم به سکوت عادت نکرده‌اند.
و هنوز هم فراموش نمی‌توانند کرد
که در این نزدیک‌ها، در میدان محله‌ی ما،
هر روز چند بار صدای انفجار شنیده می‌شد.

And you knew, O the loftiest of words, O the brightest one,
You knew how cruelly sleeplessness ravages my nights.
For my ears have not yet grown accustomed to silence,
And they still cannot forget
That nearby, in the square of our neighbourhood,

[37]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Seh Ketāb*, p. 258- 259.

The noise of explosions was heard several times a day.[38]

As mentioned in the introduction, instead of emphasizing the extension of the night, and the lack of hope for escaping it in the poems of Akhavān, now the rise and brightness from the end of the night indicate a hopeful aspect of the circumstances:

ای دریچه‌ی روبه‌رو، در کوچه‌ی سلام،
می‌دانم که تو بهتر ازمن می‌بینی
چه بیدادی وزیدن گرفت و چه بیرحمتر از مهیب سیل
دریچه‌هامان را بستند و نامهامان را
از کوچه‌های نشانی پایین آوردند.
اما هنوز هم گل و شکوفه را چون میوه باور داریم.
و می‌دانیم که روشن، تنها فقط کلمه نیست.

Oh, opposite window, in the alley of greetings,
I know you see better than I do,
What atrocities began to blow and how more ruthlessly than a dreadful flood,
They closed our windows and brought down our names
From the allies of addresses.
But we still have faith in the flowers and blossoms, as much as the fruits.
And we know that "bright" is not just a word.[39]

In these poems, Akhavān takes on a very optimistic tone, which is in contrast to the pessimism of his earlier works, particularly those written after the 1953 coup. He speaks of light and brightness, and it could be argued that Akhavān never displayed such optimism towards social events in his life and had not welcomed them with such positivity. In another poem, which was apparently written around the time of the revolution but was published posthumously, he adopts a clearly optimistic tone towards the changing situation:

لحظه‌ها، لحظه‌های زنده و گرم
لحظه‌های شگرف و باعظمت
لحظه‌های مهابت و هیبت
پر از آنات ژرف و زاینده
با گذشته کسسته نسبت خویش
سخت در جنب و جوش آینده
لحظه‌های خطر، خبر، هیجان

[38]. Akhavān-sāles, *She Ketab*, pp. 291- 292.
[39]. Ibid., p. 292.

همه امیدبخش و طوفانی
همه آینده‌ساز و انسانی

Moments, living and warm moments,
Magnificent and majestic moments,
Moments of grandeur and awe,
Full of deep and fertile instants,
Moments that have severed their ties to the past,
Intensely involved in shaping the future,
Moments of danger, news, and excitement,
All hope-giving and stormy,
All future-building and humane. [40]

He refers to these moments as 'moments of freedom and hope', which seem to reflect the two main elements associated with his ideal society in the last stage of his poetry. Akhavān maintained his positive view of the revolution because he saw it as a struggle against imperialism, an effort towards freedom, an improvement in the quality of life, and a stand against the oppression of the previous regime. In an interview with *Omid-e Javān* magazine on March 19, 1979, he discussed the Revolution in words that suggest he was unhappy about the attitudes of some extremists, but he thought that the revolution happened for the right reasons and would go to the right direction: 'We did not have the Islamic Revolution to lose our national traditions. We had the Islamic Revolution to free ourselves, to improve our lives, and to get rid of oppression and tyranny. To be calm, comfortable, and free'.[41]

In 1979, he even seemed to have changed his previous ideas about 'the death of saviour' as he spoke of Ayatollah Khomeini (1902-1989), Iran's first Supreme Leader after the revolution in terms that suggested he saw Khomeini as fulfilling that role:

> Few religious figures had paid attention to certain progressive aspects of religion and its potential for social advancement. However, since assuming the role of Shia religious authority, Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers have emphasized and advanced the vibrant, progressive, and positive elements of religion with a forward-thinking vision, capturing people's attention and opening their minds to new possibilities. I see them as

[40]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *She'r-e Mehdi Akhavān-sāles (M. Omid): Matn-e Kāmel Dah Ketāb-e She'r* (Tehran: Zemestān, 1397 [2018], p. 1707.
[41]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Sedāye Heirat-e Bidār* (Tehran: Zemestān, 1382 [2003]), p. 223.

> powerful leaders in the fight against oppression, tyranny, and evil forces, working towards a better future for the oppressed and marginalized.[42]

Despite Akhavān's belief or perhaps hope that the Revolution was striving to establish a better society, his December 9, 1979 interview reflects a less optimistic tone. In the interview, he acknowledged the struggle and sacrifice that led to the Revolution but expressed dissatisfaction with certain aspects of society after the revolution. He noted that the revolution had not always shown a positive attitude towards national values and lamented that patriotic ideals have no manifestations in the dominant ideology. Despite his wholehearted acceptance of the anti-dictatorship struggle and the leadership of the revolution, he believed that the neglect of national values and the negative attitudes towards discussing or even mentioning the names of important historical figures such as Zoroaster and Mazdak after the revolution were inappropriate. He hoped that the struggle against global imperialism would produce positive results, but emphasised that after achieving final victory, national values should not be ignored. Nevertheless, he stated that we should wait and address our problems one by one:

> Our nation made a revolution, and we witnessed a national mass revolution. All social classes rose, and this was a new experience for our nation and our history. Now, this new experience has reached a point where we are witnessing its results. Whether good or bad, this is something that the majority of our nation's people have demanded. However, the work is not yet finished, and the burden of the revolution's mission has not reached its destination. As they say, we still have a long way to go to reach the promised land. If our nation does not achieve the desired result from this experience, it will rise again and fight once more. At this moment, the immediate and primary goal for our nation's fighters is to fight against global imperialism.[43]

Akhavān's view of the possible directions of the revolution gradually became more pessimistic. As reflected in the conversation that he had with Ayatollah Khamenei (1939-), Iran's supreme leader since 1989, Akhavān knew that his idea of an ideal society could never be achieved by those who seek absolute power. In this telephone conversation that happened in 1979, Akhavān had clearly stated that he did not want to cooperate with the newly established state. Khamenei later, in a speech in 1994, described the conversation in the following terms:

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[42]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *Sedāye Heirat-e Bidār,* pp. 220- 221.
[43]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, 'Mā beh Taraf-e No'ei Sosiyalim Eslāmi Pish Miravim', interview by Nāser Bozorg-mehr, *Iran-e Javān*, December 9, 1979.

I called a famous acquaintance and excitedly told him about the victory of the revolution. I asked if he knew … that the Shah's regime had been overthrown and things were changing. His response, however, was rather negative, and he stated that the essence of his belief was to always be against authority and not with it. I disagreed with him, saying that this was a wrong belief as authorities are not necessarily bad. If authorities are good, then it's better to serve and work with them. I, then, challenged him to be against the authority and power of America, which had made us miserable in 1979. We had some arguments before I hung up the phone. We never spoke again until his death.[44]

According to Faraj Sarkoohi, after this telephone conversation, Akhavān's state pension was cut off, and he was beaten up on the street. With the suppressive nature of the Islamic Republic becoming increasingly more evident in 1979, Akhavān also stopped composing hopeful poems to the extent that none of the poems that he composed after the revolution can be read as either utopian or dystopian. Even the events of the war era (1980-88) did not change Akhavān's perspective. While he composed three poems about the Iran-Iraq war and praised Iranian soldiers for defending Iran's borders in all of them, his overall perspective remained unchanged. In one of his last poems, written in April 1990, a few months before his death, he evoked the same image he had created in *The Hunted Man* (see chapter 4)— the image of a strange man who is not understood in his own society and cannot belong anywhere else.

ما نیستیم اهل این عالم که می‌بینید،
وز اهل عالم‌های دیگر نیز هم،
یعنی چه پس اهل کجا هستیم؟
از عالم هیچیم و چیزی کم.

We are not from this world that you see,
Nor from the other worlds,
What? So where do we belong, then?
We are from the realm of nothingness and lesser than that.[45]

As one can discern, despair and darkness reassert themselves in Akhavān's poetry. In the subsequent section, in an attempt to escape the encroaching darkness, the speaker decides to

[44]. Seyye-Ali Khamenei, 'Doshman-e Enqelāb Miguyad: Mā Mikhāhim ʿAlayhe Solteh Bashim', <https://farsi.khamenei.ir > [Accesses April 4, 2023]
[45]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *She'r-e Mehdi Akhavān-sāles*, p. 1695

switch on the light. However, it proves to be futile, as it only attracts flies and bugs, prompting the speaker to promptly extinguish it.

رفتم فراز بام خانه سخت لازم بود،
شب بود و مظلم بود و ظالم بود
آنجا چراغ افروختم، اطراف روشن شد
و پشه‌ها و سوسک‌ها بسیار
دیدم که اینک روشنایم خورده خواهد شد
خاموش کردم روشنایم را
و پشه‌ها و سوسک‌ها رفتند
غم رفت، شادی رفت
و هول و حسرت ترک من گفتند
و اختران خفتند

I went up to the rooftop, it was really necessary,
It was night, and it was dark and oppressive.
I lit a lamp, and the surroundings became bright.
I saw many mosquitoes and cockroaches
I saw that my light would be swallowed.
I turned off my light,
And the mosquitoes and cockroaches went away.
Sadness went away, joy went away,
And fear and regret left me.
And the stars went to sleep.[46]

In the darkness and loneliness of the speaker, a saviour shows up. Unlike Chidāl, the saviour of *The Haunted Mand*, here the saviour is not a man from the sea, but a girl who is herself the spirit of water:

آنگاه دیدم، آن طرف‌تر از سکنج بام
یک دختر زیباتر از رویای شبنم‌ها
تنها
انگار روح آبی و آب است
انگار هم بیدار و هم خواب است
انگار غم در کسوت شادی است
انگار تصویر خدا در بهترین قاب است

[46]. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *She'r-e Mehdi Akhavān-sāles*, pp. 1696- 1697.

Then I saw, at the roof corner,
A girl more beautiful than the dream of dewdrops
Alone
As if she was the spirit of the blue water,
As if she is both awake and asleep,
As if she is the sorrow that is dressed in the garb of joy
As if she is the image of God in the best frame.[47]

The image he creates of the saviour is a reconciliation of opposites, sorrow in the garb of happiness, and asleep beside wakefulness. The speaker and the saviour both come down from the rooftop and sit down to talk with each other:

از بام پایین آمدیم آرام
همراه با مشتی غم و شادی
[...]
آنگه نشستیم و به خوبی خوب فهمیدیم
باز آن چراغ روز و شب خامش‌تر از تاریک
هیچیم و چیزی کم.

We came down from the rooftop calmly,
Along with a handful of sadness and joy.
[...]
Then we sat and understood well
Once again, the light of day and the night was quieter than darkness,
We are nothing and lesser than that.[48]

In the final image presented by Akhavān, the night is gloomy, the brightness of the day has no hope left in it, and both the saviour and the speaker are equally powerless and hopeless. Despite the many ups and downs along the way and the many changes regarding Utopia, Akhavān finally abandons his speaker in an eternal dystopian space which contains no hope for any change either now or in the future. From the memories that Simin Behbahāni quotes from Akhavān, it can be understood that she not only felt this despair in poetry but also in his personal life, saying in one instance: 'I say I don't want this life, what do you have to say?'[49]

Akhavān died rather young in his early 60s on August 26, 1990.

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47. Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, *She'r-e Mehdi Akhavān-sāles*, p. 1697.
48. Ibid., p. 1698.
49. Simin Behbahāni , *Majmu'eh-ye Dāstān-hā va Yād-neveshteh-hā*, p. 222.

A World Full of Light: Fereydun Moshiri's Last Utopia

Unlike the other three poets, Fereydun Moshiri did not make any direct or indirect comments bout the 1979 Revolution. As in the case of the 1953 coup, he remained silent about the political events before and after the revolution. Instead, he held onto his ideal image of society, which, rather than being related to everyday politics or the current situation in Iran, focused on human values, compassion, love, beauty, and art, which he considered beyond these concepts. As in the previous decades, Moshiri's postrevolutionary poems do not limit his dystopian depiction or utopian solution to a specific geography. Nevertheless, always talks about his personal connection to Iran.

دلم با صد هزاران رشته با این خلق،
با این مهر
با این ماه
با این خاک و با این آب...
پیوسته‌است

My heart is attached with thousands of threads to these people
To this sun,
To this moon,
To this soil and this water...[50]

In the poem 'I Don't Want to Die,' Moshiri presents the most comprehensive image of his utopian city, which, in general, summarizes everything he has written about different cities:

نمی‌خواهم بمیرم تا محبت را به انسان‌ها بیاموزم
بمانم تا عدالت را برافرازم بیفروزم
خرد را مهر را تا جاودان بر تخت بنشانم
به پیش فرداهای بهتر گل برافشانم
چه فردایی، چه دنیایی!
جهان سرشار از عشق و گل و موسیقی و نور است...

I don't want to die as I want to teach love to humans,
To stay to uphold and achieve justice,
To place knowledge and love on the seat of power,
To scatter flowers on the path of better tomorrows,
What a tomorrow, what a world!

[50]. Fereydun Moshiri, Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān: Kolliyāt-e Ash'ār, II, 963.

The world is filled with love, flowers, music and light.[51]

In his unique view of utopia, different from the other three poets, Moshiri presents a vision of a future utopian Iran in his latest work. He addresses the issue of the limitations imposed on women after the 1979 Revolution and presents a new saviour figure: a woman. While Shamlou had previously portrayed a female saviour and Akhavān also referred to a female figure in his latest work, Shamlou's saviour remains a rescuer for the individual, and Akhavān's saviour is as powerless as the speaker in dealing with and changing their circumstances. Moshiri describes the current state of Iran with words such as 'swamp' and 'cemetery-land', but he envisions a future utopian Iran as a place where women have achieved equal rights and where love, beauty, and art prevail beyond political and geographical boundaries.:

بر سر ما سایه ی اهریمن است
هستی ما زیر پای دشمن است
در مزار آباد ما آهسته رو
کاندر این مرداب خون تا دامن است

The shadow of Evil is upon us,
Our existence is under the feet of the enemy.
Walk slowly in our cemetery land,
As the blood reaches your thighs in this swamp.[52]

In the far future, he sees the image of a saviour, a woman who has let her hair loose and surrendered it to the wind. He takes hope from women and believes they will be the leaders of Iran's future and the ultimate creators of utopia:

در افق ها چهره ای می پَروَرَد
ماه رخساری که پشت توسن است
گیسوان افشانده بر تاراج باد
تیغ بر کف راست چون روئین تن است
من ز مردان نا امیدم بی گمان
کاوه ی آینده ی ایران زن است

On the horizon, a face appears.
A moon-faced beauty riding on a wild horse

[51]. Fereydun Moshiri, *Bāztāb-e Nafas-e Sobhdamān: Kolliyāt-e Ash'ār*, II, 963.
[52]. Feredun Moshiri, 'Kāveh', in *Faslnameh-ye Ārmān*, No. 17 (September, 2021), pp 84- 86. (This poem is censored from Moshiri's collections that are published in Iran.)

Her hair spread out in the wind.

An upright sword is in her hand, as she is invulnerable.

I certainly have no hopes in men.

The future Kāveh [saviour] of Iran is a woman.[53]

This saviour is depicted in the shape of ancient saviours, a beautiful human riding a horse and brandishing a sword. He is also named Kāveh. Kāveh, as depicted in the *Shāhnāmeh*, is a heroic blacksmith who rebels against the tyrant Zahhāk and helps Fereydun to take the throne from him. In Persian literature, he is characterized as a symbol of a saviour. In the story of Zahhāk, briefly mentioned in the first chapter, the devil kisses Zahhāk's shoulders, and from these kisses, two serpents grow. Later, Ahriman disguised as a physician tells Zahhāk that to calm the pain caused by these serpents, he must feed them with the brains of two young men every day. Kāveh had lost seventeen out of his eighteen sons, and upon the arrest of his last son, he went to the palace of Zahhāk crying out against the injustice and rising against him. Moshiri also sees women in similar circumstances as being under pressure and oppression for many centuries:

زانکه این آزرده جانان قرن هاست
طوق خون آلودشان بر گردن است
صبرشان روزی به پایان می رسد
پیش من این نکته روز روشن است

Since these suffering beings have for centuries,

Had the bloody collar of oppression around their neck.

Their patience will eventually come to an end,

This point is clear to me as is the daylight.[54]

Finally, with the realization that he has become hopeless like other men, he concludes the poem by repeating:

من ز مردان نا امیدم بی گمان
کاوه ی آینده ی ایران زن است

I certainly have no hopes in men.

The future Kāveh [saviour] of Iran is a woman.[55]

[53]. Feredun Moshiri, 'Kāveh', 85.
[54]. Ibid.
[55]. Ibid., p. 86.

Unlike the other three poets, Moshiri never directly engaged in political events, and rarely made political issues the subject of his poetry. At best, he looked at events through a cultural and social lens and made implicit ethical comments. For this reason, although his utopia in the post-coup era resembles the utopias of other poets in theme, in the end, the image he presents of utopia after the revolution is completely different from that of the other three poets. It can be said that among the four poets examined in this thesis, Moshiri's views about the foundations of utopia were the most unchanging. The values that he considered necessary for founding a utopian society remained unchanged and unaffected by the political events of Iran.

Moshiri passed away in his 70s on October 24, 2000.

Conclusion

The year 1979 marked a significant shift in the political and social landscape of Iran, as the Iranian Revolution brought about a wave of optimism and hope for a better future. This newfound optimism was reflected in the poetry of the time, with many poets writing about the promise of a 'new dawn', a 'brighter future', and the 'arrival of spring'. The ideal society, the utopia, seemed within reach, and there was a sense that Iran was on the cusp of a new era. However, this optimism was short-lived, as the reality of the post-revolutionary era set in. The new government struggled to maintain stability and order by imposing new forms of suppression, and the country was soon embroiled in a long and bloody war with Iraq. The promise of spring and renewal gave way to a long and dark night as the country was plunged into a quagmire of conflicts, state and party violence, war and chaos.

The poets of the time were not immune to these changes, and their poetry reflected the shifting mood of the nation. The promise of utopianism was replaced with a sense of despair and disillusionment, as the dream of a better future gave way to the reality of a dystopian present. The language of hope and renewal was replaced with expressions of darkness and despair, as the poets struggled to come to terms with the new reality of their country. Ultimately, the contradictory visions of utopianism were all crushed, and the country was plunged into a long and dark night of terror and poverty from which it has yet to fully emerge.

Though there was a brief resurgence of utopian themes around the time of the 1979 Revolution, after the Revolution, the frequency and quantity of utopian poems by these four poets decreased significantly. Despite this decrease, the poets' perspectives remained largely unchanged, except for Behbahāni and Moshiri, who no longer saw utopia as a program to be realized

through human effort. Instead, they view it as a phenomenon that will materialize eventually, without knowing when or how. In contrast, Shamlou and Akhavān appear to have lost faith in themselves and others like them, as they do not anticipate a future that is any different from their current reality.

The Iran-Iraq War, which raged from 1980 to 1988, did not significantly impact these poets' idealization of society. While war-related poems can be found in the collections of all four poets, the utopian poems of this period are considered an extension of the previous era, previously explored under the titles of 'death of utopia' and 'lovable dystopia'. Shamlou's poetry during this time exhibits a 'dystopia fatigue', which creates a hopeful tone towards utopia. However, this theme is not continuous, nor does it become the dominant one.

Overall, the promise of utopia and optimism towards it that peaked in 1979 with the Revolution soon gave way to a bleak reality. The poets' perspectives on utopia remained largely unchanged, despite the societal changes brought about by the Revolution and the war. They continued to write about utopia, albeit less frequently, with Behbahāni and Moshiri offering a more passive approach, while Shamlou and Akhavān expressed a sense of hopelessness.

The noteworthy point to be considered in the utopian poetry of this era is that, although it seems that utopia should be related to the direct political positions of individuals, Moshiri's work shows that even for someone who tries as much as possible to stay away from political statements and explicit positions, the utopian image ultimately takes a form that is similar to the works of his contemporaries.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, dystopia was the everyday living experience of these poets, while utopia was an ideal they created in their minds and tried to realize in the real world. However, what emerges from their poetry is that they spent their entire lives in dystopia and all their efforts to bring about change in this dystopia failed, further cementing their dystopian views. They left life behind while utopia remained eternally in their minds, and even a corner of what they wanted from the ideal did not come true in their real lives.

CONCLUSION

As it was discussed in the current study, with the emergence of civilization and the establishment of the first mythical city by Jamshid, the mythical king of Iran, the concept of utopia took shape in the Persian-speaking world. Utopias, characterized by absolute happiness, abundance, and eternal youth, gradually appear in various forms and dimensions in Iranian mythological sources. From Jamshid's kingdom, which encompasses the entire inhabited world (the Seven Kingdoms), to ideal city-states depicted in mythological, literary, or philosophical works, different types of utopias are depicted. It is worth noting that utopias are not always depicted as flawless and perfect societies; rather, they often take the form of ideal kingdoms where the best of human capabilities are portrayed.

Whether we explore literary, mythological, philosophical, or mystical sources, we discover several commonalities among classical utopias in the Persian-speaking world. Firstly, these utopias emerge in parallel with the rise of urbanization and are closely intertwined with city life. Secondly, human efforts alone are insufficient to construct a utopia, as gods and religion play direct or indirect roles in its creation and maintenance. Thirdly, the laws governing utopias derive from higher institutions than men, and adherence to these laws ensures the persistence of the utopia. Fourthly, hierarchy often serves as an inseparable aspect of the ideal society, and any disruption in the hierarchy leads to chaos (for exceptions see Chapter One). Lastly, except for mythological depictions of eternal city-states inhabited by immortal souls who will assist the saviours in their mission, every utopia ultimately faces its end. Almost all these characteristics changed with the advent of modernity in Iran.

In the early 19th century, as Iran increasingly engaged with the West, Iranians encountered a significantly more powerful and advanced 'Other'. This interaction with the 'Other' sparked a transformation in the concept of utopia in modern Iran. This evolved utopia can be seen as a departure from the classical 'ideal kingdom' concept. In classical literature, the core aspect of an 'ideal kingdom' was to create a utopia that wasn't necessarily perfect or flawless, but rather the best achievable by human potential. However, with the onset of modernity in Iran, the characteristics of utopia expanded beyond the description of a king's attributes. The type of ideal polity became a subject of scrutiny, and monarchy ceased to be the ideal form of governance. These unfolding events brought about a complete shift in the concept of utopia, with new principles replacing those that had governed classical utopias. In fact, prior to the

Constitutional Revolution, three fundamental principles evolved with the onset of modernization in Iran.

Firstly, religion lost its central role in the construction and maintenance of a utopia, leading modern utopias to adopt heterodox positions concerning religion. In these modern utopias, religion gradually yielded ground to modern science and technological advancements. In the subsequent phase, as the influence of religion diminishes and its role in legislation wanes, the need for a parliament is recognized. All individuals, regardless of their social status, bear equal accountability toward these laws. Ultimately, the parliamentary system and democracy are considered suitable for an ideal society, and turning the people into citizens becomes the next defining characteristic of utopian ideals, particularly this can happen through public education. However, following the failure of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran and the subsequent coup in 1921, a wave of dystopian literature prevails in Persian literature. Consequently, social conditions are depicted in a dystopian manner, where escape from such conditions seems impossible. In this period, utopia transforms into a phenomenon that seems within reach in the near future, attainable after a phase of struggle.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, political events and incidents in Iran intensified, and under the influence of each of these events, utopian literature in Iran changed in content. To examine the depiction of utopia in this period, four prominent Iranian poets, Mehdi Akhavān-sāles, Simin Behbahāni, Fereydun Moshiri and Ahmad Shamlou, were selected for the study. Therefore the impact of four significant political events, including the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran (1941), the 1953 coup, the 1979 revolution, and the Iran-Iraq war (1980- 1988) on their writing was examined.

These studies have shown that the establishment of an open political atmosphere after the invasion of Iran, which led to the formation of political parties, most notably the Tudeh Party, with socialist organizations, cast a hopeful shadow on Iranian utopian literature. According to this perspective, utopia, which in content is closer to socialist utopias, was seen as a phenomenon that would soon be realized, and to achieve it, one had to pass through the bloody path of revolution and social movements. However, with the occurrence of the 1953 coup and the oppressive atmosphere that prevailed in the country, this utopian theme quickly transformed into a dystopian one.

In the circumstances that unfolded, two approaches to utopia can be observed. Firstly, the society is depicted in a dystopian manner, where there is no hope for its reform, and it is not

suggested that any effort be made to change it. In a way, the poets turn into the enemies of utopia. In the second approach, since there is no hope for transforming the dystopian conditions, the concept of 'lovable dystopia' emerges, and the poets express their ambivalent feelings towards this society and country through a sense of attachment to the space. On one hand, they consider it a dystopia in which they are under pressure, but on the other hand, it is a place they desire to live in.

This cycle of hope and disappointment repeated itself before and after the 1979 revolution. In a short period of time in February and March 1979, the poets once again resumed their utopian poetry, but with the establishment of the Islamic Republic government, their hope turned into despair once again. Unlike the expectations, the eight years of the Iran-Iraq war did not have a significant influence on the utopic poems of these four poets. In their latest utopian poems, they bear a strong resemblance to the poems written after the 1953 coup. This analysis demonstrates that in modern Persian poetry, utopia is constantly changing under the influence of numerous political events that occur. The success of social movements or the hopeful horizon depicted greatly affects the poets' approach to the cycle of utopia/dystopia writing.

In conclusion, it's essential to highlight that the field of utopian studies is a rapidly expanding area with numerous unexplored dimensions. Within the context of Persian literature, there is a significant need for further research. The field remains relatively underrepresented, with limited comprehensive studies, and this presents an exciting opportunity for scholars to delve deeper into the nuances of Persian utopianism. Future research endeavours could explore the evolution of utopian thought in Persian literature, delve into the impact of sociopolitical changes on utopian narratives, and provide a more extensive analysis of the thematic variations and the influence of Western ideologies on Persian utopian works. As the field of Persian utopian studies continues to develop, it promises to unveil a wealth of insights and perspectives waiting to be explored.

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