

Gravestone of Fakhr od-Doleh at Ebn-e Bab-e Vey:

“ aramgah marhoumeh maghfoureh ferdoos magham hazrat ellieh alieh Hajjieh Khanoum Ashraf ol-Molouk Amini Fakhr od-Doleh sabieh alahazrat Mozaffar ed-Din Shah Qajar va marhoumeh khanom hazrat olia ke dar mah ziolhajah 1300 hejri motavaled va dar tarikkeh 25 deymah 1334 shamsi daie hagh ra labbeik va berahmat-e izadi peyvast.”

“ Grave of the resident of Paradise, Her Highness, the late Hajjieh Khanom Ashraf ol-Molouk Amini Fakhr od-Doleh daughter of the Exalted Majesty Mozaffar ed-Din Shah and Her Highness, the late Hazrat Olia, born Ziolkhajah 1300 (AH), died 25 Deymah 1334 (solar)”.

Photograph by Kamran Najafzadeh.



Nasser Mohajer

Fakhr od-Doleh, the Woman and the Legend



Princess Ashraf ol-Molouk Qajar known as Fakhr od-Doleh, the renowned daughter of Mozaffar ed-Din Shah. For this translation I have chosen extracts which are most representative of the turning points in the life of this Qajar Princess and indicative of the defining moments of the evolution of her persona, from a historical viewpoint.

Ashraf ol-Molouk was born in the principality of Tabriz, the capital of the province of Azarbaijan in 1883. Her father, Mozaffar ed-Din Mirza, the eldest son of Nasser ed-Din Shah, was the governor of that city which by tradition, housed the court of the Crown Prince. Her mother Sorour os-Saltaneh was the daughter of Prince Firouz Mirza 'Nosrat od-Doleh' and the sister of Abdol Hossein Mirza 'Farman Farma'. After Mozaffar ed-Din Mirza repudiated his first wife, Omm ol-Khaghan, the daughter of Amir Kabir and mother of the future Mohammad Ali Shah, Sorour os-Saltaneh, succeeded her as the one and only *aghdi* spouse of the Crown Prince. It has been recounted that she was a pious woman, whose evening prayers could last for hours. It has also been recounted that she was a recluse and her company was mostly limited to her sister Malek Taj (Najm os-Saltaneh) and her brother Abdol Hossein Mirza 'Farman Farma'. It is believed that this powerful woman was bad-tempered and despite being one of the crown prince's favorite's, her relations with him were not harmonious. Furthermore, while nothing was refused to her, she lived parsimoniously.¹ Of Hazrat Olia's mania, many stories have been told. Amongst them, that "She covered all corners of her house with white cotton fabric and allowed no one inside."²

Before Ashraf ol-Molouk, Sorour os-Saltaneh gave birth to two girls from Mozaffar ed-Din Mirza: Malek

ol-Molouk (Shokouh od-Doleh) in 1880 and Shokouh os-Saltaneh in 1882. A son, Nasser ed-Din Mirza was born in 1887.

We do not know much about the relationship between Hazrat Olia and her daughters and only son. But it is known that they all "... feared her. The only one who stood up to her was Ashraf ol-Molouk."³ It has been said that: "being a favourite of her father, she did not fear her mother, so much so that whenever she was taken to task by the latter, she would hide behind her father and thus shun punishment."⁴

Contrary to her sisters who were "humble and shy", Fakhr od-Doleh was "assertive and sociable... also quite intelligent."⁵ She was educated at the Palace's *Maktabkhaneh* (pre-modern school prevailing in Iran of that time), "where the children of the Crown Prince from different wives were taught the verses of the Koran, reading, writing, rhetoric, grammar and mathematics."⁶

Fakhr od-Doleh grew up in the Tabriz principality until she was thirteen. An episode she repeated time and again relates to her encounter with a Naderi Princess, a descendant of Nader Shah Afshar: "Once I rushed into my father's office without permission. He was talking to an old lady sitting in front of him. Without showing respect to his guest, I interrupted their conversation to ask a question from my father. When the old lady left, he told me off and said: my daughter, you behaved very badly. That old lady was a Naderi princess. As a member of a former ruling dynasty, you should have treated her with respect."⁷

It was also in that very Tabriz Palace that Fakhr od-Doleh learnt of her engagement to the son of Najm os-Saltaneh, her cousin Mohammad 'Mossadegh os-Saltaneh'!



In the month of June 1896, Fakhr od-Doleh moved to Tehran with the caravan carrying her now-crowned father and a number of Tabriz Courtiers to the Capital. On the 4th of May of that very year, Nasser ed-Din Shah had been assassinated by Mirza Reza Kermani and within two days, Mozaffar ed-Din Mirza was crowned in the city of Tabriz. The Royal suite arrived at the Golestan Palace, which was to become the home of Fakhr od-Doleh for the next year or so. Unfortunately there is no record of this exciting period of her life.

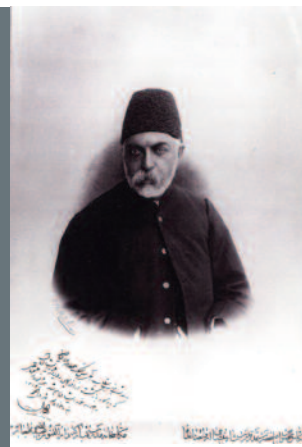
In October 1896, an air of excitement pervaded the *andarouni* of the Golestan Palace. No sooner was the engagement of Princess Fakhr od-Doleh announced, than all chitchats and whispers converged on that blissful event. The bridegroom was to be Mohammad ‘Mossadegh os-Saltaneh’, now the head of Finance and the treasurer of Khorassan province. Afzal ol-Molk, the court historian of Mozaffar ed-Din Shah, describes this fifteen-year-old youth as such: “... intelligent, well educated, polite and well-mannered beyond comparison. His conversation, behavior, hospitality and respect for others are such that he never departs from his calm and magnanimity;... One who displays such qualities in his youth is destined to figure amongst the greatest personalities.”⁸

Preparations and “the usual arrangements for the marriage had been completed” when it was suddenly learnt that Hazrat Olia “had broken off the marriage [of Fakhr od-Doleh with Mossadegh os-Saltaneh] and turned back all presents.”⁹ The Court had hardly come out of its bewilderment when another astonishing news broke out: Najm os-Saltaneh had committed suicide but didn’t die! This news was followed by telltales such as “Najm os-Saltaneh... has swallowed opium, but not as much as to die.”¹⁰

This tale had no real basis. The truth of the matter was that Najm os-Saltaneh had been so offended and depressed by her sister’s conduct that she preferred death to a life of disgrace. According to Dr. Adcock, the physician of the British Embassy, who was called immediately at her bedside, Najm os-Saltaneh “swallowed a whole stick of opium, which, however, did not take immediate effect owing to the paper in which it was wrapped having adhered to it ...in spite of her struggles and her refusal to swallow any emetics”, Dr. Adcock succeeded in saving the life of Najm os-Saltaneh “by surreptitiously injecting an antidote into the calf of her leg, for which he received from her several rounds of abuse.”¹¹

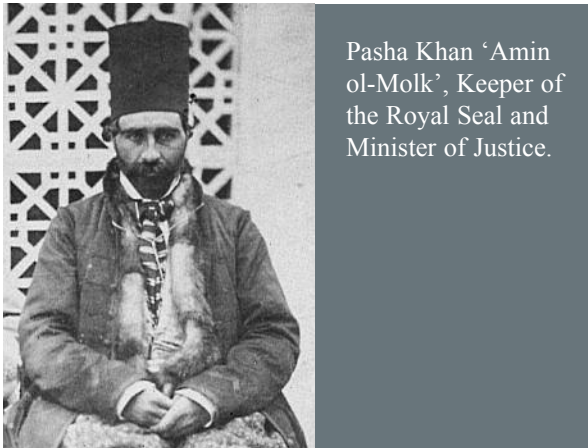
Why did Hazrat Olia break off the marriage of Fakhr

Mirza Ali Khan
‘Amin od-Doleh’.
Primie Minister of
Persia 1897-1898.
Photograph by
Abdollah Mirza
Qajar.
Photo: courtesy of
Amb. Iradj Amini.



od-Doleh with her bright and promising nephew? To my knowledge, no research has been made on this episode as of now. The little information that exists is extracted from accounts left by eminent personalities of the epoch. In these masculine accounts, the role of Hazrat Olia has been entirely brushed aside. Instead fingers are pointed towards Amin od-Doleh, who for the preservation of his position and prerogatives had compelled his son to repudiate his wife and ask for the hand of the Shah’s daughter. It has even been suggested that “Amin od-Doleh saw Bahram Khan the eunuch and told him: ‘if you persuade Hazrat Olia to consent to giving the Shah’s daughter (the fiancée of Mossadegh os-Saltaneh) to my son, I will give you six thousand *tomans*’.”¹² Interestingly enough the only person who has unveiled the plot is Charles Hardinge, the British Ambassador in Tehran. In a report to the Foreign secretary, Lord Salisbury, he writes: “The explanation of the action of the Shah’s wife in breaking off this marriage was difficult to find, as she is known to be a lady of great cleverness and to be very fond of intrigue, until a few days ago, when I learnt, confidentially, and on the very best authority, that she had decided to marry her daughter to the *Moin ol-Molk*, the only son of the *Sadr Azam*, and Minister of the Treasury and Customs, and that her idea in doing so was to obtain the aid and assistance of the *Sadr Azam* for the appointment of her infant son, Mirza Nasr ed-Din, as (*valiahd*) in the place of the actual *Valiahd*. She has never been able to forget the fact that her eldest son, who would probably have been *Valiahd*, was poisoned about six years ago by the adherents of the actual *Valiahd*, and having failed to obtain through her brother, the *Farman Farma*, the deposition of the *Valiahd* and the appointment of her infant son in his place (as reported in my dispatch No. 121 of the 12th





Pasha Khan 'Amin ol-Molk', Keeper of the Royal Seal and Minister of Justice.

September), she now bases hopes upon the assistance to be obtained from the *Sadr Azam* through the marriage of his son to her daughter. A further complication is to be found in the fact that the *Moin ol-Molk* is already married to the daughter of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and that he will have to divorce his present wife before marrying a Royal Princess.”¹³

Mohsen Kan 'Moin ol-Molk', the son of the enlightened intellectual and seasoned reformer Ali Khan 'Amin od-Doleh', was born in 1877 in Tehran.¹⁴ His mother, Mohtaram od-Doleh, was the daughter of Pasha Khan 'Amin ol-Molk', a prominent personality of Nasser ed-Din Shah's era, who before his death by accident, was Keeper of the Royal Seal and later Minister of Justice. Mohtaram od-Doleh was one of the wealthiest women of the late Qajar era. Having lost many of her newborn infants, she was particularly fond of her only son Mohsen Khan.¹⁵ Mohsen Khan was dearly loved by his father as well. However, he had not inherited much of the latter's talent, strong personality, knowledge and vision. Although he had studied French at an early age under the guidance of a certain Mademoiselle Diamantin and accompanied his father on several trips to Europe, he never mastered the French language. In line with the tradition of the Qajar aristocracy, he entered public service at an early age. At twelve he was given the title of *Monshi Hozour* (Secretary in Presence); a title held earlier by his father.¹⁶ When he was barely fifteen, his father asked the hand of Mirza Mohsen Khan Moshir od-Doleh's daughter for him. Moshir od-Doleh, at the time Ambassador in Istanbul and later Foreign Minister, was known to be Amin od-Doleh's closest friend. His daughter Bibi (Monir od-Doleh) was a modern lady, educated in Turkey, well-versed in French and Turkish,

fond of books and sciences and not particularly inclined towards domestic life, frivolity and facetiousness.”¹⁷ By marrying her, Mohsen Khan inherited his father-in-Law's former title of 'Moin-el-Molk'.¹⁸ At the age of nineteen, his father appointed him head of the country's Postal Service.¹⁹ There is no indication however, that he appreciated this job, having no ambition and not much taste for hard work. Seemingly he preferred a life of indolence and indifference.

On Wednesday December 7th 1898, which coincided with the birthday of Ali ebn Taleb, the first Imam of the Shiites, Muzaffar ed-Din Shah elevated Mirza Ali Khan 'Amin od-Doleh' to the rank of Sadr Azam. Soon after arrangements were made for the religious and civil wedding of Fakhr od-Doleh with Mohsen Khan 'Moin ol-Molk'. It took place on Monday 20th January 1898 in the Gallery of the Golestan Palace, in the presence of the Royal family and the high dignitaries of the realm.²⁰ "...when Mohsen Khan 'Moshir od-Doleh', the Foreign Minister, entered the Gallery, a sensation of sorrow swept over the gathering.”²¹ In the meantime, Bibi (Monir od-Doleh) had left Amin od-Doleh's Park for her father's residence, before being officially divorced by her husband.

Two days after the religious wedding, the ceremony of civil marriage was held at Amin od-Doleh's residence, the most modern edifice in Tehran. It was built in that vast park in the middle of which stood an ornate pavilion surrounded by "a lake adorned with several fountains and on which three or four superb and well-equipped boats were always ready for leisure. Greenhouses, gazebos, ponds and beautiful flower beds enhanced the park's appearance and splendor.”²² "...the night the bride was being driven from the Imperial harem to the residence of the *Sadr Azam*, the weather was very cold. The streets along the way were decorated with arches from which hung chandeliers and lanterns...The soldiers who lined the streets until five hours past midnight died almost of cold, even though they had lighted fires to warm themselves up. ...most of the ordinary people missed the scene, having remained in their homes to avoid suffering from the cold.”²³

That marriage was somehow dubious and unfortunate. As stated before, Ali Khan 'Amin od-Doleh' and Mohsen Khan 'Moshir od-Doleh' were the closest of friends. "There was never any disagreement or difference of opinion between them.”²⁴ The former had named his son after the latter. The latter had bequeathed his former title to the former's son. "People did not expect a wise and experienced personality like Amin od-



Doleh to resort to union with the Royal family only to strengthen his position.”²⁵ Otherwise, “the marriage of the Shah’s daughter with the son of his *vazir* or the union of the Shah’s sister with the *vazir* had historical precedents in Iran; to the extent that old Iranian novels and Persian tales are filled with those instances.”²⁶

Leaving the Golestan Palace to live in Amin od-Doleh’s Park opened a new chapter in Fakr od-Doleh’s life. She now had frequent occasions to see and converse with her enlightened and knowledgeable father-in-law, moments which left a deep and lasting impression on the young lady and greatly contributed to the growth of her personality. Fakhr od-Doleh’s fifth son, Dr. Ali Amini, depicts the essence of that relationship as: “... because of her intelligence and natural talent, my mother was particularly cherished by her father-in-law. She used to tell us about her conversations with him and the latter’s great patience with her. In his spare time, he would discuss various matters with my mother and do his best to satisfy the curiosity of his young daughter-in-law. My mother revered and admired her father-in-law and yearned to learn from him”²⁷

In consequence, Fakhr od-Doleh was awakened to the urgent need and necessity of social progress and took an interest in economic development and public education. Furthermore, the ongoing political clashes in the court, found another meaning for her and she looked at power struggle with another eye. She would now Endeavour to strengthen Amin od-Doleh’s standing at the Court and help him succeed. In this regard, Dr. Amini’s account is revealing: “In the political clashes between my grandfather and Mozaffar ed-Din Shah, which were because of the jealousy and slander of the courtiers, my mother endeavoured in spite of her young age to act as a go-between and being a favourite of her father, she brought the issues to his attention.”²⁸

From then on, Fakhr od-Doleh became a reliable political confidant of Amin od-Doleh. She recalled that one day when “The late Mirza Ali Khan ‘Amin od-Doleh’ was weary and depressed from plots and intrigues”, he confided in her: “When I was serving as the Private Secretary of Nasser ed-Din Shah, many a time he offered me the Premiership. Although I regarded him as intelligent, determined and strong-willed, I declined the offer. I was conscious that I could not cope with his despotic character. On one occasion, he retorted: ‘Amin od-Doleh, so you want to play hard to get?! I can have any Sadr Azam that I fancy...’ Yet when your father became King, as I knew he was kind, good-hearted and liberal, I accepted the responsibility. Unfortunately his ill health and indecision dispose him

to listen to an entourage who have no interest but their own and sacrifice national interest to their whims and wishes... and this weakness is such that working for him has become difficult if not impossible.”²⁹

The intrigues of the courtiers ultimately were efficacious. On 5th June 1898, considering any resistance to be futile, Amin od-Doleh tendered his resignation, which was immediately accepted by the Sovereign. Even though Fakhr od-Doleh stood unflinchingly by him, Amin od-Doleh decided to leave Tehran and take sanctuary in his estate of Lasht-e Nesha, where he died on 2nd of February 1899: “...After the departure of my father-in-law and my husband, I was informed by the Shah’s *andaroun* that ‘your husband and father-in-law are to be driven from Qazvin to Ardebil and that their life may be in danger.’ Upon hearing this news, I left immediately for Qazvin. My father-in-law and my husband were surprised to see me at their abode in the middle of the night. However I did not mention what I had heard and merely said: I have decided to accompany you to Rasht and then I’ll return to Tehran. The day after my arrival in Qazvin, a courier arrived from Tehran with a letter from the Shah commanding me to return to Tehran immediately. I ignored the order. Our stopover in Qazvin lasted several days during which couriers came one after another and were compelled to go back empty-handed. Finally, the eunuch Motamed ol-Harem was dispatched...’ the Shah has said that if you do not heed his command, I should take you back by force.”³⁰

Fakhr od-Doleh defied the threat and accompanied the exiles to Rasht. Upon her return to Tehran, she went on standing up for the exiled *Sadr Azam*, who had settled down in Lasht-e Nesha, a district near the city of Rasht, which he had purchased from Mozaffar ed-Din Shah.³¹ He was so disillusioned that he opted not to return to Tehran. Yet the machinations and backbitings continued at the court with Fakhr od-Doleh doing her best to neutralise Amin od-Doleh’s enemies and smooth over the Shah’s anger towards his ex-Prime Minister. She was wary of conspiracies planned against that reform-minded statesman...³² She also pleaded with Hazrat Olia to convince the Shah to annul the prohibition against Amin od-Doleh to leaving Iran and travelling to Mecca.³³ Mindful that none of the courtiers would take notice, she wrote on behalf of Hazrat Olia in the margin of the Shah’s authorization: “...Upon your arrival in Mecca, cable His Majesty the King, so that he knows your real objective has been pilgrimage to the Holy



City... To prevent your voyage from being disclosed and hindered by the *Sadr Azam* [Amin ol-Soltan]... we have dispatched Haji Mirza Fathollah.”³⁴

The devotion of Fakhr od-Doleh to Amin od-Doleh lasted beyond the end of the latter’s life on 8th June 1904.

We know but little about Fakhr od-Doleh during the period between the exile of Amin od-Doleh to Lasht-e Nesha and his death. We know, however, that she lived in the Park, was in close contact with her father-in-law who trusted her more than anyone else; to the extent that he bequeathed her Lasht-e Nesha and³⁵ entrusted her with the care of his wife Mohtaram od-Doleh, who in the absence of her husband, had fallen into deep melancholia.³⁶ She also shouldered responsibility of bringing up her four sons from Mohsen Khan ‘Moin ol-Molk’, who during the six-year exile of Amin od-Doleh, chose to stay with his father. It should be noted that upon his return to Tehran, Mohsen Khan did not seek any employment and mostly stayed at home. However Mozaffar ed-Din Shah granted him the title of Amin od-Doleh and included him in the royal suite in his hundred-day-voyage to Russia, Austria, Belgium and France, from 6th June to 13th of September 1906. The death of Mozaffar ed-Din Shah and the advent of Mohammad Ali Mirza marked a new turning point in Fakhr od-Doleh’s life. The relations between sister and half-brother had never been amiable. Furthermore, Mohammad Ali Mirza had no affinity with his brother-in-law, Mohsen Khan ‘Amin od-Doleh’. Not only did this state of affairs lead to a decline of Fakhr od-Doleh’s influence at the Court, but also left the couple anxious about their very future.³⁷ It was probably this anxiety along with the progress of the Constitutional movement and the upsurge of peasant revolts, especially in Gilan, that prompted Mohsen Khan ‘Amin od-Doleh and Ashraf ol-Molouk ‘Fakhr od-Doleh’ to rent the district of Lasht-e Nesha on a ten-year lease to one of the most prominent and powerful constitutionalists of the day, Mirza Karim Khan Rashti.

The political inclination of Fakhr od-Doleh during the so-called minor despotism is surrounded by a halo of mystery; notably because an incident tarnished Mohsen Khan’s reputation on the day the *Majles* was bombarded by government forces, (June 23rd 1909). When the Cossack troops attacked the *Majles*, crushed the resistance of its guards and entered the building, the deputies chose to escape. Some of them went to Amin

od-Doleh Park, which was adjacent to the *Majles* building. According to Yahya Dowlatabadi: “Those who went in first, closed the gates behind them... Those who followed climbed over the wall and thought that this park, once the hallmark of the rule of law and constitutionalism, could now become a safe haven for constitutionalists... Mohsen Khan ‘Amin od-Doleh’... told [the clerics] Seyyed Abdollah [Behbahani] and Seyyed Mohammad [Tabatabai]: ‘I can look after you two, but the others must leave.’ However much they insisted that all of them must be sheltered, their demand was rejected. Finally, [Mohsen Khan] took the gentlemen to a room close to the *andaroun*... and then left for the house of Nayyer ol-Molk... From there he phoned the Bagh-e Shah to report that the gentlemen have taken refuge in his residence. He had hardly returned home when the government troops broke into the park. The crowd split up into groups. One group composed of Malek ol-Motekallemin, his son, Agha Seyyed Jamal ed-Din, Mirza Jahangir Khan and... went to the house of Mir Seyyed Hossein, the brother of the director of *Habl ol-Matin* and took shelter there... Others left the Park and dispersed... Momtaz od-Doleh, Speaker of the *Majlis* and Hakim ol-Molk... went off to the French Embassy in disguise... Haji Mirza Ebrahim, the deputy from Azarbaijan, came face to face with the troops in one of the Park’s alleyways... suddenly, a bullet shot by a mounted Cossack hit him. He fell on the ground... and died... The clerics lost their nerve and surrendered to the Cossacks who pillaged whatever they were wearing, treating them with contempt beating them up badly... spitting on them... Anyone under arrest was first taken to the Cossack quarters to be examined by Liakhof and then to the Bagh-e Shah... to be imprisoned...”³⁸

The episode of Amin od-Doleh’s Park, occurring as it did in the feverish atmosphere of those days of outright confrontation between despotism and constitutionalists, spread like wildfire; so much so that the arrest and execution of Mirza Nasrollah Beheshti ‘Malek ol-Motekallemin’ and Jahangir Khan ‘Sour Esrafil’ (23 June 1909) was unjustly attributed to Mohsen Khan ‘Amin od-Doleh’.³⁹

In spite of her dislike for Mohammad Ali Shah, Fakhr od-Doleh was fond of Ahmad Shah. Whenever she went to the Court to call on her nephew, Ahmad Shah was most pleased to see her too.⁴⁰ As a minor, he was not yet apt to govern. The Regent, Nasser ol-Molk, also held Fakhr od-Doleh in great esteem.⁴¹



The establishment of constitutional monarchy, although diminishing the crisis of the state, augured a new period of political turmoil and intensified Russo-British rivalry in Iran. The £ 250,000 loan of the British Imperial Bank to the Government and the employment of Morgan Shuster as Director-General of the Treasury (June 1911) not only exacerbated the political clashes leading to a succession of short-lived governments, but also contributed to the increase of Russian influence in Gilan. In such circumstances, many landowners, amongst whom Mohsen Khan 'Amin od-Doleh' and Fakhr od-Doleh, saw fit to hand over their property to Iranians who had acquired Russian citizenship and acted as Russia's agents in Gilan. The couple revoked the lease held by Mirza Karim Khan and his associates and let Lasht-e Nesha to a Russian citizen.⁴² These measures fuelled the tension between landlords and tenants, which, in spite of multiple interventions by the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Interior, the Cabinet, the *Sadr Azam* and the Russian Embassy in Tehran, was not resolved.⁴³

The State's incapability to respond to the demands of the people and the atrocities of the invading forces led to the growing resistance of the people and the emergence of revolutionary movements. Lasht-e Nesha was a case in point. That northern district of Iran had a long history of peasant uprisings. With the overthrow of Mohammad Ali Shah, it was turned into a testing ground for landlord-peasant land disputes, thus causing great concern for Fakhr od-Doleh. Telegrams coming from Rasht spoke of the progress and the growing strength of the Jangali Movement. Furthermore, renewed disturbances among the peasants of Lasht-e Nesha manifested themselves in the form of petitions to the *Majles*, the Prime Minister and the Government, against the oppressive methods of Bassir Khaghan, Mohsen Khan's representative in Lasht-e Nesha.⁴⁴

The echoes of these successive complaints in some national newspapers prompted Amin od-Doleh to leave for Lasht-e Nesha at the end of Spring 1917 in order to gauge and remedy the situation.⁴⁵ In Rasht, he sought the assistance of some constitutional clerics and recruited armed guards, including a number of Cossacks. Mirza Kouchek Khan Jangali was undoubtedly aware of Amin od-Doleh's object in travelling to Lasht-e Nesha, at least from the moment the latter set foot in Rasht. It was therefore no coincidence that the day after Mohsen Khan and his escort arrived in Lasht-e Nesha, June 21st 1917, Kouchek Khan, accompanied by forty of his 'Jangali Brothers', raided the abode of

Mohsen Khan. Amin od-Doleh's followers disbanded before the property was besieged, the armed guards being the first to have fled. The Cossacks, after killing a Jangali and losing two of their own men, surrendered to the Jangali troops. At dawn, the soldiers of the *Ettehad ol-Eslam*, a branch of the Jangal Movement under Mirza Kouchek Khan's leadership, entered the *andaroun*. Bassir Khaghan fled, but Amin od-Doleh and some of his companions were arrested. Before taking them to Kasma, the headquarters of the *Ettehad ol-Eslam*, Kouchek Khan addressed the enthusiastic crowd of villagers and pledged "he would soon attend to their grievances and hand them back what was rightfully theirs"⁴⁶

On that same day, the news of the arrest and imprisonment of Amin od-Doleh the Second, which according to Iraj Afshar, was the second hostage taking of the Constitutional Era (the first having been that of Zell os-Soltan), was cabled to Tehran by the Gilan Branch of *Ettehad ol-Eslam*.⁴⁷ The reason given for the arrest and detention of Amin od-Doleh was years of "oppression and pressure on the suffering people of Lasht-e Nesha" and the indifference of "legal authorities", the "discredit of Gilan's Justice Department" and "the plight of the grieving population". The appeal of *Ettehad ol-Eslam* to the Government of Ala os-Saltaneh was worded thus: "Send a perfect, honest and competent person, proficient in legal matters, to the Justice Department of Rasht, so that he passes judgment on the representatives of Mr Amin od-Doleh and Her Highness Fakhr od-Doleh, in the presence of an assembly of impartial citizens of Rasht and the oppressed people of Lasht-e Nesha devoid of covetousness, restoring to the latter what is rightfully theirs."⁴⁸

Upon receiving the telegram, a copy of which was to be put at the disposal of three of Tehran's important newspapers, the Council of Ministers added the resolution of this problem to its agenda. One can assume that the Council of Ministers considered this unprecedented incident "an affront to its dignity and reputation and testified to the impotence of the central government. Obviously, failure to solve the problem would be interpreted as weakness and lead eventually to the downfall of the Government... In order to find a solution to the problem, Mirza Reza Ali Khan 'Zahir od-Doleh' (Safa Ali) was sent to Rasht to negotiate with the Jangal's authorities."⁴⁹

The one who "in different manners, pressed the Government" to persist in rescuing Amin od-Doleh, was Fakhr od-Doleh.⁵⁰ Indeed, at her suggestion, Zahir





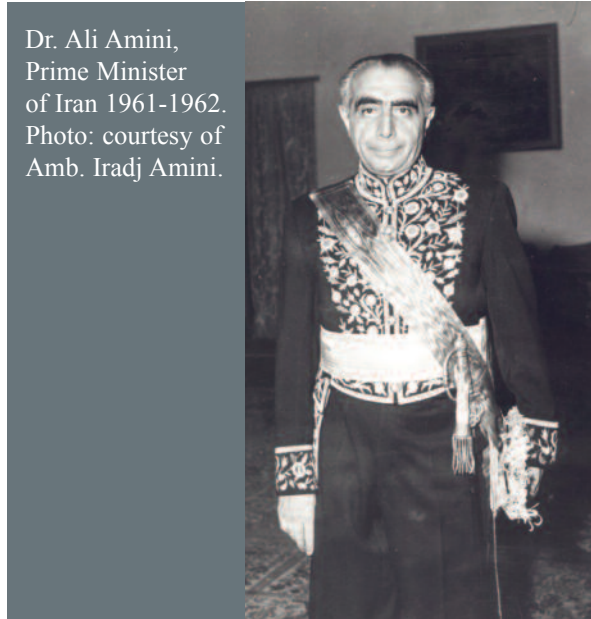
Princess Fakhr od-Doleh and her five of her nine children, from left to right: Reza Amini, Ahmad Amini, Massoumeh Amini (Nafissi), Mohammad Amini and Dr. Ali Amini. Photo: courtesy of Amb. Iradj Amini.

od-Doleh who had a record of friendship with Koucheh Khan was appointed as intermediary between the Government and the Jangal.⁵¹

To cut short the story of Amin od-Doleh's detention in the Jangal, suffice it to say that the Ettehad ol-Eslam being in dire need for money, agreed to free Mohsen Khan against a ransom of 70.000 *tomans*.⁵² It should be added that before leaving Lasht-e Nesha for Tehran on 5th of October 1918, Amin od-Doleh dismissed Bassir Khaghan and appointed Mohammad Ali Daoud-Zadeh as his representative in Lasht-e Nesha.⁵³

The anarchy resulting from the political crisis, the interference of foreign powers, the lack of basic commodities, inflation and pauperization on the one hand and the spread of revolutionary movements, on the other, ultimately led to a military coup. A few months after the end of the First World War, on the 22 February 1921 the journalist Seyyed Zia ed-Din Tabatabai and Reza Khan Mir Panj, the commander of the Cossack Brigade, seized power with the blessing of the British Government and declared a state of emergency. Subsequently, a number of personalities amongst whom Cabinet Ministers and Qajar aristocracy such as Abdol Hossein Mirza 'Farman Farma', were arrested and detained.

As soon as Fakhr od-Doleh got wind of the Coup leaders' identity and the logic behind the arrests, she presumed that Mohsen Khan would also be seized. Therefore she decided to take Mohsen Khan along with her eight sons and a daughter away from Tehran. One of them, Ali Amini, recounts this ordeal as such: "We



Dr. Ali Amini, Prime Minister of Iran 1961-1962. Photo: courtesy of Amb. Iradj Amini.

were taken to the house of one of our servants... We stayed there in a state of anxiety and confusion until the next morning."⁵⁴ The next day, before the proclamation announcing the state of emergency was stuck on the city's walls, the Amini family left Tehran for the city of Qom, where Fakhr od-Doleh possessed a house adjacent to the Hazrat-e Massoumeh Shrine. The move was made to facilitate Mohsen khans's taking sanctuary (*bast*) in the shrine should the military authorities come after him.

After a while Mohsen Khan 'Amin od-Doleh' was summoned to the justice Ministry. Apparently, Karim Khan Rashti who was close to the now all-powerful Prime Minister, Seyyed Zia-ed-Din and a number of his colleagues, had seized the opportunity to have the Lasht-e Nesha file revived. Fakhr od-Doleh and Mohsen Khan were in disagreement on how to cope with this development. Amin od-Doleh was of the opinion that "... measures have been taken to condemn us at every stage. So, what is the use of going to Tehran to fight?"⁵⁵ But Fakhr od-Doleh rejected the submissive attitude of her husband and declared: "I refuse to submit myself to force in hand-cuff. I will go and fight to the end with God's help. If I fail and am convicted, at least I will have a clear conscience and will be proud before the people to have fought but been defeated."⁵⁶

We are not aware of the details of Fakhr od-Doleh's activities in Tehran after her return from Qom. We know, however, that Karim Khan Rashti was not able to achieve his goal during the hundred-day government of Seyyed Zia. We also know that Amin od-Doleh





Princess Ashraf ol-Molouk Qajar 'Fakhr od-Doleh'
(1883-1956)



Princess Ashraf ol-Molouk Qajar 'Fakhr od-Doleh'
(1883-1956)

returned to Tehran only after the fall of Seyyed Zia! The dispute over Lasht-e Nesha was ultimately resolved to the benefit of Fakhr od-Doleh, through the mediation of Reza Khan, then the Prime Minister. After Reza Khan was crowned on the 25th of April 1926, Fakhr od-Doleh was to see him on several occasions. Ali Amini who was witness to one of those encounters says: "A few days after his coronation, Reza Shah paid a visit to my mother and told her: 'I have heard that the Qajar princes are still plotting against me. They think that I have taken the crown off Ahmad Shah's head, whereas it had fallen on the ground and I merely picked it up. I came to ask you to assemble those princes and tell them to stop their insinuations; otherwise, I will wipe them out'."⁵⁷ After that meeting, Fakhr od-Doleh called in the princes residing in Tehran and told them: "... with Reza Khan at the helm, any resistance is futile. Furthermore, this man, as I know him, will show no mercy and if we do not succumb, he will extinguish our dynasty. We better make no mistakes and lay low."⁵⁸

It is worth noting that Fakhr od-Doleh spoke those words only when she lost faith in Ahmad Shah's will to recover his crown. She never compromised herself with the Pahlavis and kept herself aloof from Reza Shah's Court, but stayed in close touch with the Qajar Family. She even corresponded with Malekeh Jahan, the exiled wife of Mohammad Ali Shah, and called upon her whenever she travelled to Paris.⁵⁹ Fakhr od-Doleh did not remain idle during Reza Shah's reign. She strove to provide her offspring with the best education. In fact "She planned her children's entire educational program with the advice of [Mohammad Ali Foroughi 'Zoka ol-Molk']."⁶⁰ Later on, she sent her sons away to Europe for higher education. Yet, she kept her daughter Masoumeh by her side, thus preventing her from attending university. Furthermore, she didn't allow her children to interfere in the management of her vast properties. Fakhr od-Doleh's efforts and perseverance in tending to her landholdings earned her the reputation of a leading expert in agricultural management. The recollection of Mohsen Foroughi, Zoka ol-

Molk's son, is revealing: "Mrs Fakhr od-Doleh had great experience in agricultural matters and managed her landholdings herself. Occasionally, she even descended into a *qanat* in order to see if the dredging work had been carried out thoroughly. Once she told my father that some months earlier 'we had a deep well dug in a pasture. There was a disagreement between me and the well-digger about the calculation of the well's depth. According to my estimate, the depth of the well was ten meters less than what he was saying. As he did not agree, I attached a rope to my waist and climbed down into the well... It happened that I was right.' My father listened to her attentively with praise and admiration."⁶¹

After Reza Shah's abdication on August 25th 1941, Fakhr od-Doleh took an active interest in charitable work. In 1947 she financed the building of a mosque in Fakhr-Abad Street. As a tribute to her late father-in-law, she named it the Amin od-Doleh Mosque. It is noteworthy that until today this building is known as the Fakhr od-Doleh Mosque and hardly anyone knows its real name. It may also be of interest to note that every Friday evening "... rice and *gheyme* (minced meat and split peas) was delivered to the Amin od-Doleh Mosque to provide for those in need."⁶²

Fakhr od-Doleh also founded an orphanage. This institution was managed with the assistance of her daughter and a number of Qajar women!⁶³ One of the women who was raised in that establishment recalls: "In the institution managed by Mrs Fakhr od-Doleh affection and serenity went along with discipline. In addition to learning household chores, sewing and music, we were reminded to concentrate on our schoolwork... In keeping with disciplinary rules fixed by our supervisors, we had to go to school and come back to our dormitory on our own."⁶⁴

Besides that orphanage, Fakhr od-Doleh took care of a number of handicapped children. She did all this without the slightest publicity. She followed the same principle regarding her religious beliefs. Although she was a "... Moslem and God-fearing [woman],... she was free of prejudice. She prayed in private and away from public eye and stayed away from superstitions"⁶⁵ Neither was she prejudiced about *hejab*. She wore a veil or removed it according to circumstances. With the passing of years, she moved more and more away from her husband, but remained faithful to him until the very end.

Mohsen Khan 'Amin od-Doleh' died on Thursday the 18th of April, 1950. He had wished to be buried next to his father in Lasht-e Nesha.

Princess Fakhr od-Doleh passed away from a heart attack five years after Mohsen Khan, on the dawn of Monday January 16th 1956. In her testament, she had expressed the wish to be buried in the Ebn-e Bab-e Vey cemetery, alongside her son Mohammad Hossein. In death as in life, she held on to her independence of mind. Long before her death, she had divided up most of her fortune among her offspring. Her sons inherited equal parts. However, Massoumeh was to get twice as much as her brothers, being a woman and entitled as such to a form of 'affirmative action'. She stipulated in her will "... My sons have no right to question her."⁶⁶

In the testament, no allusion is made to either Miki Mast or the Bebe Taxi Company; simply because none of them belonged to Fakhr od-Doleh. Her son Mohammad, the representative of the Ford motor company in Tehran, held a minor share in Bebe Taxi. He owned Miki Mast too, a yoghurt manufacturing business. Therefore, the rumors attributing the ownership of these ventures to Fakhr od-Doleh are based on legend. A legend which is rooted in the Iranian patriarchal culture, epitomized in the following remark: "Fakhr od-Doleh was a woman, albeit a man; very active, persevering, an outstanding manager, tactful, disciplined, well organized and wise. She was well informed of the state of affairs and ongoing events... Fakhr od-Doleh was an extraordinary woman and a sort of genius, the likes of her being rare in Iran. A saying attributed to the late Reza Shah has it: ..."The Qajars had one man and one half a man, the man being Fakhr od-Doleh and the half a man, the eunuch Agha Mohammad Khan."⁶⁷

Fakhr od-Doleh was far from being a feminist. But she was one of the first Qajar women to step out of the *andaroun*. Yearning for self-consciousness, she gradually found her way into the public space; tirelessly marched forward and displayed a considerable aptitude for tending to her family as well as effectively participating in civic affairs. It was by hard work that she elevated herself to the rank of the best business managers and entrepreneurs.

Her contribution to the process of Iran's transformation; discarding the belief that women are the weaker sex; introducing a new female model and changing gender relations is, irrefutable.

We know of no other Qajar princess who had such a positive impact on the Iranian society and in paving the way for the progression of Iranian women.





Top: Gravestones of Princess Fakhr od-Doleh and her son Mohammad Hossein Amini at the site of their destroyed *maghbareh* (mausoleum) at Ebn-e Bab-e Vey.

Left: Gravestone of Mohammad Hossein Amini: “.... aramgah marhoum janatmakan Mohammad Hossein Khan Amini molaghab be Moin ol-Molk farzand Haj Mirza Mohsen Khan Amini Majdi Amin od-Doleh motevaled 1277 shamsi ke dar tarikheh 2 tirmah 1316 shamsi dar Paris berahmat-e izadi peyvasteh ast.”

“Grave of the resident of Paradise, the late Mohammad Hossein Khan Amini also known as Moin ol-Molk, son of Haj Mirza Mohsen Khan Amini Majdi Amin od-Doleh, born 1277 shamsi, died Paris 2 tirmah 1316.”

Photographs by Kamran Najafzadeh.

Notes

1. Eyn os-Saltaneh, *Rouznameye Khaterat*, vol. 2, compounded and annotated by Massoud Salour and Iraj Afshar, Asatir publications, First print, Tehran 1376, p. 1195.
2. Mansoureh Ettehadieh (Nezam Mafi), *Zanani ke zire maghnee Kolahbardari namoudeh and*, Nashr-e Tarikh Iran, Tehran 1388, p. 56.
3. Ali Amini, *My mother Fakhr od-Doleh, Salnameh-ye Donya, 16th year*, Norouz 1340, p. 138.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Conversation with Iraj Amini, Paris, 30 July 2007.
8. Gholam-Hossein Afzal ol-Molk, *Afzal ol-Tavarikh*, Nashr-e Tarikh Iran, First Print, Tehran 1361, p. 83.
9. FO539/76, C. Hardinge to Marquess of Salisbury, Tehran, 6 January 1898?
10. Eyn os-Saltaneh, *op.cit.* p. 1196. Writing about this event, Ehtesham os-Saltaneh claims that "the amount of opium the lady had swallowed was not much. The physicians succeeded in treating her and saving her life." (*The Memoirs of Ehtesham os-Saltaneh*, compiled and annotated by Seyyed Mohammad Mehdi Mousavi, Zavvar Publications, Tehran 1366, p. 309).
11. Hardinge to Marquess of Salisbury, *op.cit.*
12. Mohammad Ali Sayyah, *Khaterat-e Haj Sayyah*, Amir Kabir Publications, Tehran 2536, p. 497.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Mehdi Bamdad, *Sharh-e Hal Rejal Iran*, Vol. 3, Zavvar Publications, Tehran 1388, p. 33.
15. Iraj Amini, *Bar Bale Bohran*, Mahi Publications, Tehran, Third Print, 1388, p. 33.
16. Mehdi Bamdad, *op.cit.*, p. 197.
17. Afzal ol-Molk, *op.cit.*, p. 166.
18. Doust Ali Khan 'Moayyer ol-Mamalek', *Rejal-e Asr Nasseri*, Nashr-e Tarikh Iran, Tehran 1361, p. 70.
19. Mehdi Bamdad, *op.cit.*, p. 197.
20. Mokhber os-Saltaneh Hedayat, *Khaterat va Khatarat*, Third Print, Zavvar Publications, Tehran 1361, p. 106.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Moayyer ol-Mamalek, *op.cit.*, p. 68.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 166, 167.
24. Afzal ol-Molk, *op.cit.*, p. 166.
25. Abdollah Mostofi, *Sharh-e Zendegi-ye man ya...*, Zavvar Publications, Tehran 1371, p.28.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 29.
27. Amini, Ali, *op.cit.*
28. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 138 and 139.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
31. Bamdad, Vol II, page 364.
32. Ali Khan 'Amin od-Doleh', *Safarnameh-ye Makke*, compiled and annotated by Eslam Kazemieh with an Introduction by Dr. Ali Amini, Tus Publications, Tehran 1354, p. 37.
33. Iraj Amini, *op.cit.*, p. 22.
34. Amin od-Doleh, *Safarnameh, op.cit.*, p. 50.
35. Mehdi Bamdad, Vol. 3, p. 200.
36. Unpublished letters of Amin od-Doleh to Mohtaram od-Doleh, made available to the author by Iraj Amini.
37. Ali Amini, *My Mother Fakhr od-Doleh*, p. 140.
38. Yahya Dowlatabadi, *Hayat Yahya*, Vol II, Ferdowsi Publications, Tehran 1362, pp. 332 and 333.
39. Khosrow Motazed, *Pitch-e Amin od-Doleh*, Alborz Publications, Tehran 1390, p. 207.
40. Conversation of the author with Prince Ali Kadjar, Paris.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Iraj Afshar, *Ghabaleh-ye Tarikh*, Talaye Publications, Tehran 1368, p. 357.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 245-398.
44. Sareh Askari, 'Estemrar-e Ghodrat-e Shahzadeh-ye Qajari ta Doreh-ye Pahlavi (Shekvayeha-ye bi pasokh-e ahali-ye Lasht-e Neshaz az Fakhr od-Doleh)', in: *Peyam-e Baharestan*, 2nd year, no. 6, Winter 1388.
45. Iraj Afshar, *Bargha-ye Jangal*, Farzane Rouz Publications, Tehran, 1378.
46. Mohammad Ali (Khamami) Gilak, *Tarikh-e Enghelab-e Jangal*, Gilan Publications, Rasht 1371, p.55.
47. Iraj Afshar, *op.cit.*, p.325.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 331-332.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
51. Mohammad Ali Gilak, *op.cit.*, p.58.
52. Iraj Afshar, *op.cit.*, p. 246.
53. *Ibid.*, p.234.
54. Ali Amini, *op.cit.*, p. 141.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*, p.142.
57. Ali Amini, *Khaterat*, annotated by Yaghoob Tavakoli, Soureh Publications, Tehran 1377, pp. 25-26.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Prince Ali Kadjar, conversations with the author, Paris.
60. Bagher Agheli, *Zoka ol-Molk Foroughi va Shahrivar 1320*, Elmi and Sokhan Publications, Tehran 1367, p. 247.
61. Bagher Agheli, *op.cit.*, p. 246 and 247.
62. *Kayhan Newspaper*, 26 Dey 1334, p.11 (17 January, 1956).
63. Elham Malekzadeh, *Eghdamat-e Kheyriyeh-ye Fakhr od-Doleh*, <http://wahr.ir/node/506>.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Mahi ol-Molk Mazinani, 'On the occasion of the fortieth day of Fakhr od-Doleh's demise', in: *Khandaniha*, year 16, no. 68.
66. Copy of Fakhr od-Doleh's will, kindly given to me by Iraj Amini.
67. Mehdi Bamdad, *op.cit.*, p.199.

