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 Founder of the Renowned Bonyad Neyshaboor

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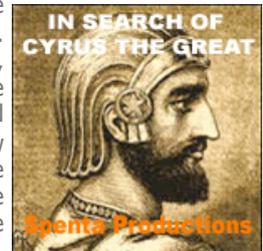
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I was in Germany when Ms. Mithra Etezadi informed me that Dr. Fereydu Joneydi would be the speaker before me in the upcoming conference entitled "Acquaintance with Nanotechnology during the Safavid Period" that was planned to take place on the premises of University of Cultural Heritage (Markaz Amuzesh Aali Miras Farhangi) in Tehran on 14 Esfand 1385 (March 5, 2007). I was truly honored, and at the same time, I knew that it would be extremely difficult to hold a speech after a legendary personality with the high calibre of Dr. Joneydi. I arrived in Tehran on Friday March 9th, and I was scheduled to meet Dr. Fereydu Joneydi in Bonyad Neyshaboor the following day.

Dr. Fereydu Joneydi is the founder of Bonyad Neyshaboor, headquartered in Tehran, Iran. Many top Iranian researchers work and contribute to this cultural institution, among them top historians, art historians, language experts (among them different dialects of Farsi and other Iranian dialects) and also ancient languages, such as the Avesta and the Pahlavi). The list of books and articles published by Bonyad Neyshaboor is truly impressive, and it is even more impressive to observe that many leading Iranian universities, universities dedicated to Iranian Studies in the region as well as European universities, consult Dr. Fereydu Joneydi and his team of researchers about their investigations and publications. One can truly assert that Bonyad Neyshaboor and Dr. Joneydi are the most important centers of Iranian studies around the world. Dr. Fereydu Joneydi teaches different classes in Bonyad Neyshaboor, among them "The Grammar and Language of the Avesta," "The Grammar and the Language of the Pahlavi," and "Explanation and Interpretation of the *Shahname*." It is even more impressive to know that all classes provided by Dr. Fereydu Joneydi are free of charge and open to the public as Dr. Joneydi wants to share his knowledge with as many people as possible. His classes are always full, and one can see many dedicated people who listen to his lectures carefully. His students come from different walks of life, among them university professors, professionals, corporate leaders, students, journalists, lawyers, pensioners, pupils, workers, and diplomats. Many researchers and inhabitants of the neighboring countries also visit his lectures at Bonyad Neyshaboor, among them many Afghan and Tajik citizens. Prior to the opening of the Embassy of Tajikistan in Tehran, the number of Tajik students of Dr. Fereydu Joneydi had risen to such high numbers that people used to dub Bonyad Neyshaboor in Tehran as "The Embassy of Tajikistan" (see Joneydi, 1385:20).

Among the countless publications of Dr. Fereydu Joneydi is the lexicon of the terms of the *Avesta* entitled *Dictionary of the Avesta (Farhang Vajehaye Avesta)* that was published in four volumes. Dr. Joneydi wrote this lexicon together with Mr. Ehsan Bahrami. This lexicon is 1,663 pages with an additional 199 pages of a list of the word entries. This is the most complete lexicon about the terms of the *Avesta*. Each word is written in its original version in the *Avesta* language with phonetic alphabets in Latin and modern Persian so that a correct pronunciation would be possible. Additionally, the meaning of each word is given both in English and in modern Farsi. Dr. Fereydu Joneydi has also been preparing a very comprehensive lexicon on the terms of the Pahlavi that will be published in Tehran soon. This will also be the most comprehensive lexicon on the Pahlavi language on the market with state-of-the-art research in language



and lexicography. Another fascinating research project conducted by Dr. Fereydu Joneydi is the analysis of the verses of the *Shahname*. Dr. Joneydi is the world renowned expert on the *Shahname*, and based on a detailed and painstaking analysis, Dr. Joneydi proves which verses had been added to the original manuscript of the *Shahname* after the death of Ferdowsi. Hence, he has been compiling a *Shahname* in its original version that had been penned by Ferdowsi. The results of his detailed research and analysis will be published in Tehran soon. This is, without doubt, the most important research on the manuscript of the *Shahname* that will be provided to the researchers worldwide.

Dr. Fereydu Joneydi truly believes in the individual contribution of each member to the research and is critical of the trend towards accumulation of academic degrees and institutions where the original research and thoughts are suppressed in favor of academic acceptance and institutionalization. Dr. Fereydu Joneydi points out and is critical of the times where Iranian scholars specialized in Iranian studies used to look for acceptance outside the borders of Iran (see Joneydi, 1385:46). Fortunately, these days are long gone, and many international scholars and experts seek the advice of Dr. Joneydi and his team of scholars on questions related to Iranian studies. This is the philosophy of Dr. Fereydu Joneydi, who rightly believes that to study the indigenous culture, one needs to study in the country and to know the customs and the habits of the related culture. Bonyad Neyshaboor teaches the Pahlavi language in three levels: beginners, intermediate, and advanced. Among the top scholars who teach the Pahlavi language in Bonyad Neyshaboor, one could name Ms. Salume Beheshti, Ms. Nasrin Furutan, Ms. Nazanin Nur, Ms. Delaram Amir Azadi, Mr. Mohammad Reza Shademani, Ms. Azade Ehsani, Ms. Mastane Arvand, and Ms. Marjane Arvand (see Joneydi, 1385:53). Among other scholars who contribute to the cultural achievements of Bonyad Neyshaboor are Mr. Hossein Shahidi Mazandarani (Bijan) with 20 years of research experience in the history of the *Shahname*, Mr. Manouchehr Pishva, Mr. Manouchehr Gajgini, Mr. Jalal Mohammad Khani, Mr. Hoveik Adgariyan, Mr. Hormozdyar Surushian, Ms. Azarmidokht Hormozan, and Ms. Mehrnavaz Hemati, who have all published a book to contribute to the wealth of knowledge of Bonyad Neyshaboor (see Joneydi, 1385:52). It is important to take into consideration that Bonyad Neyshaboor has also a center for Armenian studies being directed by Ms. Farzane Germetik (Bagdasarian). The Center of Iranian Studies of the University of Naples invited Dr. Joneidi to teach the Pahlavi language in Italy for three years. As it was clearly stated, the teaching method of Dr. Joneydi was considered the best one. However, Dr. Joneidi rejected the call as he had to take care of his old mother, and, additionally, he loved his native country of Iran too much to be able to live abroad. The University of Naples even offered to take care of his mother during this period to Italy. The answer of Dr. Joneydi reveals his true love for his native country: "My mother cannot go to Italy as the Iranian culture resides in the whole area of Iran and her skirt is like the skirt of the Mount Damavand, where clouds and stars fly above that, my mother is Iran! She sits here and watches her children from the top" (see Joneydi, 1385:58). His true love for his native country is so immense that Dr. Joneydi even remained in Iran





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during the toughest period of the Iran-Iraq war in spite of having different calls from European universities.

On March 3, 2007, after analyzing and classifying some artifacts in the museum of Bonyad, Ms. Etezadi and I left the museum to go to Bonyad Neyshaboor. She already informed me that I was scheduled to take part in the *Shahname* lessons given by Dr. Joneydi. I was truly excited to meet the legendary gentleman. The streets of Tehran were filled with cars and people going to work, and I was thinking about my upcoming meeting with Dr. Joneydi. I was aware that I was going to meet a legend, and I was truly excited as I knew that I was also scheduled to give a speech to introduce my book in Bonyad Neyshaboor. During the whole ride, I kept thinking about how privileged and honored I was to meet Dr. Joneydi. When we arrived there, I saw people everywhere. They were all students of Dr. Joneydi, each holding a book and reading it. We went upstairs and were led to Dr. Joneydi's office. Then, he arrived, a tall gentleman with a nice smile and a strong presence. I will never forget that moment. He shook my hand gently and then he highly praised my book, stressing its importance for the history of Iran. I was really honored to hear these words from such a legend. I was truly honored. He went to his library and came back with the following titles written by him: a) *Hoogooq Jahan dar Iran Bastan* (The Global Rights in Ancient Iran), b) *Zendegani va Mohajerat Aryaiyan* (The Life and the Migration of the Aryans), c) *Zamineye Shenakht Musegi Iran* (Understanding the Background of Iranian Music), and d) *Negareshi bar Zendeki Dr. Fereydu Joneydi* (A Description of the Biography of Dr. Fereydu Joneydi). He handed me all four copies as a present and signed one of them for me. I did not know how to thank him for his kind and generous offer.

We went downstairs, and Dr. Joneydi started his *Shahname* lesson. There were many people sitting around, all listening attentively to him. He already announced that a researcher, referring to me, would give a speech on a very interesting research project and results. He added that he did not know what that researcher would do once he

would get old as he had already achieved a lot. I was really feeling ashamed as I knew that many top researchers were sitting there. He started his lecture, and it was a true pleasure and, at the same time, amazing to listen to Dr. Joneydi. He knew a lot and could provide a lot of information about each part of the *Shahname*, cross-referencing it with different sources. During the lecture, I looked up and saw the pictures of Ahmad Shah Masud, and later on, I was told that Shah Masud used to be a friend of Dr. Joneydi and considered himself as his student in cultural questions. After the lecture, he introduced my name, and I gave a short lecture on my research results. Everyone was listening attentively to my lecture. I knew I was truly honored to speak in front of such an audience in such a famed institution. After my speech, I saw everywhere was applauding. Many came to me and asked me about my research project and offered their help. I was really touched emotionally—there was so much generosity, so much willingness to cooperate.

A couple of days later on Friday, we were heading to Bonyad Neyshaboor again. When Ms. Etezadi and I arrived, Dr. Joneydi opened the door with a big smile. I realized that the library of Bonyad Neyshaboor was even open during the weekends. He looked at me and said that he had a present for me. He went away and came back with a copy of the *Dictionary of the Avesta*, and he signed it as the following:

“Dedicated to the young scholar, Mr. Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani. I hope that this lexicon would also open a door for him in his future research.

Fereydun Joneydi, Esfand 1385”

I was truly touched. Dr. Joneydi asked me, “Would you please sign the copy of your book for me?” I happily agreed and signed my book for him. I was really honored. Dr. Joneydi has done extensive research on the types of weapons used in the *Avesta* and *Shahname*, and as agreed with Ms. Etezadi, I asked Dr. Joneydi whether he would like to be one of my editors for my next book. He smiled and happily agreed. I was really honored and did not know how to thank him for his great willingness to help. We had tea and started to talk about our projects. After a while, we got up. There were pictures of a young man everywhere. Dr. Joneydi added, “This is my son Afshin.” I looked at the pictures and saw a nice gentleman with a nice smile. We went to other rooms, and I realized that the pictures of Afshin were everywhere. I turned to Ms. Etezadi and did not know what to say and how to react. I could feel that I had a big question on my face. Dr. Joneydi explained: “That is my son Afshin, who died for his country Iran. He withered like a flower.” I could feel a big pain in his heart, and I felt it as well in my own heart. I was perplexed and did not know what to say. Dr. Joneydi added, “He was only one year younger as you are.” I did not dare to ask any more questions. I only managed to say that I was deeply sorry, but I realized the strong energy in the face of Dr. Joneydi and could feel that he could cope with this misfortune very well. We had tea, and after we left Bonyad Neyshaboor, Ms. Etezadi explained, “Afshin was a medical doctor. He went to the villages of Neyshaboor as a volunteer to help poor people. He worked for free there. There, he died in an accident. He was the only child of Dr. Joneydi. However, Afshin is still alive for him and gives him energy. Through the memory of Afshin, Dr. Joneydi is able to write several books at the same time.” There was a big silence. I did not know what to say and how to react. Ms. Etezadi told me, “Did you know something? Dr. Joneydi likes you like his own son.” That was a moment when no word could express my deep sorrow and happiness at the same time. I did not say a word as words were not enough to express my feelings. I decided to continue to walk on the streets of Tehran.

For more information on Dr. Joneydi and Bonyad Neyshaboor, see the website www.bonyad-neyshaboor.com.

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More information is at www.legat-verlag.de/e/programm_e.html.

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