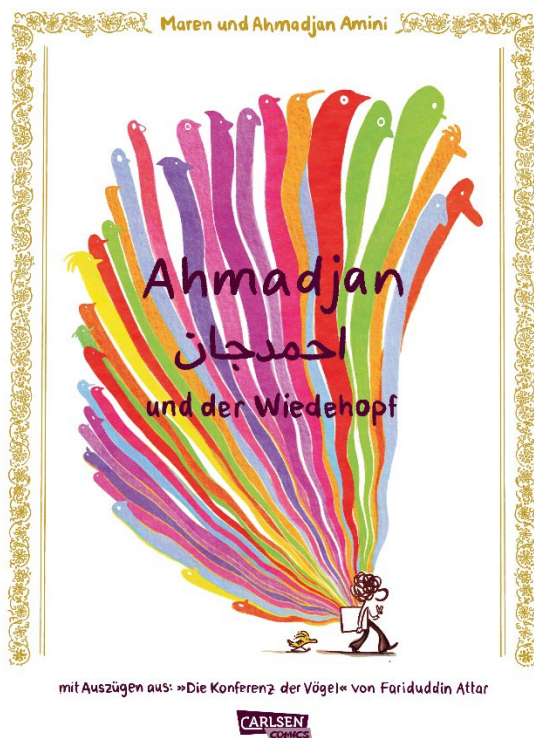


Maren and Ahmadjan Amini: Ahmadjan and the Hoopoe

Ahmadjan und der Wiedehopf

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ENGLISH SAMPLE TRANSLATION

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Maren and Ahmadjan Amini

Ahmadjan and the Hoopoe

With excerpts from “The Conference of the Birds” by Fariduddin Attar

And artworks by Ahmadjan Amini

“The Conference of the Birds” is a mystic poem considered to be one of the most important works in Persian literature. It was written in the 12th century by the Persian mystic Fariduddin Attar (1136-1220).

This book is dedicated to all the birds who have taken off on a journey.

We remember those who lost their lives on this journey,
and those who were locked up in cages.

AHMADJAN AND THE HOOPOE
Ahmadjan und der Wiedehopf
978-3-551-79971-5, October 2024

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Papa painted 1,000 birds,
because the world is coming apart at the seams.

P. 6

It happened once that all the birds of the world assembled,
those well-known and those yet undiscovered.

They proposed to seek and find a ruler,
who would bring order and safety at last.

P.7

Why don't we have a king, they wondered.
In these times in which no realm is without a ruler.
Why don't we have a king?

P.8

Ahmadjan was born in the Valley of the Five Lions.*
His mother died young
and his father started a new family.
He grew up in his grandfather's house.

*Panjshir Valley, Afghanistan

P.9

The Finch

The finch came with a weak heart and a frail body.

Trembling like a flame from head to toe, he spoke:

Since I am ill-suited for this task,

I had better seek Joseph in the well.

When I have saved him, I'll fly him from the fish to the moon.

P.10

Panjshir Valley, a narrow strip in the deep valley of the Hindu Kush mountains.

P.11

It seems to Ahmadjan as if behind the high mountains is an endless nothing.

P.12

His grandfather instructs him in what is good in life:

faith

and art.

P.13

But Ahmadjan struggles with faith.

--In the name of God, the all-gracious, the merciful. If the earth is shaken by a strong earthquake and mankind wi

--And how can I think of divinity if my stomach is growling?

(illustration) Haha (etc.)

--Oh, that boy!

--Humpf

P.14

And his stomach protests so loudly.

--Ahmadjan, go someplace else for a while – we've got company.

P.15

--All right, Papa.

P.16

And his heart, too.

--Tickle, tickle

--Hee-hee

--Haha hee-hee

--Hahaha haha

P.17

--Hee-hee

P.18

--It'd be best if I just disappeared,

P.19

and quickly.

P.20

Ahmadjan's world is a mess.

Then the hoopoe appears
and speaks of mysteries.

P.21

--If you join me on a journey to seek Simurgh,
You will come to know him and his magnificence.
So – free yourself from the shame of egoism now,
from confusion and unbelief as well!
Those who wager their souls will be liberated from their Selves,
from Good and Evil, when they travel to the Source.

P.22

Ahmadjan becomes a dreamer.
Driven on by the hoopoe, the birds embarked on the long journey to find
Simurgh, the wisest of all birds.

P.23

So that Simurgh might become the king of all birds
in order to bring peace to the world of birds at last.

This story takes Ahmadjan far, far away.

P.24

Far, far away from the narrowness of the Panjschir Valley
the poverty
the coldness
and the silence.

P.25

Ahmadjan speaks not a word to his father and his stepmother.

Or his new siblings.

And he refuses to accept his work and future
as a farmer and shepherd.

P.26

Ahmadjan!!
A journey through seven valleys stands before us.

P.27

For the best pupils in the district there are scholarships
that make it possible for them to get their education in Kabul.
Cross over Mount Qaf and find Simurgh, the bird master.
If you have the courage, you'll start off now.

P.28

The Valley of the Quest

When you enter the Valley of the Quest,
you will constantly be faced with new hardships;
you must toil, year after year,
and there, everything that exists is reversed.

P.29

Ahmadjan loses himself in his daydreams,
in his studies,
and in his art.

--That looks really good!

--Ahmadjan, you're to report to the main office!!

P.30

--The scholarship exams will be given in Kapisa next week, and as the best pupil, you're entitled to take part.

--And we teachers are entitled to a feast at your house.

No! We just can't do it! It's impossible!!!

P.31

Ahmadjan's grandfather was too poor and the exam too far away.

P.32

Just let it go and take a step on the path, Ahmadjan.

Dear Nephew,

My son has been permitted to take the scholarship exam. That's how I learned of your success. You make our family very proud. I'm sending a friend who will bring you to Kapisa, and money for the feast for your teachers.

Love,

Uncle Rasok

P.S. The money is just a loan.

P.33

The Heron

This path demands a man with a lion's strength –
long is the way, and the sea so raging wild!

P.34

Ahmadjan goes to a boarding school in Kabul.

From his uncle he gets new things for the new, big world.

--If you don't have your cutlery, you can't get in to eat!!!

And for the first time in his life ...

P.35

... Ahmadjan can always eat his fill.

P.36

--We have a king, far, far away,
on the other side of Mount Qaf. His name is Simurgh.

But he has trouble sleeping,

P.37

just like the other 40 children in the dormitory.

P.38

In the night, he's bitten by bedbugs,
and the housemasters are cruel.
But Ahmadjan can follow his dreams.
He takes art classes.

P.39

And he loves Thursdays,
because that's when the English teacher comes.

P.40

The Nightingale

For the nightingale, loving the rose is enough.

P.41

And Ahmadjan is so head over heels he doesn't even know if he exists anymore.
For her, he decorates his homework with roses.
But she advises him
To concentrate more on the content of his work.

P.42

I found myself lost in myself
So that my own self fell away,
a droplet that sank into the sea.
--What's wrong with him?
--It's like he's obsessed with roses.

P.44

--Drawing makes me calm and peaceful.
--I know, Ahmadjan.
Ahmadjan has his first exhibition
in the display case on the schoolyard.

P.45

Years pass ...
--Today is the entrance examination for the American technical college.
--I think I'll go.
--I like the building.
... and Ahmadjan begins a course in Technical Drawing at the Afghan Institute of Technology.

P.46

Next to the Institute's dorm is the building which houses the University of Kabul.
More and more demonstrations are taking place there.

SOCIALISM NOT MONARCHY

--Hey, guys, people have been dissatisfied for a decade.

--The king's days are numbered.

A few students try to persuade those in the Institute to join their cause.

--Because democratizing has already begun!

--You need to read Marx!

P.47

--You have to come with us to the demos.

--You don't have to do anything!

The only thing you have to do is study!

Vrooom!

--Huh?

--Your duty is to study and not drive yourself crazy with politics. See you around!

--That guy is so cool!

--Did you notice his shoes?

--Don't listen to that rich guy!

(book) Social State

P.48

Ahmadjan often goes to the post office after school
to look for envelopes
with pretty, miniature pictures.
It's there where he first sees ...

P.49

the others.

P.50

The Parrot

P.51

--Mister! Hey, Mister!
Do you need help?
From then on he goes to the post office every day
to practice his English.
One time he helps a parrot,
and receives an invitation as a thank-you.

P.52

Hey, cool! Come on in!
And Ahmadjan enters
a completely new world.

P.53

The parrot flies along with him to the moon.

Wow!

P.54

More and more hippies move into the city.

They put up tents in the middle of Kabul's park.

And it's inspiring for Ahmadjan

to learn how they can travel all around the world on so little money.

P.55

He immediately sells his school uniform

to go out and buy some hippie clothes.

Isn't that your nephew?

A little odd, that boy.

Ahmadjan becomes a hippie,

because actually, he's always been one.

P.56

Ahmadjan now earns his living as a tour guide.

P.57

Wow!

P.58

as a newspaper vendor, van painter

P.59

and as a cleaner

for an Afghan-American family.

--I can still drive you to school.

Ahmadjan makes really good money...

P.60

...and spends it all right away:

on eating out,

on movies,

on taxis to the dormitory,

and above all, on good music.

P.61

The Lark

Together with his friend Jahija,

whose family is rich,

he lives the good life.

P.62

During the school break, Ahmadjan lives with his uncle in Kabul, who is not at all pleased with his lifestyle. Ahmadjan's favorite activity is to lie on the roof and try to look at the sun.

Oh, let's just go,
and wander like the dazed,
and fall on the path, and
rising, stumbling, just wander.

--What's wrong with you?

You're wasting all your time
and all your money.

What about your family in Panjshir?

Don't you even think about them?

P.63

No, I'm done with them.

P.64

--I've heard them on the radio!

On the weekends, Ahmadjan and Jahijia
usually go to concerts.

Musicians calling themselves amateurs
appear at the university and the technical institute.

And in Kharabat, a neighborhood in the old part of the city, the masters give their
concerts.

P.65

Kharabat is where the great musicians were born, and their music has been passed on from one generation to the next.

--You're an artist, too. You should live here.

--Nah, I wanna emigrate, just like you.

P.66

--When I'm with my relatives in America

I'll send for you!

--Woo-hoo!

--Now let's go to the Khanagah.

They're having another thanks evening.

--Do you think you'll be able to get a visa?

--I have to dance now!

P.63

--Simurgh? I'm on my way to you!

P.64

In Shahr-e Naw, the city center, a new disco has opened.

An English-language disco.

--Scream! Jahjia!!! Bob Dylan!!!

Ahmadjan and Jahjia are crazy about Western music.

P.65

Work at the American family's house is becoming more tiring because there's a lot of company.

A Hollywood film crew. They're filming a movie in Kabul.

--Psst! That's Omar Sharif over there.

Hollywood...

Cool...

P.70

Ahmadjan has completed his training

and receives a job offer as a technical draftsman with civil servant status.

--Umm...

NO THANK YOU!

Never before has a poor, half-orphaned son of a shepherd turned down an offer like that.

P.71

--You'll never get another chance like that! What are you going to do now? Have you got any plans at all?

--Why did you even go through with the training? I don't understand you.

--How could you do that? What were you thinking?

--How do you imagine your life anyway, boy?

--How can you be so ungrateful? Isn't the job good enough for you?

--You should really take that job. Maybe you won't be able to emigrate after all, Ahmadjan.

--Unbelievable! What's he doing to his family? With a job like that, he could feed them all.

--You spend way too much time with rich people. You think you're one of them! Hahaha!!

--What about finding a job then??!! Unbelievable, this boy!

--You're acting like you're some rich guy.

P.72

Jahjia gets his visa for America.

And Ahmadjan...

...doesn't.

P.74

This turbulence of the roaring waves,
this forceful longing.

P.75

--How can you hide yourself away here
after you've heard Simurgh's call?

P.76

Reflect on the internal self, let go of the external,
until your hands hold nothing at all.

P.77

Swimming helps Ahmadjan.
And then, one day...
...someone tells him something:

P.78

The Parakeet

P.79

-- Just go to Germany – no visa required!