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JALDA's **Interview with Dr. Farshid Sadatsharifi**

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Farshid Sadatsharifi has been visiting scholar at the Institute of Islamic Studies in McGill University, Montreal, Canada since 2016. He received his PhD and MA in Persian Language and Literature from Shiraz University, Iran. He also completed his post-doc fellowship in Interdisciplinary Approaches to Literature at the same university. Dr. Sadatsharifi is the co-founder and director of *Samaak Institution*, the center for Persian Language and Literature in applied approach. He is the affiliated researcher of Hafez Studies Center, and a permanent member of Iranian Society of Persian Humor (ISPH). Dr. Sadatsharifi has spent ten years celebrating literary theories, the meaning of life, existentialism, and other subjects related to studying and teaching Persian Language and Literature in a multidisciplinary and applied approach. He hopes to have the chance to establish "applied literature" as a well-recognized part of literary studies. He believes that an applied approach is unavoidable for any form of art, humanities and literature nowadays. In pursuit of *JALDA*'s fundamental goal of spotlighting the nature of applied literature, the journal's editor-in-chief, Dr. Bahram Behin, had a short conversation with Dr. Sadatsharifi.

BB: ---- ***Dr. Farshid Sadatsharifi, thank you for accepting JALDA's invitation to take part in this short conversation.***

FS: ---- It's my pleasure.

BB: ---- 'Applied literature' is a concept that is almost unknown to many scholars in Iran. What is your definition of this concept? And how well-known is this concept in today's world in places other than Iran?

FS: ---- Literature is a blend of art and science; it has learned, measured and grounded aspects as well as motivational and heart-warming ones. But once in the academic context, it is driven into a set of enclaves that are diminutive and far from the everyday ordinary life. What I have pursued for the past seventeen years has

been to set up educational and promotional activities in relation to the Persian Language and Literature (PLL), alongside researching it, to show the applicability of the PLL and related disciplines at least at three practical levels. First, knowledge of the PLL is applied in the everyday use of language and literature, some realizations of which are orthography and editorial work. Second, the PLL can be a source of knowledge in psychology applicable to the specific needs of the reader. Children's and young adults' literature can be an example of how literature is used to affect adolescents for the purpose of psychological growth and acquiring psychological skills. Also, it has been proven that people with special needs, such as mentally or physically disabled people, can be helped through literature. The third application of literature is realized through the interdisciplinary relations between literary theories and theories from other disciplines for social purposes. Knowledge of theories employed in the production of networks of social media such as the Instagram on Facebook and Telegram on Viber as well as cinema alongside literary theories would result in more profound achievements for applied purposes. The performances in them are by no means accidental and result from profound scientific and theoretical investments. It seems that we need to pay more attention to these aspects of literary studies under 'applied literature'.

BB: ---- How would you elaborate on the third application of literature, which relies on the use of literary theories?

FS: ---- I'd like to suggest that the film industry and networks of social media are all deeply rooted in literature. They are handy tools now because they draw upon the effective use of language. An example of how to approach the reading of literature should explain what I mean. Recently, I had lectures on Hafez and Sa'di in Montreal. I argued that proper interpretation, along with obtaining accessible and visual resources, was a precursor to the task. With the help of "discourse analysis," I gave the audience a general view of what scientific approach might mean and how capable they are to make the text of their "own" and form opinions. On the basis of this, then, the audience could be suggested to bring together what they saw in the text and what they were taught to look for in it. And the result was the systematic reading of a text that was regarded as an 'old' text. This is a reading that has much in common with the scholarly achievements of the textual researcher, but it also gives the reader an excellent opportunity to use his previous knowledge in the reading of the text. This approach will enable each reader to have an insight into "systematic uncertainty" leading to the possibility of new and different interpretations and open-endedness. In the same vein, in teaching practical criticism to students volunteering for the literary Olympiad, they were practically empowered to produce a sustained critique before they were introduced to semiotics. No need to mention that this process can take place at a very young age if the critic and the

instructor both are aware and know their jobs well. Another example for this approach is the experience of reading children's works of literature critically with a theory such as the "reader within the text" (the reader hidden in the text) that reveals the author's conscious or unconscious view of the audience while creating the text.

Experiences like this show that if we put forward a functional theory at the right time, the result is 'empowerment.' In applied literature, it is a primary goal to empower everyone involved in the process of thinking, reading, writing, and living a life of intimacy with literature.

BB: ---- Another area of your specialty is literary training focused on communication and psychological skills. Please explain this aspect of applying literature to an audience.

FS: ---- Literature empowers the mind and language for expression and communication. From my collaborations in Shiraz with the psychologist and psychoanalyst Dr. Masoud Mohammadi to our psychological readings with Dr. Elham Gerami (Montreal resident psychotherapist), it was revealed that stories and poems, as well as filmmaking, are the best tools for objective thinking. Also, since the Persian-speaking audience nowadays has a minimal vocabulary for self-expression (expressing emotions, emotions, and experiences), it becomes much more vibrant and more efficient with text-reading, especially poems such as those by Sa'di. Part of this is sought in psychology and management and this is called "effective communication."

BB: ---- Literary and promotional consulting is one of the areas you are interested in. Don't you think that by incorporating literature into the marketplace and advertising it will become a commercial commodity and bereft of its original meaning?

FS: ---- We don't just see ads as a persuasion to buy low-quality goods. Advertising is not purely commercial. In addition, the trademark is not bad and not necessarily in contrast to the artistic and pleasing essence of literature. To my view, advertising is another form of effective communication. When the editor of a magazine writes an editorial condemning a terrorist incident, he wants to be as effective as possible. But since he is not a poet and does not have the right poem in mind, he can be introduced to a beautiful poem such as "Put Your Gun Down" (by Fereydoon Moshiri) so that he may write a more effective editorial by drawing upon that poem. So if "literature" is there to affect, should it not be used to deepen the effect of the note?

BB: ---- Literature graduates and many writers usually pursue literary interest with the assumption that literature cannot make money, and literature should always be a marginal interest alongside one's earning occupation. Does this stereotype sound right to you?

FS: ---- They have come to believe that if they want to use literature as an occupation, they have to become a teacher, a school or university teacher. However, this applied approach, with all its shortcomings, leads to the delivery of "knowledge-based" products and services through literature. I have repeatedly reminded my friends at the 'National Elite Foundation' about how essential it is to support this lesser-known path of knowledge. For example, our entrepreneurial experience in "Virastaran" editorial bureau has shown that literature can exist in ways other than teaching. If we were to abandon the mere look of a teacher who wanted and could become a full-time professional editor, how far would we go in terms of applied literature? This is also a clear example of the first level of applied research.

BB: ---- Thank you for your time.

FS: ---- My Pleasure.