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**Page 235-241**

**GENERAL IMPACT FACTOR & More**

**Ronny Noor**

## If You Live It Right

My grandfather, the judge Mother lovingly called Papa, is etched in my memory as an obelisk of a man with a white goatee and bifocals perched on a Roman nose.

In his small study he occupied the lone armchair at the mahogany table, with packed bookshelves along the bluish walls, pulling at

his meerschaum pipe, spreading  
a sweet incense-like aroma that still  
lingers in my nose though I am now  
almost his age with graying hair.

He knocked open the door to  
the great mythical worlds of  
the ancients in his usual meditative  
way, regaling me with stories –  
the words flowing from his mouth  
laced with the aroma of the smoke  
that curled up gently into the air –  
of Rama’s reign of eleven thousand  
years; of Noah living over nine  
hundred years, saving humanity  
from extinction; and Thetis’s son  
Achilles vanquishing Hector  
of Troy, the demigod’s very cry  
sending tens of Trojans to death.

“But I won’t live for centuries,  
Grandpa,” I sighed dejectedly,  
eyeing the floral teacup before him.  
“That’s living several lives. And  
nor am I a demigod.” He met  
my eyes: “No matter.” Adding  
with a smile that kindled his face  
between scent-filled puffs: “*Rings*

*and knots of joy and grief, all  
interlaced and locking. But if  
you live it right, one life is enough.”*

Note: The Italicized lines are quoted from Valmiki’s *Ramayana*,  
retold by William Buck.

## From the Loins of Nadir Shah

*As the wolf cannot be a shepherd*

*neither can a tyrant rule.*

– Saadi

He claimed to have descended from the fabled loins of Nadir Shah, as the bushy-browed General with an avid desire for women and liquor boasted of his notorious Persian progenitor.

Thus Yahya met Madam Aqleem Akhter, former wife of a police officer, with a sharp wit and a ready smile, who tossed her burqa in the wind to trade in girls for high society in Rawalpindi.

Soon she became his domestic partner though his first love was always liquor, and by and by her flapping dupatta sang of General Rani in the air, who was mired in her country's affairs.

With a bottle of whiskey in his hand and his rani's voice in his ear, General Yahya plotted to rob the treasures of the Bengal delta like Nadir Shah the riches of once wealthy India.

So stepping into the shoes of his progenitor who  
had sacked Delhi over two centuries ago, he let  
loose hell in Dhaka on a March night in '71,  
dying the green city red with great slaughter.

But while the victorious Nadir quit Delhi in  
two months after grabbing the Peacock Throne,  
with tons of rupees and diamonds, gems and  
jewels, flashing the crown jewel Koh-i-Noor,

Yahya was obliged to cede half the nation after  
nine months of combat and carnage and millions  
blown to bits, to the valiant tigers that had  
risen after slumber in unvanquishable number.

Shamed and disgraced, without a glory like his  
ancestor, he bowed out parting with the ribbons  
and medals that had adorned his chest to live a  
solitary life, shunned even by Aqleem Akhter.

Left alone with his liquor, to potter about his  
house without power, he escaped the fate  
of his progenitor, who had lost his head  
to the sharp knife of his wayward commander.

When his life-long affair finally caught up with  
Yahya, his fellow soldiers saluted the General's  
coffin before its journey to the hereafter, doused  
in the sighs and cries of millions and their pain.

## Ghazal

We're made in God's image, says the Good Book.  
But God can't be found by reading a book.

We must peek for God deep into our hearts.  
That can't be taught by prayers in a book.

Shakespeare can't be made by studying Shakespeare,  
Claims the gifted Emerson in his book.

Simon realizes where evil lives:  
We can find it in William Golding's book.

*We must cultivate our garden*, so says  
Voltaire after Candide's trips in his book.

God will show up in our deeds when goodness  
Rules our hearts, not the phrases of a book.



## **Ronny Noor**

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Born in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Ronny Noor is an award-winning professor and writer. His poems, stories, and essays have been published around the world, in journals and newspapers including *Short Story*, *South Asian Review*, *The Toronto Review*, *Kokako*, *FreeXpresSion*, *The Ghazal Page*, *The Daily Star*, and *Contemporary Literary Review India*. He is also the author of *Snake Dance in Berlin* (a novel), *Slice of Heaven and Other Essays* (an anthology), and *Where Heaven Spreads Wide & Other Stories* (a collection).

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