

Shrink Rap Radio #563, July, 27, 2017: Psychoanalysis in Tehran

David Van Nuys, PhD., aka "Dr. Dave" interviews Gohar Homayounpour, PsyD.

(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Mahyar Alinaghi)

Introduction: Today, my guest is Dr. Gohar Homayounpour, author of the 2012 book "Doing Psychoanalysis in Tehran" and she continues to be a practicing psychoanalyst there. For more information about Dr. Gohar Homayounpour, please see our show notes at ShrinkRapRadio.com.

Dr. Dave: Dr. Gohar Homayounpour, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio!

Dr. Homayounpour: Hi! Thank you for having me.

Dr. Dave: Yeah (laughs). Now this is the second time I've tried this intro. Maybe this time it will work. We've been messing around with lighting and all kind of technical things. It's not easy between California ...

Dr. Homayounpour: No. Not from my geography and yours.

Dr. Dave: Between California and Tehran. I have a listener there in Tehran, Mahyar Alinaghi, who's been urging me for a longest time to reach out and to speak with you and do an interview and so now, we get to do it and it's delightful. And you're a psychoanalyst there in Tehran. And, I'm curious. Are you the only, what we call, certified psychoanalyst in Tehran?

Dr. Homayounpour: No. I'm not the only certified psychoanalyst. There are a few other analysts here. As far as I know, I was the first IPA analyst, International Psychoanalytic Association's analyst, in Iran and you know, there are many many colleagues who do wonderful psychoanalytically oriented work, even though they're not certified psychoanalysts.

Dr. Dave: Ok.

Dr. Homayounpour: This is, you know, Just to continue a little bit, it's very interesting for me because... I understand your question because the

important thing is that you can't be trained and become a... basically you can't get training to become a psychoanalyst in Iran. So any of us who're here were all trained abroad. And this was the case also before revolution. So it's not that, you know, never there has ever been a psychoanalytic institution where people could train and become an analyst here.

Dr. Dave: Ok. Well, that makes you a fairly rare breed, I think, since there are not so many psychoanalytically trained people there. But it's good to learn that there's something going on. And you actually wrote a book "Doing Psychoanalysis in Tehran" and we'll be speaking about that. But before we get into that, let's go into your background a bit and... tell us about your background and your path to becoming a psychoanalyst. We can go all... I understand you were born in Paris. We can start with your birth.

Dr. Homayounpour: (laughs).

Dr. Dave: ... go all the way back.

Dr. Homayounpour: Well, for a psychoanalyst, everything starts at the beginning.

Dr. Dave: There you go.

Dr. Homayounpour: ... so it's wonderful to start with Paris. You know, I was born in Paris and at the time, my mother was finishing her graduate work at Sorbonne University.

Dr. Dave: Oh, can you go through that again? We froze a little bit. Your mother was... .

Dr. Homayounpour: My mother was finishing up graduate work at Sorbonne University in sociology and my father was working for UNESCO and what's interesting is that... you know, he had a PhD. in political science as well as one in adult literacy and so he would go to, I have vivid memories, as a little girl in Paris, that he would travel in China and Africa to develop literacy programs in those countries.

Dr. Dave: Did you travel with him, or you just remember him going there?

Dr. Homayounpour: No, he never took us. I think we were too young. I just have these vivid memories of him having to get all kind of vaccinations before his travels.

Dr. Dave: Sure.

Dr. Homayounpour: And on some days that I'm feeling very good about doing psychoanalysis in Tehran and what I've been doing here in regards to, sort of, contributing to bringing this discourse to this particular geography, I always think about this and tell friends about it that I think this is sort of following in his footsteps and it's bringing a sort of different kind of adult literacy.

Dr. Dave: Aha! Interesting, interesting! I can understand that. Now, I got the impression from your book that your parents were intellectuals and they had, circling around them, a kind of, a group of artists and intellectuals and celebrities. Do I have that right?

Dr. Homayounpour: (laughs). I don't know about celebrities, but definitely intellectuals and artists.

Dr. Dave: Aha. So, that's the kind of stew that you (laughs) came from, out of that. And how did that impact you, do you think? Growing up in that kind of an environment where there was that sort of stimulation?

Dr. Homayounpour: You know, as you point out, this was an extremely fertile ground to grow up in. And this sort of intellectual environment was not just about my immediate family which was my parents that they're both highly intellectual, but it was a trans-generational phenomenon. And I bring that up because I'm just... I think that it's quite important, this trans-generational phenomenon in general when it comes to our psychic life. So that's why I bring this up, you know. My paternal grandfather was one of the first few people that studied abroad in Switzerland and United States and became a medical doctor. Then he travelled back to Shiraz, which was where my father's mother's family comes from, and he was one of the first contributors to the opening of the medical school there.

Dr. Dave: Aha.

Dr. Homayounpour: So... and my uncle who's my late father's twin brother is a very important intellectual, still in Tehran, and... So I think there's a trans-generational phenomenon that I was very privileged and fortunate enough to be part of and to be surrounded by all of that and yet, as psychoanalysts we know that, you know, nothing is purely good. So, I have my ambivalent relationship to this sort of intellectual background as well, as much as I recognize the privilege of it and how I have tremendously enjoyed it and I feel a great deal of gratitude. But you know, good things... we can feel very ambivalent, especially at times, about good things.

Dr. Dave: Oh, I've been riddled with ambivalence all my life, so I can definitely relate to that!

Dr. Homayounpour: Exactly! You can imagine there are... for example, there are quite high expectations that can become quite ambivalent for a child to grow up in such environment.

Dr. Dave: Oh, sure, sure. So at what point did you learn about psychoanalysis and become interested in it?

Dr. Homayounpour: So, you know, this is always a very interesting question for me because I like to play with it and at times, I play with producing different stories (laughs) just... because I think, you know, our sort of conscious constructions about why we think we became interested in something... one of mine, which is how I remember it, is that I was sort of confronted with psychoanalysis in the same libraries that were all over my house. I was twelve or thirteen and I, sort of, ran into Freud's interpretation of dreams.

Dr. Dave: Oh boy!

Dr. Homayounpour: And you can imagine, you know, as a young teenager, when you read "The Interpretation of Dreams", it's not that you find it, you're confronted with it. And so, it was sort of love at first sight.

Dr. Dave: (laughs).

Dr. Homayounpour: And again, of course, you know, love is one of the most ambivalent things. So ambivalently, it was love at first sight.

Dr. Dave: Aha... aha.

Dr. Homayounpour: But there are unconscious reasons of course, that why we become interested in the things we become interested in or we make careers out of certain things. Some that will always remain inaccessible to me, but some that I have, on the couch, figured out over the years... I think that we all come to psychoanalysis because we're in pain.

Dr. Dave: Because we're what? In?

Dr. Homayounpour: Because we're in pain.

Dr. Dave: In pain, yes.

Dr. Homayounpour: And sort of trying to elaborate or translate all of these questions and... sort of these questions around existential questions, questions around the human condition. I think my road wasn't any different than that. At the end of the day, it came out of pain.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. You know, what that triggers for me is remembering when I sort of decided... originally, I wanted to... several different ideas I've had about what I am going to be. In college, I ended up switching out of engineering and into creative writing. So I had this image of wanting to be a writer. But then I heard about psychology and the image I had of being a psychotherapist, was just to be able to sit down with people and talk about the brass tacks of life and what it is to be human. That was really the image I had.

Dr. Homayounpour: That's a really nice association, yes.

Dr. Dave: Because I enjoyed those kinds of associations already. Not as a therapist, but people would, you know, somehow we would gravitate in that direction often. So, how did you begin to move professionally in that direction? Where did you go to school? What did you major in? Etcetera?

Dr. Homayounpour: So after Paris, we made this very strange move to come to Tehran and I tell you why strange because at the time, it was after the revolution and a lot of people were moving out of Iran, my parents who lived in France from before the revolution decided to make a move back to Tehran. I emphasize this because I think this has become a significant

move in my psychic life as you can imagine for a young oedipal child I was at the time to me (freezes) ... sort of found extremely bizarre that why are they making this move. And of course they had reasons of their own. My mother wanted to take care of her elderly parents and, you know, many many reasons. But as a child, this move became quite an important move in the development of my psychic life and who I became. And we lived in Tehran for a few years and then, as a teenager, I moved to Canada where I went to high school and I also went to Queen's University where I did my undergraduate degree in sociology and psychology. Then I moved to Boston and - this is a long voyage - and I did my master's degree and my doctorate degree and was trained to become an analyst at the Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis.

Dr. Dave: Ok. What an interesting journey.

Dr. Homayounpour: Afterwards...

Dr. Dave: Yeah, go ahead.

Dr. Homayounpour: Afterwards, I did sort of a lot of extra training to become a member of the IPA, because where I was trained was a non-IPA institute. So this is, quickly, the voyage, sort of speak.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. Wonderful! And so, at what point did you decide to go back to Tehran yourself? You've gotten all these education and so on. You've been immersed in this western world. What made you decide to go back?

Dr. Homayounpour: You know, again, going back to the beginning of our interview, it's about beginnings, no? And sort of, I think I made another strange move (laughs), sort of caught in this, you know, sort of... I think still an attempt to figure out the first move maybe, somehow. Because this again, as you pointed out for somebody who's educated in the west for as many years of my life as I had been, to make the move back to Tehran at that time was again another move that often people don't make. So I think it had to do with trying to elaborate the first move on the one hand and on the other hand, this sort of roads-not-often-travelled which I'm referring to about this first move and the second move, as anxiety provoking and as painful as they can be at the time, I find that they also

produce this marvelous, marginalized, subversive road that are often not travelled so frequently...

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Dr. Homayounpour: ...which for me is also the essence of psychoanalysis. So I think the spaces that I tended to provide for myself during my life because of my life history, as I said, quite challenging as you can imagine. But I think, on the other hand, they really provided this sort of space and possibility for creativity, playfulness, freedom and pleasure. I tend to really like roads not often travelled.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. So in your own way, you're adventurous and maybe a little rebellious. Not quite a hippy. You're much too educated to be a hippy, but there's something of that impulse to put yourself in situations that at some level, you knew were going to challenge you and stimulate growth and discovery.

Dr. Homayounpour: I love the association to a hippy, you know, because my fantasy has always been to be a nomad. So (laughs)...

Dr. Dave: Wow yeah. Ok. In that context you talk about the psychoanalytic concept of creating a third. Oh, wait a second; I'm getting ahead of myself. I wanted to go back to your book "Doing Psychoanalysis in Tehran" which is written in a very, kind of unique and interesting style. I thought I was going to be reading A, B, C, D, E, you know (laughs), some kind of straight forward, discursive thing (laughs). It wasn't quite that. How would you describe it? What were you doing with that?

Dr. Homayounpour: (laughs) I'm so glad you didn't find an A, B, C, straight kind of a thing.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Dr. Homayounpour: You now, as I talk... I'm so glad you bring that up because to me, that was one of the things that I particularly liked about the book that... I thought it's kind of a new genre in the sense that it's novelesque and at the same time, because I have this professional deformation, so novelesque in a psychoanalytic format. In this, you know, I talk about in the book that for me, staying very close to Julia Kristeva,

you're really closest to facing yourself when you write novel. And I think that is maybe even more when you're writing it in the sense of free associating, really free associating, as free as one's free associations are which we all know it's not quite free but, you know, in the sense of free association that we know. So that was very important to me. And it was also important to me for the process to be not just torturous, you know, to be pleasurable as well. And this is a genre that I really enjoy writing in.

Dr. Dave: Aha. Yes, it was free associative, almost like a diary at points, almost like a novel at points...

Dr. Homayounpour: Yes.

Dr. Dave: And in it, I think one of the things you spoke about, was creating a third, a psychoanalytic concept of creating a third that... approaching it in a style that was neither A nor B, that something else could emerge. And you write that the third is a super signifier in psychoanalysis. Tell us a bit what you mean by that? What is this super signifier?

Dr. Homayounpour: I have directly not talked about as much as the third being a super signifier in the book, but I have written about this elsewhere. But the idea is very much there because, you're right. I don't like binaries. I think when we're given a choice between either or, I always find it extremely (freeze)... creativity or playfulness or imagination. And I think the reason I talk about how the third is a super signifier, of course I'm referring to this idea that, if we want to get a little bit technical, that it is the moment that we are able to get out of the dyadic relationship we have with our primary care taker, whoever that may be, and enter the symbolic world, to use a Lacanian language for a second, that is a move from a dyad to a triad and that's where we can move out of these binaries and have possibilities of becoming in a way. You know, like when at the beginning you asked me if I was the – just to give a much more, like an example that might be helpful in elaborating it – like you asked me if I was the only psychoanalyst here, (freezes) such desire for psychoanalysis here and how few of us there are. On the other hand, it reminded me, just free associating, to this little children's story we have in Iran. It's called "The Little Black Fish" and it's quite famous, written by Samad Behrangi, and the interpretations made from the book, it was often that it was

political allegory. But the story starts with this old fish, telling two thousands children and grand children of hers the story of the little black fish. And the story is that this little black fish courageously risks leaving a little stream or a little pond and enters the sea via a waterfall and I think it's a beautiful metaphor for the super signifier, you know. The only psychoanalyst only happens in little streams and that's the danger of, I think, the situation when there are very few psychoanalysts because we can all get seduced into that trap. We need to, you know... the little stream, the little pond, is a dyadic, binary (freezes) ... the signifier of the third enters. And, you know, the sea is deep. It's full of possibilities, it's terrifying. But it can only happen if we leave the comfort of this dyadic, primary relationship and enter into the sea or the super signifier and it only happens via a third. You know, there's a little scene that Žižek refers to in the matrix that he's given the option between a blue pill or a red pill and Žižek says: "I want a third pill!" (laughs). So, I think...

Dr. Dave: I want a third pill?

Dr. Homayounpour: Yes. "I want a third pill!" Not just the option between a blue pill or a red pill, you know.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. The idea of the third put me in mind of one of Jung's ideas which he called the transcendent function and it's a similar idea that something, sort of higher, more creative, can emerge out of the binary; as you say, something new can emerge.

Dr. Homayounpour: Yeah. That's a very interesting idea. Unfortunately, I'm not so familiar with the idea, but it sounds fascinating.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. In your book, you confess to some initial concerns about how psychoanalysis might fit in with Persian culture. But you found a very strong, common element that helped make that transition easier which is story. You just told us a little story.

Dr. Homayounpour: (Laughs)

Dr. Dave: But tell us how did story helped you to begin there as a psychoanalyst?

Dr. Homayounpour: You know, I came with all the prejudices that often people have when coming to Iran and talking about the mental health discourse. I thought that they would have a hard time talking about their personal stuff, I thought that they would think that "Oh (freezes) ... crazy if I want to go" or that they would be ashamed of sharing that they're getting help for their mental health issues. None of it I found to be true, to tell you the truth. I found that there was such openness and desire for psychoanalysis that I was so pleasantly surprised. And I relate it to this... I think it might have to do with the fact that we do have this (freezes) that it might, you know, this is just an idea I have. I'm sure that...

Dr. Dave: Can we have you back up just... the screen is freezing periodically...

Dr. Homayounpour: Ok, ok.

Dr. Dave: And I think it's been intelligible anyway, but just back up a little bit and repeat what you just said.

Dr. Homayounpour: Just I was talking about the fact that I was as, you know, I had all these prejudices that often people do when they come to a more, what one would call, a traditional, you know, conservative culture. But none of that I found to be true. Of course there are people who have these ideas, but I also found this extremely hospitable, fertile ground for psychoanalysis. I always say that maybe we helped to bring the seed, but there was such a fertile ground and in my opinion, one of the reasons one could look into, is that we have such strong culture of storytelling and talking. And, you know, of course this is complicated and multilayered, but I was very surprised about the openness of patients to talk about things, about the desire people have for psychoanalysis. This is really incredible.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. In fact you recently presented a paper at a psychoanalytic conference in Manchester in England on psychoanalysis and Islam and in that presentation, you focused on the famous story of Scheherazade and the One Thousand and One Nights. Can you give us the sense of what was that you were getting across in that presentation?

Dr. Homayounpour: No, no. I think there was a slight miss communication. The presentation I did in Manchester recently was on psychoanalysis and Islam. Before that in the States, I did one on Scheherazade.

Dr. Dave: Oh.

Dr. Homayounpour: Yes, so just to clarify on that. In Manchester was on psychoanalysis and Islam at this wonderful conference organized by wonderful people. But in the States, just last year in a couple of places, I lectured on this idea I had. I used Scheherazade and One Thousand and One Nights to look at, where has Scheherazade gone as a possible source of female identification for all these Iranian young women? And I think that – I say where has our Scheherazade gone? This extremely incredible woman that was able to, just by telling stories, free the feminine soul and save so many young women's lives? And I continue relating this to the idea that when Scheherazade had three sons, but not a daughter. And I think that there was a trans-generational mutation and because she didn't have a daughter, there was this trans-generational mutation and things were not able to be passed on from one generation of females to the next. And I find so many beautiful archetypes of women in One Thousand and One Nights from good women, bad women, strong women, you know, seductive women, non-seductive women, to women who are strong, to women who..., you know, and I think this is the beauty of Scheherazade. She didn't tell us that women are just good. She just told us that women are everything, and that we can be everything and I hate the fact that we have lost her as a source of female identification and the only thing we're left with is that either women in Iran now are politicized or eroticized and I think that's another binary we need to get out of and move into the discourse of the sea, if we have any hope of developing a discourse that has new possibilities of freedom for women, you know. Now, if you google Scheherazade, one of the first things that come up is how to put your make up on, like Scheherazade, to become the exotic, eastern figure. So, I think we need to move away from this sort of eroticization or politicization.

Dr. Dave: Ok.

Dr. Homayounpour: And, I don't want to get more into this discourse because I relate it to the female Oedipus complex here and, and, and (laughs).

Dr. Dave: Well, going in a slightly different Freudian direction then, one of the things you write about is the importance of "The Father" or the Father Principle or what's called the Reality Principle and so, maybe you can rhapsodize on that a little bit (laughs).

Dr. Homayounpour: Well, it's... I always love to talk about father, so I'm more than happy to do so. And, you know, I think it's interesting because there's a paradoxical, meta-psychological thing that I'm not going to get into here but just to briefly refer to what you're saying is that, you know, we – I talk to you about storytelling, I talk to you about imagination, my desire for subversiveness which is what I appreciate about the psychoanalytic discourse, about margins, about what I've called "the play ground of monsters" elsewhere, and playing and imagination and yet, I think the reality principle has a bad reputation. Because we don't, you know, all of these things become possible only if you're introduced to the reality principle. It's true that meta-psychologically, there's a dialectical tension between reality principal and the pleasure principal. But, if we're not introduced into the outside world, which again happens going back when we're in (freezes) ... but I have to say that the paternal function here is not sex, so the paternal function could be female or could be the mother's job. As long as the mother has a desire outside of her children, that could function as the paternal function within Lacanian discourse. And this third whose job it is to introduce the reality principle is extremely important within (freezes) ... us finding our ways in the realm of the pleasure principle. So I think the reality principle has a bad reputation. There's a beautiful quote by Goya that he talks about how reason, fantasy without reason, can produce impossible monsters.

Dr. Dave: Aha.

Dr. Homayounpour: So I think the reality principle has a bad reputation. We need it in order to find our way within the sea and away from the little fond of, you know, this sort of... we need it to find our way in the realm of the pleasure principle.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. You talk about that it's got a bad reputation and I that there's this conversation about the patriarchy among feminists. The awareness has been brought forward of the patriarchal structure of western culture and some questioning of that and rebellion towards that. So that's the bad reputation that you're referring to, right? But you're saying that there's a deeper play of the opposites that needs to be honored in order for creativity and etc. to be flourished.

Dr. Homayounpour: Yes, absolutely, absolutely, yeah.

Dr. Dave: Now, you've married (laughs) and you have a four year old daughter. So, these are some big changes in your world. What is your experience of being a mother of a four year old child? What is she teaching you? (Laughs) I think our screen has frozen up.

Dr. Homayounpour: Yes, yes. Now I have you again. Sorry I didn't get the last part.

Dr. Dave: What is your four year old teaching you? And maybe she is helping you, maybe she is revising some of your psychoanalytic concepts?

Dr. Homayounpour: Definitely. Absolutely. You know, it's fascinating because on the one hand, I have never seen such a validity to psychoanalytic theories and it's incredible to see "Wow! This really works". If you know these little things, it really works and it really helps. You know, I can give you an example. She was sick and she had an infection and she had to get blood. And before – you know, after we went and she – before we went to give the blood, we played with her dolls and made sure she was getting blood from the dolls. You know, this idea of the active passive thing, so she would be the active one before she was exposed to the passive position of being the one whose blood was taken, and it was incredible how it made the whole process smooth for her. So this is where you think that "Wow! It's wonderful that I know these little things and it helps and it's really delightful". On the other hand, I have to tell you that I have never thought that how hard psychoanalysis is on mothers on the one hand and how some of these things are really good in theory but they don't work in practice. Again, another example: so we have the idea that you don't, you know, as a psychoanalyst, one tells, you know, this is the theory that says: "if you want to leave the house, no

matter how much struggle you have to face, you make sure you say goodbye to your child. So you don't run out or, you know, make her preoccupied with someone and then leave". And this is a wonderful concept and of course, it would be great that all of us could apply it all the time. But you know sometimes between patients and having to take care of so many different things, you don't have 45 minutes to spare to say goodbye in the most proper way. And I think this is where like you have to be, you know, the theory has to go easy on mothers. And I love, you know, Winnicott's ideas, and at the same time, I think his concept of a good-enough mother has made many mothers feel extremely guilty over the years because even the good-enough mother is impossible to live up to. Because his good-enough mother intuitively knows things, the moment she becomes a mother she just knows what to do. Even if she's uneducated, she just knows, because the good-enough mother is just really a super mother at the end of the day.

Dr. Dave: Ah.

Dr. Homayounpour: And I think this has made quite a lot of women suffer, because you feel: "if that's just good-enough and I don't live up to it", you know. So I think that first, the most important thing is for mothers to have other people who support them and contain them. Because if the mother is supported and contained, then she can be a good-enough – you see how we're like bound to it?! She can be a good-enough mother for her own children. So, you know, with her, it's both ways. I see some things that incredibly work and it's a delight and some things that I think the theory has to go easy on mothers.

Dr. Dave: That's interesting because, I've not read Winnicott deeply, but I just had the impression that "Oh, good-enough mother, she doesn't have to be a perfect mother. She only has to be good-enough". But what I'm hearing is that actually, he sets the bar very high.

Dr. Homayounpour: What you're saying is correct and this is exactly what he talks about and he, I think his intention is to make mothers not want to be these perfect mothers. But, having said all of that, his good-enough mother is also quite a super mother! You know? Quite capable of so many things, you know, naturally. I don't know, for example, how much

space there is for... I had a, let's say I have heard that, you know, mothers can talk about the fact that when they become a mother, they don't necessarily, psychically become a mother. It takes time for some women.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Dr. Homayounpour: And I'm not sure how much these things are acknowledged or how much of the fact that, you know, you have this desire to not be a mother all the time. Or how much of a struggle this is to find your way because of how much is aroused within your own unconscious dynamics, with your own mother, with your own background, you know. Every stage they go through, every stage my daughter goes through, I go with her somehow and it's a struggle to find your feet. And I think the most important thing is for mothers to be contained and supported.

Dr. Dave: I wanted to ask you about use of the word "Contained" there. What does that mean? Because "contained" sounds restrictive somehow.

Dr. Homayounpour: Yeah... yes, you're absolutely right. I'm using Bionian term here. You know, the idea is that you... I don't know if this is doing justice to the term, but something around, along the lines of be held maybe, you know, in this metaphorical way, that if you can contain somebody's anxiety, it helps her anxiety. If you can contain her doubts about herself or if you can... you know, it's a concept Bion uses and he uses it as an extremely important therapeutic (freezes).

Dr. Dave: Oops! We just froze up again.

Dr. Homayounpour: ... there to contain the child. So, you know. But I think in order for her to be able to do that, she needs to be contained herself.

Dr. Dave: I wonder if that relates it all to the concept of mirroring; that somebody needs to be there to listen, to be there for her and to, kind of, reflect back?

Dr. Homayounpour: Yes. I mean, I think, yes. I think these concepts are all, sort of, within the same realm in a way, yes.

Dr. Dave: Now, I understand that at this point, you have an ongoing psychoanalytic study group with about a hundred and fifty people attending (laughs). Yeah, tell us about that. What goes on there and who are these people who come and what are they looking for?

Dr. Homayounpour: Well, I, you know, we established the group here when I came and we started with, I don't know, five, six people and then people were just interested in learning psychoanalysis and attending the class I was teaching in the format of a study group; like a cartel. And what happened was that more and more became interested and more and more students came. Usually... the people who come to us are basically interested and they have a desire to learn psychoanalysis because we are not able to give them a degree or a certificate because we don't have any sort of affiliation. So they don't come to get a degree or certificate. They just come to learn, because they have the desire to learn. And this is another subversive space that I love, because it's such a luxury and I'm privileged to work with students that they just want to learn. And this allows (freezes) ... we don't have to grade, we don't have to think about, you know, we can change our ideas about... you know, it really allows a certain kind of freedom. Now, on the other hand, the group is quite structured, I would say, within these dynamics, you know, because we have different... as you said, we have a hundred students in Tehran – about – and fifty members in Mashhad which is another city in Iran – quite a religious city – which makes it interesting and so what happens is that people get what is very close to a psychoanalytic training, but with the freedom that I had just described. So they have analysis, supervision and they take theory classes and, you know, they're exposed to many, many different theories. Of course as the name of the group goes, there's an emphasize on Freud because I always think that it's important, you know, it's important not to idealize Freud, of course, but it's important to acknowledge that he was our beginning.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Dr. Homayounpour: And to acknowledge (freezes) ... be able to criticize him. So there's an emphasis on Freud. But they're exposed to many, many different theories. We have a... we're so lucky that we have the support of a large number of international colleagues. Every few months, we have

somebody visiting the group, lecturing for them, giving them supervision. We've held two international congresses. I think we've done a lot of good work. I'm very proud of the work that the group has done. I'm very proud of every single student. You mentioned Mahyar at the beginning and you know, he's just a... you know him, he's just a wonderful gem but there are many students like him. One of our students recently won the IPA video award and he's in Argentina now to receive the award as we speak.

Dr. Dave: Oh, how exciting!

Dr. Homayounpour: Yes, yeah.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, you know, I definitely understand the joy, the freedom of not having to train people to certain standards, etc. but I wonder if you see this eventually evolving into an institute that could give recognized training?

Dr. Homayounpour: Absolutely. I think this is a very good point and this has been the goal of our group and we have been working with the IPA, hoping to get allied center and status and this is in the process. Now, there are some complications that have nothing to do with the group or psychoanalysis, but the situation of the country, for example, with various different things. But I think you're absolutely right in bringing this point that as much as it would be hard to give up this sort of freedom, it's important to be able to allow people to become trained as psychoanalysts here. I think I and the group have done everything we can along those lines and will continue to do. Of course when it happens, which I hope it will happen, we will be nostalgic for the days we were more free.

Dr. Dave: (laughs) Right.

Dr. Homayounpour: But I think it's a compromise that we need to make and it would be wonderful for the future of psychoanalysis here.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. I really relate to the freedom that you're talking about because for many years, I was a university professor and students would take my classes. Well, some loved them (laughs) but a number of them, you know, who were taking it to fulfill a requirement and sometimes I even think that in terms of the traditional ages that people go through education. They're not ready for yet.

Dr. Homayounpour: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: They should be out travelling in the world and doing other things to finally get to the place where they hunger for it. So the thing I love about doing this podcast is that nobody has to listen (laughs), nobody has to be here. And yet there are people who do.

Dr. Homayounpour: And you have many, many listeners.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. So that's so gratifying.

Dr. Homayounpour: Absolutely.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. So that's wonderful. Well I kind of run out of my questions. But I wonder if there's anything more that you want to share, you know, given this opportunity to speak. Maybe there were things we didn't touch on that you really would like to share?

Dr. Homayounpour: No. I want to thank you for your hospitality and for having me on the show. It's been wonderful and I really appreciate the exposure that you're giving to psychoanalysis in Tehran because there are wonderful students here that deserve to be recognized and I really hope that they get to be trained to become psychoanalysts someday. So I really appreciate your hospitality with them and with me.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, thank you. Well, I hope that some point down the road, relations between our two countries will normalize and, you know, I would love to visit. I know that (laughs).

Dr. Homayounpour: (laughs).

Dr. Dave: You're the third Persian person I've spoken to there and all three of you have given me a warm invitation to come and visit and if I ever overcome my fear and apprehension, maybe I will. Or maybe the world will just move along to a better place.

Dr. Homayounpour: But as, you know, I think that I would like to extend my invitation and tell you that I'm sure you would enjoy it and you would have a wonderful time.

Dr. Dave: I strongly feel that. It's making me very tempted.

Dr. Homayounpour: We're famous for hospitality here. So...

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah, wonderful. Well, so glad to have been able to extend to you today. I want to thank you for being my guest on Shrink Rap Radio.

Dr. Homayounpour: Thank you for having me, thank you!