

**PERFECT IN
EVERY WAY**



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The Paradise Garden: Diagonal vase with Shah Abassi flowers

PERFECT IN EVERY WAY

When you enter the spacious showrooms of the Centre of Original Iranian Carpets in Abu Dhabi, you see the piles of carpets stacked high, the assistant turns them over for you like leaves of a book. There is a quiet "wvish" as perfect rug follows perfect rug.

If you have visions of the artist weavers putting in the last knot and rushing it off to market, says Dawood Hossein Zadeh, forget it. "If you were to see the rug as it leaves the loom, you would not give it houseroom. The finest rug, just woven, will look coarse and filthy. The pile looks like nothing but a mess of rough tufts.

"First the carpet has to be washed then, gradually, we will

This week in our magic carpet series, we learn about the making of new carpets, and Jalil Hossein Zadeh's dream carpet that took 15 years, a little drama, and a lot of heartache to complete...

by Joan van der Merwe

see the true colours emerge. Expert finishers will trim the pile to an even size, and finally it is "shaved" to create that perfect smooth light catching finish. Then the warp strands knotted together to make a perfect fringe.

"All these are specialist trades, and in our workshop in Teheran,

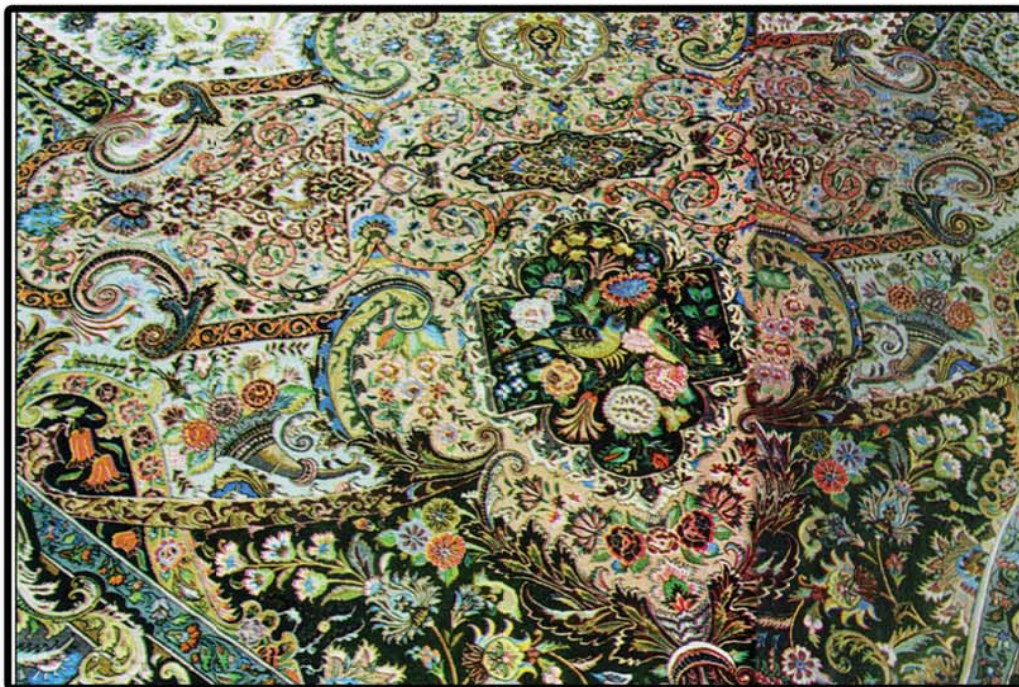
we employ many "finishers". There is a small village outside Tehran where we take the rugs to be washed. The water there has a special quality which helps to set and clarify the colours.

"The carpets, particularly the large ones, are very heavy when wet and we have a huge hand

press, a mangle, that takes most of the water before the carpet is carried up the hillside to dry in the clear light," says Jalil Hossein Zadeh.

It took 20 men to carry Jalil's special 160 sq.metre carpet up the hillside to dry. This carpet was Jalil Hossein Zadeh's dream. Everyone whose life is involved in the rug trade, designers, weavers, dyers, and patrons, dreams of his own "special", the carpet that other carpet men talk about. Jalil was no exception. His family, in almost a century of selling other men's dreams, had initiated the making of many carpets, but this would be his own special.

His carpet took 15 years to create, and often during that



Although it was not the biggest Tabriz, there was one 450 sq. m. carpet being made at the same time, but this was the Hossein Zadeh carpet and perfect in every way

→ time, he wondered why he had ever started. But a carpet once started has to go on, there was no going back.

Dawood remembers growing up with this carpet. "First my father had to choose where it would be made, how big it should be, who should design it, who should weave it and who would be the dyer to produce the wool and silk.

"Tabriz was the origin of the family firm so it was decided that it should be made there. Then the size; it was a big dream, it had to be a big carpet, 16m.x 10m. 160 sqm.

"Nami, the designer, and Amir Kazemi, the weaver, had worked together before, creating our "specials", but they had never before made a carpet of this size. The design was chosen, a price agreed, and my father started to buy the materials.

"While the special loom was being assembled, he went with Nami to talk to the dyers. It was essential that they not only were able to produce the 90 colours

needed for the design but to make enough of each colour in one batch to complete the carpet. If it were to run out, the colours could never be matched again."

The materials were ready, the loom was assembled and Amir Kazemi threaded the first knot into the warp in the summer of 1972. "That carpet became part of our family life. It began when I first joined my father in the business in Tehran, and by the time it was complete, I was married, had my own family and was established in Abu Dhabi.

"Our supervisor in the Tabriz region watched over the progress and passed the carpet at each stage before a cash installment was made. We all made regular visit to see the weavers at work, it was exciting, like watching a sapling in garden grow into a tree, or your child developing from a baby to an adult, the same mix of joy and anxiety.

"There were problems; usually cash disputes among the weavers, and at one time they stopped work completely for two



This loom shows what the pile looks like before it is trimmed or shaved



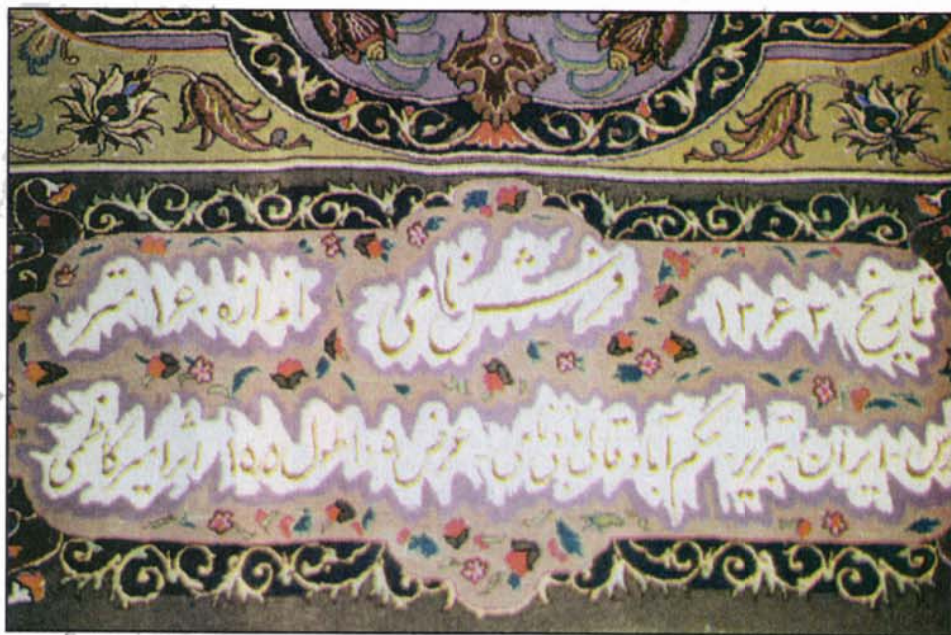
Above: Jalil and Dawood standing on the Paradise Garden
 Left: Details of the Paradise Garden: A section of the border shows birds and flowers
 Below: An inscription on the border of the Paradise Garden gives the date of completion, the names of the designer and weaver, and the size

years. This was one time when my father wished to God he had never started it all but by now too much money had been invested to stand by and watch work stop. He finally got them all working together again.

"Eventually in 1985, the last knot was put in place and the weaving was over. It was a time to celebrate. Everyone involved felt a personal achievement. Although it was not the biggest Tabriz, there was one 450 sq. m. carpet being made at the same time (and which incidentally, has since come to the family to sell on consignment) but this was the Hossein Zadeh carpet and perfect in every way.

"There were parties, gifts were exchanged and the last cash payment made."

Then the carpet went off to Tehran for finishing, months of more work. Dawood has a video of some of the processes involved in this carpet, including the epic haul of the wet carpet up the mountain, which is like a scene from the build-



ing of the pyramids. If you have the opportunity to visit Dawood in his showroom, he will happily screen the video for you.

The Paradise Garden is part of

the family's private collection.

Next week is the last in this fascinating series of magic carpet stories, and we will find out about the antiques, the collector's items that books are writ-

ten about. Can we see them here? How good are they as an investment and how can you be certain if you do buy one that you are getting what you paid for. ■