

Persian Heritage

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Much has happened over the course of the last year, but the events that stand out in our minds are still events of September 11; how they changed the world! For some it has been changed forever, while for others it changed only briefly. If any good is to come from those tragic events, I hope that it will be a better understanding of each other's religion, politics and culture. September 11 made me realize that after our health the most precious commodity that we have is freedom, especially the freedoms of speech and press and the sacrifices that we must make to keep them! These freedoms are the subject of this editorial.

Over the past few months I have been deluged with criticisms, directly, through phone calls, e-mails and letters. One of the conversations I would like to discuss with you was with a friend of mine following a meeting I attended. He approached me to apologize for the sharp words he had written to me in a letter regarding one of my editorials. He explained that he had no intention to insult me but my words angered him. I informed him that I was not at all insulted, in fact I was glad to hear that my words provoked a reaction, be it for or against me. I further explained that as I have the absolute right to write my opinion and report factual information, the readers likewise have the right to voice their opinion. Any censorship done to anything written in the magazine is only done if there is a question of accuracy, or if there is a malicious attack that is not factually based or there is a direct insult. I walked away from this conversation content with the fact that the magazine was being read, digested and was provoking discussion.

A few days later I had another encounter on the same subject. Friends of mine criticized me for news I had written. They felt that the news upset some people in the Iranian art and literary community. They lectured me by stating that, years ago, had famous editors of three well-known Iranian newspapers received this news, they would have not printed it or they would have softened the piece to make it more polite. (Frankly, the politeness of any news is not my concern unless the vocabulary used to describe it is somewhat off color.) When I realized what news article they were referring to I was relieved that what was written was based on facts, was not off color and that my staff had stayed well inside the journalistic rules. I turned to my friends and explained that though I respected their opinion on this matter that I believed the article to be factually correct and accordingly was printed. I also told them that if they believed this news was inaccurate that they should respond to the news and deny its accuracy. I assured them that if the news was inaccurate that it would not be repeated and a retraction or correction would be made. On the other hand, if the news were accurate, but simply not to their liking that the article would remain as printed. Not to print news simply because it may put someone in a bad light is the worse kind of journalistic censorship. I further explained to them that if the person who was the subject of the news was concerned about how they were made to look then he/she should have considered the political, social and ethical correctness of their actions and they should certainly not repeat it.

This conversation reminded me of politics and journalism in Iran during Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. Apparently the Shah was so fearful of being placed in a negative light that he would go to great lengths to prevent any negatives being printed about him. On occasion he would wake up his constituents in America and Europe in the middle of the night ordering them to censor, at any price, adverse news about him. (If anyone has information that this is not true I ask that you contact us so that we can correct this statement? I would not want our readers to be misled.)

Criticisms I received over the last few issues were not confined to our readers. I was also criticized by *Persian Heritage* writers who were angered by the printing of letters that criticized their writings. It is disappointing to me to think that these writers could not accept criticism. In life we must be willing to accept criticism as willingly as we accept praise. We must always understand that the way we see things will not be the way things are perceived by others. What is important, however, is the fact that the one who writes, opines or criticizes be treated fairly. That is how I practice journalism and it is a lesson I learned at the "school of hard knocks."

Some years ago I was involved in a medical malpractice action. The case was settled



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against my better judgment. The next morning I saw the headlines of a prominent local paper "SLOPPY SURGEON." At the end of the article, which was filled with many inaccuracies, the reporter stated that he tried to contact me and that I would make no comment. I was, of course, angered by this because I was never contacted. I contacted the reporter and asked him if in fact he tried to contact me and he admitted he did not. I then asked him if he would like my side of the conversation now that I contacted him. He said no. I was angered, not because of the news or the headlines, but by the fact that once this reporter knew that there may be inaccuracies in his story he refused to print it.

During the weeks that followed this event, it seemed as if all my "friends" carried a copy of this article in their wallets and briefcases. Though they were sympathetic to my face, I knew that I was the topic of conversation. On one occasion a caring friend approached me and asked me how I could tolerate what was going on and why I didn't fight back. I told him that I unfortunately had very tough skin. (In truth I wish at times I were not so tough skinned and could react.) Deep in my heart I know

that criticism is a part of life and it is what leads us to a healthy exchange. Criticism must be accepted (a Persian expression states: "the one who eats the melon must expect the chill"). What we do not have to accept, however, are lies and inaccuracies.

So I leave my readers with this thought. We, the so-called intellectuals, sit comfortably outside of Iran and easily speak of liberating a nation thousands of miles away. But, what is it we want to liberate this nation from? All the former governments in Iran from Pahlavi to the present controlled the people's freedom, controlled the press. Writers who criticized these leaders were placed in jail, disappeared or felt compelled to leave the country. All these governments were frightened by criticism because they believed it would be their demise. In fact their demise came from their unwillingness or inability to accept criticism and open dialogue. I must ask those who have criticized me over the past weeks if this is their desire? Do they wish to continue this kind of censorship? Because that is what they are doing by not accepting criticism and truth. Criticism and truth are the two requirements if Iran is to survive this new millennium, respond to criticism but do not censor it.

Allow me, in conclusion, to share an example of the positive results of criticism and open dialogue. On January 9, 2002, I saw something on television that made me feel deeply sad for Iran and Iranians. Do you know what it was my friends? It was President Bush addressing three schools in three different states on the new educational bill that had just passed in Congress. Do you know who was standing next to him applauding? It was his greatest critic, Senator Ted Kennedy. He was applauding the fact that this was a job well done. Millions would benefit from this bill, which was birthed from a great rivalry.

I am saddened by the thought that this scenario may never be able to be played out in Iran, that Senator Kennedy in a like situation would not be in the picture.

As I end this editorial, I look around and I see that our pain and suffering still remains. Perhaps by the next editorial, we will all find the world just a little better place. Let us try and hope.

Shahrokh Alavi

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AHMAD SHAMLU

Massoud Benhuri

AHMAD SHAMLU is one of the most revered poets in contemporary Persian literature. One who is familiar with Shamlu's name is aware of controversies surrounding his personality. Some vilify him as a mere leftist agitator, a modern poet, whose verse has no rhythm or rhyme and is against all the rules of classical Persian poetry. Some consider him as a slanderer of Persian heritage who dared to attack the legendary epic poet Ferdowsi. But there are people who consider him the greatest poet that Iran has created in the last five hundred years. Who is this Shamlu?

If his only accomplishment was to create an encyclopedia of Persian proverbs, expressions and idioms, he ranks second to master Dehkhoda whose comprehensive dictionary of the Persian language is the best scholarly work of its kind. Shamlu has compiled more than two million index cards of these proverbs, a monumental task still in progress that so far eleven volumes have been published. He edited the collected poems of Hafez, the mystical poet of the 14th century who influenced Goethe to write his East-West poetical works. Shamlu also edited the *Rubayat* of Omar Khayyam, poems of Nezami, to name a few. He translated many novels, short stories and plays from Mikhail Sholokhov to Erskine Caldwell, Antoine de Saint Exupery and Andre Gide. He translated major poems of Langston Hughes, Paul Eluard and Jean Coctau. He re-translated Song of Songs of Solomon of the Old Testament in a beautiful lyrical form. He translated many Japanese Haiku. He wrote ten collections of children's stories. Shamlu was a journalist, and in many cases the editor in chief of more than ten publications, and last but not least published sixteen collections of poetry. Above all, his poetry is supreme.

Ahmad Shamlu was born in Tehran in 1926. He was the son of an army officer. His mother, a housewife, raised four more children. He had interrupted elementary and secondary school education in different cities due to his father's occupation. At age 18, in the midst of World War II, he engaged in political activities with nationalistic aspirations and a tendency toward Germans, who were fighting against British forces. Britain was much hated in Iran because of their interventionist policies. Shamlu was jailed by the Allied Forces for a few months. After his release, he moved back to Tehran and the following year abandoned his academic education. During this period, he went through some sort of spiritual transformation, repented his right Wing nationalistic ideology and was inclined towards the left. He was never a member of the communist Tudeh Party, but was a fellow traveler and had many close friends who lost their lives for its cause.

Poetically, Shamlu was a pupil of Ali Esfandiari, aka, Nima Yushij, who is considered the father of Persian-modern poetry. There were some experiences by some other poets in modern verse, but it was Nima who by publication of his first long poem,

i.e., "Fairy Tale," in 1922 established himself as a modern poet. Nima was harshly criticized by the defender of classical poetry. He chose a life of seclusion and seldom published any poetry. Shamlu considered Nima as his mentor, but soon transcended him and created a new style, which is rich in vocabulary, 'imagery and frees 'itself from the conventional wisdom of many centuries. Shamlu achieved this by the meticulous study of classical texts. For instance, he studied Ferdowsi's *Epic of the Kings (Shah-nameh)*, the legendary stories of Persian mythologies thoroughly and noticed in many instances when Ferdowsi created a battle scene he used an abundance of harsh words to create the atmosphere of violence. Shamlu applied this technique skillfully to the point of perfection. In a non-rhythmic verse, which at times rhymes, words flow beautifully. He reintroduced many old and archaic words and at times created new words. He used vernacular to enrich his poetry, with old legends, myths and fairy tales, which was unprecedented:

"Fairies"

*Once upon a time
Under the azure skies
Bare and naked, in the late afternoon,
Three fairies were sitting,
Their hair as long as a bow, amber dark,
Longer than a bow, darker than amber.*

Persian classical poetry is known for its descriptive quality. Many old poets have described nature by rhythmical verses, which is a mastery of word play. Shamlu experimented with the new descriptive verse, which is rich with new concepts that rep-



resent modern life and lacks It-he old clichés, but -its imagery is daunting:

“The Fog”

*The desert thoroughly is covered by fog,
The village lights are hidden,
A warm wave fills the blood of the desert,
Tongue-tied
Broken*

*Sweats slowly in the warmth of
delirious night.*

Shamlu is familiar with the legends of the Bible and sometimes borrows from ‘its themes. For instance, in “Death of Nazarite,” he has an elegy for any soul who has been tortured for his belief in the character of Christ:

“Death of Nazarite”

*With a monotonous
monotonous sound
the end of the cross
drew a heavy and shaky line on the ground.
Behind him,
put a crown of thorns on his head.”
And the lasting sound of the burden
In the delirium of his pain
Was waving
A flaming cord.
Hurry, Nazarite, hurry.*

Shamlu laments on the Holocaust and pays tribute to the Warsaw ghetto uprising:

“Sleepers”

*From those who confronted death,
With open eyes
From proud brothers,
In the dark district
Nobody is awake.
For those who screamed renegade fury
In their empty hands
From sorrowful sisters
In the dark district
Nobody is awake.*

In the years following the end of World War II, an atmosphere of relative democracy appeared on the Persian horizon, which culminated in the nationalist coalition government of Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh. During this period many literary journals flourished. Young intellectuals including Shamlu had a great hope for democracy and the promise of a new society. The defeat of that government and the suppression of political activities, in the mid 1950’s, was a defeat of the freedom of expression and drove many intellectuals into despair. Shamlu, in this period, got more introverted and his poetry got very dark:

“Death of Nazi”

*“Nazli spring laughed and judas-tree blossomed.
At home under the window the old lilac too blossomed.
Give up imagining!*

*Don’t grapple with ominous death!
Being is better than not being, especially in spring.”
Nazli did not speak,
With her head high
She bit her afflicted heart and went.*

In the early 1960’s Shamlu met and fell in love with Aida Sarkissian, a union that lasted for 38 years. He came out of despair and wrote the most beautiful lyrics of contemporary Persian poetry and dedicated two volumes of these to Aida:

“Aida in Mirror”

*Your lips, delicate as poetry
Turn the most voluptuous kiss
Into such coyness
That the cave-animal uses it
To become human.
And your cheeks, with two oblique lines
That lead your pride
And my destiny
I who have endured the night
Without being armed.*

In the mid 1970s, toward the end of Shah’s regime, Shamlu left Iran and lived in the United States for a year and later moved to England to edit a journal, i.e., *Iranshahr*, to defend the freedom of expression in Iran. After the seizure of power by Khomeini’s regime, he returned to Iran with renewed hope for democracy. In his last journalistic effort, he edited a monthly, i.e., *Book of Friday*, dedicated to literature and arts. In his first editorial in the spring of 1979, he predicted that a dark age is dawning on the Persian horizon:

“Dead-End”

*They smell your mouth
Lest you have said, “I love you.”
They smell you heart
It is a strange world my darling!
And they lash love
On roadblock post
One must hide love in the closet.
In this clod labyrinth of dead-ends
Fire is kept aflame
With books of poetry and song.
Do not endanger yourself by thinking
It is a strange world my darling!*

The Islamic Republic suppressed its publication after one year and Shamlu retreated to his home in suburban Tehran and dedicated his time to edit the encyclopedia with great help from his wife Aida. He translated new works and at times wrote poetry.

Shamlu was awarded the Helman-Hammet prize for freedom of expression. He was awarded the Stig-Dagerman prize from Swedish academy, which is considered to be on the short list for the Nobel Prize in literature. His work has been translated in many languages and is available on the net: www.shamlu.com

He died in the year 2000 in Tehran. His funeral was attended by thousands of people mostly from younger generations and turned into a protest against repression of freedom. ■

Review:

TA'ZIYEH

AT THE LINCOLN CENTER

When the heart and soul of the performers are given to their performance, then the difference in a language will have no bearing on the enjoyment of the audience. And this was how it was at the Lincoln Center Festival 2002 with their presentation of *Ta'ziyeh*. As I scanned the faces of those sitting around me, I was certain that few understand the Persian being spoken or the point of *Ta'ziyeh*. Their eyes, however, did not reflect boredom but rather interest, excitement and emotion for what was being shown before them.

At a time when the world is torn apart and suffers such grief, now more

than ever there is a need for understanding other cultures, especially those who are called the "enemy." If history is not to repeat itself, understanding and logic is the true way to a lasting peace. The invitation by Lincoln Center to the Iranian troupe for *Ta'ziyeh* could not come at a better time. The invitation was well received by the artists but there was the issue of obtaining visas for their visit to the States. An additional factor was that even if the visas were obtained would the Iranians want to take a chance of being subject to additional harassment at the US borders.

As it was, some visas were denied which resulted in a reduction of the

cycles of *Ta'ziyeh* being performed. Despite the trouble it was a success at least from a spectator's point of view.

As a child I faintly remember going to see *Ta'ziyeh*. It was something that you did but I doubt that at that time few children understood or cared. I know now that was a loss for me. At the Lincoln Center performances I was happy to see young faces, Iranian and not, interested in what was going on. They were moved by the music, staging, and the general performance. They were receiving a message and I hope the one received was rational and clear. By the applause and smiles that followed the performances conclusion it was evident that the audience walked away accepting this culture, a country that they knew only as people who chanted "Death to America." Many, for the first time, saw Iranians as we see ourselves, people who are cultured, educated, hard working and people who want the world to no longer see them as monsters.

The performances and the music were delivered from mostly seasoned performers of *Ta'ziyeh*. Most in the ensemble began participating in *Ta'ziyeh* at five years old and were members of *Ta'ziyeh* performing families. They therefore have an inbred attachment and understanding for *Ta'ziyeh* and thus give believable performances. It was also apparent that their love for what they do has not lessened through the years. Take Reza Nasrollah Lankarani who at the age of seventy-four continues to perform *Ta'ziyeh* with the same love and desire when he first started, six decades ago. What was even more interesting were the performances of the children Kamal Ali Abbassi Jazi, age thirteen, Majid Alibi Abassi Jazi age ten, to name a few. The maturity of their performance is unbelievable.

I commend Lincoln Center and those responsible for this production on the success of this year's festival. They took a chance for it was not a politically easy task. Because of their perseverance, however, and love of the arts regardless of their origin, New York finally saw Iranians in a different light, both on stage and in the audience. ■



Reviews:

A SINGING DEBUT

Haale Gafari is making her recording debut with a CD simply titled *Haale*, the *Wide-Eyed Seamstress*. Though a young woman her words are profound. The CD contains songs that are not designed to lift your spirits but rather provoke inner emotions. Only in her twenties, I question if her thoughts are individual or reflective of all young adults her age. The messages she wishes to deliver are done in a precise and succinct manner and show her, talent ambitions and love of her music.

I truly admire the way in which she markets herself, constantly seeking new venues to introduce herself to a new audience. This past summer she and her band made a special appearance on Channel 5's *Good Day America* and at The Mercury Lounge in New York City.

What is most impressive to me about this young woman is her commitment to please her listeners. They demanded that she record some songs in Persian. She accepted the challenge and hopes to have the music released in the near future.

THEATER OF IMPROVISATION

If one is searching for a music miracle, it can be found in the musical duo of Hossein Alizadeh and Madjid Khaladj. Master of the tar, Alizadeh sprinkled the States with his talent last year when he toured with Shajarian and Kalhour. It proved to be a wonderful warm-up for this recent tour, which started this past June in New York City at Symphony Space.

Khaladj is a genius on percussion specifically the *tombak* and *daf*. Through these instruments and the tar these gentlemen create a sound that is brilliant and beyond imagination. Each note offered by Alizadeh is balanced by a stroke of the talented hands of Khaladj creating music similar to a well-synchronized poem.

Though I favor contemporary sound, I found myself mesmerized by the traditional music they played in addition to the contemporary offerings. After hearing them live, I am not surprised by Alizadeh's receipt of the Best Contemporary Artist award in Iran in 2000. Alizadeh's music is found beyond the concert hall. It has been used in the musical scores of the movies *Gabbeh* and *Time for Drunken Horses*.

Both of these extraordinary artists are thankful for their talent. They, therefore, have made efforts to give back to their community. Khaladj teaches at The Center for Oriental Music Studies at the Music Institute of Paris-Sorbonne where he has introduced western musical instruments to Iranian music. A demonstration of this technique was given in this latest concert tour. In 1996 he founded the Ecole de Tombak in Paris and in 1999 started teaching at the Music Academy of Basel Switzerland.

Alizadeh is also involved in teaching at the University of Tehran, the Tehran Music Conservatory and the California Institute of the Arts.

The concert is a worthwhile effort for all. For additional your dates contact the World Music Institute.

BEAUTIFUL PRAYER

By: Anonymous

*I asked God to take away my pain.
God said, No.*

*It is not for me to take away,
but for you to give it up.*

*I asked God to make my handicapped child whole.
God said, No.*

*His spirit is whole,
his body is only temporary.*

*I asked God to grant me patience.
God said, No.*

*Patience is a byproduct of tribulations;
it isn't granted, it is learned.*

*I asked God to give me happiness.
God said, No.*

*I give you blessings.
Happiness is up to you.*

*I asked God to spare me pain.
God said, No.*

*Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares
and brings you closer to me.*

*I asked God to make my spirit grow.
God said, No.*

*You must grow on your own,
but I will prune you to make you fruitful.*

*I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life.
God said, No.*

*I will give you life,
so that you may enjoy all things.*

*I ask God to help me LOVE others, as much as
He loves me.*

*God said ... Ahhhh,
finally you have the idea.*

FIFTY PERCENT OF THE CASPIAN SEA BELONGS TO IRAN: FACT OR FICTION?

Bahman Aghai Diba

Once upon a time there were two partners. They jointly owned a property. Due to chronic diseases, one of the partners passed away. The inheritors of the deceased partner got their half of the property and divided it among themselves equally. The other partner got his own share of the property, which was of course the other, half. They lived happily ever after. Do you see any legal discrepancies in this story? Neither do I.

Now we come to the Caspian Sea. Once there were only two countries at the shores of the greatest lake in the world: Iran and the Russia (and later the Soviet Union). Iran in the nineteenth century was a very weak country. Although it did not become officially a colonized state, but the great powers, especially British Empire and the Russian Empire were actively involved in Iran's politics. If it were not for the "buffer" situation of Iran between the two dominant powers, Iran would have lost its independence totally. However, this did not stop the concerned powers from rivalry to disintegrate and take over of Iran's territories as much as they could in the south and north of the country. The British Empire, using its agents in the so-called British Raj in the Indian continent and later the East India Company, was active in the Persian Gulf and southern parts of Iran, as well as Afghanistan (which they considered as the gateways to their vast colonies in the Indian continent). At the same time the Russians were taking any opportunity to cut out a piece of Iran. The weak and corrupt governments of Qajar dynasty in Iran fought for twenty long years with the Russians. The outdated and weak army of a backward country was no match for one of the most advanced armies of its time. Iran asked for help from other European countries and they either declined from helping or

worse than that, they made the own arrangements with the Russians to get a piece of spoils in Iran or elsewhere.

The end result was that after twenty years of war and killing thousands of Iranian peasants army who were fighting with swords and daggers against the advanced artillery of the Russian army, a significant part of Iran's northern cities and villages were occupied and annexed to the Russian territory according to the imposed treaties of Golestan (12 Oct. 1813) and Turkmanchi (February 22, 1828). These treaties were among the most severe attacks against the political independence and territorial integrity of Iran. According to the Article 8 of the Turkmanchi Treaty, Iran was denied of its rights of navigation in the Caspian Sea. The Russians were going to complete these plans against Iran by splitting the whole country into two spheres of influence with the British according to 1915 and especially 1917 treaties (this plan was exposed after the collapse of the regime in the Russian Empire). Following the emergence of the new Marxist regime in Russia and establishment of the Soviet Union, a new ground breaking treaty was concluded between Iran and the new Soviet regime in 1921. According to the new treaty the Article 8 of the Turkmanchi treaty was annulled. They decided that both sides are free to use the Caspian Sea "equally."

There were other incentives for the treaty. The new regime in Russia was worried that the fugitive elements of the previous regime and their allies (all together called "White Russians" as opposed to the red ones) might gather in Iran and stage a counterattack to reclaim the power. So, they added two articles to the said treaty, saying, "If Iran was unable to stop the operations of those elements against the Russians, then the Russian

government will be entitled to send its troops to do the same." Also, Russians hoped that by giving certain concessions, they would be able to help their ultimate cause of attracting this important country to their side. Anyway, the Iranian government in the Shah's time and also following the collapse of the past regime has declared articles 5 and 6 of the 1921 Treaty are null and void because the issue was related to the White Russians and they no longer exist. Of course, the past and present regimes of the Russia have never accepted neither the unilateral cancellation of those articles, nor the special interpretation of those articles. However, the Russians and Iranians signed another treaty regarding the Caspian Sea in 1940, and this time they agreed explicitly that except than a 10-mile exclusive fishing zone, the rest of the Caspian Sea was the common property of two sides. In the letters attached to the Treaty of 1940 (The Treaty of Commerce and Navigation Between Iran and the Soviet Union), several times the expression "Iran-Soviet Sea" is repeated as a reference to the Caspian Sea.

The international community has treated the Caspian Sea the same way. For example, during the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Seas (UNCLAS III) which lasted "ten" years and thousands of experts and diplomats from all countries of the world took part in it, they discussed almost all issues related to the law of the seas in the world, there was not even one case of reference to the Caspian Sea, the greatest lake in the world. The reason for this treatment was that they all recognized the exclusive rights of Iran and Soviet Union for defining the legal regime of this body of water. The UNCLAS III led to the conclusion of 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of Seas, which is also called the "Monte-go Bay Convention." There is nothing in this convention about the Caspian Sea. Some people (including a number of erroneously discussed that the issue of "enclosed or semi-enclosed seas" (covered in the articles 122 and 123 of the 1982 Convention) is a reference to places like the Caspian Sea. This is totally wrong. The best way to prove this claim is a quick review of the preparatory works of the UN Conference on the Law of the Seas. This is a good method to interpret a treaty, according to The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. The preparatory works of this conference are thousands of pages and you do not see the Caspian Sea any-

where. The participating parties who spoke about the "enclosed or semi-enclosed seas", made it clear repeatedly that they were referring to such places as the Persian Gulf, and the Mediterranean Sea.

On the other hand, there are no serious obligations for the countries bordering the "enclosed or semi-enclosed seas" in the Convention. If the countries bordering the Caspian Sea decide to use the contents of articles 122 and 123 of the 1982 Convention as a blue print for their cooperation in this region, this would be a new decision which has nothing to do with the obligations arising from signing and ratification of the Convention (Iran has signed the 1982 Convention, but has not ratified it yet).

It is clear that The Caspian Sea was a common property of Iran and Russia and this fact was recognized by the international society. Following the collapse of the USSR, the states, which came into existence out of the disintegration of the previous state are inheritors of the rights and obligations of the their deceased father. A clear example is that the Russian Federation is occupying the seat of the former USSR in the UN Security Council and it enjoys the right of Veto.

Some may argue that the newly independent states, other than the Russian Federation, should have their share of such privileges. I think they are right and the concerned states have solved these issues among themselves (or still trying to solve them). However, The Russian Federation and all other states, which have emerged out of the collapse of the USSR, are committed to obligations of the former USSR according to the principles of international law, especially the principle of the succession of states. The concerned states have approved this legal fact in many occasions directly and indirectly. They have said time and again that they are under legal obligation to observe the commitments of the Soviet Union. The most important cases are the Minsk Agreement, dated 8 Dec. 1991 (article 12) and Almaty Accord dated 21 Dec. 1991. In both cases the inheritors or the successors of the former USSR, have expressed their solemn commitment to respect the obligations arising from the treaties and agreements of the deceased state. This practice is also established by the Vienna Convention on the Succession of States (Article 34).

The Russian Federation has made it

clear in many instances that they believe any use of the Caspian Sea is subject to the existing legal regime. They have registered this officially in the United Nations, and even they have warned other states to observe it. Of course, the newly independent states may have their own ideas and suggestions or even aspirations about the validity or invalidity of treaties and also about the rigid or intensive interpretation of treaties. You may know that some circles in Iran have their own views regarding the validity of 1813 and 1828 treaties between Iran and Russia, which resulted in annexation of a part of Iranian territory of Azerbaijan to Russia. But, these ideas and suggestions have not any impact on the principles of international law regarding validity and interpretation of treaties, as codified in The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties and the customary practice of the international community, in the field of the sanctity of treaties.

Some sources have said in the past that the situation has changed fundamentally in the Caspian Sea basin and these treaties are no more valid because of the international principle called "Rebus Sic Tantibus." I have to say that the principle of "Rebus Sic Stantibus," or 'the fundamental change of circumstances' does not apply to border agreements. The reason for inclusion this provision in the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, was a kind of compromise in the international community, otherwise many existing borders, especially those imposed by colonial powers would go under question.

Anyway, the existing regime in the Caspian Sea based on 1921 and 1940 treaties, is that the Caspian Sea is a condominium, and except than a ten-mile exclusive fishing zone, there is no borderline.

The fact that Russians had divided the Caspian Sea among its provinces, and also the fact that Russians would not let Iranians cross a hypothetical line connecting the two sides of the Iranian land territory do not have any meaning in the international law. The internal division of territories for administrative purposes does not create obligations for other states. Also, denying of Iranian rights by a superpower does not write off those rights. In fact, Iran at that time was paying a price for being a US ally. The Iron Curtain was more visible in the Soviet-Iranian border than Berlin Wall. Iran was a member of CENTO

or Central Treaty Organization, which was the extension of NATO in the region. It is noteworthy that the Iron Curtain first started to crumble in the Soviet-Iranian border especially in Azerbaijan borders.

I wish to indicate that Russians were exploiting the common property, especially in Azerbaijan, and they did not pay the Iranian share. The only thing that Iran was getting was terrible pollution from oil exploration and exploitation. This practice has been continued by Azerbaijan, and I think in some stage this issue should be addressed. The reality is that the Caspian Sea was a common property of Iran and the USSR. Now that the Soviet Union is divided into several states, Iranians should have their fifty per cent and the newly independent states may divide their 50% as they wish. Also all those states should pay compensation to Iran, for unilateral using of the common property and tremendous pollution that they have caused during the last 50 years in the Caspian Sea.

The present position of the government in Iran is that the Caspian Sea is a condominium, but if it is going to be divided into national sectors, then Iran should have at least an equal share with others, meaning 20% of everything I think that this is a good bargain for the other concerned states.

It is clear that lack of relations between Iran and USA is helping to create unfavorable conditions for Iran in the Caspian Sea issues. This is not a fixed matter. Whoever gets the ultimate power in Iran's power struggle, shall definitely take serious steps in removing this obstacle and those who are investing heavily on the hostility between two countries, should keep in mind that Iran and USA have long term strategic common interests in many issues of the region and the sailing against the tides, whether it is from Iranian or US side, will not last for a long time.

As a result of the discussions among the concerned states, a new legal regime will replace the existing one in future. So, until then: The existing regime is in force. Contrary to all intentional and unintentional misinterpretations, the Caspian Sea has a legal regime at the moment. There is no case of *Res-nullis* or a property belonging to whoever finds it first in the Caspian Sea. This point was reiterated in the recent Summit Conference in Ashkabad (23-24 April 2002). Also, unilateral agreements of one or two states create no legal obligations for others.

At the moment there are different suggestions for the new regime based on:

1. Dividing the whole Caspian Sea.
2. Dividing the Caspian Sea bed and leaving the superjacent waters as common.
3. Dividing the Caspian Sea according to the rules set forth in the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.
4. Dividing the Caspian Sea with a modified median line.
5. Dividing the Caspian Sea into 20% sectors.
6. Dividing the Caspian Sea into north and south sections first, and then dividing those sectors again among the concerned states.

The present positions of the concerned states in a nutshell are: Iran wants a condominium or division of the whole sea into 20% sections. Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have divided their territories on the basis of the Russian made formula called -"modified median line" which divides the seabed according to an equidistance line, and leaves the waters as free for all. They are putting pressure on Iran and Turkmenistan to do the same. Turkmenistan has been changing its positions several times, but the bottom line is that they want a piece of the Sarder/Kapaz oil field, which is now under the control of Azerbaijan.

Iran, according to its national interests, is going to try to stop and install the process of defining a new legal regime as long as possible for the time being. There are important reasons for this policy and they remain true even in the face recent overtures by Iran that it is not going to wait for official definition of the Caspian legal regime. These reasons are as follows:

1. Iran does not need the oil and gas of the Caspian Sea. There are vast resources of oil and gas in other areas of Iran, especially in the Persian Gulf. The Iranian reserves have been estimated as equal to all reserves of the Caspian region. Exploration and exploitation of many areas in Iran are much easier and practical. Recently, a number of huge oil and gas reservoirs are found in the Iranian side of the Persian Gulf that some observers believe they are going to change some of the fundamental calculations in the world energy scene. There are so many areas inside Iran that have never been really examined for oil and gas resources and yet you can see oil on the ground surface and gas burning sites. The whole north of Iran, starting from Azerbaijan to Khorasan are parts of these undetected areas. The main

reason for lack of any activities in those areas in the past was that Iranian governments did not want to incite Russians.

2. The second point is that Iran does not expect to get anything more than 12% of the Caspian Sea under the present conditions. For a long time, Iran was holding the same position as Russia regarding the legal regime of the Caspian Sea but since two years ago (that Russians found oil and gas in their own part), they are going in differing directions. Russians still agree with Iran regarding the validity of the 1921 Treaty for their own reasons. The Russians have never given up their own interpretation of the articles 5 and 6 of the 1921 Treaty. However, no state has accepted Iranian proposal for 20% sectors. Some observers consider Turkmenistan as Iran's ally in asking for 20% sectors. This is not true. Turkmenistan is trying to get a better position in its disputes with Azerbaijan over several oil fields, including Sarder/Kapaz oil field, and beyond this point it has nothing to gain by supporting Iran. The modified median line, which is proposed and enforced by Russians in their agreement with Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan (and also, between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan), leaves about 12% for Iran. In this formula, the seabed is divided according to an equidistance (median) line and some modifications are done due to man made or natural elements, leaving the surface waters free for all. In this way, the Russians got their own share of the oil rich Caspian Sea bed and they could also navigate all over the Caspian Sea with their commercial and naval fleets. In the present situation, freedom of navigation in the Caspian Sea does not mean anything for others. Iran, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan do not have any notable commercial or naval fleets in the Caspian Sea. On the other side Russians will be free to navigate in the whole Caspian Sea. In reality, Iran and the other littoral states (except than Russia) have nothing to gain from the freedom of navigation, because they do not have any considerable commercial or naval fleets there.

3. Iran hopes some developments come up in the situation of the concerned countries and their relations with others. This includes: political changes in all corrupt, unstable and undemocratic states around the Caspian Sea. It should be noted that Soviet time's politicians continue to be in power in almost all of the newly independent states. They are decided to prevent oppositions and they also violate all

kinds of human rights in wide scale. Many believe that political oppression works in favor of Islamic extremists. Also, the possibility of changes in Iran-US relationship is an important factor. The Iranians are well aware that bad relations with USA is damaging Iran's interests in the Caspian Sea issues in an extensive level. The hardliners, just like the reformists in Iran want to be in power and they do not wish to be the target of American hostility.

4. Iran can only accept the "modified median line" if it can safeguard Iran's national interests in the framework of existing limitations. This may get something more than the figure that will remain out of others division of seabed without Iran's cooperation.

5. Reference of this case to the international tribunals, especially the International Court of Justice (ICJ), requires the agreement of all concerned parties. At the present juncture there is no such agreement. In this context the role of Iran is particularly important. It seems that Iran is not inclined to put itself in the risk of an international judgment because of what it sees as unfavorable international circumstances, and its regular suspicion of such forums being dominated by great powers and in particular the two sided role being played by the Russian Federation.

In the last ten years almost all Caspian Sea littoral states have resorted to unilateral measures in the exploitation of their oil and gas resources in various degrees without waiting for the final definition of the legal regime. They can do so in the following cases because it is in line with their interests:

I. The littoral states of the Caspian Sea must refrain from exploration and especially exploitation activities in the disputed territories until a new legal regime is devised. This is a valid put that the conference can put in into more concrete frameworks.

II. The Caspian Sea has no natural link with the open seas. However, it is connected to the Black sea and Baltic through Volga river canals. Before the collapse of the USSR, the only two concerned countries acted as if the Caspian Sea does not exist or it has no problems. The Russians did not let the Iranians pass a hypothetical line of demarcation which was the line connecting Astara and Hosseinghioli in the two sides of Iran-USSR land borders (without any justification in the international law or bilateral treaties). Iran, tried not to make waves in

its relations with the northern superpower.

With the formation of independent states in the Caspian region, a new chapter began in the history of the Caspian Sea. The present littoral states, namely the Russian Federation, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are trying to replace the existing legal regime with a new one and each have their own positions. I think they should seek a new legal regime for Volga-Don and Volga-Baltic waterways right from now. These waterways should be subject to all or a part of the rules and principles of international law regarding internationally used navigable waterways, at least as far as the littoral countries are concerned. They may also try to establish a special regime for the passage from Volga-Don and Baltic waterway. There are several cases of special regimes like those of the Turkey's Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits (connecting the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara). The states, which have been separated from the USSR, should insist on their rights as a former part of the USSR over those waterways. This means that the people and resources of these states have been used to make and run those waterways. Also, the newly independent states are entitled to many of the things that exist in the present Russian Federation. They are not only entitled to inherit parts of the former Soviet fleet in the Caspian Sea, but also the rights of passage from those waterways. Kazakhstan has a special position in these regards. The other littoral counties should try to stop Russians from making this issue a bilateral issue between those two states.

III. Pollution of the Caspian Sea: Untreated waste from the Volga River, into which half of the population of Russia — and most of its heavy industry — drains its sewage, empties directly into the Caspian Sea (according to the report of the US Energy Information Administration) is the main source of Caspian pollution (80%). Pollution is endangering all aspects of life in the Caspian Sea, including the sturgeon fish. The Caspian Sea states should not wait for the legal regime. It may be too late by that time.

IV. The Caspian Sea Regional University. Education is an important element in the development of the Caspian Sea in a sustainable way. Iran should welcome and present best incentives for the Establishment of a kind of regional Caspian sea University, in the north of Iran.

V. Transfer of the main office of the

A Piece of the Main

Ariah Rastegar

Diffuse the wick of destruction ignited by the flame of terror.

Siphon the oxygen from the lungs of the wicked and rejuvenate the innocent souls victimized by the evil-doers.

Poor souls, whose very weeping will not allow them to weep, and grief that finds a barrier in their eyes turns inward to increase their agony.

Had I the crude and coarse rhymes to suit all the melancholy attributes of terror, my pen would surely perish.

In thought of catastrophe I do not die, but nor do I live.

The devastation of meaningless agony deprives me of life and suspends me from death, for I am trapped in the essence of misery.

I commiserate, because I am a fellow human being blessed with the power to speak, the power to touch every man that lives, for I am a part of the whole.

The embodiment of interdependence that is linked through breath, heart and understanding.

I am a piece of the main, for when I step my foot the vibrations are felt through every crevice of our common home.

When the bell tolls turn not thy heads in ignorance, rather tune your senses and feel the release all will be granted.

Caspian Environment Programme (CEP) to Tehran, according to previous decisions of all littoral states.

VI. Establishment of the Caspian Cooperation Organization.

In conclusion, I have certain points for the Iranian side:

1. Iran should not give up the idea of 50% easily. It has been created after so many cruelties against this country.

2. It is not very important the Iran has suggested 20% in the past and it has not got anywhere, because the present conditions which has been created mainly by Russians for Iran, requires that Iran stalls the definition of the Caspian Sea's legal regime. Changing of policies in this kind of issues happen

all the time. The best example is the Russian policy. They wasted Iran's time and energy for ten years pretending that the two countries have the same position, and they enjoyed from many concessions in this regard, such as selling their low level products to Iran. Now that they have found some oil in their section and also they are offered good opportunities by regional and out of region powers, they have changed their policies without any explanation, sham or any other consideration.

3. Iran must make it clear for the other sides that there are many people in and out of Iran that believe 50% of the Caspian Sea belong to Iran. This is a legal and political fact. ■

How come there is always talk of Love in Erfan?

Yes, the main discussion is about love, as it was maintained before no one can see the person who is strengthening his inner and super sensory capacities and not be fascinated by him, because from such a person the manifestations of exuberance, joy and attraction will radiate and absorb those whom have the quality and merit of being attracted to him. As Mowlana said:

Whoever saw his feature and was not ruined
He is not a man, but is marble stone.
Do not brag about the light, the spirit and fairies
He is none of them, but is something else.

Observing the feature of such a person disorients the viewer and increases his heart's pulses.

Let me ask you, the one whom you are the lights in the light
How do you cast your spells? Turning the sorrows to joy.
As Prophet David, You are magician, and sweet talker
Soften the iron to the wax in the palm of your hand,
deprive it from being iron.

Could not you be, but you're the absolute king,
You are the ruler of the kingdom of the truth.
The selected disciple of the creator
You are cleansed from all the tricks.
When I got to know you, as if I was riding the horse
of the ruler
I liberated myself from the fears, into serenity and peace.

This is the introduction of fascination and devotion. Such an effective feature and domineering face in the standpoint of face recognition might not be evaluated as beautiful. It is possible, not even one hair was grown on his head. He probably could not stand on his own two feet because of his old-age and weakness. Two persons had to assist him to stand up and walk. The purpose of beauty, attraction, and charisma refers to the qualities of someone who spends his lifetime constructing the inner power, the concealed and intangible quality, which could not be described. A powerful attraction radiates from these person's personalities, which attracts their viewers.

The person's face is not only the appearance of the eyes, hair and beauty-marks.

Thousands of concealed elements cause his power of attraction.

There is a hidden core in him which love radiates from it.
Its name is not red lips and black mark

It is the spirituality that offers such an attractive force to those who are seeking it. The power of spirituality is so domineering over the physical domain that who ever encounters it unconsciously will be gravitated by it. Spiritual attraction is not of the material world; therefore gender is not an issue.

Zolaykha's love to Josef and Layli's love to Majnoon was spiritual love and not a sexual attraction. Layli's face did not possess any unusual preference of beauty, when Khalife ordered to bring her to his presence to see for himself her beauty, which madly fascinated a devoted and fateful spiritual man such as "Ghays." He found a skinny dark featured person without any outstanding dress or jewelries. He was shocked and disappointed.

Interview with Dr. S. M. Azmayesh PART II



As Sa'adi describes it: "She had no distinction with any of his court maids, the least of those maids were prettier than Layli. With her intuition Layli realized and responded with loud voice and said you should view through the Majnoon's eyes to see the Layli's beauty."

As Mowlana said:

Khalife said to Layli. Is it you?
From whom, Majnoon became so disoriented and confused.
You have nothing that others do not have
Be quite! said Layli. You are not Majnoon
If you had Majnoon's eyes
You would have been liberated from both worlds

Majnoon was fascinated and attracted by Layli's concealed spiritual essence, which Khalife was not in such position. Obviously Khalife could not possibly be capable of being in such state of mind because he was influenced by the culture of "sexual tendency." In this mind-set he evaluates the woman differently. Many people in different eras and different times up to our time look at each other with a sexual tendency. Therefore, their paradigms and evaluations of beauty are based on peripheral and physical values. Love also in their definition only is the outburst of their lust and satisfaction of their desires. It is for this preconception that they do not comprehend anything of spirituality and its innate power.

Josef "Youssef of Kan'an" had thousands of madly attracted women fascinated by his good-looks. They were not his wives or maids. Josef was the messenger of God and his spiritual quality dominated his physical appearance and good-looking feature. Mohammed also had the same spiritual power. It was the radiation of his spirituality, which attracted the people to him to an extent that they were willing to sacrifice themselves for him. They were following him as if they had been intoxicated by his spiritual power.

I became self-less and unconscious yet need more
I am telling to your eyes that I want such intoxication.
I do not want the crown; I do not want the throne
I want to kneel on the ground in front of you.
My beloved confidant, grabbed my throat
Asked me what I want. I told him, this is what I want.

A person who ascends to such vision and level of fascination, he is in love, and is ready to sacrifice everything and lose everything for that love

Behold Lovers, behold lovers, that person whom you see his face

Whoever sees him will lose his mind and his behaviors will change.

Will seek his lover, his business will be ruined
His head and face becomes seekers, and flow like water in his stream.

Such love is only caused by the impact of the spiritual domination of the beloved in lovers mind. It has nothing to do with the sexual attraction to someone. There is no male or female issue involved. Comprehension of such love requires highly spiritual cognition. The same comprehension of the shepherd who was in love as if some one possessed his soul and fascinated him and took a God-like meaning for him, he was busy whispering and praying with him day and night.

Behold though I sacrifice all my goats
My hay, hay, and hay hays of mine for you
Where are you so I become your obedient follower?
I sew your lap and comb your hair
Kissing your hand and rubbing your feet
At the bedtime I prepare your bed
Where are you so I can kill the louses off your head....

Moses asked this shepherd, "Where is this person whom you want to kill the louses off his body and you are constantly busy whispering with him?" In my view that person is the creator of the earth and skies, shepherd responded, "I am whispering to the one who created this rotating wheel; this earth and universe, from him came to existence," said the shepherd

He is my God, he created me, he is the creator of the earth, the sky and the universe and he is the owner of existence and non-existence. The same person whose body is infested with louses? Moses asked. Yes the shepherd responded. He is my beloved who conquered my existence in me, and took away "me" from my self, instead gave me such knowledge about him.

As the Shepherd did, Mowlana attained the same cognition toward Shams al-Din Malekddad Tabrizi whom he called the provider of the kingdom of the world and the pole of the universe.

The provider of the kingdom and the king of the universe
How could you depart from such hospitable guest?

We have to cry and pity those who are emerged in the culture of sexuality and view the relationship between lover and beloved through the thick fuzzy glasses at Islamic school of Sufism and Erfan. Shams al-Din Malekddad for Mowlana, is everything and he only finds meaning in existence of Shams. The fact, truthfulness, truth and everything else only appears in the Shams' entity.

I reached to the truth through you and the truth presents you
Openly I declare my Shams and my God

The vigor of the sexual hormones in the sphere of a spiritual person who has developed his inner spiritual power will fade and disappear.

Mowlana who left so many poems in such a vast varieties but he did not leave any poems about Iran, wasn't his homeland important for him?

Mowlana lived in the era when Mongols conquered Iran. He was looking at the whole world as a huge prison. He was a patriotic man who loved his homeland very much but where was his homeland? He himself responds to this question.

Egypt, Iraq and Sham is not the homeland
The homeland is where it does not have any name

That homeland is where Suhrewardi talks about it in his work "Aqle Sorkh" ("Purple Archangel") in the story of "Ghorbate Gharbiye." Avicenna in his essay, "Hay Ebne Yaghzan," also refers to it. Most of the prominent Sufis and Erfan define the homeland as the trap of events, prison or cage. They consider the homeland as the resting-place of the bird of the human soul. In Erfan or Sufism the soul of every human is considered as a talking bird which comes from the "domain of meaning" which called "Hindustani Maanna" and flies all over and eventually is trapped in the cage of heart.

Mowlana addressing Shams Tabrizi says: "when I was the parrot outside of the cage I got used to you and acquainted with your name. I wish I was never captured in the mold of this cage, that keeps me away from you."

Before being in the prison of this world, I was always with you
I wish I never passed through this trap.

In another poem he said:

I remained in the jail of this world for a purpose
Where am I from? Where did the jail come from?
Whose property did I steal?

Mowlana always desired to fly to the domain of the beloved "Doost"

It will be a Joyful day, when I fly to the domain
of the beloved "Doost"
With the wish to spread my wings over the sky of his region

Mowlana refers to this issue in his story of "Parrot and Merchant" and also in the story of the old "Harp Player" ("Pir-e-Change").

Hafiz also in spite of his extensive love for his homeland which is manifested in his poems, considers the seven worlds as a whole prison. Because they are always after flying to the eighth world migrate there. As an analogy: If you incubate a swallow's egg till the time of hatching and you keep it in a cage until maturity, when the time of natural migration of this bird comes, it will struggle so hard to find a way out of this cage and be free to migrate out.

If Shams Tabriz does not show me his face
Then, I should smash this dead mold of mine

The moment that you open the door of the cage to a swallow, it will fly to the direction where normally the swallows fly. The love of migration is an innate love in the swallow and is a natural love and is not conditional. If you prevent its natural drive it will be neurotic. The swallow does not care where you put its cage, in what room, apartment, villas, house, castle, country, continent of the world. All it cares about is to break away the barriers that are stopping it from the desire of flying and migrating. Mowlana said: at the beginning of every month unconsciously I became neurotic.

At the beginning of every month I become mad
I must be mad for no reason

In the story of Parrot and Merchant the "spiritual master parrot" teaches the "disciple parrot" that in order to be liberated from the cage of your mold and be able to fly you should denounce your interests and possessions.

The parrot advised me with his action
Get away from eloquence, singing and pretension
That my singing put me in the cage
From that advice, he dropped himself dead

Denouncing the possessions of the constructive elements of this world will enhance spiritual capacity which eventually means the return to the main homeland. Sufis and dervishes strive to exit from this nature and step by step ascend to the zenith of the perfection. The ultimate level will be where the bird of spirit resides. An earth-worm goes to its cocoon and transform into butterfly and then flays toward light. Because it desires to fly. As a worm it does not have wings to fly but it has the desire for flying. As Hafiz said:

I do not have wings, and nothing more wonderful in
my mind but
Only the desire of reaching to where simorgh resides.
Thank God that in the peek of this establishment
The peacock of the universe can hear the sound of my wings

What is the relation between the "Sama and Erfan"?

Mowlana said:

From dried string, dried wood, and dried skin
How and from where the sound of the beloved comes from?
This is the howling of the rotating wheels of the universe

The sound played on "tambur" and throat
We were all parts of the "Adam"
We heard these songs in paradise

Because the knowledge extracted from spirit and on its way passed through the universe and heard the sounds of the moving stars, and became acquainted with their melodies and got used to them when one hears them again, one recalls them as if it is at home again.

The music is the methodology of extracting the vibration and frequencies of the stars and universes which these sound coincide with the rotation of the circle which is reflected in the rhythms of the poems and melodies. Mowlana said:

O-Harp! I yearn for the "Sepahan's" melodies
O-Flute! I yearn for the burning groan
This knowledge of music is like "Ashhadu an la-illaha
il-Allah..." to me

I yearn for "Ashhadu an la-illaha il-Allah..." and belief,
because I am a believer

When one hears a melody, he will be joyful and because of that his whole existence becomes restless and starts dancing, which is only physical and does not affect the soul.

I tap-dance. World! Clap for me
Clap for me world! Clap for an intoxicated heart

"Sama" needs a melody that affects the spirit. A melody which only affects the body to dance does not affect the spirit. Nowadays it has become fashionable for some people gathering together, chanting and whirling their bodies which do nothing to the spirit. Mowlana said:

Jumping up and down and tap-dancing and whirling
These are all game-playing, Sama, is something else

The first requirement for Sama as I mentioned before is "love." Mowlana is fascinated by Shams al-Din Tabrizi, he sits in front of him and gazes at his eyes and does not turn his eyes away from him, "Mo'azen, religious announcer "singing "azan" from the top of the minaret, and calling for prayers to daily pray. Mowlana remains motionless while missing the prayer time and affected by Shams's presence because he is in love with his instructor. Time passed by still he is motionless, he wants to stand up but he lost his control because he is under the influence of his beloved and captivated by his power, as if Shams was the bartender of the tavern of the love. Mowlana said if we form the rows of prayers for pray and Shams appears there everyone will changes his direction to him instead of Mecca for praying.

I want to go from here but someone is holding me
He captured my heart and resides in it.
The head became as hard as rock, and the heart
became restless because:
You showed up with your swirling hair.
You took me away from my prayer, how dare you
If my heart were not jealous, my body would have adored love.
That intoxicated man, if he was coming among the rows
He would have become the orientation, and Ka'abeh
would be hurt

When Mowlana was dancing and jubilating he was not pretentious out of hypocrisy, it was for the reduction of the excess energies produced by the electrons of his body. He did not whirl around himself; he was whirling around the knowledge because knowledge was the domain of his beloved.

I will whirl so many times around the heart
Which from my excessive whirling
Neither body could carry the load of soul,
nor could soul carry me
If the body does not whirl around the soul
with a torch such as sky
Behold! The spot of goodness, drag my
restless soul in you
Behold! In your clutch, I am like a plying harp
Please strike slowly, so you don't rip off my strings

Here Mowlavi said:

Not just every one could achieve the real "Sama"
Not just any bird could feed on figs

The person who sees the celestial features, and hears the celestial songs, his body will be affected by those strong energies and unconsciously will whirl and dance, just like a windmill which will start rotating when the wind energy affects it, but the energy which mobilizes the human is the energy of love. Mowlana said:

Behold! You are the essence of my soul, because of you;
I am like a turning wheel
Continue sending me the wheat so my windmill
does not stop

Based on religious definitions, anything that deviates the normality of human spirituality is sin. Therefore, music is a strong stimulation, which changes the human spirit, in spite of close relation between the religion and Erfan, is that why Sufis and Arefs are in favor of using the music as a spiritual stimulation?

No, it depends. We are dealing with which religion and what interpretation. If we refer to the religion as it is known in the superficial level: as we mentioned before it is the disciples that choose the religious leader for themselves and different leaders could have various interpretations. Many sects of Islam, such as Hanbalis, or Vahabis, prohibit the music and they have restrictions. Some like Imam Mohammad Ghazzali believes the senses are the vehicle of salvation and therefore ordered to use "Sama" singing and music. The Sunnis are the ones who are against it. We should see which sect we are talking about, because they all have different views. The opinion of one is only valid within his sectarian religious domain and is not generalized for the whole Islam. Generally there have been always difference of opinions between the Sunnis and Shiats over the legitimacy of the music, some restricted it and some allowed it.

Mowlana Jalaloddin Mohammad Khorassani, who is wrongly known as Rumi, before he turned to Erfan and Sufism he was a religious authority and leader in that position he gave "fatva"

or permission for Sama "singing and hearing" and music to be free from religious restriction. Imam Mohammad Ghazzali as an experts and one of the important religious leaders and gave a "fatva" to allow music to be practiced. But at the time that he gave this "fatva" he was not a Sufi yet. His advanced intellect and progressive minded personality was one of the reasons that he embraced the school of love and Sufism. In his book, *Al-Monghaz Men al-Zalal* ("The Guide for Those Who Are Lost"), he proclaims, "even though I was the religious authority and because of that every follower trusted my judgment and truthful authority, but I myself was in doubt until I entered the world of mysticism and Erfan."

If listening to the music in any fashion could be able to enhance the level of the spirituality of a person and takes him away from his natural state of mind to the celestial level, will be promoted, accepted and encouraged by the entire religious experts. In the contrary if music stimulates only the sexual lust and anti humanistic behaviors then will not be approved by them.

My last question: An American participated in one of Sufi gatherings, and when it was the question period, he asked, when I want to come here my wife prevents me, what can I do?" The instructor answered, "divorce her." This kind of prompt answer caused his complete withdrawal from his participation in those sessions. Is this Erfan's educational paradigm?

The protection of the basic family structure is a sacred consideration. Family's atmosphere is the most important ground for the child who is entering this world to learn the most significant educational elements to stabilize himself. Erfan generally creates such atmosphere and is the method to facilitate a warm environment for this process. The cynicism and selfishness are the natural parts of the human makeup, which is the cause of all the harshness and conflicts among the people, these kinds of conflicts are part of the family's structure. If the values of Erfan replace these conflicting encounters then they will strengthen the family's sincerities, restructure their behaviors and direct them toward the self-orientation. Based on what we said, Erfan is the atmosphere of cooperation, camaraderie, and is not the atmosphere of hostility, antagonism and quarrel, therefore, if some one advise you to divorce your wife and come and join us definitely he is not following the Erfan's instructions.

Thank you. If you would like to add something else please do so.

I thank you again and I am grateful for the opportunity given to me to communicate with the beloved readers of *Persian Heritage* magazine. In addition I appreciate if this prestigious magazine devote an atmosphere of spiritual evaluation for the readers, so they could be able to have a reference station to examine the Erfan's values and restructure a believe of their own and their children. A belief system which in this chaotic, material incentive world which the waves of uncertainty threatens our lives will help them to be equipped with a defensive means. I am hoping that this introductory presented here showed a schematic view of the teachings and instructions of Erfan and Sufism.

From the bottom of my heart, I wish the most brilliance and illuminated recognition for your outstanding and prestigious magazine. ■

Interview with MOHAMMAD ALI DOWLATSHAHI

Shahrokh Ahkami



With such a wonderful background in Persian art, what caused you to leave Iran?

During the time I was teaching in high school I, along with two others, was given a scholarship from The Ministry of Culture and Art to study art in Europe. We were picked because of our artistic talents. After I had prepared myself for the trip, I was summoned by one of the deputies of the Ministry of Art and Culture. He told me that my scholarship was given to another person, and that I would not be going to Europe until the following year.

This news hit me like a rock, but I had to accept their decision, after all who would argue with the Minister of Art and Culture, who happened to be the brother-in-law of the Shah. Upset about the decision I decided to write to my brother-in-law who was living in the States. I asked him about the American art situation and what he thought I could do within that community. He told me more than likely I could get a job as a textile designer. After hearing this, I immediately packed my bags and with the excuse of a Summer vaca-

tion in America my wife and I left Iran. We are still on that extended vacation.

What style of painter do you

Beyond the petite and delicate frame, silver colored hair, impeccable dress with a delightful tie and handkerchief in his suit pocket is a polite and gentle man called Ali Dowlatshahi. He is a teacher, a poet and skillful painter with a wonderful sense of humor. I have had the pleasure of knowing him for the past twenty years. As a writer for *Persian Heritage*, our readers have had the privilege of learning art from him for the last seven years. This past August 3, Mr. and Mrs. Shahab Homapour, along with their colleagues and friends of the Shahab poetry night celebrated Mr. Dowlatshahi's eightieth birthday. In his honor, *Persian Heritage* decided to again interview this versatile gentleman.

Mr. Dowlatshahi was born in Mashad, Iran. After finishing his primary and high school education there, he moved to Tehran. In 1941 he entered into the art school to study miniature painting under the master Mohammad Ali Zavieh. He also studied oil painting with Master Esmail Ashtiani. Following these studies he entered the Academy of Fine Arts and after that taught for the next fourteen years in various high schools in Tehran, Iran. He is proud to state that some of his students have become very famous Iranian citizens.

Besides painting Mr. Dowlatshahi has published multiple books on the subject of art and has received the highest medal of art from the Iranian Ministry of Culture. He is also the proud recipient of the Royal Award for children's books.

consider yourself to be?

Like many other painters, I am not an "ism" follower. By "isms" I mean im-

pressionism, surrealism, expressionism, etc. Therefore, I don't really follow a style. For me, each piece of art must contain three elements: (1) feeling, (2) a message and (3) emit a power. If the piece does not contain these elements, then I believe it has no aesthetic or artistic value.

Most of my work is in either miniature painting or painting of the Qajar period. In my opinion the school of this period is in itself a mixture of the wall miniature of the Safavid period and the classic period of Europe. I often call the Qajar period the Renaissance Period of Iran.

I have to ask you, miniature and oil painting?

As you know, Iran is called the country of flowers, nightingales, sun, light, color, poetry, music and its language, the language of expression. It is also a land that, despite multiple oppression and suppression is very rich in culture and has

given the world great mystics, poets and philosophers.

Iranian art, unlike western art that speaks from the outside in, speaks from

the inside out. When a person becomes a true lover of art he or she is automatically attracted to this style. For me, the miniature, as the modernists call it, is somewhat a surreal technique; it lacks perspective and therefore allows the artist to use his imagination with more freedom to create what he feels. The realist on the other hand is forced to paint as it is seen. He must respect color light and image, this, then, impacts his creativity.

Tell me about your life-time work?

As I stated I came here in the early sixties and was lucky to find a job with a well-known textile company as a textile designer. I am proud to tell you that many of my designs and drawings were published in *Vogue*, *Bazaar* and *WWC*. In 1972 I competed against one hundred and twenty others in a logo competition and received first prize. During this period I also painted a portrait of the late President and Mrs. Kennedy, which still hangs in the White House. I am also very proud of the fact that one of my books on Iranian images and portraits is in its third edition and is used by both Iranian and American designers.

More recently I did a painting dedicated to the tragedy of September 11th. The painting has been acknowledged by President Bush, Mayor Giuliani and the United Nations.

All in all how many exhibitions have you done?

I don't think I could state the exact amount. Most of my works that are exhibited, are classical Iranian painting which have been on a constant exhibition in a variety of galleries since 1963.

Is there a purpose for exhibiting your work?

For me the purpose is to make the American public aware and acquainted with Iranian art and culture. It is interesting that despite the time I have spent outside of Iran I am still in love with the country, the people, its art and culture.

Paisley's and flowers seems to be a constant theme in Iranian art, how did that happen to prevail?

If you go back to the Achaemenid Dynasty, which was at about the time of



the birth of Jesus Christ, and look closely at the architecture you will see the use of these images. It was displayed in the tops of columns and on walls. Gradually, after Islam, Iranian artists and painters began to use these images on the cover of *The Koran*, on pencil boxes, in carpet weaving and of course textiles.

Can you give me your opinion on why there are no modern Iranian artists represented in

the museums throughout the world?

For certain, no one can deny the talent and creativity of today's Iranian artists. Unfortunately, they are painting during a period in which they do not have complete freedom to express themselves. This denies them to create to their highest level. Other factors affecting their exposure are politics, ethnicity and religion. I am afraid that I could go on forever about this subject and do hope that you will give me the opportunity to do at a later date.

In today's society with so much political and financial turmoil, how is it possible for artists to maintain their integrity?

Regardless of the period the artist will constantly struggle to maintain his or her integrity. You must find your own way. In my opinion I believe the artist must always remain optimistic and respect society as he or she feels society should respect them. I try always to be positive and to use my gifted talent and the power of it in a positive and productive manner. I want to be useful to society whether it is through money or spirit.

My rule in life is to give up your comfort for the comfort of others.

Do you have any closing statements?

Yes, I would like to end our conversation with the words of a famous Chinese philosopher, "one who keeps a low profile will always stay healthy, one who bends himself will always stand straight, one who is hungry will become full, one who is tired will be rested, one who has nothing will live in comfort and satisfaction, one who has much will be misled. With trustworthy people I keep their trust, one who is bad should not be discarded but must be shown the good."