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Amoozegar-Fassaie, Farzad

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Los Angeles

Ethical Dimensions of Music-making in Iran:  
Beauty in Islamic Revelations, Mysticism and Tradition

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Ethnomusicology

by

Farzad Amoozegar-Fassaie

2018

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Ethical Dimensions of Music-making in Iran:  
Beauty in Islamic Revelations, Mysticism and Tradition

by

Farzad Amoozegar-Fassaie

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Stephen Blum, Co-Chair

Professor Roger Savage, Co-Chair

This dissertation is based on the reflections of three prominent Iranian *ustādān* (master musicians; plural of *ustād*)—Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem—on what defines *beauty* in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* (traditional music). The judgment of beauty incorporates an array of ethical queries conveyed through a language that is heavily entangled with Islamic revelations, mystical beliefs and traditional values. The three *ustādān*'s perceptions of beauty are articulated through their understandings of how *akhlāq* (ethics, morals or manners) shapes the ideals of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. *Akhlāq* defines a set of principles that form the attitudes and actions relevant to the process of music-making. This dissertation examines the judgment of beauty and *akhlāq* in relation to *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* based on an examination of language, logic, politics and metaphysics. For the

three *ustādān*, beauty is mainly reflected upon through a metaphysical and spiritual perspective, that they have learned through readings of Iranian poetry and literature.

Beauty and ethical ideals shape how the three *ustādān* make use of the *radīf* (Iranian musical repertoire) as the main source of *akhlāq* in their music classes, and the ways in which their role has now extends to the public sphere to advance the position of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. In the past four decades Iranians have witnessed the “Islamization” of the political, cultural and social norms. More recently, Iran has seen the disengagement of their youth from the traditional values. This detachment among the youth highlights a breakdown of conventional *akhlāq* principles, creating an ambiguity of the normative social and cultural practices in Iran. The youth’s nonconformism steps beyond socio-normative principles and Islamic values to create its own ethos. The three *ustādān* are faced with the unravelling of the norms, as they are confronted with a desire to adjust to the music tastes of younger Iranians. As the ethical values are being undone, newly-formed ideas about the judgment of beauty are being demarcated. Based on the current political, religious and social undertakings in Iran, this dissertation examines the correlation of ethics and beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*.

This dissertation contributes to the fields of ethnomusicology, anthropology and Middle Eastern studies by a) serving as an in-depth ethnography exploring the relationship between music-making, judgment of beauty, and *akhlāq* from the perspective of the three *ustādān*, Shī’a authorities and Islamic scholars; b) mapping out *akhlāq* as a matrix incorporating language, logic, politics, Islamic values, and music’s affective power over individual sensibility and emotion; and c) exploring the tension, derived from individual musical experiences, between religious and cultural obligation and personal desire. This dissertation also explores urgent questions shared among the wider Iranian public and Western academics: a) What is it in the act

of listening to or participating in music that could make it good or evil (bad)? and b) To what degree are beauty and ethics compatible, considering the intensity with which Iran is changing?

The dissertation of Farzad Amoozegar-Fassaie is approved.

Ali Behdad

Munir N Beken

Mark L Kligman

Steve J Loza

Stephen Blum, Committee Co-Chair

Roger Savage, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

*To Two Master Teachers:*

*Ustād Mohammad-Rezā Lotfī,*

*Who taught me the beauty of music*

*Professor Stephen Blum,*

*Who taught me the beauty of critical thinking and scholarly writing*



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I fondly remember when my grandfather first called me into his music room to teach me how to play the *setār*. I had just turned six-year-old and viewed the beauty of music in the liveliness of the melodies and poetry he played and song. My grandfather often spoke about his “great fortune” to learn from *ustād* Abolhasan Sabā (1902-1957), calling his music “pious” and him “a spiritual and divine man.” He was adamant that musicians need to follow *ustād* Sabā’s beliefs and practices. My grandfather was instrumental in my musical journey, for which I will always be grateful. My family has actively supported me, enthusiastically listened to my music, and patiently heard my graduate school worries. I am forever indebted to them for their never-ending care and love. I hesitate to write a laundry list of names of my family, yet each one of them should know that my gratitude is sincere and permanent.

As life has it, I traveled back to Iran nine years after immigrating to Canada to learn music from a number of master musicians. I am profoundly grateful and honored to be a student of Hooshang Zarīf, Masood Shāreaī, Arshād Tahmāsbī, Ramin Sodeif, and Pashang Kamkār. Furthermore, my time in Iran as a music student and later as a performer has been deeply shaped by the knowledge and expertise of Soodabeh Sālem. She is a brave female master musicians, an exemplary role model for any young musicians to follow. I am grateful to her for her time and insights, but more importantly obliged for her dedication to being a powerful advocate of music in Iran. Moreover, I hope that this dissertation illustrates my indebtedness to the late Ata-Allāh Jankouk and the late Mohammad-Rezā Lotfī. If music is a journey, then they took my hands and walked me along its path so I could see the beauty of music-making. In addition, I am grateful to Professors Hossein Nasr and Mohsen Kadivar, who provided me with their expertise and insights on Islam and mysticism.

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VITA/BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

MA, Anthropology; University of British Columbia (2012)

MA, Ethnomusicology; University of British Columbia (2010)

BA, Music & Middle Eastern Studies; University of Toronto (2008)

## INTRODUCTION

My initial musical experiences coincide with the first decade of the Islamic Republic in Iran, which brought severe cultural shocks, including an unofficial ban on music for a period of time. The Islamic cultural transformation became a profound educational experience, forcing me to question the public response to music in a society that insisted I veil my artistic aspirations. Each week my father hid my *setār* in his car before we drove to my music class. The smaller *setār* was easier to hide in my father's car than the larger *tār*, with its six strings played with a plectrum. *Tār* ("string" in Farsi) is a double-bowl shaped instrument with a fingerboard of twenty-five adjustable frets. *Setār* (*seh* meaning "three") is a four-string instrument played with the index finger. My perplexity grew as I came to understand the contradictions inherent in the Shī'a authorities' opposition to music, since the Islamic Republic made use of music in the state-sponsored media, religious ceremonies and public events. Ironically, music was part of my educational experience in elementary school. I recall the mandatory participation in school choir to rehearse revolutionary songs, while at the same time I had to keep quiet about my musical training. Years later, I remember the renowned *tār* and *setār* master musician Mohammad-Rezā Lotfī (1947 – 2014) saying, "musicians in Iran have had to constantly battle to try to protect music from countless *fatwā* [interpretations of Islamic law given by a qualified jurist] that proclaim it as 'sinfulness.'" Lotfī's sentiment is echoed by master vocalist, Mohammad-Rezā Shajarian (b. 1940), who publically stated: "music in Iran has had to endure a history of contradictory *fatwā*" (Shajarian live in concert; Bam Iran DVD; *Ham-navā bā Bam*).

As I gained more knowledge of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* (traditional music), I began to contemplate issues such as: a) on what religious grounds do the Shī'a '*ulamā*' base their religious doctrine when reflecting on music? b) how do the *ustādān* (master musicians; singular



*ustād*) counter the *'ulamā*'s stance? and c) what factors support or impede the *ustādān*'s judgment of *beauty* and *goodness* in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*? These questions have been fundamental in my development as a musician; at the core of these inquires is the relationship between *akhlāq* (ethics) and beauty. Individuals cannot disengage completely from their history and cultural norms, even if actively rebelling. Thus, ethical deliberation on *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is mutually related to the judgment of beauty (ethical deliberations inform the judgment of beauty, while judgments of beauty illuminate the ethical deliberations), whether or not an *ustād* is consciously aware of the music's relation to beauty and goodness. Moreover, *akhlāq* are not treated here to judge an *ustād*'s personal character-traits or behavior, rather understandings of ethics and beauty are the array of ideals passed on through the oral tradition of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*.

My grandfather was my first music teacher in Iran. It was he who taught me the basics of plucking techniques and a number of short melodies on the *setār*. After I immigrated to Canada, I had the good fortune of becoming *ustād* Lotfī's disciple at age fourteen. From the early stages of my musical training with him, Lotfī frequently stressed the importance of *'irfān* (mysticism) and *sonnat* (tradition) in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. I still recall my first class with *ustād* Lotfī in Berkeley, California. He spent much of the first session explaining the significance of the *radīf* (the collection of melodic figures preserved through oral tradition that provides the basis of improvisation in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*). He took a considerable amount of time discussing the historical, cultural and ethical implications of the *radīf*, before demonstrating a few short music examples on his *tār*. As my first class was about to end, he stated: "the *radīf* is the Qur'ān of musicians." Eager to learn the techniques of the *tār* and *setār* as a young music student, I found Lotfī's statement more fascinating than crucial. Based on music's and Islam's tenuous history in Iran, I found the suggested connection between the *radīf* and the Qur'ān peculiar. However,

something in Lotfī’s provocative analogy never escaped my mind. Years later, during a summer evening in Tehran, I asked Lotfī about his statement. He avidly responded: “*radīf yek bār-e akhlāqi dārad* (the *radīf* carries an ethical weight).” Lotfī explained that the *radīf* is fundamental in developing musical techniques, but it also outlines a set of principles for *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. He said:

many parts of the *radīf* are based on poems, narratives, events or characters. The poems and narratives have evaluative textures that give them their ethical significances. Through the teaching of master musicians, the evaluative textures of the poems and narratives become part of the performance practice of the *radīf*. The stories and poetry in the *radīf* correspond to an array of Islamic revelations, *‘irfān* and *sonnat* that are imbedded in our history and culture.” (Interview conducted on July 12, 2012).

As a teen, I found Lotfī’s discussions of *‘irfān* and *sonnat* to resonate with the classical Persian literature I was learning from my father. A few times a week, I would read Sa‘dī (a 13<sup>th</sup>-century poet and prose writer known as *ostād-e sokhan*, “the master of speech”), Rūmī (a 13<sup>th</sup>-century poet and Sūfī mystic, referred to by his followers as *Mawlānā*, “our master”), and Hāfez (a 14<sup>th</sup>-century poet known by his pen name “the memorizer” or “the safe keeper”). One of the most influential books that helped shape my understanding of *akhlāq* was *Golestān-e Sa‘dī* (*The Rose Garden* of Sa‘dī). Reading *Golestān*’s eight chapters—“on the Conduct of Kings (41 stories), “on the Morals of Darāvish” (48 stories), “On the Excellence of Contentment” (29 stories), “On the Benefits of Silence” (14 stories), “On Love and Youth” (21 stories), “On Frailty and Old Age (9 stories), “On the Effects of *tarbiat*” (education) (20 stories), and “On Manners” (100 stories)—paved the way for me to gradually become interested in its central issues: a) the exercise of power and enlightened moral authority; and b) self-interest as opposed to humane altruism. The *hekāyāt* (tales) in *Golestān* illustrate “religious, political and socio-ethical values through entertaining and edifying tales” (Lewis 2012:84). Moreover, the *hekāyāt* include “over

forty direct quotations from the Koran and the Hadith.... asserting that ‘the purpose of the revelation of the Koran is the acquisition of a good character, not the recitation of the written characters’” (Lewis 2012:83). As I read *Golestān*, I began to think how Islamic thinkers, poets and mystics contemplate different issues about life. I asked myself, how would they think about happiness, and what would the meaning of existence be for them?

My father was also interested in reading *Rubā‘iyyāt* (quatrains) of ‘Omar Khayyām, an 11th-century philosopher and poet. Through his poems, Khayyām profoundly inspired me to think about human existence, which during my undergraduate studies I learned that he had discussed in length in his treatise *Risālah dar ‘Ilm Kulliyāt-i Wujūd* (On the Knowledge of the Universal Principles of Existence). While *Golestān* encouraged me to learn about the principles of *akhlāq*, Khayyām motivated me to think about the meaning of life and human existence. Before I began my undergraduate studies, reading Persian literature with my father was a significant medium for me to learn about *akhlāq* and metaphysics without having a concrete philosophical understanding of these two disciplines. For many Iranians, Persian literature becomes the means to acquire good manners, to advocate for justice and humanity, to exalt knowledge and art, to glorify wisdom and hymn friendship, to find love in the Divine and cherish life’s delights, to praise modesty, courage and patience, and yet to denounce ignorance, greed and deceit; and to contemplate human existence. In Iran, poetry and prose are a critical medium for the thinking of illustrious eastern Islamic philosophers, such as al-Fārābī (872 – 950), Ibn Sīnā (980 – 1037) and al-Ghazālī (1058 – 1111), to be transmitted over time. Persian literature takes the abstract philosophical issues and presents them in exquisite and enthralling language, making the philosophical ideas more accessible, thus easier for the public to comprehend. Many in Iran cherish individuals who memorize poems and recite each verse accurately. Poetry

stimulates conversations about ethics, the meaning of life, and the existence that awaits humans after this lifeworld.

While poets produce expressive ideas, many have been familiar with philosophical issues and mystical writings; their poems could not have been written without the necessary philosophical contemplation. For instance, Khayyām took a considerable amount of time to contemplate and write about metaphysics. In *Risālah dar ‘Ilm Kulliyāt-i Wujūd*, Khayyām discusses the gradation of being:

What remains from among the most important and difficult problems [to solve] is the difference among the order of existents.... Perhaps I, and my teacher, the master of all who have proceeded before him, Avicenna, have thoughtfully reflected upon this problem and to the extent that it is satisfactory to our intellects, we have understood it. (trans. Mālik 1998:329)

This passage clearly illustrates the depth of Khayyām’s philosophical knowledge. It also shows his familiarity with past philosophers, particularly Ibn Sīnā’s writing on the inseparability of essence and existence. Moreover, his writing shows that metaphysics has been an area of concern for Islamic philosophers.

As I reflect on my childhood, I notice that certain metaphysical issues have played a significant role in my upbringing. My elementary education in Iran coincided with the creation of a new curriculum in schools that was rooted in the Islamic Republic’s socio-political Shī’a doctrine. *Tā’līmāt-e dīnī* (Islamic studies), one of the subjects that was revised based on the new curriculum, played a central role in my understanding of the transcendent nature of Allāh, the principles of Qur’ān, and the way of the Prophet. This class mainly focused on how Islam attempts to provide answers for human existence in the world; it explained the nature of Allāh, the problem of *shaytān* (the devil) and the human being’s free will. These metaphysical issues run through the history of Islam and Iran. For both al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, metaphysics is a

fundamental discipline in philosophy because it is held as “the universal science of the existent *qua* existent (ontology)” (Bertolacci 2006:149). Another metaphysical question that has been a source of reflection for many Iranians is what al-Ghazālī refers to as Allāh’s all-encompassing knowledge of the particulars, and the conundrum between cause and effect. These metaphysical issues have played a central role in the construction of cultural values and the creation of social norms for many Iranians.

My fascination with ethics and metaphysics grew in tandem with my music studies under Lotfī, which opened the door into an understanding of *zībā’ī* (beauty) in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. Lotfī’s teaching and discussion of music-making first made me aware of the connection between ethics, metaphysics and beauty. For him, these three philosophical issues were inseparable. In my experience, Lotfī’s music classes can be summed up as a place to learn about the beauty of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* based on certain principles that were connected to the Divine love. Music is an instrument to achieve this connection, a delightful journey through hard work and moral convictions to attain ultimate happiness.

Lotfī’s correlation between the *radīf* and the Divine love drew my attention to the deep-rooted *ab’ād-e akhlāqī* (ethical dimensions) that govern the ideals, standards (of behavior), value system and virtue in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. I introduced the phrase *ab’ād-e akhlāqī* in my discussions with Lotfī, and he viewed it as a critical concept in reflecting on ethical values in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. I chose *ab’ād* because it requires the concurrent analysis of the aspects, features and facets of Islamic revelations, *’irfān* and *sonnat* (Part I). Lotfī believed that *ab’ād-e akhlāqī* form the layers of *zībā shenāsī* (“knowledge of the beautiful,” a subfield of philosophy typically equated to Western *aesthetics*). In fact, Lotfī used *zībā shenāsī* to discuss his perception of beauty; he believed that while *zībā shenāsī* is implicated in the Kantian notion of aesthetics, it

*needs* to be examined based on Islamic philosophy and mystical thinking. He was adamant as to how *zībā* (the beautiful) needs to be understood in the context of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*.

Lotfī's discussions of beauty or happiness were at times vague and incomprehensible during my teen years. My intentions back then were more about becoming a technically gifted musician, yet I realized there is something more to *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* than becoming a virtuoso performer. I first began to comprehend what "happiness" (*sa 'āda*) or "good life" meant in a philosophy class on al-Fārābī during my undergraduate studies. Ultimately, attainment of *sa 'āda* is a human aspiration for Divine love achieved by those who seek the true meaning of life. My readings on *sa 'āda* eventually led to al-Ghazālī's discussion of *hāl* (disposition), *riyāda* (discipline) and *mujāhida* (earnest effort) as the way for human *najat* (salvation) and *sa 'āda*. As I read al-Fārābī and al-Ghazālī, I noticed that many of Lotfī's discussions about *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* were based on similar philosophical concepts and ideas. Lotfī would talk about "the importance of *hāl* and *ān* [the moment] in uncovering the beauty of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, which is evoked by *mahbūb wa ma 'shūq* [lover and beloved]." I now realize that Lotfī's perception of *zībā 'ī* was based on Ibn Sīnā's understanding of beauty as something that is aroused by *mahbūb wa ma 'shūq*, and perceived through the *hiss* (sense) and *khayāl* (imagination).

Lotfī's perception of beauty illustrates the relevance of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī in the judgment of the good and beautiful in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. While Lotfī was not aware of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*'s connection to medieval Islamic philosophy, his use of poems, narratives and anecdotes is emblematic of an oral tradition of music-making that is pervaded with ethics, metaphysics and beauty. To understand how an *ustād* relates *zībā 'ī* to *hāl* and *riyāda*, an in-depth examination of the thought of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī's is essential. In order to apprehend the criteria that shape the judgment of beauty, one must be aware of how Islamic

concepts form the ethical norms and offer meaning to *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. *Zībā'ī* needs to be evaluated based on what Ibn Sīnā calls *kull jamāl mula'im wa-khayr mudrak* [all beauty which is suitable and goodness which one perceives] (see *Kitāb al-Najāt—Book of Salvation*; trans. Ahmed). This dissertation places a great emphasis on the understanding of ethics and beauty that the *ustādān* I studied under consider to be “beyond the earthly desires.” This form of thinking corresponds with that of al-Fārābī, who conceptualizes *jamāl* (Arabic for beauty) based on his writings on *mā ba'd al-tabī'ah* (Arabic for “beyond the natural”; equivalent to Greek *ta meta ta physika*).

With over two decades of experience as a music student inside Iran and abroad, I have had the good fortune of gaining intimate knowledge of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* from a number of *ustādān*. My *ustādān* patiently nurtured my *tār* and *setār* development, and they have also cultivated my understanding of *akhlāq* as a vital component of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. The other reason I choose to write about *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is based on its long and tenuous history with the Shī'a 'ulamā'. When it comes to this historical tension, *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* precedes other musical genres, as something that has been debated for centuries. Over the past forty years the suffix *sonnatī* (traditional) has played a significant role in the construction of ethics in music-making. Prior to the 1979 Revolution, *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* was most often called *mūsīqī-e Irānī* (Iranian music). The use of *sonnatī* has created a discourse about the “essence” and “authenticity” of music-making grounded on a “defined” history that emblemizes a particular pedagogical and performance practice. This linguistic construct has been incorporated in the everyday vocabulary of the public. An examination of the history of Iranian music in the twentieth-century makes clear that this use of *sonnatī* is a unique phenomenon that has been popularized since the early Seventies.

*Mūsīqī-e sonnātī* consists of an oral tradition as well as a scattered written history that is helpful in depicting how beauty has been perceived. For instance, music books, manuscripts, artifacts and documents, in addition to narratives told of past master musicians, offer a window for understanding how *akhlāq* have shaped the idea of beauty. It must be noted that other music genres—for example, popular music or hip-hop—are under severe criticism by the ‘*ulamā*’ today. In fact, they are also under scrutiny by some of the *ustādān*. The disapproval of some *ustādān* toward newly emerging musical genres (like hip-hop or rap) points to the fact that *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is accorded the highest status. The juxtaposition of “good music” and “bad/unacceptable music” stems from the connection made to mysticism and traditional values. Since *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* presents the mystic, pure and traditional elements of Iranian culture, it is deemed “good music.” Mohsen Kadivar (b. 1959), a leading intellectual reformist and professor of Islamic Studies, states that “music is *halāl* (permissible), as long as it is good music... Good music offers tranquility and peace, instead of some of the new music we hear nowadays, that just agitates us, making us lose a sense of ourselves to anxiety and lack self-control” (Interview conducted on May 11, 2017).

The final reason for concentrating on *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* arises from my experiences outside of music classes, and more as a performer and researcher. I often find Iranians fascinated with my perspective on the position of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, asking: why do ‘*ulamā*’ find music *harām* (forbidden)? Does my research *prove* that music is *halāl* so that the misleading Shī’a claim could finally be put to rest? And, what needs to change in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* so it is more “modern,” “up-to-date” and less melancholic? The last question forces me (perhaps even obligates me) to defend the principles and values passed on to me by my *ustādān*. At the same time, I am sympathetic to the concerns about *halāl* and *harām* in Iran, even though the public



often overlooks the fact that ‘*ulamā*’ have an array of perspectives on music. The understanding of Shī’a authorities on *halāl* and *harām* with respect to music is not a homogeneous and uniform perspective.

A central figure in this dissertation is the renowned Iranian master musician Lotfī, known particularly for his mastery of the *tār* and *setār*. He was encouraged by his older brother to play the *tār* in his hometown of Gorgan. At age seventeen Lotfī moved to Tehran to study music in the Persian National Music Conservatory under Habibollāh Salehī and ‘Alī Akhbar Shahnāzī (1897-1985). He was a member of the Fine Arts Administration under the direction of Hossein Dehlavī (b. 1927), and at the same time learned the *setār* from Sa’id Hormozī (1897-1976). Musically, one of the greatest influences on Lotfī was Nūr-‘Alī Borūmand (1905-1977), a notable authority on the *radīf*. Lotfī was a student of Borūmand in the College of Fine Arts at Tehran University, and the Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Traditional Persian Music. Lotfī has taught privately, as well as in public institutions such as the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents. He has also performed on the radio and television and founded the *Shaydā* Ensemble. He was the head of the School of Music at Tehran University (1978-1980), and directed the *Chāvosh* Center. In 1986, Lotfī left Iran as he was invited by the Italian cultural institute *Fondazione Cini* to take part in music performances and workshops. In 2005, after nineteen years he permanently returned to Iran, having visited Iran on two previous occasions.

My music training with Lotfī began in a small beautiful house in Berkeley during my teens. Each summer, I travelled to California to take part in his classes. For about eight years, I was able to learn under *ustād* Lotfī by taking part in his weekly music classes, and also by simply being around him when he spoke about music or decided to play. There were many

instances, either late night or early morning, when he would begin to play the *tār* and *setār* and then discuss his views on *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. Living with him was a classroom for me; it meant that I had direct access to an *ustād* who had become increasingly spiritual in his life and music. *Ustād* Lotfī enjoyed telling his students narratives from the past, stories that shaped my perception of music-making as a young person growing up outside of Iran. Sometimes his narratives were directly about music, other times they were about the time he came to Tehran or his experience when he was enlisted in the army.

The years I spent learning from *ustād* Lotfī in Berkeley fundamentally shaped my understanding of music. At times living with such a renowned master musician was difficult. He was very demanding as a music teacher, and at times it was challenging to be uncertain of the expectations such a celebrated musician had of his disciples. In some ways for me, it was a rediscovery of my Persian roots, with countless beautiful instances of awe and inspiration, and at times a feeling of loss and discomfort. Years later in Tehran, *ustād* Lotfī spoke to me about his reasons for being so demanding and how he had observed the inspirational moments when I learned something new. He added that the master and student rapport “is like Sa‘dī said: ‘*nā bordah ranj ganj moyāsar namīshvad*’ [One cannot have treasure without enduring the hardship].” He went on to explain that *ranj* (hardship) is the key to success provided it is under the direction of those with the knowledge and experience to guide.

When Lotfī moved back to Switzerland in the summer of 2001, I decided to travel to Iran to continue my studies of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. Being back in Iran was thrilling; I started to learn music from a number of renowned master musicians, and was befriended by many young musicians who helped me along the way. Among the *ustādān* I studied *tār* and *setār* with was Ata-Allāh Jankouk (1936 – 2009). He was a student of Shahnāzī and Borūmand from the age of

eighteen when he moved to Tehran from a small city close to Shīrāz. Jankouk studied the *radīf* over a span of ten years with Shahnāzī, becoming so trusted that he would teach the *ustād*'s young students. Much like Lotfī, Jankouk also studied under Borūmand at the College of Fine Arts at Tehran University. He was also a member of the Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Traditional Persian Music and taught at the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents. For eight summers, I learned the *radīf* from Jankouk, and during each lesson he elaborated on each *gūsheh* (unit within the *radīf*) so I would understand all relevant issues in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. The oral transmission of the *radīf* takes place between master musicians and students. During the master musicians' classes, each pupil is responsible for memorizing a small part of the repertoire. As a modal system, the *radīf* is based on complex subsets of melodic and rhythmic patterns called *dastgāh*, *āvāz*, and *gūsheh*. Within each melodic and rhythmic structure lies a set of complicated musical features that range from modulations, accidentals and folk melodic motives. Melodies are often memorized based on the deep connection between the *radīf* and Iranian classical poetry.

I was particularly excited in 2005 when Lotfī decided to move back to Iran. My first public performance was under the guidance of Lotfī in Tehran. As a music student, my experience began with my grandfather, was nourished by Lotfī in California, and matured when I travelled back to Iran. Even though Lotfī and Jankouk never specifically mentioned being part of a particular Sūfī order, they both had strong connections with the Ni‘matullāhī order and at times participated in its gatherings. Another master musician who has been very influential in my musical experience is Soodabeh Sālem (b. 1955), music educator and the conductor of Iran's Children Orchestra. Although she is not a *tār* and *setār* player, her profound knowledge of the *radīf* and *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, helped me learn music and understand the socio-political and ethical

issues involved in music-making. Sālem moved to Tehran from Kurdistan and attended the College of Fine Arts at Tehran University as a *santoor* player (a trapezoid-shaped hammer dulcimer, usually with 72 strings and eighteen bridges). She learned the *radīf* under the guidance of Borūmand at the university. Soon after finishing her college degree, she began to research folkloric melodies by women, particularly recording mothers' lullabies from various regions in Iran. She has been interested in the musical relationship between a mother and her child. Over the past forty years, Sālem has worked with various children's orchestras to stage various folksongs, classical poems and famous stories. Currently, she has two music institutes located in the western and northeastern parts of Tehran.

This dissertation is a deliberation about what ethics and beauty mean, mainly from the perspective of Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem. At certain points a number of other master musicians also take part, making this ethnographic study a more in-depth examination of the relationship between music-making, beauty, and *akhlāq* from the perspective of the *ustādān*, Shī'a authorities and Islamic scholars. I have made use of approximately 30 hours of audio recordings of Lotfī, in which he discusses issues of *akhlāq* in the *radīf* or *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. Most of these recordings took place over the years as his student, often after lessons had concluded or during intimate gatherings where Lotfī decided to play. Similarly, Jankouk would discuss the *radīf* or his views on music-making after my classes had finished. Since I was the last student in each of his teaching sessions, we had the chance to talk in depth about *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. I have collected about 40 hours of audio discussion of music with Jankouk that range from the students' discipline to the status of music-making in today's Iran. My discussions with Sālem were informal and part of a classroom setting. I often visited her at her music school, usually towards the end of the week. I would often have questions about how to understand the socio-cultural

aspect of music. Her perspectives have been fascinating and informative in my musical development. At times, younger musicians, particularly women, would join the discussion which enriched my understanding through the lens of gender issues, which have been sanctioned and censored for the most part in Iran. My interviews have been helpful in mapping out *akhlāq* as a matrix incorporating language, Islamic values, and music's affective power over individual sensibility and emotion. They have also assisted me in exploring the tension, derived from individual musical experiences, between religious and cultural obligation and personal desire. Discussions with the master musicians have also enabled me to explore urgent questions shared among the wider Iranian public and Western academics: a) What is it in the act of listening to or participating in music that could make it good or evil (bad)? and b) To what degree is *sa'āda* attainable, considering the intensity with which Iran is changing?

This dissertation avoids using the term “aesthetics,” as it deals with the judgment of beauty and taste in the Western philosophical tradition. The eastern Islamic philosophers are not known to have used a term comparable to “aesthetics,” instead exploring the concept of beauty based on their perceptions of *jamāl* (Arabic, beauty) or *jamīl* (Arabic, beautiful). Furthermore, this dissertation uses *akhlāq*, which in Islamic tradition encompasses a range of English terms, such as disposition, nature, morals or manners. *Akhlāq* is the plural of the word *khulq* (character or traits). It is closely related to *khalīq* (Creator, Allāh) and *makhlūq* (creature). For example, *Sūrat al-Qalam* (The Pen; 68:4) addresses the human's virtuous *khulq*: “And indeed, you are of a great moral character” (Sher 'Alī 2004:682). *Akhlāq* also appears in a number of *'ahādīth* (reports of the words, actions, or habits of Prophet Muhammad; singular *hadīth*). A well-known *hadīth* of the Prophet describes the importance of learning and teaching *akhlāq*: “I was sent to make clear the explanations to ethical issues [and teach them to people]” (Ali 2013:372). This

*hadīth* illustrates the belief that *akhlāq* provide the means to strive to attain *sa‘āda* during one’s lifetime. *Sa‘āda* is the way to elevate and cultivate one’s status toward divine happiness. In another *hadīth* the Prophet states: “Allāh grants *akhlāq* so that human beings connect to Him. Once a person starts to observe *akhlāq* by conducting the appropriate deeds, he/she becomes closer to God” (Ali 2013:375). *Akhlāq* are practices of virtue that bridge the connection to Allāh, *makhluq* to *khalīq*. *Khulq* (singular of *akhlāq*) is part of *nafs* (the human essence) that intuitively inspires individuals to act.

#### OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation consists of four sections. The first section lays the groundwork about how *akhlāq* is understood and practiced by Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem in the private settings of their classes. Each of the three *ustādān* has been instrumental in my musical development. They are also known to have different understandings of the function and purpose of the *radīf*, even though they are all from the same generation and have benefited from the same master teachers. I begin by analyzing the *radīf* as explained and taught by Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem in their music classes. The *radīf* is the collection of melodic figures preserved through oral tradition that forms the basis of improvisation in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* (traditional music). For the *ustādān*, the *radīf* is the foundation and the source of *akhlāq*. The poems and narratives used as part of the *radīf* depict a set of principles that constitute what I label as the three *ab‘ād-e akhlāqī* (ethical dimensions) in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*: Islamic revelation, *‘irfān* (mysticism) and *sonnat* (tradition). The *radīf* embodies values and norms that define what is suitable and good in the performance practice of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, while delineating—through the teaching of an *ustād*—what manners and worldviews the students ought to acquire. The norms, practices and principles presented in the *radīf* comprise the *ab‘ād-e akhlāqī* that determine what is suitable and good. It

needs to be mentioned that *ustādān* have differing and sometimes contesting views on beauty. A number of master musicians consider themselves to be more “secular” and “academic” by distancing themselves from ethical principles of the *radīf*. However, based on what I learned from Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem, I believe that the values and ideals in the *radīf* cannot be neglected. The ethical dimensions in the *radīf* shape the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, whether one is aware of their presence and significance or not.

After discussing how the *radīf* becomes pivotal for the three *ustādān* in outlining a set of principles, in Part Two my focus turns to how they engage in public forums to convey that which is suitable and good about *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. Gradually, Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem have taken on a public role to defend and promote *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* as a source of goodness. By advocating a high moral ground for *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, the three *ustādān*'s position (typically reserved for their disciples) has taken on a public prominence. From the confines of the music classes, Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem have expanded their calling of *akhlāq* to shape a public discourse on *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. The three master musicians' public role has transformed their responsibility from private teachers to public guardians of *akhlāq*. The public position of *ustādān* is significant due to *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*'s long-history of condemnation by many Shī'a 'ulamā'. Music has endured years of government censorship, prohibitions and regulation that date to the beginning of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. For instance, the outlawing of female lead vocalists in public performances (except for concerts only attended by women) is a clear illustration of Shī'a authorities' anxiety toward music.

Part Three discusses how modern tendencies, the great appeal of urban lifestyle, and the advancement of a quasi-free market economy in Iran have created an environment where the *ustādān* find themselves ethical curators of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, yet under pressure to innovate to

generate more interest in younger audiences. As a result, a tension between fulfilling the conventional practices and parting from the normative values has come to the surface. It is indisputable that innovation is a key ingredient in crafting transcendent artworks. However, innovation for some *ustādān* has become something of a necessity (almost a compulsion) rather than an artistic process. The impulse to innovate has given rise to an ethical gray-zone, an ambivalent and fluid space where it is difficult for the *ustādān* to practice that which has been codified as suitable and good. If there ever existed a focal point of mutual understanding among the *ustādān*, a center where an almost-unanimous consensus could be reached about what ought to be good in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*, such perceptions have now given way to decentralization and distortion of the established principles. The ethical gray-zone arises when the *ustādān* find themselves faced with the unravelling of the social norms, while they are tempted to change previously revered principles to adapt to the wishes (or music tastes) of younger Iranians. As judgment of music-making is being redefined, the concept of beauty is also being reconstructed.

The final part of this dissertation turns back to a philosophical discussion of how Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem comprehend the attainment of *sa'āda* in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*, while reconciling with the changes Iranians face. I focus on the concept of *sa'āda* and union with the Beloved discussed by Islamic philosophers, particularly al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī, in light of the ethical ambivalence in today's Iran. The pursuit of the good life is an antecedent source of inspiration in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*, allowing for the construction of a language of purity and goodness. In two chapters, I discuss how the logical and political aspect of music-making takes on a language to serve public awareness for education and fulfillment in everyday life. In addition to the three *ustādān*, three contemporary Iranian thinkers—Hossein Nasr (b. 1933), Hossein Mohyeddīn Ghomsheī (b. 1940) and Abdolkarim Soroush (b. 1945)—and two young



musicians join in the dialogue about ethics and beauty in music-making. The final chapter examines the metaphysical and spiritual understanding of the soul and its connection to the metaphor of journey often discussed by Lotfī and Jankouk.

Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem's ethical discourse on beauty takes place in intimate settings (e.g., music classes and private gatherings) and public venues (e.g., television interviews, concerts or the Internet). Part I explores the ways in which they produce and maintain *akhlāq* in their music classes and other private settings. In this part, the three master musicians stress how *akhlāq* shape a metaphysical and spiritual understanding of beauty. Part II explains how Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem's discourse on *akhlāq* becomes public; in addition to the metaphysical importance, Islamic revelation, *irfān* and *sonnat* take on a logical and rational political life to combat the Shī'a authorities' doctrine on music-making. Part III examines the tension between *sonnat* and innovation, exploring how the three master musicians mediate between traditional values and individualistically goal-oriented aspirations of many Iranians. Finally, Part IV returns to the philosophical issues of beauty discussed in the Introductions on two fronts: a) the logical and rational political discourse on music-making as something that creates awareness and educates the public about the truth; and b) the metaphysical and spiritual component of music that enables the soul to ascend towards the Beloved. Ultimately, beauty is the union with the Beloved, where the human state of perfection and happiness provides harmony and tranquility for the soul. For Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem music-making is an instrument that enables the soul to find this union with the Beloved and provides individuals with harmony and happiness.

This research is based on ethnographic fieldwork that took place in four locations inside Iran (Tehrān, Shīrāz, Esfahān and Qom), and the United States over a span of twelve years. In many of these years, I was a music student who had the good fortune to study the *radīf* under

Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem. Nasr, Ghomsheī and Soroush are thinkers who are part of a contemporary movement of Islamic reformation informed by rationality and intellectualism, while being inspired by Islamic thought and interpretations of its relationship to individual freedom, civil society and religious pluralism. The Islamic scholars are not only well-informed with respect to Western philosophical perspectives; they have also transformed Islamic theology and ethical perspectives on political, social and cultural norms. These in-depth ethnographic interviews provide Islamic viewpoints alternative to those of the Shia' authorities. Part IV also presents ethnographic data on young musicians, who speak about change and artistic freedom as opposed to conformity to the ideals in tradition. These interviews illustrate how Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem are mediating between the past ideals and a changing future as they define what beauty means.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE ETHICS OF BEAUTY IN MUSIC-MAKING

In the summer of 2018, Arshād Tahmāsbī (b. 1957), an accomplished *tār* and *setār* performer posted a video on Instagram:

Today, the music market is such that not only *manesh-e honarmandāne* [artistic manner], and *shakhseyat-e honarī* [artistic character] are not prioritized, musicians do not even think about these principles. What is left are materialistic gains, such as money, marketing, promotion and billboards.... [nowadays] in every performance we act peculiarly and behave improperly... we think we are *honarmānd* [artist].... We assume we have the *resālat* [intuition or insight] for others and the youth to learn from us...to teach the youth what *honar* [art] is and what it entails.

Tahmāsbī was one of my *tār* teachers during my stays in Iran. For him, *manesh* (manners) meant respect for the past *ustādān*'s ideals and knowledge, considering it as the “proper beliefs and sensitivity handed to musicians as an *amānat* [inheritance] through the oral tradition of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*.” After seeing his post, I decide to Skype with Soodabeh Sālem in Tehran, asking for her insights about what Tahmāsbī calls the *manesh-e honarmandāne* and *shakhseyāt-e honarī*. She passionately spoke about artistic manner as a correlation between *akhlāq* (ethics) and beauty:

If we want to speak about *manesh-e honarmandān*, we first need to perceive what values are important. We must understand what it is that makes *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* beautiful. For years, I have behaved a certain way and acted based on specific principles. If I were to suddenly change my demeanor, my character would become unpleasant... I would become the opposite of what is beautiful. It is very much a similar situation to *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. If we do not have an appropriate understanding—or we choose to disregard the proper understanding—of the ideals that shape what is beautiful about *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*, we lose the significance of what our music represents.

If beauty is reevaluated to be materialistic gains instead of higher ideals to achieve, then we are faced with a major problem... a dilemma that we face today. *Mūsīqī-e sonnatī* is losing its beauty, because it has lost its ethical principles. Ethical principles connect—even unite—a *honarmānd* to beauty. Ultimately, we are responsible to clearly convey the proper understanding of beauty to the youth—the same values taught by our masters. We must question those who challenge the appropriate understanding of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. Ethics cannot be neglected in any part of our everyday life, otherwise our understanding of norms falls apart. Similar thinking needs to apply to music; if ethics is ignored music loses its meaning. We must constantly remind ourselves that beauty is the

manifestation of the ethical values and the proper conduct according to the ideals bequeathed to us in our *sonnat* [tradition]. (Interview conducted on June 21, 2018).

For Sālem, there are clear connections between what is beautiful in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* and *akhlāq*, where the ideals that shape the judgment of music-making have been orally transmitted from one generation to the next. The connections between *akhlāq* and beauty have three functions: a) they shape a specific understanding of norms and values in music-making based on Islamic revelation, *irfān* (mysticism) and *sonnat*; and b) they shape and legitimize a discourse to repudiate efforts made by Shī'a authorities, who for years have forbidden most forms of public participation in music; and c) they counter the inclination of many youth who favor innovation as they gradually distance themselves from the traditional values of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*.

This dissertation examines how beauty is interpreted and understood in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* as explained in music classes, performed in concert halls, demonstrated in workshops, and articulated in public domains by the three *ustādān*. The judgment of beauty focuses on the three master musicians' reflections with respect to *akhlāq*, based on the political, socio-religious and cultural occurrences in today's Iran. Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem convey a judgment of beauty that encompasses a range of sublime qualities that are ultimately attributed to the Beloved, Allāh. *Mūsīqī-e sonnatī* is a medium that brings individuals closer to the beautiful and the good—the Divine *mahbūb wa ma'shūq* (lover and beloved) of Allāh. The three *ustādān*'s judgment on beauty brings together their intellectual opinions, desires, cultural preferences, values, Shī'a ideology, politics and social norms in the rapidly changing Iran's geopolitics and cultural practices.

*Akhlāq* are shaped through the societal norms, religious practices and historical understandings that place value, imagination and meaning on music. They evoke the imaginative

power to perceive that which is suitable and good when listening to and performing music. Imagination steers emotions and perceptions of possibilities (or limitations) for individuals. However, the notion of good also creates a dichotomy that allows for the inappropriate and the bad to exist. For some, the imaginative power of music can be a corrupting power on the soul. For others, it poses the ability to engender grace and harmony. In Iran, the dichotomy of unethical (corrupted powers) and ethical (grace) in music has historically been formulated and modified through the discourse of *halāl* and *haram*.

To pursue how a *good life* relates to *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*—to give the *radīf* meanings and to advocate for its significance in public—is to stand in opposition to the Shī’a incursion music has endured. The topic of *sa’āda* (happiness) allows for a discourse that elevates the position of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, countering the many Shī’a ‘*ulamā*’ who have used their religious platforms to condemn music. This in-depth ethnography of Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem explores four interrelated themes in each part of the dissertation about *akhlāq* and beauty of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*: a) the teaching of beauty: teaching the *radīf* and the relevant viewpoints in music classes; b) ethical guardians, Islamic discourse and authority in the social domain; c) apportioning “tradition”: (re)defining the judgment of beauty and the ethical gray-zone; and d) (re)affirmation of the good life: judgment of beauty and the attainment of *sa’āda*.

To examine these questions, this dissertation outlines how metaphysics and spirituality relate to beauty in eastern Islamic writings. The eastern Islamic philosophers have sought to theorize human experiences of, and judgments about, beauty as a value or a quality of perfection. In *Kitāb al-Mūsīq’ā al-Kabīr (The Great Book of Music)*, al-Fārābī underlines the importance of empirical principles in music-making by emphasizing the centrality of performance. Musical experience highlights a temporal and referential priority, rather than mathematical and systematic

foundations. Al-Fārābī seeks out “the natural phenomenon of certain instinctive dispositions. Humans need to express their inner states as they go through life’s pleasure and unpleasure experiences” (Shehadi 1995:9). The relationship between human experience, actions and the perception of reality means that the judgment of sublime beauty is also grounded in its transcendental quality.

During my studies with Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem, they did not demonstrate much knowledge of eastern Islamic philosophers in their music classes or interviews. For the three *ustādān*, the connection to thinkers such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ghazzālī and Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (1154-1191) discussed in this dissertation is through Persian literature and poetry. The *ghazal* (love poems) and *qasīda* (praise poems) are “ideal vehicles for mystical experiences,” in which the poets “dwelt, in impressive, sometimes unexpected, images, upon the mystery of God’s beauty and majesty, His grace and wrath, and the marvels of creation” (Schimmel 1975:162-163). Music is not the only art form in Iran that demonstrates an intense connection to Islamic revelation and mysticism; generally speaking artistic beauty serves above all to elevate the human soul and help it come closer to Allāh. Poetry, as both oral and written traditions, demonstrates this profound spiritual gratification of the Divine love. In *Fīhi mā fīhi*, Rūmī speaks about the true meaning of mystical prayer and the union with the beloved:

...[it] does not consist in forms alone.... Prayer is the drowning and unconsciousness of the soul, so that all these forms remain without. At that time there is no room even for Gabriel, who is pure spirit. One may say that the man who prays in this fashion is exempt from all religious obligations, since he is deprived of his reason. Absorption in the Divine Unity is the soul of prayer. (trans. Arberry 1994:158)

Rūmī speaks about mystical union by means of contemplation, meditation and praying. Similar to the ways in which music-making becomes an instrument of Divine satisfaction for the three master musicians, praying serves as an instrument to achieve harmony with the Beloved. It is

known that renowned classical Persian-speaking poets were knowledgeable of Islamic theology and philosophy. Poets such as Sa‘dī, Rūmī and Hāfez have profoundly influenced *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*, since poetry is a vital pedagogical component in teaching the *radīf* and significant for its performance practice. The poems address various philosophical, Islamic and mystic issues that have inspired Lotfī, Jankouk, Sālem and other master teachers to reflect deeply on each verse to discover the meanings each line carries. Poetry becomes an indirect but assertive way for the three master musicians to contemplate and speak about metaphysical and ethical issues in relation to beauty.

### 1.1 THE QUALITIES OF BEAUTY

One of the core questions addressed throughout this dissertation is how to define beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. For many Iranians, music is a form of sensory experience that takes on a spiritual significance, divine resonance or tranquil quality shaped through a noetic acknowledgement of the metaphysical nature of music.<sup>1</sup> There is a clear connection between music-making and something that is beyond the materialistic realm. The reflection of most Iranians on *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* incorporates an array of ethical queries that at its core is entangled with Islamic revelation, *irfān* and *sonnat*. The connection to Islamic revelation and mysticism is elaborated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr:

Islamic art is an art which dissolves the limitations of external form in the indefinite rhythms of form, space or sound [characteristic of the expression of the sublime], thereby opening the soul to the reception of the presence of the One who is not only absolute but also infinite. This art, issuing from the inner reality (*al-haqīqa*) of the Quran, is an integral aspect of the Islamic revelation and plays a basic role not only in the beautification of everyday life, but also in the remembrance of God and the beauty of the Beloved for which our soul yearns here below, for we carry the imprint of the Divine at the center of our being even in the exile of our earthly existence and the confines of the world of forgetfulness. (1997:458)

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<sup>1</sup> I use “noetic” as it relates to the metaphysical branch of philosophy concerned with the mind.

Islamic art becomes a medium that connects the inner reality (that above all is to elevate the soul towards the Beloved) to the Divine (Part IV). Music-making is the catalyst for the beautification of everyday life that grants individuals the ability to realize the beauty of the Beloved. The spiritual aspect of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* is hardly a point of contestation. Thus, music-making closely relates to what Sālem calls the “journey to ecstasy.” If the mystical journey is “a ladder, a staircase that leads to heaven” (Schimmel 1975:105), then music is the instrument to reach a higher level of experience and eventually a perfect union with the Beloved.

Some scholars and musicians may be critical of the term “Islamic revelation” in this context, claiming that *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* can be practiced without any religious or even mystical perspectives. In other words, music can be a “secular” phenomenon. Islamic revelation is not to be mistaken as something associated with the geo-political doctrine of Shī’a authorities prevalent over the past four centuries in Iran. Rather, Islamic revelation finds its roots in *mashshā’ī* (Peripatetic) philosophers, and is influenced by the Sūfī school of *ishrāqī* (Illuminationist) identified with Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (1154-1191) (see Part IV). This understanding of beauty is inherent in Iranian socio-cultural practices; to varying degrees, Islamic revelation has been crystalized in the social psyche, belief system, language, action and artistic aspirations of Iranians. Islamic revelation illustrates a form of beauty not based on religio-political motives, but a manifestation of the socio-cultural aspirations inherent in the history of Iran. In addition, the dichotomy of sacred and secular is a Western construct. It is problematic to dichotomize *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* based on this dualistic opposition.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, *mashshā’ī* became a branch of Islamic philosophy, where Aristotelian thinking was critically examined by al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī. A vital



reason this dissertation examines the writings of these three eastern Islamic philosophers is based on their perceptions of the soul as something that originates from Divine unity and the movements of celestial bodies towards the Beloved. In Islamic mysticism Allāh is represented as the Divine Beloved and the spiritual traveler as the lover, disciple or novice (*murīd*). Lotfī offers a similar perspective about the human soul and the Beloved, asserting that “music is a medium to facilitate the union between the *nafs* (soul or inner essence) and the Divine.” Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī provide an understanding of a spiritual and ontological ascendance of the soul that is central in the relationship between music-making, *akhlāq* and beauty. It is ontological because it is an ascent to a higher plane of being. For Lotfī, beauty becomes the transformation of an individual’s soul from the everyday to a higher reality, a quest for the divine through proper ethical practices. This mystical treatment of the soul and its union with the Beloved is developed in detail by Suhrawardī in *Mishkāt al-Anwār (The Niche of Lights)*:

Gnostics climb up from the lowerlands of unreal (*majāz*) to the highlands of reality, and perfect their ascent [via the soul]. Then they see by direct eye-witnessing (*kashf*) that there is none in existence save God and that ‘Everything perishes except His (God’s) face’ [...] So each existent has two aspects—one towards itself, and the other towards its Lord. Considered in terms of the face of itself, it is nonexistent, but considered in terms of the aspect of God, it exists. (trans. Buchman 1998: 17-18)

Suhrawardī, the *Shaykh al-Ishrāq* (Master of Illumination), states that the soul can become luminous depending on a person’s spiritual status. This form of liberation of the soul speaks to an ontological capability of the *nafs* to ascend to a higher status (the soul also has the capability to descend) (Part IV). During my classes with Jankouk, he regularly discussed how “music enables the soul to break free from its *qeyd va band* [tenets and shackles], since the soul impatiently awaits its return to the Beloved.”

This treatment of the soul becomes significant in understanding how Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem perceive beauty. It creates a connection between a metaphysics, beauty and *akhlāq*, where one cannot exist without the other. In Suhrawardī's words the soul can be identified as a light with different degrees of intensity. The soul is an instrument of spiritual perfection, where on an ontological level it becomes associated with mystical love. Lotfī frequently spoke about '*ishq* (love) and the act of *fanā'* (annihilation) in the *murād* (desire), what he called "the journey of the soul to and from the Beloved." A key component stressed by the three master musicians in the search for the Beloved was '*ilm* (knowledge) of the *murād*, as the guiding light on the quest for the mystic union.

Allāh's Beauty is pure abstraction, yet His Beauty is considered, analyzed and objectivized. In Iran, music has for years been at the forefront of a vigorous debate about how, or even if, sensory experience (observable beauty) relates to Allāh's Beauty. The deliberation on the position of music has often produced a religio-ethical discourse, formulated on Islamic interpretations of *halāl* and *haram*. The debate centers on what ought to be viewed as suitable and good in music. Most Shī'a '*ulamā'* (religious scholars) have understood music as something that removes individuals from the desirable and the good, initiating a pleasurable awe that facilitates indulgence in immoralities. The inquiry into morally judgable individuals, the metaphysical relation to beauty, and the set of principles that outline what is considered good form the basis of *akhlāq* with respect to beauty in music.

Meanwhile, a large number of Iranians are witnessing the disengagement of their youth from traditional values. The nonconformist attitude of the youth steps beyond socio-normative principles and Islamic values to create its own ethos. The three *ustādān* are faced with the unravelling of the norms, as they are confronted with a need to adjust to the musical tastes of

younger Iranians. As the ethical values are being undone, newly-formed ideas of beauty are being demarcated. Over the past three decades, the judgment of beauty and the practice of *akhlāq* have been significantly transforming in Iran. The geopolitical circumstances of Iran have created a unique environment where Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem have taken their ethical discourse on beauty to the public. They have used various public platforms to convey what they deem beautiful about music-making to a) counter the hegemony of Shī'a authorities' ideology on music (Part II); and b) resist the overwhelming appeal by many young Iranians who reject *sonnat* in favor of innovation (Part III). The three master musician's classes on the *radīf* became a place for me to learn about *akhlāq* and its relation to beauty as I learned each part of the musical repertoire (Part I). Tahmāsbī and Sālem's statements illustrate the breakdown of social norms that speaks to a gray-zone of ambivalence and uncertainty in Iranian society. The challenge for the three *ustādān* has been to keep the practices that make *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* suitable and good, yet to engage with the transformational changes taking place in Iran.

## 1.2 THE GRAY-ZONE IN THE JUDGMENT OF BEAUTY

For Iranian musicians, pondering what is suitable and good with respect to *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* is not unusual. Lotfī insisted that “there is an obligation and responsibility for musicians to convey what is *sharāfat mandāneh* [permanently venerated] about *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*.” *Sharāfat* comes from *sharāf* (Farsi from Arabic, dignify), often referring to something that is pure and honorable. For me this has meant staying dedicated to the *sonnat* of my *ustādān*, by becoming more aware of historical developments, cultural norms and social transformations that have profoundly defined the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. I have grappled with the frequency and intensity with which newly-formed ideas have come to redefine the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. The intersectionality of religion, ethics and tradition requires a critical

discussion about the status of music in today's Iran. It is a conversation that needs an in-depth analysis in order to understand how beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is being judged and reevaluated. Considering the shortcomings of the Iranian revolution, and the youth's disengagement from the past, a fertile ground has come about for examining how *akhlāq*—the intersection of Islamic revelation, mysticism and tradition—shapes the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*.

During my visits to Iran, many describe the current circumstances as ambivalent, where long-standing views are giving way to more individualistic and goal-orientated objectives. Sālem states,

Progress has been made after the [1979] revolution, not because the authorities or religious factions have allowed it, rather the public's insistence and resistance has kept us moving forward. With all the progress made, the perplexity, or paradox, I felt as a child remains. I think it is largely the legacy of centuries of religious doctrine, and in addition the traditional norms that came from it—it is so entangled that we are not able to escape. I teach music classes, perform in public venues, and have followers on social media. But, as a society we are still at the crossroad about where we stand on music; we deny that music can be a virtuous act, and could be a healing. As a society, consciously—and perhaps subconsciously—we grapple with the same ago-old question: Why is music considered *harām* for some? As musicians, we are constantly justifying the position music plays, as we continue to struggle to figure out ways to redeem and eradicate a history that views music as impious and immoral activity. Most importantly, this paradox still dominates our thinking as musicians; we ask ourselves to what extent should religion, tradition and mysticism be a part of our music-making without tainting it as something else, whilst staying true to its core values that religious has fought to oppose. (Interview conducted on June 18, 2016)

The ambivalent space has caused the unraveling of norms and accepted wisdom. The transition taking place is making many reject the past ideals and seek new ones, thereby creating an environment to (re)define beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. The dichotomy between tradition and innovation has taken strong hold in the collective consciousness of Iranians (Ansari 2014; McLachlan 2016). Over the past century, Iranians have faced a strenuous (and somewhat inexplicable) predicament about the extent to which they need to modernize and Westernize. For

many, the West has come to be the pinnacle of knowledge and innovation, opposed to the Islamic world which finds itself in the midst of frequent social and political failures and transgressions. The admiration for the Western world has never come to a stop, while also qualified by a dislike toward imperialism and colonization of the Europeans, the former Soviet Union, and later in the twentieth-century the United States.

One of the goals of the 1979 Iranian Revolution was to eradicate dependency on the Western powers and strive for national sovereignty. The ambitions of the revolution quickly fell apart, as Iran faced a daunting eight-year-war with Iraq led by its Shī'a theocratic regime. Once more Iranians had to struggle to make sense of their history, reconcile with current events and hope for future possibilities. The Shī'a authorities began a forceful implementation of a version of Islam that highlighted specific historical events and utilized certain Islamic norms and practices that were increasingly rejected by most Iranians. Today, Iran stands at a crossroads of tradition and modernity; Islamic principles and secularism; collectivity or individualism; and materialism and spirituality. As Iran encounters these predicaments, the ethical ground for right and wrong has become increasingly blurred, and the judgment of that which is *hasan* (good) and *qabīh* (bad) uncertain. *Hasan* is subdivided into three forms of action, *mubāh* (permissible), *mandūb ilayh* (deserving of praise), and *wājib* (obligatory). Each form of *hasan* is based on religious and traditional values, yet they are being reshaped by Iranians as they look for alternatives.

To understand the ethical values upheld in music-making, an examination of what beauty signifies is essential. In Islamic tradition beauty is ultimately an attribute of Allāh. The following section addresses the theological and ontological understanding of beauty. Beauty is discussed by al-Fārābī to be *al-baha'* (brilliance) and *al-zina* (splendor) of the Beloved (Kemal 1996:21).

At its core, beauty calls for an ontological study that stresses the perfection of the soul and the union with the Divine.

### 1.3 THE METAPHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE ON BEAUTY

Islamic metaphysics is originally tied to the reception, interpretation and transformation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. In *Kitāb fī l-falsafa al-ūlā (Book on First Philosophy)*, Al-Kindī is mainly concerned with issues about God's unity and the creation of the universe. In Islamic tradition, metaphysics becomes a science of the divine being. Al-Fārābī's writings on metaphysics reflect on topics such as God's attributes, divine names and actions. He views metaphysics as a universal science of being *qua* beings, thus closely alienating Islam to metaphysics. Ibn Sīnā uses an epistemological understanding to conclude that metaphysics is the examination of the First Causes (used by Aristotle to examine how things in nature are caused and the way they exist as a chain back to their original source) and God. First Causes and God become the object of metaphysical inquiries. This form of philosophical theology is concerned with the existence of God and His attributes, human beings' destiny in the afterlife and providence. Ibn Sīnā intended "show that the philosophical world-view expressed in metaphysics is not contrary or alien to the Islamic one, and that it can provide rational access to some of the tenets of the Muslim creed" (Bertolacci 2018:Line 68).

Islamic metaphysics consists of a number of interconnected viewpoints. It began to flourish as the transformation and cultural integration of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (also his *Posterior Analytics* and *Categories*). In a way, it was marked by the transformation of Aristotelian metaphysics based on the Arabic-Persian cultural understanding with a strong Islamic influence. What made metaphysics unique in the Islamic world was the epistemological reflection that was placed on it, particularly by Ibn Sīnā. Metaphysics becomes a scientifically

oriented theological discourse that required rigorous investigation. The transformation of metaphysics, as a foreign discipline, “into a monotheistic social context, like the Islamic one, determines either the accordance or the antagonism between philosophical theology and revealed theology, or, in other words, between the quintessence of *falsafa* [philosophy], on the one hand, and the speculation of *kalām* [Islamic scholastic theology], on the other” (Bertolacci 2018:Line 103).

The concept of *jamāl* (beauty), of God and His Attributes is best represented in the Qur’ān and the actions of the Prophet. In most verses of the Qur’ān and the *ahādīth* (singular, *hadīth*), words relating to beauty are derived from the same Arabic root as “good”: *h-s-n*. *Hadīth* refers to collections of sayings, conduct and actions of the Prophet based on the accounts of his daily practice (Arabic, *sunna*). When asked by the angel Gabriel about his religious preaching, the Prophet provided three attributes: *islām* (submission), *īmān* (faith) and *ihsān* (acting according to what is beautiful). *Ihsān* is to “worship God as if you see Him, for even if you do not see Him, He sees you” (*Hadīth*: al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, Book 2, 48). *Islām*, *īmān* and *ihsān* are the links between ethics and ideals of beauty. The Qur’ān, as the inimitable proof of the Divine, is the prime source of beauty. Since the Qur’ān is proof of the Divine, it is then also evidence of the prime source of beauty. *Ihsān*, then, is the manifestation of beauty based on ethical values. The language of the Qur’ān conveys a form of beauty that Muslim scholars unanimously consider to be a *mu’jiza* (miracle; compare *karāmāt*, miracles of saints). Besides the Divine revelation of the Qur’ān and its majestic language, its beauty centers on how an *ummī* (illiterate) shepherd becomes the Messenger of Allāh. The beauty of the Qur’ān centers on its Divine revelation to the Prophet, yet it is also based on an exquisite poetic language of desire and gratification. In an authentic *hadīth*, the Prophet is known to have spoken about gratification and

beauty: *laysa min-nā man lam yataghanna bi-l-Qur'ān* (nobody escapes the pleasure of the Qur'ān). The beauty of the Qur'ān is viewed by Muslims as the quintessential aspect of Islam: the recitation of its verses evokes strong emotions in the believers, and even generates a state of ecstasy for some devotees.

The Qur'ān frequently addresses the beauty in Allāh's creation. Many of the *ulamā'* speak about beauty based on the Qur'ān's ascription of *al-asmā' al-husnā* (the most beautiful names) of Allāh (see *Sūrah*, 7:180; 17:110; 20:8 and 59: 24). They assert that Allāh has ninety-nine names attributed to Him in the Qur'ān. The names are divided into two major groupings, *lutf* (kindness) referring to the gentleness and kindness of Allāh, and *qahr* (strictness) illustrating His firmness (the two opposing aspects of God's appeal in relation to His Creation). Two of the names associated with *lutf* are *rahman* (mercy) and *muhyī* (life-giver); the gentleness of Allāh provides a connection for the believer to the divine—He loves all. Names of Allāh that are associated with *qahr* can be *'adl* (justice) or *ghadab* (wrath), which are supposed to evoke fear in individuals so that they avoid acts of immorality. The two opposing dimensions of Allāh's names are also known as *jamāl* (the gentle side) and *jalāl* (majesty; the severity of God). In the eighth book of *Kitāb al-Shifā, On Knowing the Principle of All Existence and On Knowing His Attributes*, Ibn Sīnā states that “His positive and negative attributes do not necessitate multiplicity in His essence; that to Him belong the most tremendous splendor, the loftiest majesty, and infinite glory” (Murata 2017:17). Thus, both *jamāl* and *jalāl* present the beautiful essence of Allāh, yet the gentle aspect of beauty is the basis of contemplation for Islamic philosophers.

The categorical definition of beauty by the *ulamā'* takes on a theological perspective; eastern Islamic philosophers, however, were more interested in the ontological understanding of



*jamāl*. The point of departure for the philosophers is that *jamāl* and human beings share an identical character, based on the mutual relationship between the Divine and the human soul. Lotfī would often say: *jamāl* is within; it is the kindling of *‘ishq* in one’s soul. As Rūmī states, one is born with such love. . .we need to find it to rekindle such beauty.” The soul that sets out on the quest for its higher origin in the realm of true beauty—in mystic views the soul is set to return to its origin (that is the reason death is often celebrated as one’s return to the origin or Creator, in some cases referred to as *pārvāz-e malākoṭī* [sanctified ascent]). The soul needs to be disciplined to enable the ascension towards Allāh. This journey is similar to the steps the Prophet took in his *mi‘rāj* to the heavens. Muslims believe that *al-‘Isrā’ wal-Mi‘rāj* refers to the physical and spiritual two-part night journey of the Prophet to the heavens, where he came face-to-face with Allāh. The Prophet was in union with his Creator. The journey to ascend towards God takes place in steps: each stage requires the following of ethical principles that will bring individuals closer to divine beauty.

Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī do not consider beauty to be a means to an end. In regard to art, this would mean that an artwork is produced to convey a message about morality and the truth as it educates the public. The beauty of the artwork is to create an awareness that appeals to human sensibility, yet aims to elevate the soul to a higher status. For most Islamic philosophers

the role and function of beauty [is found] in the noetic development of the individual. This involves...a process whereby an individual encounters a beautiful object, resulting in a subsequent correspondence between the soul of the knower and the object known. This correspondence in turn allows the individual to recognize the beauty of the intelligible world. (Hughes 2004:161)

The majority of Islamic philosophers believe that beauty is experienced in earthly or physical entities that are tangible, as well as in a divine form of beauty founded in the Beloved. Physical

beauty serves as a vehicle to achieve what is considered good, inciting a journey towards the Beloved as one gains adequate knowledge and awareness on the quest for the *murād*. Experience of physical beauty needs to exhibit the right intentions and have the appropriate purpose. For instance, poetics is considered to be a pragmatic and political instrument of communication that “demonstrated truths of philosophy to the populace, whose intellectual abilities were presumed to be limited” (Murata 2017:13). Beauty in poetry is presented through the knowledge it provides for the public. In addition, poetry is thought to be “the expression of spiritual truth, from one who has experienced this truth and who possesses a harmonious nature (*tab-i mawzūn*), expounded for those who also possess such a nature” (Nasr 1987:93).

In short, *jamāl* in the work of art is the endless search for *al-haqq*, a quest for the Divine splendor, the desire and the mission of the lover (*‘āshiq*) to become one with the *murād*. Lotfī distinguished earthly beauty—achieved through the “proper” practice of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*—from the ultimate goal of music-making, “becoming one with the universe or Divine beauty.” He would say: “*zībā’ī* is a quest, a journey that moves one towards the pure beauty and splendor of the universe.” The discussion of *jamāl*—the journey towards Allāh—is based on the knowledge and awareness gained of the Islamic, mystic and traditional values, where physical beauty becomes an instrument to attain divine beauty. For Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, beauty also comprises pragmatic and political aspects that serve as an instrument of communication and the demonstration of the truth. Most of the discussions about beauty center on rhetoric and poetics founded on Aristotle’s logical corpus, the *Organon*. Ideals of beauty are elaborated based on linguistic components and cognitive functions of rhetorical, poetic and political language. Rhetoric and poetics are viewed as methods for producing a certain state of belief in the audience. To a large part, the instructional component of rhetoric and poetics is stressed due to

the belief that the public is incapable of grasping the nuances of issues, hence the responsibility of philosophers to contemplate and examine the problems at hand.

#### 1.4 THE LOGIC AND POLITICS OF BEAUTY

In *The Canons of the Art of Poetry*, al-Fārābī states that poetry is designed to register the “imitation of the object” in the mind of the hearer (Arberry 1938). In *Ihsā’ l- ulūm*, al-Fārābī asserts,

When we hear poetic discourses, something happens to us; I mean, through the imaginative creation (*takhyīl*) which takes place in our souls through them [which is] similar to what happens when we observe an object resembling another which we loathe. For then we right away imagine this object to be something we loathe, and our spirit feels repelled from it, and thus we avoid it, even if we are certain that it is not in reality as it appears to us. (1953:21)

*Takhyīl* speaks to the ability of the imaginative faculty to inspire certain trains of thought that spur false perceptions of reality. They can also augment perceptions of reality. *Takhyīl* allows the mind to (re)conceptualize feelings and aspirations that are stimulated and come to life based on an imaginative understanding of the truth.

Al-Fārābī expounds his view of *takhyīl* when he compares the rational content with the reality of the poetic language. He states that *al-aqāwil ash-shi’riyyah* (poetic discourse) consists of language that can function to create deception about an event, characters or a circumstance (a thesis rooted in Platonic thinking). When a poem is recited, a listener is inspired by the words of each verse (an Aristotelian understanding).<sup>2</sup> As illustrated in the above quotation, poetic language creates *takhyīl* “which takes place in our souls” (1953:23). Al-Fārābī makes a distinction between the imaginative and the real. *Takhyīl* can be thought of as a painting of a tree

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<sup>2</sup> Aristotle’s poetics includes core concepts such as *mimesis* (imitation), *catharsis* (purification), *mythos* (plot), *ethos* (character), *lexis* (speech), *opsis* (spectacle) and *melos* (melody) that were contemplated and elaborated by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā.

(imaginative), and while it bears some resemblance to the tree (reality), the shadow only presents a perspective of the tree, but it can never be representative of the whole tree (the reality of the tree). *Takhyīl* will always have a partial reality; it is fractional to the truth. *Takhyīl* resembles the real, but never is the real. Therefore, it cannot augment the real, since it is only partial reality.

In *Kitāb al-Najāṭ*, Ibn Sīnā states that human beings, by virtue of their cognitive perception, benefit from “rational imagination” (*mufakkir*). Ibn Sīnā is concerned with imitation in the context of human reason. The “rational imagination” is a faculty that aims “to combine certain things in the faculty of representation, and so to separate some things from others as it chooses.” The faculty of representation “preserves what the *sensus communis* has received from the individual five senses, even in the absence of sensible objects” (trans. Ahmed 2012:31). While Ibn Sīnā claims that the imaginative power is part of the rational and cognitive faculty for humans, he also draws on the connection of *mutakhayyil* (imagination) to *mufakkir*. Humans and animals have a number of faculties in common including the sensitive imagination. Animals, much like humans, can remember, perceive and feel pleasure and pain; humans have the intellectual capacity to think rationally. Based on this view, Ibn Sīnā argues that *mutakhayyil* is part of the exercise of human reason. Pondering the ‘*ulamā*’s view on music, at the core of their argument is apprehension over human tendencies to *mutakhayyil*. However, Ibn Sīnā maintains that humans are not passive recipients of these stimuli. He states that humans demonstrate an “active intelligence,” which in the case of poetry is the ability to reason to create an “imaginative assent.”

Following Aristotle, Ibn Sīnā emphasizes that all thoughts are based on imagining. Thus, the use of *takhyīl* becomes inevitable in human experience. In poetry, the “imaginative assent” is a form of “compliance due to the wonder (*ta‘ajjub*) and pleasure (*ladhdha*) that are caused by the

utterance itself” (trans. Ahmed 2012:63). Poetry is productive in his sense. *Takhyīl* has the “image-making” or the imaginative component as opposed to a discursive and logical nature (Dahiyat 1974:34). Poetry has a pleasant and impassioned quality, as well as an “apodictic and ratiocinative” side (Dahiyat 1974:34). Ibn Sīnā asserts that imitations “possess an element of wonder that truth lacks” (trans. Ahmed 2012:63). *Ta’jīb* (arousal of wonder) brings together pleasure and bewilderment in poetic recitation. The amazement has to do both with the form of prosody and the vibrant representation of the event, character or circumstance. Although the imaginative assertion (*takhayyul*) instigated by *ta’jīb* is the crucial task of poetry, it also has “a rhetorical function as well, namely, the artful representation of truth” (Dahiyat 1974:63).

The simultaneous effects of pleasure and bewilderment closely relate to my experiences as an Iranian musician. I remember Lotfī explaining that certain *gūsheh-hā* (melodic and rhythmic pieces that are the building blocks of the *radīf*) present “profound delight, a joy that is inexplicable.” Yet, he also notes the perplexity and awe in the delight experienced. I often encounter the imaginative component of some of the *gūsheh*. For example, *sūz-o godāz* (a *gūsheh* in *āvāz-e Isfahān*) to me imparts a sorrow and the melancholia of an unfinished undertaking or a hope that was derailed, the burden of something unattainable yet within reach. For Lotfī, *sūz-o godāz* represents the burden of the failed aspiration of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the optimism that quickly vanished and the bloodshed which soon followed.

The construction of the categories and the interpretations of beauty by the three *ustādān* is based on their political judgment of contemporary Iran. At the same time, the construction of these categories and interpretations informs their political judgment. The discourse of the three master musicians continues the deliberation of ethical issues that have long preoccupied

philosophers in Iran and elsewhere in the Muslim world. Sālem spoke to the power music exerts in the public domain and the magnitude of how social life is affected by its cohesive force:

They [the Shī'a authorities] know how important music is to the people. I remember from the beginning of the revolution, they asked us to play certain music that they liked, asked poets to recite poems praising the revolution and its leader.... they made male-choirs sing "their kind of music." I even remember watching on Television, the minute [Āyatullāh Ruhollah Mūsavi] Khomeinī arrived in Tehran [he flew back to Iran on a chartered Air France plane on February 1, 1979 after 14 years in political exile] a youth-choir greeted him singing praise songs for him and the revolution.

Sālem's perception of music's power is similar to Ibn Sīnā's view on poetry as one of the most effective secular forces of social cohesion. Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā claim that the power and purpose of poetry is to bind individuals together in the community of the Virtuous City (Chapter Nine). Sālem is also addressing the way music's power binds a community together both socially and politically. The cohesive role of music is not a secret to the Shī'a authorities; their agenda has been to utilize music as long as it suits their desired political and social agenda. Sālem has increasingly taken on a political role by addressing the political and religious tensions with music that are endemic in today's Iran.

She also uses a demonstrative syllogism to advocate for her view of the good and beautiful in music:

I have often wondered, and have asked myself, if music is played to advance a political and religious agenda, then, music is not a threat to the ideals of individuals and the community. If music is not a threat to the core values of a group, then music ought to be good and pious.

The validity in Sālem's statement is based on the following propositions: "music is permissible to advance an agenda of the Shī'a authorities," "if music is permissible," then "music can be good and pious." Sālem is using a demonstrative syllogism, which al-Fārābī views as the most securely validated form of discourse. For al-Fārābī, a syllogism is initiated based on "well-

found[ed] premises and leads by a process of strict implication to true conclusions” (Kemal 1991:122). A demonstrative syllogism utilizes language to convey things as they are, instead of persuasion through rhetorical, dialectical or poetic means to advance an argument. For the Shī’a authorities, music is permissible as long as it advances their political and religious agenda. Then, logically their argument that music is a threat to the community is invalid, as Sālem demonstrates.

Al-Fārābī conceives of logic as a “universal grammar,” the guidelines for “correct reasoning in all languages” (Black 2002:110). In *Reminder of the Way to Happiness*, Al-Fārābī describes logic as opposed to grammar:<sup>3</sup>

Just as the art of grammar rectifies language so that nothing is expressed except by means of what is correct according to the custom of the speakers of the language, so too the art of logic rectifies the mind so that it only apprehends intellectually what is correct in all matters. And in general the relation of the art of grammar to expressions is analogous to the relation of the art of logic to intelligibles. (trans. Black 2002:110)

Language also plays a central role in the advancement of the agendas of political and religious institutions. Therefore, two central themes are woven together for al-Fārābī: logic and the nature of language, and political themes involving tensions between philosophy and religion. He views religion “as essentially the popular expression of philosophy communicated to the non-philosophical masses by prophets, who employ the two popular logical arts of rhetoric and poetics” (Black 2002:110). Al-Fārābī classifies five categories of residents of the virtuous city the second of these; *dhawū ‘l-alsina* (the expositors), includes the *mulahhinūn* (melodizers) as well as orators, poets, secretaries and upholders of religion. The first and highest category is that

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Fārābī believes that grammar and logic are separate forms of knowledge, yet essential in the affirmation of the validity of linguistic expression and the underlying content. He explains how the evolution of language culminates in the advancement of practical arts, philosophy and sciences.

of the philosophers. For al-Fārābī, logic is realized through the techniques of syllogism (based on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*), where claims to knowledge are produced through demonstration (showing the existence of "truth"). In his view logic conveys the true message through the medium of language, which is the principle aim of knowledge production and transmission by philosophers.

In addition to self-perfection, al-Fārābī believes that philosophers need to convey knowledge to others, following Plato in the *Republic*. In *Attainment of Happiness*, he states that "To be a truly perfect philosopher one has to possess both the theoretical sciences and the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of all others according to their capacity" (1969:43). What is vital (for instance, for the master musicians, religious leaders, and others in the second category) is the practical realization of the truths, the idea that one who holds knowledge (the philosopher) becomes a prophet and political leader. Therefore, the principal means of communicating the truth to the people is to persuade the members of the community to be virtuous and act justly. This form of persuasion is through the imaginative arts of rhetoric and poetics. In this way, "arts are for [al-Fārābī] an indispensable part of philosophy and a necessary complement to demonstrative science, just as religion is a necessary partner with philosophy in the formation of the ideal political state" (Black 2002:111).

The formation of an ideal state leads to al-Fārābī's perception that philosophers are obligated to assume political and religious leadership. In other words, philosophers are compelled to participate in public discourse, and become avid advocates for the truth in the public sphere. Al-Fārābī believes that human beings are by nature political animals, where their perfection necessitates living in a cohesive and organized community. He favors civic institutions and political organizations over family and communal ties. Al-Fārābī also speaks



about the vitality of a sustainable and virtuous community based on the plurality of civic, cultural and political institutions. Al-Fārābī asserts that philosophers are equipped with the knowledge, and therefore the responsibility, to create and shape political, religious and social discourse. Other members of society are given the task of interpreting and reflecting on philosophical discourse.

### 1.5 BEAUTY IN MOTION

In *The Virtuous City*, al-Fārābī states that imagination has the capability to stimulate human desire and emotions (including temperaments), enabling the body to spring into action (1985: 216–219). There is a connection between ‘*amal*’ (one of the three components of *akhlāq* according to al-Ghazālī) and al-Fārābī’s explanation of *muhākāt* (re-enacting) based on *takhyīl*. Action in Islamic ethics renders obedience to some of the requirements of the *sunna* (way of the Prophet). The human action evoked from listening to music is precisely where the three *ustādān* and ‘*ulamā*’ differ in their views. Lotfī explains that

music offers tranquility and serenity to individuals. It makes us behave in a compassionate way toward each other; music makes us come together and have empathy toward each other. That is precisely what takes place in my classes. Music invites us to conduct ourselves in a manner that is respectful to others and to ourselves. It opens a window to find a path to cultivate good deeds and improve our lives through actions that are honorable and worthy of humanity. (Interview conducted on June 9, 2013)

Lotfī’s interpretation of what kind of action is invoked for the listener contrasts with that of many ‘*ulamā*’, who associate music with illicit sexual activity and wine drinking. *Ustādān* perceptions of the action resulting from music-making are more in line with the mystical views. For mystics, *samā*’ is reflection on Allāh through melodies and recitations—the manifestation of the Ultimate Beauty through music, poetry and trance-like ecstasy. Lotfī maintains that “music reveals what is in the heart, and *rūh-ro be wajd mīyārad* [offers the soul the divine joy and

ecstasy].” He used *wajd* (trance-like state of ecstasy) to highlight the transcendent journey that *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* invites individuals to take.

It is critical to consider *muhākāt* in the context of the individual’s autonomy. Individuals have the ability to choose what is deemed suitable, provided they are guided by knowledge and rational thinking. Lotfī often stressed in his music classes that *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* requires a deep reflection and contemplation to cultivate virtue and character, which are required beyond the development of musicianship. Lotfī’s classes developed the students’ knowledge and awareness of character, so that they might gain a deeper understanding and reflect on what it means to attain goodness. The deeper one’s understanding, the less chance of being allured by imaginative illusions. Lotfī often mentioned that

to better understand *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* one must acquire a deep knowledge of Iranian literature and poetry...to understand what Rumi and Hafez [two of Iran’s iconic poets] mean when they speak about *sāqī* [wine bearer], *hāl* (disposition), or the *ma ‘shūq* (Beloved). How is it that Rumi’s words still lift us and educate us after centuries? A competent musician would understand poetry and literature...and learn to reflect deeply on these topics. (Interview conducted on June 9, 2013)

He usually implemented his vision in his classes. For instance, I learned and recited relevant poetry to the *radīf*, not only for the beauty and awe the verses produce, but to understand and contemplate the connections made by the poets to Islam, mysticism and tradition.

For al-Ghazālī, one of the major components of *akhlāq* is *hāl* (disposition). He believes that an individual’s disposition is unchangeable, yet can be nourished and refined. He situates the purification of *hāl* in the prevalence of human reasoning. While al-Ghazālī believes that the possibility for *hāl* to significantly transform is beyond human capability, he maintains that gradual change can be achieved through *riyāda* (discipline) and *mujāhida* (earnest effort). For him, human *najāt* (salvation) and the attainment of *sa ‘āda* (happiness) is achieved through

*riyāda* and *mujāhida*. The demanding daily training in the close relationship between *ustād* and pupils helps inculcate and develop the practice of *riyāda* and *mujāhida*. The concept of *riyāzat* (Farsi for Arabic *riyāda*) is often utilized by *ustādān* to make clear the hard work and effort needed in music training. *Riyāzat* is a manner, a form of behavior based on *akhlāq* that sets out a set of principles to refine pupils' *hāl*. *Riyāzat* as daily practice through the students' close connection to *ustādān* is a process that constantly redefines the pupil's attitude, experience and judgment toward the world (further discussed in Chapter Three).

The disciples do not only become musicians, but also *haqīqat-jūyān* (truth-seekers) of a kind of beauty that is beyond the mundane and ordinary—the Ultimate Beauty of Allāh. Lotfī states that the relationship that develops between the student and master musicians “enables the disciple to seek the truth beyond worldly desire and pleasure.” He highlights how *riyāzat* in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* refines the individual's disposition. His understanding of *hāl* closely follows al-Ghazālī's grouping of humans: those who cannot distinguish *al-haqq* (truth) from *al-bātil* (folly) or *al-jamīl* (the beautiful) from *al-qabīh* (the base); those who lack *i'tiqād* (conviction) and admire pleasure and cannot control desire. Judging from Lotfī's statement, the “authentic” practice of music-making is a journey that attempts to reach a more complete understanding of *al-haqq* and *al-jamāl*. It strives to develop *i'tiqād*, and distance itself from a kind of pleasure concerned with materiality. For Lotfī, this view becomes the basis of “good music.”

A major difficulty in today's Iran is deciding what constitutes *sa'āda* considering the rapid transformation in social practices and cultural norms. If the first decade following the 1979 Revolution brought a revitalization of traditional values, the past two decades have seen the gradual fragmentation of social ideals. Tradition does not necessarily offer a pathway to *sa'āda*, but conventional understandings maintain the normative practices that codify what a good life

means in Iranian society. The cultural and historical practices are like an anchor that impedes the flow of ambivalence and social breakdown. *Sa'āda* finds its significance and vitality in the cultural beliefs and social norms. Considering the swift transformations taking place in Iran, many find themselves trapped between two worlds, wondering whether (and to what degree) *sa'āda* translates to materiality or spirituality.

## PART I: THE BEAUTY OF AKHLĀQ IN MŪSĪQĪ-E SONNĀTĪ

This part examines how Lotfī's and Jankouk's teachings of the *radīf* render a viewpoint on beauty formed through their understandings of *akhlāq*. I focus mainly on the two *ustādān*'s intimate music classes to illustrate how *akhlāq* are shaped and cultivated to elucidate what defines *suitable* and *good*. The teaching of Lotfī and Jankouk involves a multifaceted consideration of *akhlāq* that encompasses the musical features of the *radīf* (see Chapter Two), as well as ethical norms and expectations associated with learning the repertoire (see Chapter Three). Jankouk regards the *radīf* as the source of *qā'ida va qānūn* (guidelines and rules) for musicians. The Second Chapter, "Unveiling *Akhlāq* in *Mūsīqī-e Sonnatī*," is a musical analysis of a number of *gūsheh-hā* (melodic and rhythmic pieces that are the building blocks of the *radīf*; singular, *gūsheh*) to reveal how *akhlāq* are associated with the repertoire. As a modal system, the *radīf* consists of complex subsets of melodic and rhythmic patterns called *dastgāh* and *āvāz*. *Akhlāq* are conveyed by the poems, narratives, events or characters that Lotfī and Jankouk discuss as they teach the *radīf*. The ethical connotations of the poems or the stories associated with certain *gūsheh-hā* confer a religio-ethical conviction of *beauty*. The connection of the *radīf* to poetry is significant in teaching and the transmission of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. It is also essential as the foundation for ethical deliberations that shape the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. To a large extent, the advancements of *akhlāq* in Iran have been through Persian literature, poetry, narratives, *hekāyat* (anecdote), *pand* (piece of guidance) and *nasīhat* (counsel or advice). Narrators, novelists and poets have used imaginative ideas, rational discourse or poetic language to offer perspectives on *akhlāq* based on religious convictions, social norms, historical awareness and cultural values.

The Second Chapter also examines the ethical implication of what Lotfī and Jankouk view as the “proper” methods of performing the *radīf*. To comprehend and appreciate the goodness of the *radīf*, a disciple is expected to exhibit self-discipline and genuine desire to acquire the “correct” and “accepted” musical knowledge. Jankouk emphasizes that “to have *dark-e bālā* [high comprehension] of the *radīf*, a disciple needs years of guidance from an *ustād*.” He uses a Farsi expression to refer to the earnest effort essential in the development of students: “*dūd-e chīrāq khwūrdan* (to burn the midnight lamp (or oil). To inhale the smoke coming from an oil lamp” (‘Haim 1956:216). Jankouk often refers to his years of tutelage under the celebrated *tār* master, ‘Alī-Akbar Shahnāzī (1897-1985), to give legitimacy to his rendition of the *radīf*. His interpretation of the *radīf* presents a unique understanding of beauty that comprises all aspects of *tār* playing (from tuning the *tār*, to how melodic sequences of *gūsheh-hā* are played). Jankouk’s rendition of the *radīf* demarcates what he deems good, and he regards other interpretations of the repertoire as unacceptable. For Jankouk the learning of the *radīf* requires the sincere and serious acquisition of knowledge, only possible through the disciple’s self-sacrifice by developing *riyāda* (discipline) and devoting him/herself to *pūr kārī* (hard work). Exhibiting a high-level of self-discipline necessitates a disciple’s dedication and commitment to an *ustād*’s interpretation of the *radīf*. For the students, it means a willingness to commit to an *ustād*’s worldviews.

The Third Chapter, “*Akhlāq* and the Experience of the *Radīf*,” explores the ethical practices that have conventionally governed the relationship between an *ustād* and the disciple. I begin by explaining how *adab* (etiquette, virtues or civility) becomes central in the rapport of *ustād* and *shāgird* (disciple). *Adab* prescribes cultural, traditional and Islamic etiquette. Good manners, morals or human decency implicate certain codes of behavior and conduct rooted in

social norms and Islamic values. *Adab* presents a set of rules to demonstrate suitable behavior, by acquiring the aptitude for sound judgment of proper actions. For Lotfī and Jankouk, *adab* underlines the following musical etiquette: a) the attitude and manner of past *ustādān*, conveyed to students as venerated moral lessons; and b) the expectations of appropriate conduct on the part of a *shāgird*. The examination of *adab* allows for a reflection on the cultural and ethical weight the label of *ustād* carries for a master musician. As a prominent cultural status bestowed on few individuals, an *ustād* is expected to hold exceptional knowledge not just as a proprietor of musical tradition, but as someone with admirable awareness of the historical, religious and ethical issues at hand.

Chapter Three also focuses on Lotfī's holistic reflection on the *radīf*, what he considers the purpose, preparation and order of *gūsheh-hā*. Lotfī believes that each *gūsheh* needs specific attention, treatment and proper sequencing to produce the emotional affect needed to make the listener(s) embark or continue on a spiritual journey. *Gūsheh-hā* have a specific ordering that provide each *dastgāh* or *āvāz* with their unique itineraries to attain *sa'āda* ("happiness"). Lotfī refers to the spiritual journey of each *dastgāh* and *āvāz* as *sair va sulūk* (journey and seeking the path). *Sair* (journey) derives from the same Arabic root as *sīyar* (plural, *sīrat*), which means virtue or morals. It is common in Farsi to say *sīratī pāyambar* (the way of the Prophet), or read literature that states: *shāhi nīkū sīyar* (virtuous king). *Sulūk* means to proceed or follow a certain path, a reference to manners by which one seeks the truth. Lotfī spent a considerable amount of time discussing how each *gūsheh* requires an interpretation and preparation in order to provide a specific frame of mind to perform. The main purpose of each *dastgāh*, *āvāz* and *gūsheh*, for Lotfī, is to grant the listener the means to take on the spiritual journey. *Sair va sulūk* enables

musicians to think of the *radīf* as a path for a transcendent excursion toward *sa'āda*. *Gūsheh-hā* become the building blocks of a journey to attain happiness.

The examination of the *ab'ād-e akhlāqī* (ethical dimensions) in the *radīf*—the musical features and the non-musical aspects—presents three interrelated sets of principles that form the basis of ethics in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*: Islamic revelations, *'irfān* (gnosis) and *sonnat* (tradition). For Lotfī and Jankouk, any understanding of *akhlāq*, explicitly or implicitly, is influenced by the coexistence of each of the *ab'ād-e akhlāqī*. For example, when discussing the mystical elements of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, inevitably its values are tied to Islam and traditional beliefs. Lotfī expands on the coexistence by stating that

*mūsīqī-e sonnātī* and poetry are so interrelated, one cannot exist without the other. Let's put aside the enjoyment a recitation or singing of a Rūmī poem would bring. Each verse teaches us how to think, self-reflect and develop a critical view of our world. Rūmī is our ethical, social and cultural guidance, whose presence becomes even more vivid through music. People think when I recite a poem by Rūmī my interests are in how each verse fits with my music. But my aim is to ultimately resonate Rūmī's message of peace, love and self-evaluation. There is a sacredness and mystical message in poetry that is kept alive and given wings through music. At the same time, music becomes purified through the spiritual and *mūqaddas* [holy] significance the poems carry. (Interview conducted on July 23, 2012)

Poetry clearly links the three *ab'ād-e akhlāqī* together. A poet like Rūmī simultaneously introduces the reader to mystical views, Islamic asceticism and traditional values. For Rūmī, the human soul belongs to the spiritual world and is trapped inside the physical body waiting to be reunited when the soul is merged with Allāh (Donaldson 1953). Reunification is only achieved when self-desire is replaced by devotion to divine love, where human love is merely a small step—albeit the first step—in this journey. This form of thinking by Rūmī is what Lotfī's music students learned. He was adamant that music needs to be the voice of tranquility and love, which is the only path to attaining *sa'āda*.



Lotfī's classes, which often began with a recitation of a poem, set the stage for an in-depth analysis of the ethical expectations that a music student needs to acquire. He emphasized that "becoming a musician is a practice of reexamining the self." While initially it was difficult to understand what the "reexamination of the self" meant, it soon became clear that it is a never-ending journey to a better understanding of how beauty and the good are perceived. Lotfī taught that the traditional values passed on to him by his *ustādān* encompassed a mystical element that connects the musician to a higher state. He would say, "*mūsīqī samt-e haqq raftan hast*" (music offers a path to seek the truth, or Allāh). To take on this path, Lotfī believed, "*az del va jān bāyad māya guzash*" (a form of self-sacrifice is needed in order to devote one's heart and soul to a matter). Lotfī's classes were always an invitation to learn restraint and dedication, while recognizing the majestic act of music-making.

Lotfī's and Jankouk's views on *ab'ād-e akhlāqī* are based on their unique judgment of beauty expressed through mystical and religious beliefs. For them, the *radīf* embodies sets of principles that are shaped by Islamic revelations, *'irfān* and *sonnat*. Having said that, not every *ustād* exhibits the same level of commitment to *ab'ād-e akhlāqī* in teaching the *radīf*. During my classes with Alizādeh and Talā'ī, a limited time was dedicated to talking about *akhlāq*. This is not an indication that *akhlāq* were not important to Alizādeh and Talā'ī. Certain ethical beliefs—for example, the *radīf* requiring the sincere and serious acquisition of knowledge, self-sacrifice, *riyāda*, *pūr kārī*, and *adab*—were generally agreed upon, and implemented by all my master teachers. Alizādeh and Talā'ī seem to think of the ethical implications of the *radīf* as inherent and not needing much explanation or elaboration. They believed *shāgird-ha* should know, practice and conform to the proper etiquette and virtues before attending classes. For Alizādeh and Talā'ī, *akhlāq* is more personal and subjective, whereas Lotfī and Jankouk viewed the

learning and practicing of ethics central to the rapport of *ustād* and *shāgird*. An *ustād*, as an individual, has distinctive ways of conveying his/her beliefs concerning *akhlāq*. Alizādeh and Talā’ī choose to pay limited attention to *akhlāq* in their classroom, but ethics becomes an immense part of their public discussion of music-making (Part II).

As Lotfī introduced me to the *ab ‘ād-e akhlāqī* in the *radīf*, I began to question the relationship and co-existence of these ethical dimensions. The interwoven nature of Islamic revelations, *‘irfān* and *sonnat* in the poems and some of Lotfī’s narratives made it difficult to clearly distinguish each dimension’s independence. Yet, each story or poem conveyed by Lotfī had a distinct religious, mystical and traditional content. Walter Benjamin’s concept of “constellation” that expresses the relationship between ideas, objects or concepts (1977) is helpful in exploring the interrelations between Islamic revelations, *‘irfān* and *sonnat*. While Benjamin’s and Theodor Adorno’s uses of the term *constellation* differ slightly, they both intend for it to mean objects or concepts in an array or juxtaposition, instead of a hierarchy or sequenced order. Walter Benjamin, in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, wrote that “ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars” (1977:34). The *ab ‘ād-e akhlāqī* in the *radīf* co-function as an array of juxtaposed ideas in which no one ethical dimension takes precedence over another. Benjamin acknowledges that ideas are recognizable much like a group of conspicuous stars. Ideas enable us to perceive the relationships between concepts. Regardless of how one views a group of conspicuous stars, they still exist overhead. Moreover, a certain image or idea is drawn from the position, size or brightness of the stars. Yet, the relationship given to the constellation is embedded in tradition, history, cultural norms and myth.

Knowledge of the size and brightness of stars is objective and factual; however, human perception of history, culture and myth is subjective and interpretive. A constellation is at the

same time based on the factual understanding of the world and subjective perceptions of reality. *Ab 'ād-e akhlāqī* in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* take on a similar form. For instance, Lotfī's understanding of Islamic doctrine is based on Iranian history, cultural practices and social obligations. While there needs to be an acknowledgement of what is considered as the objective truth about Islam (the Qur'ān or the way of the Prophet), Lotfī becomes an agent whose reinterpretation of Islamic viewpoints on music is based on his understanding of religion, history and culture. *Ab 'ād-e akhlāqī* are arrangements of ideas that are juxtaposed in positions depending on an *ustād's* understanding of each ethical dimension. For Benjamin, constellation is also a way to pattern phenomena by concepts, and at the same time highlight the characteristics of the patterning process. Hence, for Benjamin, "ideas are timeless constellations, and by virtue of the elements being seen as points in such constellations, phenomena are subdivided and redeemed" (1977:34). The co-existence of *ab 'ād-e akhlāqī* shifts the perception from one to another, while preserving both their distinctive integrity, and at the same time, their mutuality. *Ab 'ād-e akhlāqī* work together to give the *radīf* a meaning, as they collectively shape the judgment of beauty in the musical repertory they also preserve their own existence.

Learning one of the poems prevalent with *gūsheh-e kereshmeh* in *dastgāh-e shūr* exhibits the interconnection of *ab 'ād-e akhlāqī* in the *radīf*. Music students are taught by their teachers to recite: *nadānamat be haqīqat, ke dar jahān be ke mānī* (I do not regard you as the truth, since you last for no one). For instance, *haqīqat* (truth) has mystical and religious connotations. In *'īrfān*, *haqīqat* is founded on an individual's desire to relinquish earthly desires; the renouncing of worldly appeal ultimately presents one with the path to seek the truth in Allāh. The acknowledgment of Divine love is achieved based on conformity to Shī'a ideology. Without an Islamic understanding *haqīqat* is meaningless. In addition, *sonnat* plays a vital factor. For many

Iranians, relinquishing earthly desire equates to becoming a *darvīsh*. *Darvīsh* is associated with modesty and humility. *Haqīqat* is understood based on the interwoven nature of Islamic ideology, *irfān* and *sonnat*. However, each *ab'ād-e akhlāqī* is also autonomous by offering a specific meaning of *haqīqat*.

Furthermore, Benjamin's constellation is a move from individual instances to a totality: "every idea is a sun and is related to other ideas just as suns are related to each other. The harmonious relationship between such essences is what constitutes truth" (1977:37). This would indicate that an *ustād*'s understanding of *akhlāq* (for example, the concept of *haqīqat*) is subjective and given meaning based on individual beliefs and social norms. However, *haqīqat* is anchored in Islamic revelations, *irfān* and *sonnat* that offer a collective appreciation of "truth," regardless of personal biases. Each view on *haqīqat* presents a master musician's unique standpoint about the truth. However, each perception of *haqīqat* is based on the history and cultural significance of *akhlāq* in Iran. The historical and cultural background creates a harmonious relationship between the meanings and perception of *haqīqat* conveyed by master musicians.

## CHAPTER TWO: UNVEILING AKHLĀQ IN MŪSĪQĪ-E SONNATĪ

This chapter examines how the teaching of certain *gūsheh-ha* illustrates *akhlāq*'s connection to the *radīf*. During my music classes, Lotfī and Jankouk discussed *akhlāq* in great detail through poems, narratives or characters. Each story or poem I learned proclaimed a religio-ethical view of beauty. The connection to poetry, as a vital medium to convey *akhlāq* in the *radīf*, was central to Lotfī's and Jankouk's teaching. The narratives by Lotfī and Jankouk also offered evaluation of *akhlāq* based on Islamic revelations, *'irfān* and *sonnat*. This chapter also explores the ethical implication of what Lotfī and Jankouk considered as the "proper" ways and means of performing the *radīf*. To understand and recognize the value of the *radīf*, a disciple needed to exhibit self-discipline, self-sacrifice, *riyāda*, and *pūr kārī* in order to obtain the "suitable" and "accurate" musical knowledge.

My earliest exposure to *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* was listening to my grandfather play the *setār*. The revolution had taken place in Iran, and as a child there was no opportunity to see public music. My grandfather began to teach me short segments of a number of well-known *gūsheh-hā* (known by some as *shāh* [king] *gūsheh*) on his *setār* without elaborating much about their names and functions. In fact, he hardly taught me a complete *gūsheh*. He was mainly interested in how I engaged with the music, wanting me to build a pleasant rapport with my instrument. While being reluctant to teach the entirety of a *gūsheh*, he was eager to introduce me to a poem, which years later I learned to be associated with *gūsheh-e kereshmeh* in *dastgāh-e shūr*. My grandfather wanted me to recite the poem with him as he played his *setār*: *nadānamat be haqīqat, ke dar jahān be ke mānī* (I do not regard you as the truth, since you last for no one). I began to think about the poem, and wonder what *haqīqat* or *mānī* meant. As I struggled to gain a deeper

understanding of this poem, I realized an important aspect of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is tied to something that transcends the everyday understanding of my lifeworld.

As I contemplated the meetings of *haqīqat* or *mānī*, I felt that *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* embodied certain principles and practices, which were hard for me to decipher as a child. This was partly because developing an in-depth knowledge of Islamic beliefs and mystic practices is difficult at a young age. It was also because I had immigrated to Canada soon after my preliminary lessons with my grandfather with no *ustād* to guide me. I felt the *radīf* had guidelines and values that need explaining. The ideals and norms of the *radīf* remained nebulous until I met Lotfī in 1997. Before meeting him for the first time, I had seen his pictures and heard most of his recordings. During my first meeting with Lotfī (as I had anticipated), his aura presented a tranquil and mystical feeling all around him. It was apparent he had a message of affection, devotion and serenity that was beautifully expressed through his *tār* and *setār* playing. He wore white (a symbol of purity and simplicity), and sat on the floor (a sign of introspection and modesty) in a corner of the room. His students gathered around him in a circle, creating an intimate and collective synergy. Lotfī viewed each music class as a *dīdār* (encounter, or meeting); there was a sense of togetherness that allowed the students to feel the intimacy of the collective. Lotfī believed that *dīdār* permits “*del-hā bā ham nazdīk shavānd*” (hearts to become closer to each other).

Lotfī’s teaching of the *radīf* took surprising turns, often presenting his students with narratives that situated each *gūsheh* within relevant sociocultural contexts that were imbued with religio-ethical connotations. Even before classes began, the circular seating arrangement on the floor provided an intimate and mystical ambiance for the disciples. For Lotfī, the spatial configurations were vital, cultivating empathy and care for one another. He spoke of his class as

a place where “our eyes and bodies face each other, enabling us to become more attentive to one another. It is by being attentive that *muhabbat* [love and affection] becomes the vehicle to find the path of *mahbūb* [Beloved].” Lotfī’s teaching was as much about righteousness and devotion as it was about music. Music lessons were *akhlāq* discussions, as the ethical considerations shaped the experience of music-making.

Below, I outline some of the ways Lotfī incorporated poems and narratives in his teaching of *gūsheh-hā* as he unearthed the *ab ‘ād-e akhlāqī* for his disciples. *Neyshābūrak*, in *dastgāh-e māhūr* and *dastgāh-e navā*, is an example of a *gūsheh* that embodies Islamic revelations, *‘irfān* and *sonnat*. This *gūsheh* is based on an account of how pilgrims were embraced upon their return from pilgrimage. When Lotfī taught me *neyshābūrak* for the first time, he began by speaking about his first exposure to this *gūsheh*:

I first learned *neyshābūrak* from a *darvīsh*, who was a close friend of my brother. My brother was an accomplished *tār* player. He used to get together with a *darvīsh* named Hossain Khān, who had a lovely voice but did not seem very knowledgeable of the *radīf*. In one of the gatherings, Hossain Khān overheard from my brother that I had begun to play the *tār*. Hossain Khān suddenly asked whether I knew anything about *gūsheh-e neyshābūrak*? I said, I am seven-years-old, and just started to learn the *tār*. Hossain Khān said maybe you mean you are just beginning to learn the techniques of the *tār*, because *mūsīqī-ye to rūh va ravān-e to hast* [music is in your blood and essence]. Then Hossain Khān recited *bār Muhammad va ‘ūl-e Muhammad salawāt* [send blessing onto Muhammad and his family] in *neyshābūrak*. I quickly realized that while I do not know how to play *neyshābūrak* on my *tār*, or even how sending blessing to the Prophet had anything to do with music, the *āhang* [the song] of *neyshābūrak* was very familiar. Hossain Khān’s recitation was not my first experience of *neyshābūrak*...He helped me put a name to a recognizable *āhang*; Hossain Khān was right, I had heard *neyshābūrak* in the bazar by other *darāvīsh* outside the local mosque, greeting some pilgrims upon their return to their houses, and in Sufi gatherings. (Interview conducted on July 12, 2001)

Hearing Lotfī speak about *neyshābūrak* made me even more eager to learn this *gūsheh*, and to acquire more knowledge of how *gūsheh-hā* correspond to religious rituals and mystical practices. More significantly, I asked myself what are the meanings and inferences when an *ustād*

elaborates on *neyshābūrak*. For Lotfī, judgment of beauty in *neyshābūrak* is formed through his memories, commitment to the legacies and perspectives of those who taught him this *gūsheh*, and obligation to the legitimacy and “proper” representation of the *radīf*, while considering the socio-cultural and political implications of today’s Iran.

The main melodic motif for *neyshābūrak* is:



Example 1. *Neyshābūrak* based on Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version (During 2006:228)

*Neyshābūrak* is recognized by the above melodic contour, a descending phrase that covers a range of four notes. Before playing *neyshābūrak*, Lotfī spoke about how its melodic contour is based on a vocal style known as *chāwūshī*. Lotfī spoke of *neyshābūrak*’s Shī’a connotation:

In the old days, when pilgrims came back from pilgrimage, a person with a beautiful voice would walk out of the village towards the coming caravan of pilgrims to greet them. As the *chāwūsh* walked toward the pilgrims, he would repeatedly chant: *bār Muhammad va ‘ūl-e Muhammad salawāt*. This style of singing is known as *chāwūshī*. (Interview conducted on August 5, 2012)

A *chāwūsh* is a messenger or announcer with a pleasant voice that carries well. *Chāwūshī* is the vocal genre of *chāwūsh* singers, prevalent in various parts of Iran. *Chāwūshī* in the *radīf* incorporates an Islamic phrase chanted by a man, announcing the return of the pilgrims: “*bār Muhammad va ‘ūl-e Muhammad salawāt* (send blessing onto Muhammad and his family).” This



phrase instructs those who come to greet the pilgrims to respond by uttering *salawāt*, an Arabic phrase recited during prayer and when hearing the name of the Prophet. The Qur’ān (verse 56 of Sūrat al-Ahzāb) and numerous *ahadīth* (“traditions,” singular, *hadīth*) stress the articulation of *salawāt*. This form of call and response is continually repeated between the *chāwūsh* and the crowds that gather to welcome the pilgrims.

The account of *gūsheh-e neyshābūrak* brings forth Islamic viewpoints (the importance of pilgrimage as a mandatory religious duty, and the respect given to the Prophet); *irfān* (pilgrimage as a spiritual journey of the body and the soul towards the Beloved, Allāh); and *sonnat* (the socio-cultural recognition and high status reserved for pilgrims). An *ustād* demonstrates *neyshābūrak* for pupils by reciting the Islamic phrase, playing the melodic motif and explaining the socio-cultural relevance of *chāwūsh*.

The renowned contemporary Iranian poet, Mehdi Akhavān-Sāles (1929 – 1990), one of the pioneers of modern (free verse) poetry, has a slightly different account but the religious implications remain:

*Chāwūshī* is part of our music... In the old days, *chāwūsh* were people who went around and chanted *bār Muhammad va ‘ūl-e Muhammad salawāt*. It was an appeal to convince those unsure of taking the pilgrimage.... Once they heard the *chāwūshī*, they were convinced to take on the long and strenuous journey to Mecca and Karbala, which in the old days took a considerable amount of time and was very expensive.<sup>4</sup>

*Neyshābūrak* preserves a socio-historical view of Iran that embodies Islamic values as a vital component of its cultural rite. Pilgrimage to Mecca needs to be a part of any devoted Muslim’s life at least once, unless constrained by health issues or financial matters. The narrative of *chāwūshī* upholds the ideals celebrated as appropriate and pious in Islam.

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<sup>4</sup> My translation of an interview conducted in London: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b27VBLdMgkU>

*Neyshābūrak* is not the only *gūsheh* in the *radīf* with an elaborate religious and mystical meaning. *Kereshmeh* is a famous *gūsheh* played in a number of different *dastgāh-hā* and *āvāz-hā*. In *kereshmeh*, narratives give way to poetry. This *gūsheh* is based on a prosodic scheme that students need to memorize. Prosody makes the melodies flow based on a distinctive rhythmic sequence. Rhythmic schemes are expressed through two patterns: *atānīn* and *afa ‘īl*. *Atānīn* are rhythmic cycles that utilize the conventional syllables *ta, na* (each considered one unit) and *tan, nan* (each equivalent to two units). *Ta* and *tan* are always situated at the beginning, *na* in the middle, and *nan* as the final part of the rhythmic scheme. For instance, the rhythmic value of [Tanan Tanan Tananan Tan] consists of an internal division of [3 + 3 + 4 + 2]. It is common to use *atānīn* to count the rhythmic values in music and *afa ‘īl* for the poetic meter of the verse (Zonis 1973). Having said that, some literature scholars, poets and musicians use *atānīn* to account for the poetic meter (Azadehfar 2011). *Afa ‘īl* is a device of ‘*arūz* (prosody), the system of poetic meters in Persian poetry.

*Kereshmeh* follows a poetic meter known as *mojtas-i mosamman-i makhbūn* that corresponds to: *Mafā ‘elon - Fa ‘elāton - Mafā ‘elon - Fa ‘elāton*. Below is an example of *kereshmeh* in *dastgāh-e shūr*:



Example 2. *kereshmeh* in *dastgāh-e shūr* based on Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version (Talā’ī 2016:3)

Figure 1 analyzes the rhythmic pattern of *kereshmeh* based on Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version:

<i>Atānīn</i>	Tanan	Tanan	Tananan	Tan	Tanan	Tanan	Tananan	Tan
<i>Afa ‘īl</i>	<i>Mafā</i>	<i>‘elon</i>	<i>Fa ‘elā</i>	<i>ton</i>	<i>Mafā</i>	<i>‘elon</i>	<i>Fa ‘elā</i>	<i>ton</i>
Pattern of shorts and longs	U –	U –	UU –	–	U –	U –	UU –	–

Figure 1. Rhythmic pattern of *kereshmeh* based on Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version.

When I first learned *kereshmeh* from Lotfī, he wrote both its *atānīn* and *afa ‘īl* on a small scrap of paper (similar to Figure 1). *Kereshmeh* is associated with a number of poems, but Lotfī favored *nadānamat be haqīqat, ke dar jahān be ke mānī* in his teaching. He asked me to join him in clapping *kereshmeh*’s rhythmic scheme and reciting the *atānīn*. Lotfī then played *kereshmeh* on his *tār*, while humming the *atānīn*. For him the musical demonstration of *kereshmeh* was only a part of the task. Lotfī continued the lesson by elaborating on the meaning and significance of the poem. He began to explain each verse of Sa’dī separately:

*Nadānamat be haqīqat, ke dar jahān be ke mānī* [I do not regard you as the truth, since you last for no one] requires us to look inwards within ourselves, to strive to be selfless. It allows us, as musicians, to understand that *kereshmeh* asks us to relinquish worldly *niyāz* [wants or desires]. *Jahān o harche dar ū hast, sūratandī to jānī* [what is found in this world is insignificant, yet you are the true essence of life] means that we find salvation in the ultimate Being. A musician becomes a *zāhid* (devotee) who attempts to withdraw from the pleasure of the world. (Interview conducted on May 3, 2005)

Lotfī’s discussion of *kereshmeh* illustrates a state of intimacy and respect that brings together a spiritual education, the exercises of Sufī orders and the socio-cultural and religious ideals of relinquishing the worldly *niyāz*. *Kereshmeh* is an expression of human freedom and generosity and absence of self-constraint only achieved as one becomes a *zāhid* (devotee). The mystic and theologian, ‘Alī al-Hujwīrī (1009 – 1072), writes in *Kashf-ul Mahjūb* (Revelation of

the Veiled) that “Sufism is the heart being pure from the pollution of discord [*khalāf*].... Love is [harmonious], and the lover has but one duty in the world, namely to keep the commandment of the beloved, and if the object of desire is one, how can discord arise?” (trans. Tufail Muhammad 1959 [1911]:38). The purification of the heart is one of the essential components of *‘irfān* stressed by Lotfī. There is no mystery as to why *kereshmeh* has a liberating effect on musicians. Lotfī referred to *kereshmeh* “as the gateway into an otherworldly experience.” Each time I improvise on *gūsheh-e kereshmeh*, I feel that its poetry looms larger than its melody, the music produces an uncanny force, a feeling of being liberated. Music becomes spoken word about wisdom and virtue. It needs to be mentioned that a large number of important poems use the same meter as *kereshmeh*, through they are not necessarily performed to the *kereshmeh* rhythmic scheme.

Another notable example of a *gūsheh* with significant *‘irfān* connotations is *masnavī*, known as a chant of the *darvīsh*. A *darvīsh* is guided by Sufī and Islamic principles, seeking to attain ultimate happiness through *haqīqa*, *sharī’a* (legal path), *tarīqa* (esoteric path) and *ma’rifā* (knowledge or awareness) (Schimmel 1975). *Masnavī* originates from the word *sanā*, which means to recite a prayer, give thanks to Allāh (Dehkhodā 1955). Lotfī explained that “often *masnavī* is sung by *darāvīsh* in the bazaar or when they are wandering the streets. *Masnavī* expresses one’s desire for freedom and liberation from this world.” *Masnavī* is a yearning for the Beloved, the escape of the soul from the body. I have frequently seen singing *darāvīsh* wandering in both rural and urban areas of Iran. The goal of a *darvīsh* is to realize *fanā’* (annihilation), giving yourself to Allāh. *Darāvīsh* believe that *fanā’* is the unification with Allāh. *Masnavī* can be regarded as a song for divine grace. Annemarie Schimmel refers to this

experience as *wajd* (ecstasy), “to find God and become quiet and peaceful in finding Him” (1975:178).

The most popular verses for *masnavī* are from the *Masnavī-i Ma‘navī* (The Sacred Prayer) of the Islamic scholar and mystic Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (1207 – 1273).

*Masnavī-i Ma‘navī* is a collection of stories, conversations and anecdotes that convey Sufi teaching, support the Qur’ān and *hadīth*, and incorporate Islamic wisdom while contemplating the meaning of life and various ethical issues. Below is an example of *masnavī* in *āvāz-e afshārī* based on *ustād* ‘Abdullāh Davamī’s (1891 – 1981) vocal *radīf*:



Example 3. *Masnavī* based on Abdullāh Davamī’s version (Pāyvar 2000:61)

Davamī is known for his vocal mastery and command of the *radīf*. In his teaching of *masnavī*, Lotfī recited the verse below by Rūmī following Davamī’s vocal *radīf*. The rhyming couplets are about Moses and a shepherd:

*Moses saw a shepherd on the road  
 who kept crying out: O God, O Lord  
 Where do I find you, that I might serve—  
 sew your moccasins, and comb your hair  
 wash your clothes for you, and kill your lice  
 bring milk for you, O Lord Majestic! (trans. Lewis 2000:371).*

Lotfī told me that the shepherd in the story is an ‘*ārīf*’ (gnostic), who is searching for the *ma‘rifat* (gnosis; true compassion). *Masnavī* presents the human soul as something that belongs to the spiritual world, seeking to be reunited with its true source. In fact, the poem ends:

*What to some is praise, to you is blame  
What’s honey to his taste, your poison  
Above pure/impure I’m sanctified  
far above all suave- and boorish-ness...*

*We’ve no regard for words or language  
We look for spirit and behavior  
We see the heart and if that’s humble  
ignore the words used, brash or mumbled (trans. Lewis 2000:373).*

Ultimately, the way to attain happiness is to destroy the illusion of the *nafs* (self) by means of divine love, to which earthly love is the first step. This view is precisely what Lotfī advocated to his students. For him, music is a tool to relinquish the self, by breaking the cage that keeps human beings from achieving true love. Reflecting on music during an evening gathering in Tehran he stated:

Music is a tool to achieve a status that ultimately makes us, as fallible beings, closer to our true calling. If one thinks carefully, music brings together spiritual and religious ideals, but in a different language than the conventional Arabic language we associate with Islam. Music does the same thing as when I listen to a *sadāye rasā* [powerful voice, a voice that projects well], I find myself separated from this world. Music purifies and guides me to attain something I would not otherwise be able to achieve. (Interview conducted on August 11, 2013).

Lotfī’s “separation from this world” is best presented in the intoxication his music brings him. He spoke about how intoxication is a self-possession, where the soul is “overpowered by the attraction (*jadhb*) of divine energies” (Ernst 1997:29). *Mastī* or intoxication is regarded as a holy experience: “*mūsīqī man ro mast mikonad*” (music makes me intoxicated).

Lotfī referred to *basteh-negār* in *āvāz-e Abū ‘atā* as a dialogue between two lovers, both taking alternative melodic phrases to express their love for one another.



Example 4. *Basteh-negār* based on Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version (During 2006:58)

Lotfī elaborated

*Basteh-negār* is like two butterflies chasing each other from one flower to the next. Each takes a turn to dance and then eagerly waits to see what the other will do. Each melodic phrase expands its range by one note and then comes back to the beginning. While beautiful there is also a sorrow; the dance is never completed and the two lovers ultimately are left without a resolution as they drift apart. (Interview conducted on July 21, 2012).

This description of *basteh-negār* is very worldly. It conveys a failed love story. However, shortly after the interplay, *basteh-negār* has a melodic line that the students learn to recite in Arabic: *yaqūlū na leylā* (utter the name of Allāh).



Example 5. *yaqūlū na leylā* based on Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s (Talā’ī 2016:134).

After the phrase *yaqūlū na leylā* is played, *basteh-negār* becomes self-reflective. The melodies become more contained and the interplay of the melodic phrases gives way to sequences of notes that rapidly move but only cover a small range. Lotfī explained the importance of *yaqūlū na leylā*:

As a balance between love and devotion to Allāh. In *basteh-negār*, the lovers' affection for the other is never fulfilled. Their love remains unresolved. *Basteh-negār* ultimately shifts to a contemplative stage by recalling the name of the divine. Allāh becomes the supreme source of love, divine love. Love remains unfulfilled unless it is bound to divine love for Allāh. By uttering the name of Allāh, earthly love is transformed and becomes pure and virtuous by finding refuge in God. (Interview conducted on May 11, 2010)

*Basteh-negār* demarcates the notion of earthly love and the attainment of divine love. While making a distinction between human affection and the desire for Allāh, the phrase *yaqūlū na leylā* in *basteh-negār* exhibits the link between the two. Earthly love should be grounded in the desire to seek ultimate happiness in Allāh. Human desires, while enjoyable and exciting, lack direction and purpose without the refuge in Allāh as the source of adoration and devotion. *Basteh-negār* illustrates how observable beauty connects to Divine Beauty (Chapter Ten). The interplay of melodic lines of *basteh-negār* demonstrates the joyful representation of love and affection (observable beauty). However, earthly love is met by *yaqūlū na leylā*'s self-reflection and contemplative nature to seek Allāh (Divine Beauty).

The interplay between observable beauty and Divine Beauty is central in many Persian classical poems. *Gūsheh-e sāqīnāmeḥ* in *dastgāh-e māhūr* presents an example of the interplay between Islamic revelations, *'irfān* and *sonnat*. *Sāqīnāmeḥ* is a poetic genre where the poems seek relief from everyday hardship and misery by addressing the *sāqī* (cupbearer) who provides wine, and by asking a *moḡannī* (singer) to sing. *Sāqīnāmeḥ* presents a paradox that is rooted in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. At times the interplay becomes a source of friction. *Sāqīnāmeḥ* speaks of the



pain and longing that focuses on the *sāqī* and *moḡannī*. The connection with the cupbearer manifests the tensions with Shī'a ideals, as wine is forbidden in Islam. Yet, *sāqīnāmeḥ* points to an understanding of *'irfān* that stresses the mystic symbolism of *sāqī* and *moḡannī* where wine becomes the medium to enable one transcend in search of Allāh's love.



Example 6. *Sāqīnāmeḥ* based on Mīrzā 'Abdullāh's version (During 2006:183)

As a music student, I learned to recite *sāqīnāmeḥ* of Hāfez:

*O Bearer, bring the wine that brings joy  
 To increase generosity, and let perfection buoy  
 Give me some, for I have lost my heart  
 Both traits from me have kept apart  
 Bring the wine whose reflection in the cup  
 Signals to all the kings whose times are up  
 Give me wine, and with the reed-flute I will sing  
 When was Jamshid, and when Kavoos was king  
 Bring me the elixir whose grace and alchemy  
 Bestows treasures, from bonds of time sets free (trans. Bell 1897:97).*

There is an inclination in *sāqīnāmeḥ* to a kind of detachment from the normative Islamic practices prevalent amongst many *'ulamā'*, which are more about pretending to be virtuous than believing in righteousness or performing good deeds. Hāfez highlights their hypocrisy (*riyā*) and

his disapproval of ostentatious Islamic practices of *zāhidī* (ascetic abstinence) and *taqwā* (piety) in his poetry. Hāfez’s “theology of sin” (Bly and Lewisohn 2008) is to seek refuge from the hypocritical self-righteousness of many ‘*ulamā*’ by finding salvation in ‘*īrfān*. He writes:

*Hypocrisy and the fire of ascetic renunciation  
Will eventually consume the harvest of religion.  
Hafez, throw off your Sufi robe and go on your way. (trans. Bly and Lewisohn 2008:70)*

By drawing on ‘*īrfān*, Hāfez presents two concepts central to Lotfī’s worldview: *tarīqa* (path) and *faqīr* (Arabic for poor or underprivileged). *Faqīr* resembles the Farsi concept of *darvīsh*. Both *faqīr* and *darvīsh* have significant mystical importance. Being poor creates a humility and modesty that forges a connection to Allāh. The need for humility generates a reliance on Him to find refuge and relief in his Divine love. Being poor for “the Sufis was a sign of turning away from the world and focusing on the divine reality. ‘Poverty is my pride,’ the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said” (Ernst 1997:4). Lotfī often spoke about his admiration for *darāvīsh*:

if I am ever worthy of being a *darvīsh*, it would be the greatest honor in my life. I have given my life and my music so I learn how to become a *darvīsh*. My life is about the desire to find the path of truth, my music is my instrument to take this journey. I think of music as a devotion, an act of a *zāhid* and one who is *pārsā* [pious or upright in behavior]. (Interview conducted on July 2, 2010)

Lotfī’s perception of “the path to truth” is analogous to the *darāvīsh* evoking Sūrat Al-Hadīd (The Iron; Chapter 57, verse 3): “He is the First and the Last, the Visible and the Unseen. He has knowledge of all things” (Qur’ān: trans. Dawood, 536). In doing so, the *darāvīsh* regard Allāh as the “inner aspect (*bātin*) of all things [that requires] an articulation of the relation between the inner and the outer” (Ernst 1997:26). For the *darāvīsh*, the outward aspect is based on the acquiring of Islamic values. Once the appropriate Islamic knowledge is obtained the inner search, which consists of *tarīqa* (the path) to find *haqīqa* (Allāh) begins. Lotfī’s high regard for

*darāvīsh* is also rooted in the appeal many past *ustādān* have had towards Sūfī practices. He spoke of the renowned *tār* and *setār* player Gholam Hosseīn Darvīsh (commonly known as Darvīsh Khān, 1872 – 1926), and his own *setār* teacher, Sa‘īd Hormozī (1897 – 1976), and their desire to be *darvīsh*. Lotfī believed that *muhabbat* and ‘*ishq* (love and affection) were central in Darvīsh Khān’s and Hormozī’s thinking and music. Through their music, he explains:

I learned to display my *muhabbat* and ‘*ishq* [love and affection] to my students. The power of ‘*ishq* is so important for a *darvīsh*. It often is presented through the chants, poetry and music. Do you know a *darvīsh* is known as *sahib-e dil* or *ahl-e dil* (master of the heart)? It is no coincidence that in music we often say someone is *ahl-e dil*. (Interview conducted on July 2, 2010)

*Ahl-e dil* is about the connections individuals make to one another by opening their hearts to seek another’s’ affection. *Ahl-e dil* is about cultivating a mutual desire; it is an invitation to join the journey Lotfī regards as spiritual. In Farsi, it is common to say someone is *ahl-e dil*. The everyday meaning is about how an individual is thoughtful and compassionate to the common ideas and ideals held by others. For Lotfī, *ahl-e dil* is about *tasfiyat al-qulūb* (purification of the heart). *Ahl-e dil* is also an attribute of an individual’s *safā*’ (purity and joyfulness). In other words, a human being’s egotistical and self-absorption tendencies need purification to become *ahl-e dil*. Ultimately, Lotfī considers *muhabbat* and ‘*ishq* as a journey, a *tarīqa* to find *haqīqa* (Allāh). Writings on the mystical experience of this journey refer to it as *sulūk* (see Chapter Three). The importance of *sulūk* is based on “the common Sufī practice of traveling to distant lands, either to seek religious knowledge or as a form of self-discipline” (Ernst 1997:29). The seeking of knowledge and self-discipline speaks to the ethical implication of what Lotfī and Jankouk thought of as the “proper” approach to performing the *radīf*. Learning the *radīf* is a process, a path that needs appropriate care and attention. To develop what Jankouk considers

*dark-e bālā* (high comprehension) of the *radīf*, years of self-discipline and guidance from an *ustād* is needed.

A helpful way to illustrate how self-discipline, *muhabbat*, and *‘ishq* become integral parts of Lotfī’s teaching is through a description of what transpired in his music class. A detailed observation depicts the way in which ethical values are perceived and shaped through Lotfī’s teaching of the *radīf*. While Lotfī resided in Berkeley, he held his regular music classes twice a week (often on Thursdays and Sundays). However, some of his regular students (including myself) had the good fortune of meeting with him every day, and at times living with him for a few days. Lotfī believed that his students needed daily interaction and guidance from their *ustād*. He said that “in the old days, a student would visit his/her *ustād* daily, learning a small part of the *radīf* each day. It is important to learn the *radīf* accurately and meticulously.” The disciple’s regular visits to his/her *ustād*, also meant that the student would become familiar with the master musician’s worldview and beliefs about various issues. The regular visits form a bond between the disciple and an *ustād*.

The time I spent with Lotfī shaped my ideas beyond his musical competency. During a late spring evening at his residence, I was preparing salad for dinner. Each student was responsible for a task around his house. Suddenly, Lotfī came to the kitchen looking for tea and began to sing in *dastgāh-e homāyun*. I listened carefully trying to identify the *gūsheh*. He was very attentive and good at reading my face. Knowing that I was eager to learn, Lotfī said:

This is *chakāvak* [a *gūsheh* in *dastgāh-e homāyun*]. Do you notice the beautiful melody at the beginning? Listen to me... [he sang the beginning of *chakāvak* again]. This is how *Ustād Davāmī* sang *chakāvak*. He was old when I was his student. He did not like Tehran very much, because his house was in a very busy and crowded area. Some weekends he would call me, and ask me to take him to the foothills of Damāvand [a mountain to the east of Tehran]. He loved to hear the birds’ songs in the countryside. One afternoon, when we were sitting under the shade of a tree, Davāmī said he had learned *chakāvak* from the birds here when he used to visit with his master teacher, Mirzā ‘Abdullāh. He

asked me to get my *tār*, telling me to hold the frets of *chakāvāk*. Old master musicians would never say “play *gūsheh-e chakāvāk*.” They would refer to a *gūsheh* based on the fingering of the frets on the *tār*, by saying *parde chakāvāk ro bagīr* [hold the frets of *chakāvāk*]. Then, he began to sing, asking me to play each melodic line. He kept repeating, telling me to pay closer attention to the melodies. He broke each of the melodic sequences into smaller groups and asked me to play them individually. It was a great learning experience. (Interview conducted on July 22, 2001)

Lotfī’s anecdote was a way for me to connect to the past *ustādān*, to understand their insights on the *radīf*, and how their perceptions shaped their worldview.

Being around Lotfī was like being in a music class. In addition to all the stories he told me, it was insightful to see how he prepared his daily routine. He often woke up early in the morning, beginning his day with about half an hour of meditation and breathing techniques. Before having breakfast, he would play his *setār* (named gold for its beautiful soft sound). I was always curious to hear what *dastgāh* or *āvāz* he would play. Frequently, I sat next to Lotfī and carefully observed his *setār* techniques and musical manners. For instance, his nail on his index figure would not grow as long as most conventional *setār* players to pluck the strings (typically about 3 to 5 millimetres). His *setār* had a longer neck than a standard size *setār*. The greater distance between the neck and the bridge on his *setār* gave the strings less tension, making it easier to bend notes. On the *kāsa* (bowl- or pear-shaped body, carved from mulberry wood) of his *setār* a Farsi calligraphy of Hāfez’s poem read: *ke ‘ishq āsān namūd avval valī uftād mushkilhā* (For love at first appeared easy, but difficulties came about in due time). Lotfī talked about Hāfez’s poem on his *setār*: “love is not easily achievable; it is illusive, but its majestic nature yearns for us to carry on the path of love.” Since my initial encounters, I noticed that *muhabbat*, and *‘ishq* are vital in his music-making. Instead of the religious phrase *la ilāha illā Allāh* (there is no God but God), Lotfī would sometimes say: “*la ilāha illā ‘l-‘ishq*” (There is no God but love).

Lotfī's *setār* playing resembled that of his *ustād*, Hormozī. Playing *setār* made him reiterate some of Hormozī's views. Lotfī explained that

Hormozī liked to begin his playing with *dastgāh-e māhūr*. No matter what he wanted to play, he began with *māhūr*. He believed that *māhūr* had a certain purity; often describing it as "life's journey." The beginning parts resemble creation, coming to life, a birth. The middle part is about energy, vigor and youth. Then, *māhūr* slowly becomes reflexive and inward. Finally, things come back to where they started, to the beginning. Hormozī's view was so *latā'if* [with touches of grace]. He saw life as a joyful and blissful experience. For him, every moment was about connections; it was an encounter of life's journey. He was devoted to his music, and the grace in his beliefs and manners was a valuable lesson. His *setār* playing brought *wajd* [ecstasy] to me. It was like he explained the mystery of life through his music. (Interview conducted on July 12, 2001)

If Lotfī had one message, it was the need to cultivate *latā'fat* (with touches of grace) by devotion to the proper manners of those master teachers before us. *Latā'fat* was a blessing, a gift to be honest and transparent. He believed that music teaches humans to filter impurity. Lotfī adamantly spoke about music's goodness as something that is pure; *latā'fat* is the sensitivity and gentleness that enables one to attain *wajd*. He emphasized that *latā'fat-e mūsīqī* (purity of music) requires one to be dedicated to learning the *radīf*, and to cleanse the soul from the unwanted in order to gain the clarity needed to develop the proper understanding of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*.

Dedication to the proper manner of practicing and appreciating *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* was a fundamental component of Lotfī's teaching. His classes were held in a large room with a rug that covered most of the floor. On the wall of the classroom were pictures of past *ustādān*. Lotfī would sit in the far corner of the room, opposite to the door where the students would enter. His *tār* and *setār* were on opposite side of him as he sat crossed-leg to begin his classes. The students often sat along the wall around the room. Lotfī was adamant for everyone to sit on the floor. He believed a spiritual connection can be made by being connected to the ground. It was a way to

channel energy into the earth, while seeking an upward path towards Allāh. It was also a sign of modesty and humility, which he referred to as a *sonnatī* (traditional) approach.

At times, the classroom was full of eager students sitting in next to each other (usually on Sundays during his regular class). Lotfī always had a copy of *Dīvān Shams-e Tabrīzī*, *Masnavī* and *Dīvān Hāfez* in the classroom. On the wall behind him hung Farsi calligraphy of a Rūmī poem from *Dīvān Shams-e Tabrīzī*:

*On the seeker's path, wise men and fools are one.  
In His love, brothers and strangers are one.  
Go on! Drink the wine of the Beloved!  
In that faith, Muslims and pagans are one. (trans. Amin Banani and Anthony Lee 2014:3)*

He began each class by reciting a poem. Lotfī took the time to explain the relevance of the poem he had recited, and elaborated on how it fits with his perception of *zibā shenāsī* (knowledge of the beautiful) in music. After an in-depth explanation of the poem, he began a simple warm up routine for both *tār* and *setār* students. He asked the students to loosen their wrists and slowly rotate them. The students would hold their hands across their shoulder, and along with Lotfī rotate their wrists for several minutes. As the hands were held outwards, the students sat crossed-legged with closed eyes, concentrating on our breathing techniques. Meditation was a fundamental part of the classes.

Lotfī methodically guided the students through the breathing techniques. He believed music needs a holistic approach of the mind and body. The next step was a discussion of what he perceived as the most basic, yet important aspect of *tār* and *setār* playing. Regardless of the level of musical competence, Lotfī expected the students to take the time to learn the proper *mizrāb* (plucking) motions. He explained to his *tār* disciples:

You need to hold the wax of the *mizrāb* [the end part that sits on the fingers when playing] lightly. Often *tār* players exert too much force on the *mizrāb*, therefore it becomes fixed and rigid in the hand. If the *mizrāb* is not held lightly, it produces a harsh sound on the *tār*. The way I hold the *mizrāb*, is close to Mīrzā Hosseīn Qolī [a renowned *tār* player 1853 – 1916, and the father of Lotfī’s *ustād*, ‘Alī Akbar Shahnazī]. What is very important is, while holding the *mizrāb* softly, to relax the wrists and turn the hand from the elbow. This way the whole arm moves as one keeps the wrist and fingers loose and flexible. If the *mizrāb* is held gently the *tār* produces a soft and beautiful sound. *Ustād* Shahnazī used to tell me that every time his father played, the sound of his *tār* was so soft that you had to get close to hear. His *mizrāb* was soft and effortless, much like a butterfly moving from one flower to the next. (Interview conducted on August 11, 2001)

After making clear the proper *mizrāb* technique, Lotfī would ask the students to demonstrate it without the *tār*. He would lead and the students followed the hand and wrist motions. Lotfī then tuned his instrument and plucked the open string on his *tār* so that students could tune their instrument one by one. Finally, it would be time to pick up the *tār*. Before the disciples played music, a similar *mizrāb* practice to what was stated above took place (on each of the open strings of the *tār* or *setār*).

The circular sitting pattern of the classes enabled Lotfī to play a melodic motif, then each student, in an orderly fashion (usually from right to left, where the most advanced students would sit), repeated the exact musical phrasing. Lotfī always began by playing the basic notes of *darāmad* in *dastgāh-e shūr*. He believed that *dastgāh-e shūr* “is the mother of all other *dastgāh-hā* or *āvāz-hā*.” It was a collective approach to teaching, a way to involve his novice students since *darāmad* in *dastgāh-e shūr* would be the first thing each student learned. The repetition of *darāmad* at the beginning of each class helped students with memorization. In each class, Lotfī introduced more of a certain *dastgāh* or *āvāz*. He called it *radīf rā dorah kardan* [to review the *radīf*]. Each month Lotfī picked a *dastgāh* or *āvāz* for the class to learn. Once all the twelve *dastgāh* or *āvāz* were completed, he would start all over by teaching students more details and the lesser-known *gūsheh-hā* during the next cycle of reviewing the *radīf*. The process of *radīf rā*



*dorah kardan* was designed to add more information, and details each time the musical repertoire was taught.

Lotfī did not allow students to record his teaching of the *radīf*. He believed that the *radīf* needs to be orally transmitted and memorized by the disciples. It was very important for the students to play each *gūsheh* exactly as Lotfī had played it. He taught the *radīf* of Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh. Once I learned a *gūsheh*, I would go to a different room and practice for several hours. Initially, it was hard for me to remember the sequences of melodies. The poems discussed by Lotfī when teaching me a *gūsheh* were a significant help in remembering the melody and the rhythmic scheme. He demanded precision in following the exact details he had played. Lotfī would often speak about learning the *radīf* of Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh *osūlī* (properly):

Many experienced musicians come to me saying they have been playing music for years. I am talking about musicians who have been performing for some years, not students. Even though they have experience playing the *tār*, they have never learned the proper *mizrāb* techniques. It is so difficult to fix their *mizrāb* and the form of their hands, because they are used to their own incorrect ways. What is more troubling for some of these musicians is their lack of deep understanding of the *radīf*. Many play the *radīf* of Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh wrong and out of order. Each *gūsheh* has a form that needs to be played correctly so it does not lose its identity, otherwise it becomes something else. Sometimes a note here and there changes everything. (Interview conducted on July 12, 2001)

The *radīf* needs to be learned and practiced *osūlī*. This meant close attention to the precise *gūsheh-hā* Lotfī played. It also meant hours of practice to accurately play the *gūsheh* as outlined by Lotfī. He expected me to practice about five to seven hours each day. A couple of hours on my *mizrāb* techniques, and the rest on a *gūsheh* Lotfī had taught me. I was required to play back the parts of a *gūsheh* I had learned the following day. By the end of the month, before Lotfī began teaching a new *dastgāh* or *āvāz*, he would randomly choose *gūsheh-hā* and ask me to play them. Often he would correct me, asking me to repeat the melodic sequence he had played. He would remind me of the poems or narratives associated with each of the *gūsheh-hā*.

Lotfī made me aware of how learning each *gūsheh* is based on a process of perceiving and attaining a suitable understanding of the principles and practices of the *radīf*. *Ab ‘ād-e akhlāqī* in the *radīf* is not something that individuals define, but rather it defines individuals. As *akhlāq* shapes the process of music-making, Lotfī’s interpretation of the ethical values becomes important. *Ab ‘ād-e akhlāqī* in the *radīf* has long been established before Lotfī, but he becomes the agent that unearths the appropriate principles to provide meanings and judgments on today’s practices of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. For instance, *gūsheh-e neyshābūrak* is best interpreted based on a historical awareness that accounts for Islamic revelations, *‘irfān* and *sonnat*. This history is undeniable. Without the adequate historical background, *neyshābūrak* loses its religious and ethical significance. Lotfī find himself situated within a historical, religious, cultural and ethical framework that shape his judgment of *zibā shenāsī*. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, all consciousness is “historically effected consciousness” (1994:279). Lotfī’s understanding of *gūsheh-e neyshābūrak* is affected by his “prejudices,” which, in turn, reflect his place in the history of the Iranian music tradition. Reflecting on *gūsheh-e neyshābūrak* is “furthering of an event that goes far back” (Gadamer 1994:xxiv).

Over time, *ustādān* have been creating new horizons of experience of *neyshābūrak* that transcend time and become a template for a new generation of musicians. A horizon of experience is not necessarily a novel understanding, but rather a new and individually unique approach to performing *neyshābūrak* based on its history. An understanding of *neyshābūrak* arises when it is placed in the present context of meaning that can only build on history. The process of understanding *neyshābūrak*, and the set of principles associated with it, transform over time. Lotfī, as an *ustād* in a lineage of *ustādān* who narrates the relevance of *neyshābūrak*, offers a certain presentation of this story that is unique to him, but its core ideals remain intact.

History serves as the condition of an individual's knowledge. One would never be able to begin from a history-free position. History does not exist in a vacuum; it thrives amongst social interactions, and is created based on social understanding and cultural norms. However, there is also a tendency to establish the "validity of what is old" (Gadamer 1994:273). Taking *neyshābūrak*, validity of the old is a form of romanticization, giving the past an authority that is idealized and adored. What has been sanctioned by history is usually viewed as having authority. Gadamer explains that "our finite historical being is marked by the fact that the authority of what has been handed down to us—and not just what is clearly grounded—always has power over our attitude and behavior" (1994:280).

Human capabilities are melded with social practices that create for the agent a sense of responsibility to oneself and the larger community. Such expectations bring forth social and moral obligations. Ethos, obligations, individual capabilities and identity are closely tied to social institutions such as Lotfī's music classes. The ethos gives rise to identities and ideologies that are based on certain views and belief systems. Moreover, they give meanings to the process of learning and the oral transmission of the *radīf*. The Third Chapter explores how *adab* (etiquette, virtues or civility) is vital to the *ustād* and *shāgīrd* (disciple) rapport.

This chapter uncovers the ethical practices associated with learning the *radīf* in relation to *akhlāq*. It begins by examining the vital role *adab* (plural, *ādāb*) played in Jankouk's *tarbiyat kardan* (education or tutoring) of his *shāgird-hā*. He commonly referred to his *shāgird-hā* as *bā-adab* (well-behaved) or *bā-tarbiyat* (well-trained or well-mannered). *Bā-adab* and *bā-tarbiyat* project Jankouk's satisfaction and approval of his *shāgird-hā*. An *ustād's* selection of a *shāgird* is rather exclusive; before accepting a disciple, a master teacher assesses a student's musical ability, as well as the receptiveness to develop "proper" character and viewpoints. A *shāgird's* dedication to an *ustād's* beliefs and outlook is as important as developing competent musical ability. *Adab* is "a process of moral and intellectual education designed to produce an *adīb*, a gentleman-scholar, and is thus intimately connected with the formation of both intellect and character" (Khalidi 1994:83). The discussion of *adab* also unpacks the cultural capital of the position of *ustād*, shedding light on the ethical entanglements the label of master musician brings to *tarbiyat* of a *shāgird*. Finally, *adab* is a practice of etiquette by a *shāgird* toward his/her *ustād*. This position is similar to the *tasawwuf* (Sufism) relationship formed between *murīd* (disciple) and *pīr* (religious scholar or a master with an extraordinary role). A *murīd* is in search of *murād* (beloved or desired). The relationship between *murīd* and *pīr* is central in the transmission of *'ilm* (knowledge). The *pīr* guides the *murīd* out of ignorance through knowledge. Admiration for the *pīr* prepares the *murīd* for a *tarīqa* (path) toward attaining *sa'āda*. In *tasawwuf*, *adab* is the "exoteric and disciplinary education" (Katz 2004:98) facilitated by the *pīr* to the *murīd*.

After an evaluation of what constituted *adab* in Jankouk's music classes, this chapter focuses on Lotfī's holistic approach to the *radīf*. It explores how each *gūsheh* serves a specific purpose, what Lotfī calls *sair va sulūk* (journey and seeking the path) of the *radīf*. I outline a

detailed account of Lotfī’s perception of *sair va sulūk* in *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān* based on his teaching of Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version of the *radīf*. I explore his views of each *gūsheh*’s purpose and function in *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān*. That is the treatment and proper sequencing of *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān*, and the way each *gūsheh* provides specific ordering and meaning. For Lotfī, *sair va sulūk* has a mystical connotation. The interconnected nature of *gūsheh-hā* presents a narrative of sublime and mystical importance. Lotfī perceives the ultimate aim of each *gūsheh* as a step forward in the endless *sair* (journey) toward *sa‘āda*. The *radīf* has a transcendent nature, a dynamism to strive forward through the vibrancy of each *gūsheh*’s connection to the following *gūsheh*. The interconnectedness of *gūsheh-hā* weaves together the mystical journey, encouraging the listener to seek *tarīqa* in order to attain *sa‘āda*.

Even as a child, I often noticed *adab* and *tarbiyat* to be central topics of discussion and debate among Iranians. I learned that *tarbiyat* are the manners and guidelines parents, teachers, religious leaders, and other role models in the community set out for the youth to follow. My immediate family frequently discussed what *adab* meant, laying out their expectation for my manners, conduct and attitude. My childhood *tarbiyat* was primarily based on the values and principles important to most educated middle-class families in Tehran. As I grew older, my knowledge of *adab* expanded with increased exposure to different individuals, groups and social institutions. In elementary school, my teachers asked students to be *bā-tarbiyat*. In the context of post-revolutionary Iran, the phrase *bā-tarbiyat* conveyed the expectation for us to be “dedicated” and “responsible” young Muslims. The teachers set out Islamic practices that we were expected to follow, such as *namāz-e jamā‘at* (congregational prayer) during lunch hour, fasting during the month of Ramadan (many students did not fast, but publically observed it during school hours to

respect the holy month), listening to the recitation of the Qur’ān during school assembly each morning, and being involved in after school revolutionary choir and plays.

Regardless of my personal beliefs toward the revolutionary ideals we were expected to observe in my school, I became aware that *adab* entailed a learning process, an exercise to cultivate suitable conduct that led to the manifestation of good habits, manners and attitudes. *Adab* has a “pedagogy that results in the cultivation of a virtue and motivates all human practice” (Moosa 2005:208). Ghazālī views *adab* as the psychological outcome of a conscious mind to establish a certain *fadīla* (virtue), acquired through an individual’s *malaka* (inner disposition) of the self and the soul. *Adab* is based on the skills attained by a person through individual awareness, realization, appreciation, apprehension and perception of a specific issue, event, belief or fact. Ghāzalī describes *adab* as the “disposition toward knowledge” (Moosa 2005:208). *Adab*, then, is the attitude and disposition cultivated through practice.

As my knowledge and awareness of the world around me expanded, my *ustadān* had a significant influence on my *tarbiyat* and *adab*. They placed great importance on the disciple’s *adab*. In fact, an individual’s conduct and manners were more highly considered than a new student’s musical ability. Each *ustād* I encountered would take considerable care in explaining the importance of *tarbiyat* and *adab*. As a disciple begins to conform—with total awareness and autonomy—to an *ustād*’s beliefs and worldview, a mutual and respectful relationship is formed. This connection is similar to the mystical rapport between *pīr* and *murīd*. As one who grew up in Canada, experiencing *tarbiyat* by allowing my *ustadān* to become central in shaping my worldview was unique and challenging. The *pīr* and *murīd* relationship was intriguing to me. I began to read more about this relationship in Iranian poetry and literature. The connection between disciple and master teacher depicted in the writings offered me an understanding on

how individuals achieve *husn al-khuluq* (beautiful character) and *azraf al-akhlāq* (refinement). A *murīd* dedicates him/herself to the *pīr* by practicing qualities such as *hilm* (forbearance) and *jūd* (generosity) passed on through the *‘ilm* of the master teacher. The *nafs* (soul or human essence) obtains knowledge, attitude and the practice of *adab* to replace blameworthy qualities with praiseworthy traits.

### 3.1 OSTĀD JANKOUK’S TEACHING OF ADAB

During the summer of 2003, I walked up four flights of stairs in an apartment building in central Tehran to meet Jankouk for the first time. As I approached his apartment unit, I could hear the music lesson taking place within. He was playing the *tār* and one of his *shāgird* would repeat what Jankouk was teaching him. I buzzed the door, and moments later was greeted by his student. I waited outside the main classroom until I was summoned inside. He asked me to sit across from him on a wooden platform covered with a small rug. There were a number of *tār-hā* and *setār-hā* around him. Behind him hung a picture of a young ‘Alī Akbar Khān Shahnāzī, who was Jankouk’s *ustād*. I expressed to him my gratitude for taking the time to consider me as one of his students. After responding to his request to tell him about myself and informing him that I had been a student of Lotfī for some years in the United States, I expected he would ask me to play the *tār*. Instead, Jankouk said:

It is important for me to learn about my students. I want to know why they wish to learn music...how they will act in the classroom, and more importantly, how they will put their musical ability to use. Learning the *radīf* is very *latā’if* [subtle or refined]. I desire my students to have similar beliefs and understanding of the world as those passed on to me by my teacher, *Ustād* Shahnāzī. I try to teach the values that *Ustād* Shahnāzī passed on to me...one *gūsheh* at a time. The *radīf* lives through *Ustād* Shahnāzī, it lives through his actions and conduct. I would like my students to honor ‘Alī Akbar Khān’s legacy, his pious view of music, and his humility even though he was so great. He taught me to always be indebted to the *radīf*, especially to those who passed it down to us. Through their actions and ideas, the *radīf* lives in us...particularly with all the hardship and problems they faced in keeping the tradition alive [reference to the history of political and religious tensions with music]. (Interview conducted on June 24, 2003)

To be granted access to the knowledge of the *radīf*, a *shāgird* needs to place full faith and trust in the *ustād*. *Tarbiyat* of a *shāgird* is to concede knowledge of what is deemed suitable and good through the *‘ilm* and understandings of an *ustād*. *Tarbiyat* becomes the practice of passing on experience, expertise and awareness from an *ustād* to a *shāgird*. I came to realize that once Jankouk accepted a *shāgird*, he gave exclusive access to knowledge that required constant care and attention. To be able to commit to the necessary care and attention, a *shāgird* must exhibit proper decorum and strong integrity. In other words, a *shāgird* shows faithfulness and loyalty to the *ustād*, much as in *tarīqa* “a disciple takes an oath of allegiance to the *shaykh* [religious guardian]” (Katz 2004:101) and his beliefs and practices.

Ignāc Goldziher refers to *adab* as “the noble and humane tendency of the character and its manifestation in the conduct of [one’s] life and social intercourse” (1981 [1919]:31). For Jankouk, *adab* extended across three generations of accumulated knowledge. His views were based on narratives Shahnāzī told about his father and master teacher, Mīrzā Hosseīn Qolī. They were also based on his observation of Shahnāzī’s conduct when he himself was a *shāgird*. In addition, Jankouk’s personal understanding of *adab* was based on the current sociocultural and political environment of Iran. For Jankouk, *adab* had both a private and a public life. *Tarbiyat* began with *safā’-e dil* (purity and joyfulness of heart or the essence), a practice to cleanse the inner part of the human essence, the self. *Tarbiyat* is the practice that originates in the *naḥs* and extends outwards onto individual’s lifeworld. The exercise of *safā’-e dil* consists of practices that seem simple and inconsequential, yet are important and necessary to observe. Patience is considered a vital virtue. A simple task in Jankouk’s music classes was to wait outside quietly and patiently until the *ustād* calls you in. At times this would take more than an hour.



*Sabr* (patience) also had larger implications. Patience has an extrinsic value, therefore is perceived more as an ethical means than an end. Patience is viewed by al-Ghazālī as a “mystical virtue” and an “attribute of God” (Abul Quasem 1975:155). He explains *al-sabr* based on three elements: a) knowledge; b) a disposition created in the soul due to knowledge; and c) action that results from the disposition. *Sabr* must be achieved through the practices of devotion and cultivation of the self. The cultivation of *sabr* arises from the individual’s desire to become exemplary. Patience was a constant theme of Jankouk’s as he taught the *radīf*. He often would say: “*shāgird bāyad sabūr bāshād*” (a disciple needs to be patient).

*Adab* is a form of knowledge that is cultivated through the bond formed between *ustād* and *shāgird*. Jankouk emphasized his close connection to Shahnāzī and spoke of the fostering of *tarbiyat* and *adab* that took place:

*Ustād* taught in *Honarestān-e Mūsīqī-e Mellī* [National Conservatory of Music] and privately to a few of his students. It was a privilege for me to be chosen by *Ustād* Shahnāzī to attend private classes. He lived in a house in northern Tehran with a lovely garden. My classes with *Ustād* Shahnāzī were at 4 o’clock on Tuesdays. I would make sure to arrive at least 15 minutes early. *Ustād* would teach the ladies first, in the early afternoon, so they could get home before dark. I knew *ustād* liked *noon khāmeī* [cream puff] with his tea, so before attending class, I would stop at a famous pastry shop close to his house and buy a box of *noon khāmeī*. I never took the *noon khāmeī* inside the classroom, but would leave them on the table in the common area. I remember, his house had an old wooden door with what looked like a Victorian mechanical doorbell in solid brass. Once inside, I would wait in the common area where I was greeted by his wife and other students. She was kind, always asking if I needed something before my class. His wife was like a *parwāna dōwr-e ustād* [“a butterfly around *ustād*,” affectionate and caring by being present and attentive]. I would sit quietly, listening to *ustād* teach other students. When *ustād* was done with a student, he would take a break for a few minutes before inviting the next student inside the classroom. I would patiently wait for my turn. When he was ready—to my surprise always right at 4 o’clock—he would call me inside. As I walked in, I would greet him. He was very kind, often smiling and complimentary. He would check his pocket watch, which had a beautiful brass chain before he began teaching. Punctuality was very important to him. What was noticeable about him was his demeanor; it was kind and gentle, yet serious and demanding of his students. He always wore the same neatly pressed suit with a tie every Tuesday. He would say: “what you wear and what you say is a good indication of who you are and who you will become.” (Interview conducted on July 8, 2005)

Jankouk was granting me access into the world of his *ustād*. Passing on these stories exhibited the attitudes and practices that were expected of him. It illustrated the willingness of Jankouk, as an autonomous individual, to learn and embody the etiquette and civility needed to be a *shāgird*. While an *ustād*'s demands of a *shāgird* are significant, they are based on mutual respect. Jankouk's objective was not to force me to be his *shāgird*, but rather to enlighten me on the ways one is expected to obtain knowledge of the *radīf*.

The kind and gentle demeanor, yet demanding and serious attitude Jankouk spoke of with reference to Shahnāzī was also evident in him. He would not teach students if they arrived late without prior notice. In addition to learning the *radīf*, he expected his students to read poetry and literature that he would recommend. He never forgot what poem or writing he had assigned. The following session he would ask about the reading. These writings dealt with various ethical issues that he related to the *radīf*. When he was teaching me *zābol*, a *gūsheh* in *dastgāh-e chahārgāh*, he asked me to read a *hekāyat* (anecdote) from Sa'dī's *Golestān* (The Rose Garden). Jankouk had asked me to read from the third section of *Golestān*, which deals with the excellence of contentment. He said that *zābol* brings delight and satisfaction:

when you begin *dastgāh-e chahārgāh*, it is very heroic and invigorating. It is energetic, as it signals the victory of overcoming an obstacle. Afterwards, you need the fulfillment and pleasure that *zābol* brings. This delight is an inner satisfaction rather than a physical triumph over others.

Sa'dī's *hekāyat* was to help me understand the meaning of inner gratitude and fulfillment. Many Iranians, in fact, learn the *Golestān* from a young age, since it deals with many of the ethical dilemmas human beings face. At the beginning of my next music class, Jankouk asked about the

*hekāyat*. My response barely scratched the surface, having none of the details he sought. For the following two weeks, he stopped teaching the *radīf* in order to concentrate on the *hekāyat*.

After dedicating a considerable amount of time to the *hekāyat*, and more generally the philosophy behind Sa‘dī’s *Golestān*, Jankouk told me a story about *adab*, particularly of the importance and seriousness of an *ustād*’s demands:

*Ustād* Shahnāzī used to tell me stories of his father, Aqa Hosseīn Qolī [Mīrzā Hossein Qolī]. One of these stories *Ustād* Shahnāzī spoke of a number of times was about when he was fourteen-years-old. Aqa Hosseīn Qolī had informed him that he would soon be going to the studio to record with the vocalist, Jenāb Damāvandī. I have the recording; they recorded on gramophone disks in *āvāz-e afshāri* and *āvāz-e bayāt-e tork*. *Ustād* Shahnāzī said his father expected him to wake up early, before his school started, to practice the *tār*. If he delayed, he would hear from Aqa Hosseīn Qolī: “‘Alī Akbar, you need to start practicing.” *Ustād* used to smile and tell me, I was young and wanted to sleep, but I had to get up on time and start practicing. *Ustād* Shahnāzī had the same routine right after school. Instead of playing with other kids, he would run straight home in order to practice. *Ustād* said he complained to his mother a few times about what his father expected from him. His mother would try to calm him, either by cooking a nice meal for him or giving him his favorite pastry. However, Aqa Hosseīn Qolī was serious and showed little flexibility, he demanded hours and hours of practice. A few months had passed and the recordings were completed. *Ustād* Shahnāzī had no idea about how the recordings had turned out. Back then, there were no edits or retakes. Then, one day as *Ustād* Shahnāzī was practicing his *tār* Aqa Hosseīn Qolī walked in. Aqa Hosseīn Qolī asked *Ustād* Shahnāzī’s mother to come in. *Ustād* noticed that Aqa Hosseīn Qolī was holding a box of pastries and brand new shoes. He gave *Ustād* Shahnāzī the new shoes and told him to have as many pastries as he wished. *Ustād* Shahnāzī: “what has happened to my father to be so kind and caring to me.” Aqa Hossein Qolī was a serious man, and rarely smiled. He turns to *Ustād*’s mother and says: “mother of ‘Alī Akbar, your son will keep my name alive.” Every time *Ustād* Shahnāzī told me this story he would choke-up and cry. (Interview conducted on July 12, 2005)

Jankouk expressed the importance of expectations and demands an *ustād* requires from a *shāgird*. He believed that *adab* cultivated hard work or sacrifice to attain ‘ilm. In other words, the exercise of proper manners and conduct enables the discipline, dedication and commitment needed to have access to an *ustād*’s knowledge and care. Jankouk continued further by quoting a verse from one of the *hekāyāt* in Sa‘dī’s *Golestān*: “*Jaur-e ustād beh z mihr-e pidar*” (the

hardship and anguish of learning from an *ustād* is more honorable than a father's love).

Jankouk's purpose in reciting this verse was not to minimize a father's love and care, but to highlight the upright position an *ustād* holds. In addition, *jaur* (enduring hardship) should not be considered as an exasperating or upsetting experience, but rather as sacrifice and dedication, a liberating exercise for *'ilm*. Attaining knowledge offers illumination and clarity to seek Allāh's *jalāl* (majesty) and *jamāl* (beauty).

The *ustād* and *shāgird* relationship is based on a hierarchy. However, hierarchy in this relation should not be viewed as an absolute position of command from an *ustād* to a *shāgird*. The term *ustād* validates a master musician's extraordinary connection to the tradition as one who has been given the responsibility to preserve *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. It bestows cultural capital on a master teacher, which enables an *ustād* to delineate a set of principles and norms for the *shāgird*. Jankouk frequently drew on his experiences with Shahnāzī, as if Jankouk's knowledge is validated through Shahnāzī, and Shahnāzī's through Mīrzā Hossein Qolī. The hierarchical relationship between *ustād* and *shāgird* is disseminated through a history and lineage of master teachers. Jankouk demanded respect from his student, and in turn he respected his master teacher. Recalling one of Jankouk's anecdotes demonstrate his level of respect for Shahnāzī:

One Friday morning, I decided to visit *Ustād* Shahnāzī. I was about 30 years old. I had just completed the entirety of the *radīf* with him. He had given me his blessing to start teaching his novice and young students. After about a couple hours visiting with him, a guest arrived. Shahnāzī had told the guest about me. The guest was eager to hear my *tār*. He asked me to play. However, I choose not to play in front of *Ustād*, until given permission. The guest did not know that the proper manners would be not to ask a *shāgird* to play in front of an *ustād*. The right thing for the guest would have been to ask whether *ustād* is willing to play. Finally, I said we are blessed to be in the presence of *Ustād*, why listen to me when there is such a marvelous *ustād* with us? (Interview conducted on June 24, 2003)

One could argue that Jankouk was young at the time and needed to exercise proper manners in front of his master teacher. This argument is partly valid. It is obvious that he practiced the grace and refinement that a *shāgird* needs to exhibit. However, by narrating this story, Jankouk is demonstrating his respect and indebtedness to Shahnāzī. He is also illustrating and teaching what he considers as *adab*.

Jankouk's lineage to the past strongly dictates his views on *adab*. He becomes an agent, who perceives *tarbiyat* as a practice built on a reservoir of knowledge: use of a historicity that denotes the actuality, authenticity and factuality of music-making. As Jean During states, an *ustād's* creativity is less the manifestation of "radical innovation" than of "a personal style that imposes itself in its special domain, becomes a school, inspires other fields of creation, and can even help punctuate a whole period with its spirit" (2003:22). Jankouk's discussion of Shahnāzī is about the spirit of his master musician that lives in him. Jankouk's main objective as an *ustād* is to add his unique qualities as he transmits the *radīf* to his disciples. An *ustād's* knowledge and experience cannot be depicted in isolation from other master teachers. Jankouk is inscribed in part within the continuity of Shahnāzī's and Mīrzā Hossein Qolī's tradition. Yet, Jankouk holds a special place in the tradition of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. Therefore, a *shāgird* gains knowledge from Jankouk as an expert of the tradition, as well as benefiting from his lineage to other *ustādān*, which also forms his understanding of the tradition.

The level of trust and intimacy between a *shāgird* and *ustād* is only possible if a mutual trust is created. This relationship resembles a Sufī's understanding of the *pīr* (master teacher). The sincerity of the disciple and the care and guidance provided by the *pīr* build conviction and faith for the student to give him/herself to the master teacher's beliefs and conduct. In *Kitāb*

*Adab al-Murīdīn* (The Book of Manners for disciples) Abu Hafis al-Suhrawardī (1145-1234), a renowned Sufī responsible for creating the Suhrawardīyya Sufī order, states:

When the sincere disciple enters under obedience of the master, keeping his company and learning his manners, a spiritual state flows from within the master to within the disciple, like one lamp lighting another. The speech of the master inspires the interior of the disciple, so that the master's words become the treasury of spiritual states. The state is transferred from the master to the disciple by keeping company and by hearing speech. This only applies to the disciple who restricts himself to the master, who sheds the desire of his soul, and who is annihilated in the master by giving up his own will. (1975:252)

Obedience to the *pīr* provides *'ilm* that illuminates the *murīd* (disciple). The metaphor of lamp and lighting signals the passing on of experience and expertise to enlighten the novice who is seeking the path of divine love. The words, manners and attitude of the *pīr* are inspirational for the *murīd*, who is convinced that the master's guidance leads to *sa'āda*. The faith of a *murīd* in the master teacher requires relinquishing earthly desires through annihilation in the *pīr*. *Fanā'* (annihilation) is the eradication of the self-ego in mystical union. The trust and earnestness between *pīr* and *murīd* is *irāda* (longing, desire or respect; Farsi *irādat*). The *pīr* is the *murād* (the desired, the beloved), and the disciple or aspirant is the one who desires.

In *Minhāj al-yaqīn*, Uways Wafā al-Arzanjānī states, “*tarīq al-haqq kulluhā ādāb*” (the path to the truth is by proper etiquettes or virtues) (al-Arzanjānī 1910:4). *Adab* ultimately leads to the *murīd's* annihilation in the *pīr*. Ghazālī asserts that the objective of *adab* is “primarily the attitude and disposition that enables one to experience the effects of knowledge and be transformed by its animation in the self” (Mossa 2005:210). *Adab* is disciplining the *nafs*, for proper conduct of body and mind, which is possible by attaining *'ilm* provided through guidance by the *pīr*. Without the discipline to enable the body and mind to act according to the *pīr's* guidance, a *murīd's* annihilation cannot take place. *Adab* is the practice of the proper conduct to attain salvation. Annihilation in the *pīr* is the path to salvation. A *murīd's* annihilation in the *pīr*

is a process that purifies the *nafs*, the self and attitude toward others. Thus, *adab* is the refinement of the soul, the self and the view of others through *'ilm* gained from the *pīr*. Al-Ghāzalī explains *adab* as the ethical paradigm encompassing: a) *tahdhīb al-nafs* (the discipline of the soul or the human essence); b) *siyāsa al-badan* (governing the self or body); and c) *ri'āya al-'adl* (social justice and fairness) (Moosa 2005).

*Adab* is a practice of self-discipline that enables a *murīd* to become a subject of Allāh. *Adab* governs the *nafs* in order to achieve the highest sovereign status possible for human beings. To become a subject of Allāh the “self must become subject to itself in a necessary and voluntary act of self-surrender” (Moosa 2005:216). For Ghazālī, the individual liberation is possible by cleansing the human being’s soul from the instinctive and animalistic nature through knowledge, thought and guidance. The *pīr* becomes the facilitator for the *murīd* to attain the *murād* (beloved or desired). In Sufism, the *pīr* is the *murīd*, and he also guides the *murīd* toward the *murād*. *Fanā'*, as a mystical union, is based on the notion that all humans are “delegated representatives” of the *khalīfat Allāh* (the absolute sovereign) (Moosa 2005:216). *Adab* is the cultivation of the self that makes the mystical union possible. In short, *adab* is the commitment to *ta'addub* (moral cultivation) and *ta'dīb* (education).<sup>5</sup>

*Adab* has been part of the public discourse in Muslim societies. It is not about accumulating knowledge to be stored in the memory, rather *adab* “evokes a desire for action” (Lapidus 1984:50). Thus, *adab* creates knowledge that is performed and practiced. In Islamic philosophy (particularly for al-Ghazālī), the correlation of *'ilm* and *'amal* (action or practice) produces the discipline needed for proper or ideal conduct (*adab*). For al-Ghazālī, exemplary conduct means regulating *bātin* (inner self) to achieve the ideal *zāhir* (external or physical) traits.

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<sup>5</sup> *Adab*, to a large degree, is similar to the Greeks’ philosophical perfection of the soul through *paideia* (upbringing, ideal education for the members of the polis).

He labelled this dialogical relationship as *ādāb al-bowātin* (inner *ādāb*) and *ādāb al-zawāhir* (external *ādāb*). In *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, al-Ghazālī states,

Movement of the limbs is the fruit of thoughts, actions are the product of character, and right conduct is the dissemination of knowledge. Know that the purest concealed core of the heart [*sarīra al-qulūb*] is the orchard of deeds and their wellsprings. (trans. Al-Zabīdī 2001:382)

*Adab* is a practice of self-discipline that first engages with *bātin*, where *ādāb al-bowātin* orients *zāhir* towards exemplary conduct. Al-Ghazālī continues his discussion of this dialogical relationship by asserting that

The interior luminescence illuminates the exterior by giving it ornamentation and luster. Right conduct transforms loathsome and sinful deeds into virtues. If a person has no humility in his heart, do not expect to find it in his limbs. And whose heart is not a niche for divine lights, the beauty of prophetic example will not radiate [throughout] his exterior. (trans. Al-Zabīdī 2001:318)

*Tahdhīb al-nafs* sets the groundwork for a symbolic relationship between *bātin* and *zāhir*. *‘Ilm* illuminates the *nafs*, setting in motion the practice and performance (*‘amal*) of *zāhir*.

Jankouk’s teaching emphasized the importance of a *shāgird’s* *nafs*, *qalb* (heart) and *‘aql* (intellect). This indicated that Jankouk viewed a *shāgird’s* *bātin* as the place to cultivate and nurture proper conduct and worldview. He frequently said, “*shāgird bāyad bātin-e khobīe dāshtah bāshad*” (a disciple needs to have an exemplary inner self or essence) or “*nafs kār-e mohem hast*” (the essence or intent of an action is important). *Adab* is the groundwork for *akhlāq* that sets knowledge into practice and performance. *Adab’s* groundwork takes place in the *nafs*. Thus, *adab*, first and foremost, concerns the inner struggle to relinquish impurity. Jankouk’s understanding of *bātin* was based on the elusiveness and tenuous nature of the human *nafs*, which can find itself in danger of immoral activities:



A few of my music friends [reference to other master teachers] have regular night gatherings. They play music, smoke opium and drink excessively. Some of their students have learned to do the same, which is disappointing. I do not want to interfere in anyone's personal life, it is not my concern, but when they involve others—particularly young musicians—they are setting the wrong example of how musicians need to act and carry themselves. I speak to my friends about demonstrating a degree of self-restraint; the materials they use [referring to home-made alcoholic drinks and opium] are harmful to their body and their soul. They need to be responsible; young musicians look up to them. They [the students] see my friends using opium, behaving in a certain way... young musicians say: this is how we need to act for our music to sound like them... I ask my friends: what does the word *ustād* mean to you? I tell them, I never saw *Ustād Shahnāzī* act this way. I tell them, aren't we obligated and indebted to this tradition? Don't we have a responsibility to guide our *shāgird-hā*. If we do not act properly, why should our students? I think—especially with the situation in Iran—self-discipline and restraint is a challenge. But I say, an *ustād* needs to set an example, if not, then why be called an *ustād*? I try to illustrate for my students that, even though it is very challenging nowadays, music brings us *sa'ādat* [happiness]; it elevates our souls and gives us happiness—not momentary happiness and escape from the world by using drugs or drinking as some music masters have chosen to do. I need to do my part to act as a role model and expect my students to learn and act based on the ideals and good that our music exhibits. Young musicians need guidance and a role model. An *ustād* has a significant role in the formation of their beliefs and attitudes. It all starts from ourselves, from our *bātin*. We give music meaning and if our *bātin* is without *'ishq* [love], then our music is tainted. Music is the reflection of our *bātin*. The more we illuminate it—the more we cultivate our *bātin* with purity and good deeds—the more enlightening and beautiful our music would be. Music without the right conduct and attitude loses its meaning and majesty. Having high standards and expecting proper conduct falls on the shoulder of an *ustād*. Purity is the legacy of our music, we cannot disgrace it with depraved and errant behaviors and actions. I cannot let my students stray. An *ustād* has an obligation to *shāgird-hā*, and *shāgird-hā* have a responsibility to an *ustād*—we [Jankouk looked and pointed to me] both have a duty to this musical tradition. (Interview conducted on June 8, 2005)

During my lessons with Jankouk, he would say that playing music is like holding a mirror; if *bātin* is pure it reflects light and glows, if the inner self is immoral it projects gloom and darkness. He would say “music is the image of a human's *bātin* unveiled through sounds.”

Jankouk's perspective on *adab* and *tarbiyat* opened my eyes to the world of Sufism, which is grounded in Islamic ideals and traditional values. My respect for Jankouk, as an *ustād*, is for his humility and kind nature. It is also because of my admiration for his knowledge and

experience. As a *shāgird*, annihilation was not a self-destructive and unknowing relinquishment of autonomy for me, rather it was immersion in the *‘ilm* and *sonnat* Jankouk embodied. Although some days my experience with Jankouk was more demanding, extraneous and even alienating than I had desired, our *ustād* and *shāgird* relationship increasingly became gratifying as I learned more of the *radīf*. The more my understating of the *radīf* advanced, the more I became aware of how music-making is a process of accumulating knowledge and exhibiting proper conduct. The process of learning became a journey, each day brought new experiences and understandings of the *radīf*. The *ustād* facilitates the *sair* for the student in search of the *murād* (beloved or desired).

### 3.2 USTĀD LOTFĪ’S TEACHING OF *ĀVĀZ-E BAYĀT-E ESFAHĀN*

Even though the concept of journey predates Islam (e.g., the Arabic *qasīda* describing a hero’s journey), it finds deep religious and mystical meanings through the Prophet’s life and actions. The Prophet’s *Hijrah* refers to his migration from Mecca to Yathrib (later named Madīnat an-Nabī [“City of the Prophet”] or Medīna), when he became aware of an assassination plot against him. *Hijrah* has significant religious, social and spiritual connotations for Muslims. For many, his nightly journey, known as *isrā’* or *mi’rāj*, offers a model for an esoteric journey toward Allāh. *Sūrat Al- Isrā’* (The Night Journey, 17:1) states: “Glory Be to Him who made His servant go by night from the Sacred Temple [of Mecca] to the farther Temple [of Jerusalem] whose surroundings We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. He alone hears all and observes all” (trans. Dawood 1956:281). In Sufism *sair va sulūk* (journey and seeking the path) has similar meanings to the Islamic understanding of *fī sabīli llāhi* (for the advancement of Allāh’s cause, or in the way of Allāh), a phrase that is frequently found in the Qur’ān. For instance, in *Sūrat Al-Tawbah* (Repentance, 9:60):

Alms shall be only for the poor and the destitute; for those that are engaged in the management of alms and those whose hearts are sympathetic to the Faith; for the freeing of slaves and debtors; *for the advancement of God's cause*; and for the traveler in need. That is the duty enjoined by God. God is all-knowing and wise. (trans. Dawood 1956:195; emphasis added)

A Sūfī dedicates him/herself to the advancement of Allāh's cause. The esoteric journey towards Him necessitates a moral undertaking and self-sacrifice by the Sūfī. *Sair va sulūk* illustrate a forward motion, a progress from *jāhilīyah* ("ignorance") to attaining illumination in Allāh's majesty of *jalāl* and *jamāl*. The journey is an advancement toward His never-ending divine love. Sūfīs who take on this journey are not concerned with a starting point or a destination, but rather take gratification in each moment they come closer to being a praiseworthy servant of Allāh.

*Mantiq ut-Tayr* (The Logic of the Birds, also known as *Maqāmāt ut-Tuyūr*) by the poet 'Attār illustrates the endless journey of divine love. 'Attār Nīshābūrī (1145-1221) was a poet and Sūfī from the city of Nīshāpūr located in northeastern Iran. *Mantiq ut-tayr* is about a journey of thirty birds towards the *sīmurgh* (the mystical bird or the Beloved). The hoopoe (symbolic of wisdom and knowledge) informs other birds about seven obstacles to overcome (valleys of quest, love, knowledge, detachment, unity, wonderment, and annihilation) in order to reach the place of the *sīmurgh*. Ultimately, the birds realize that the journey to the *sīmurgh* has an ending, but the journey in the *sīmurgh* is endless. Bahā al-Din Muhammad-i Walad, the eldest son of Rūmī, states,

when the journey to God ends, the journey in God begins... There are two journeys, one to God and one in God, for God is infinite and eternal. And how could there be an end for the journey of the soul that had reached His presence? (Sultān Walad 1936:238)

Sūfīs understand the never-ending journey as "the soul's flight into the Divine Presence" (Schimmel 1994:126). The Prophet compared his praying ritual to the *mi'rāj*, a journey of

coming into the presence of Allāh. The mystical journey, or heavenly endeavor is an excursion of the human spirit.

Lotfī believed that a fundamental purpose of *gūsheh-hā* is their ability to set in motion a forward progress. The *gūsheh-hā*'s dynamic nature demonstrates an advancement or an evolution, where the ideas behind their sequences and functions resemble the Sūfī concept of an esoteric journey. Lotfī was convinced that the interconnectedness of *gūsheh-hā* is like the stages and phases Sūfīs go through in the journey of divine love. Lotfī spoke about how *gūsheh-hā* have emotive and stimulating characteristics—*ilhām* (inspiration), *'ishq, bahā'* (splendor), *khayāl* (imagination), *ta'ajjub* (wonder), and *fanā'*—similar to Sūfīs' experiences while embarking on the journey to attain *sa'āda*. Below, I provide an account of Lotfī's *sair va sulūk* in *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān*, based on his teaching of Mīrzā 'Abdullāh's version of the *radīf*. Each *gūsheh*'s purpose and function in *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān* is individually discussed. In each *gūsheh* the journey is set in motion by the specific ordering of melodies and their meaning. In addition, the interconnected nature of *gūsheh-hā* in *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān* expresses a journey with mystical significance.

It took several years for Lotfī to explain to me what he meant by *sair va sulūk* in *gūsheh-hā*. In the summer of 2005, I saw Lotfī after four years. He had moved back to Switzerland for some years before coming back to Iran to settle permanently. His intention was always to come back to Iran, where adoring music students would benefit from his mastery. Meanwhile, I had gone back to Iran to learn *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* from a number of master musicians. I was delighted to hear that Lotfī was in Iran. There was a great level of enthusiasm and energy amongst young *tār* and *setār* players about his return. Many experienced musicians and young music students were hoping for a chance to learn from him. His classes were full of eager students (often up to

forty or fifty students packing his classroom). He was back teaching at his music institution, Maktab Khānah-e Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh (the school of Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh; often called Maktab-khāneh for short) in central Tehran. The naming of his music school expressed the indebtedness Lotfī felt toward *ustād* Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh. Lotfī viewed the relationship between *ustād* and *shāgird* as ever-lasting. He was not a direct disciple of Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh, learning Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s *radīf* from master *tār* player Nūr-‘Alī Borūmand (1905-1977). Yet, Lotfī believed that the knowledge of the *radīf* passed on to him exemplified the immense musical talent and admirable lifestyle of *ustād* Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh.

Lotfī asked me to meet him in Maktab-khāneh early in the morning. It was a late spring morning and the weather was pleasant in Tehran. Lotfī greeted me at the door. Nothing had changed; I felt the same connection to him that I had in Berkeley. He would still play his *setār* early in the morning before having tea. I sat in his empty classroom and listened to him play. He was playing *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān* (simply known as *bayāt-e Esfahān*). When he was finished playing, he explained to me that part of music training is recognizing and playing each *gūsheh* in the *radīf*. Lotfī said

In fact, learning to play the mechanics of a *gūsheh* [basic melodic structure] is the easiest task. What is important for a *shāgird* is to learn the meaning and purpose of *gūsheh-hā*. Why is a certain *gūsheh* played first instead of another? Why do *gūsheh-hā* have an order and *hālat khās* [certain mode; reference to emotion and feelings] *va bayān khās* [certain delivery]. Learning the melodies of *gūsheh-hā* is like learning words; an orator does not only know words, but knows how to put words and sentences together to make a powerful and effective speech. The orator knows when to use a certain word, when to pause, when to incorporate poetry... *Gūsheh-hā* also need similar attention by a musician, similar like that an orator gives to words in a speech. Once you know the purpose of *gūsheh-hā*, then each *gūsheh* provides meaning and builds on other *gūsheh-hā* to produce an effective and powerful message for listeners. (Interview conducted on May 18, 2005)

Lotfī, then asked me to play in *bayāt-e Esfahān*. It was the first time he had asked me to play a *dastgāh* or an *āvāz*, instead of a *gūsheh*. I felt this was a beginning of a different kind of music

training. In the past, he expected me to play a *gūsheh* I had previously learned. Playing a *dastgāh* or an *āvāz* would mean more artistic freedom that requires bringing together different *gūsheh-hā*. I was anxious. I recall asking myself how to begin *bayāt-e Esfahān*, what *gūsheh-hā* to play and when to end. My playing could not have lasted more than five minutes. I rushed through a few of the *gūsheh-hā*, hoping to show Lotfī my adequate knowledge of the *radīf*.

Once I was finished, Lotfī said “well, you now know each *gūsheh* in *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān*, but you do not know what you are playing and why you are playing it.” He said

There is a logic and reason that is judicious and sensible behind each *gūsheh* which are the components of *dastgāh* and *āvāz*. After the first few years of *radīf* training, the students need to learn the logic and reasons behind *gūsheh-hā*. The ordering and function of each *gūsheh* is like *sair be samt-e murād hast* (a journey toward the beloved or desired). Eventually, a young musician needs to learn the path of this journey. Each *gūsheh* offers a step forward in the spiritual journey. (Interview conducted on May 18, 2005)

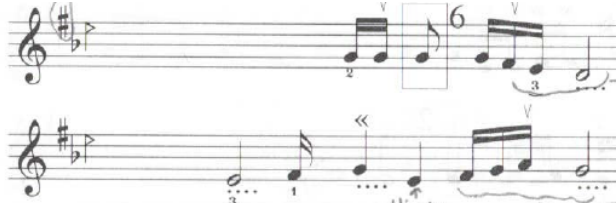
Lotfī instructed me to meet with him early on Sunday mornings, so that he could “re-teach” the *radīf* to me. He said, “this time, you will begin to learn the *radīf*’s purpose and meaning.” The following Sunday, I was at Maktab-khāneh just before seven o’clock. As usual, Lotfī was already there, practicing his *setār*. He told me that he will be teaching me *darāmad-e bayāt-e Esfahān*. Lotfī planned to teach me a *gūsheh* each Sunday morning. During the week, he would instruct me to think about various emotional and spiritual aspects of the *gūsheh* I had learned. A week was enough time for me to re-conceptualize and rethink my approach to the *gūsheh* I had learned from Lotfī. Each week, he would also instruct me to listen to a number of master musicians’ recordings that he had recommended. He wanted me to develop a deeper knowledge of different master musicians’ treatment of *gūsheh-hā*. The following week, he would take some time to talk about the recordings.

Lotfī began his teaching of *darāmad-e bayāt-e Esfahān*, playing note-by-note from Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version of the *radīf*. Then he began to improvise in the *darāmad*. The potency and beauty of his improvisational skills was on full display. While the authenticity and accuracy of *darāmad-e bayāt-e Esfahān* remained intact, his unique playing produced a novel rendition and interpretation of this *gūsheh*. After a few minutes of playing the *darāmad*, Lotfī made an eye-opening remark:

in this quest for love, the beginning is known and the end never materializes. The beginning is the origin; it is what orients and holds things together. It is a point of reference; a reminder of the raw and unfiltered essence of the human soul. It needs care and nurture to grow. *Darāmad* needs to be played gently and with deliberation. *Darāmad* is like a new-born; it means to start...it has *latā’fat* [with grace] and needs to be played with compassion in calm and tranquility. Particularly, in *bayāt-e Esfahān*, which is melancholic, lamenting and nostalgic. These are all traits of a journey...a lament of parting away from what was considered the beginning or the origin. Although one would never lose sight of the origin, one cannot come back to the same spot or stage again in life. That is the journey of *darāmad-e Esfahān* [*bayāt-e Esfahān*]. (Interview conducted on May 25, 2005)

Lotfī believed that the concept of *bayāt* derives from the Turkmān Sahrā region in the northwestern Iran near the Caspian Sea. *Bayāti khāndan* means to sing *do-baytī* (“double-couplet”). *Do-baytī* is a form of poetry with a stanza of four half-lines, typically with eleven syllables in each half-line, and a metric scheme of *hazaj-e mosaddas-e maḥdūf-e maqsūr*: [u - - - | u - - - | u - - -]. It is customary in Turkmān Sahrā for *bayāti khāndan* to involve themes of love, separation, traveling, loneliness and rejection. Lullabies (*lālā’ī*), which are solemn and somber, also have the same *hazaj* rhythmic scheme (or prosody) and incorporate similar themes. Lotfī viewed *bayāt-e Esfahān*’s melancholic and lamenting nature as due to its connection to *do-baytī*. He was convinced that, even though *do-baytī* is not sung in *bayāt-e Esfahān*, the theme of separation and journey is prevalent in this *āvāz*.

When playing *darāmad-e bayāt-e Esfahān*, Lotfī emphasised the first melodic motif:



Example 1. *Darāmad-e āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān* based on Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version (Talā’ī 2016:285).

He stressed the importance of playing each note gently and with deliberation. Lotfī viewed this melodic motif as the beginning of *sair va sulūk*. He said,

This is the most important part of *darāmad-e bayāt-e Esfahān*. Particularly, this note [referring to his F sharp fret, which he would move lower when playing *bayāt-e Esfahān* in order for F sharp to sound flatter, but not as low as F-koron] needs to be bent. Without the bending *darāmad-e bayāt-e Esfahān* is not recognizable. The bending creates a powerful representation of sorrow and agony of separation. The end of *darāmad* comes back to the same note, but not quite the same. Also, after opening melodies, the *darāmad* expands outwards...but the steps are small and confined, much like someone who begins a journey, but is unsure and cautious of the first steps. (Interview conducted on May 25, 2005)

Lotfī’s explanation of the *darāmad-e bayāt-e Esfahān* completely changed my understanding of this *āvāz*. I began to develop a better sense of what he meant by journey. He would say that “sounds have spirit.” His teaching began to reaffirm the importance of attaining the appropriate knowledge of Islamic ideals, Sūfī practices and traditional values to give my music spirit.

*Darāmad-e bayāt-e Esfahān* was the first step in *sair va sulūk*. It has a *bahā’* in its contemplating and reflexive nature. *Bahā’* is similar to the English phrase “pay your dues,” earning the right to achieve something through hardwork. *Darāmad* sets the stage for other *gūsheh-hā* to follow. Lotfī spoke of *gūsheh-hā* like episodes of a journey:

Each *gūsheh* has its own encounters and unique experience, which can be thought of as small journeys. The aggregate of the small journeys, the coming together of *gūsheh-hā* produce the epic journey. Each time the journeys are unique, and individuals will have a different experience of them. (Interview conducted on May 25, 2005)



Lotfī next taught me *jāme-darān*, which follows the *darāmad* in *bayāt-e Esfahān*. *Jāme-darān* literally translates to “tear apart clothing or garments.” The tearing of garments is the result of intoxication, ecstasy and joy that the music creates. Lotfī addressed the meaning of *jāme-darān*:

Nakīsa [also known as Nagīsa, meaning “jewel”] was a master harp player. The story is that one day she begins to play her harp [she played in the royal court of Khusraw II]. She played her harp so memorably that those around her began to be intoxicated, a trance state came over them, making the listeners rip their clothing off and dance to her music. (Interview conducted on June 2, 2005)

After the initial contemplative and cautious steps of the *darāmad*, *jāme-darān* is the joy and delight of being set free. After the primary stage of separation comes the pleasure of having the audacity and courage to take on this journey. *Jāme-darān* offers a sense of *‘ilhām*, it is inspirational and stimulating. Lotfī viewed it as,

*‘ilhām bakhsh* [inspirational]. The intoxication of *jāme-darān* does not mean taking off clothing like some young people do when they attend a rave party. *‘Ilhām* [inspiration] is divine motivation enabling one to rip off the darkness and impurity of the *nafs*. *Jāme-darān* inspires love and affection for the Beloved. It is a youthful, vigorous and animated form of love. In this stage of the journey caution is put aside in favour of youthful energy and discovery. (Interview conducted on June 2, 2005)

*Jāme* becomes the garments that cover the human *nafs*. It is a stage in the journey that requires a letting go, a celebration of being liberated. While playing *jāme-darān*, Lotfī paid particular attention to the following two melodic motifs:



Example 2. *Jāme-darān* in *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān* based on Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version (Talā’ī 2016:288).



Example 3. *Jāme-darān* in *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān* based on Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version (Talā’ī 2016:289).

Both examples of *jāme-darān* stress the note G. However, in each the treatment is different.

*‘Ilhām* elicits meditation, or a form of contemplation that is rooted in an individual’s sense of wonderment and inspiration for the world. *Jāme-darān* creates a sense of awe and imagination based on this duality. Lotfī viewed the above examples of *jāme-darān* as the highest point of inspiration for the listeners. The examples have a contrary melodic movement to one another, but both stop on the note G. They create a complementarity, interconnectedness and interdependence, while being different. There is a simultaneous unity and duality in each example. The paradox produces an inspiring message of joy and delight for the listener.

The inspiration of *jāme-darān* then shifts to a mature state of *‘ishq* (love) in *bayāt-e rāje*. Lotfī referred to *bayāt-e rāje* as the burning desire for divine love. It begins with a rapid sequence of melodies, then stops on the note A. The note A produces a longing and yearning for the Beloved. My experience of *bayāt-e rāje* is one of fascination, but also an unsettling search to understand its mystery and appeal.



Example 4. *Bayāt-e rāje* in *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān* based on Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version (Talā’ī 2016:290).

Lotfī spoke about *‘ishq* in *bayāt-e rāje*:

Love is a way of getting closer to Allāh. True love is hard to attain, it is the most honourable act of all...only if one could attain unconditional love, then one would

experience and feel love's majesty. By unconditional, I mean, nothing matters but love toward the path of Allāh. Love becomes a devotion and act that is pure and divine. (Interview conducted on June 9, 2005)

The statement by Lotfī conveys his Sūfī belief. For Sūfīs, the manner of worship has four stations, known as *manzila* (house or station) (Ernst 1997), which consist of asceticism, fear, longing and love. Sūfīs believe that true love cannot be attained by everyone; it is considered to be the highest and most honorable *manzila*. Love is attained by “those whose hearts are strengthened by sincere conviction and by behavior purified of sin” (Ernst 1997: 101).

As Lotfī was explaining the attributes of love to me, I remembered his classes in Berkeley. Back then, I was uncertain why he would ask me to sit on the floor to meditate and practice breathing techniques with him. I was oblivious as to what he meant when he spoke about purifying the *nafs*. I recalled a comment he made during my music training in Berkeley: “music is an invitation, the classroom is *muhīt-e muhabat* [place of kindness or compassion], love opens our heart toward the divine as we take on this mystical journey.” I now have a better understanding of Lotfī's standpoint toward love. Attaining love is only possible through a purified and cleansed heart, otherwise the divine journey would be inaccessible. In *adab al-'ibādat* (The Manners of Worship), Shaiq al-Balkhī (d. 810) of the Khorāsan order, writes about individuals who attain His love:

On that day he becomes the beloved, the noble one, the near one, the pure one, the sweet one.... You will never meet him when he is not smiling, sweetly and nobly, pure in morals, never frowning, good in company, full of good news, avoiding sins, contradicting liars, never hearing anything except what God loves. One who hears or sees him loves him, because of the love of God the Mighty and Majestic for him. (1982:17-20)

What Lotfī wanted me to learn was that love becomes a vehicle for the spiritual travelers. The journey takes place within the soul, that is precisely what Lotfī meant by “love opens our hearts.”

“Heart” is the metaphorical representation of human soul. The longer one endures the challenges of the journey, the higher *maqām* (plural, *maqāmāt*) one obtains. *Maqām* (ranking or status) entails a succession of ethical attributes that an individual achieves to progress to another stage.

Love has an imaginative component, making one wonder about the splendor and illustriousness of the divine. The *gusheh naghmeh* embodies an element of *ta‘ajjub* (wonder) and also *khayāl* (imagination). *Naghmeh* means a pleasant voice. The pleasantness is an attribute of moderation in *naghmeh*. Lotfī said that the patterning of the melodies and sequences of *naghmeh* points to moderation. The melodies have a small range and follow a specific rhythmic scheme. Moderation requires restraint and self-discipline to oppose what is deemed unacceptable. Divine love demands that individuals dedicate their actions, desires and thoughts to Him. Moderation entails an individual’s rational mind to strive for good deeds, based on nurturing dispositions such as steadfastness and being grounded. The exhibition of extreme traits indicates a lack of reason and rationality. Lotfī observed that *naghmeh*’s moderate nature solidifies one’s effort to love. Moderation is the steady stream of progress of the continuing journey in the path of divine love. True love requires a lifetime’s dedication, where one cannot falter by being excessive and extreme. Lotfī began to play the first three melodic motifs of *naghmeh*.



Example 4. *naghmeh* in *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān* based on Mīrẓā ‘Abdullāh’s version (Talā’ī 2016:295).

The journey toward divine love is not completed for any Sūfī without annihilation in the *pir*. *Sūz o godāz* characterises *fanā*. Lotfī viewed *sūz o godāz* as the dance of a *murīd* for *murād*.



Example 5. *sūz o godāz* in *āvāz-e bayāt-e Esfahān* based on Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh’s version (Talā’ī 2016:298).

He stated that,

*sūz o godāz* is like a butterfly dancing in front of a candle. It is beautiful and mesmerizing, yet the butterfly knows the heat will ultimately burn its wings and destroy its body...love for the *murād* has no answer but to surrender for the desired. To be one with the beloved, one must give all to Him. (Interview conducted on June 16, 2005)

*Sūz o godāz*’s opening melodic motif is lamenting. However, there is a delight in *fanā*’, the recognition of the unity with the self, creation and Allāh. Only when the individual ego is eliminated can an individual attain awareness of *tawhīd* (unity or oneness) of Allāh and the universe. *Fanā*’ consists of three steps: a) seeking annihilation in the being of the *pīr*; b) seeking annihilation in the being of the Prophet; and c) seeking annihilation in the essence of Allāh.

For Lotfī, the rhythmic scheme of *sūz o godāz* is based on the poetic meter of Nizāmī Ganjavī’s *Khosrow o Shirin*, which comprises more than six thousand verses in the *hazaj* meter.<sup>6</sup> In this epic poem, Khosrow (Sassanian Khosrow II) endures the physical and spiritual challenges of long journeys to be reunited with Princess Shirin. According to Lotfī, *sūz o godāz* represents a higher form of love. The relationship of *murīd* to *murād* is not about impure human attributes, but seeking illumination and salvation in the *pīr*, who leads the way to the Prophet, and finally to give all to Allāh.

<sup>6</sup> Ganjavī’s (1141-1209) *Khosrow o Shirin* is one of the five epic poems in his *Panj Ganj* or *Khamsa* (“quintet” or “quinary”).

Lotfī explanation of *sair va sulūk* in *bayāt-e Esfahān* helped me develop a better understanding of how the *radīf* embodies three interrelated sets of *ab ‘ād-e akhlāqī*: Islamic revelations, *‘irfān* (gnosis) and *sonnat* (tradition). For me, each of the *ab ‘ād* was inspiring, offering me a better understanding of the *radīf* and the judgment of beauty in the musical repertoire. Lotfī and Jankouk both believed that music is a medium to attain *sa ‘āda*. Lotfī’s and Jankouk’s teachings of the *radīf* render a viewpoint on beauty that is shaped through their understandings of *akhlāq*. For them, *ab ‘ād-e akhlāqī* in the *radīf* illuminate what is deemed *suitable* and *good*: *mahbūb wa ma ‘shūq* (lover and beloved) as important attributes of divine love. Allāh’s Beauty is subjective and abstract. Lotfī’s and Jankouk’s teachings set out to consider, analyze and objectivize Allāh’s Beauty through their music-making. Each lesson in the *radīf* was a judgment of beauty for Lotfī and Jankouk that encompassed a range of sublime qualities that are attributed to Allāh. Ultimately, in their classrooms music became a medium to attain *sa ‘āda*. Lotfī and Jankouk taught me that *sa ‘āda* is to recognize *zibā ‘i* (beauty). This recognition is only possible through Islamic revelations, *‘irfān* and *sonnat*. Music finds its *zibā ‘i* or *jamāl* when one cleanses the soul of impurity and finds the path toward Allāh’s Beauty.

## PART. II

“Music is an ‘*ibādat* (servitude or worship); it has always been a part of my people’s life. But, in my country music has been *harām* (forbidden). And, they [religious authorities] have used the musicians’ instruments to beat them over the head with.”

Mohammad-Rezā Shajariān—Stanford University, Spring 2009

The discussion of Lotfī’s and Jankouk’s teaching in Part I shows that the judgment of *zibā’i* (beauty) in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is based on the metaphysical views that seek to illuminate one’s awareness towards the splendor of the Ultimate Beauty of Allāh. Lotfī’s and Jankouk’s deep belief in Sūfī ideals connects their music to a judgment of *zibā’i* that revolves around Islamic values and mystic beliefs. Part II of this dissertation examines how Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem’s judgment of beauty, articulated in intimate spaces like the music classes, takes on a public form through a discourse grounded on logic and rationality. The public discourse is informed by the current socio-political circumstances of Iran, where the perception of *zibā’i*—alongside the metaphysical understandings—is facilitated through language, logic and politics (jurisprudence and theology). The next three chapters address the linguistic, logical and political components of the three *ustādān*’s judgment of *zibā’i*. They examine how the three master musicians’ contemplations on *akhlāq* have shifted from the private settings into the public sphere. The public sphere bestows a new advocacy role upon Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem as “*akhlāq* teachers.” The three master musicians’ public discourse revolves around how music helps an individual to attain piety, goodness and *sa’āda* (happiness).

Part II begins by illustrating the ways in which Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem have been able to insert their private views on *akhlāq* into the public sphere. Master musicians, as guardians of a tradition, have always held strong positions about the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* in

the intimacy of their homes, music classes and private gatherings. What has changed over the last three decades is how many of the *ustādān* are finding themselves as “private individuals [who] come together into the public space” (Habermas 1989 [1962]:27). The Fourth Chapter, “*Ustādān, The Preachers of Akhlāq,*” examines how Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem have increasingly used the public sphere to become politically engaged agents. Throughout the modern history of Iran, celebrated musicians are known to have been socially engaged and politically motivated. For example, ‘Abū’l-Qāsem ‘Āref Qazvīnī (1882-1934), a musician and poet, was a revolutionary during the *Enqelāb-e Mashrūteh* (the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1905-1911). Qamar-ol-Molūk Vazirī (1905-1959), was a renowned female singer, known for her charity concerts and contributions to an orphanage in southern Tehran. Over the past three decades a considerable number of the *ustādān* have become more politically engaged than before. In large part this is due to the flow of information, mobility, advancement of a quasi-free market economy, and public reaction to the socio-political and religious environment of today’s Iran. These factors have facilitated and empowered Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem to publicly articulate their positions on music, and argue against the antagonistic position of some Shī’a authorities toward their art.

Chapter Five, “The Language of Devotion, Goodness and Beauty,” elucidates the three *ustādān*’s religious and political use of language. Although the use of Islamic and mystic language is not the only way Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem convey their understanding of beauty on music to the public (See Part III), the use of religious concepts is fundamental in developing a righteous and an honorable position on music. The Islamic language that the three master musicians engage with makes use of powerful discursive elements similar to those of the Shī’a authorities. The Shī’a authorities’ deliberations on music rely on two forms of language use: a)



the employment of Islamic thoughts, concepts and narratives (a normative practice often heard in their speeches); and b) the exploitation of derogatory terms to demote the status of music.

The majority of Shī'a authorities have historically had a tenuous relationship with musicians, resulting in a strained connection between the two that is quite noticeable today. For many 'ulamā', music falls outside the "accepted" Islamic values individuals ought to follow. Today, the sway of the "conservative" 'ulamā' influences decisions to hold public performances or grant permits for recordings and production of CDs/DVDs. The 'ulamā's' sanctions on music are typically channeled through state institutions (e.g., The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, established in 1984), religious ceremonies (e.g., Friday sermons), or religious decrees (e.g., *fatwā* [nonbinding but authoritative legal judgement]). Chapter Five examines how some *ustādān's* use of religious and mystic language counters the Shī'a authorities' viewpoints. It also shows how master musicians' ethical discourse puts forth a view on music that centers on devotion, goodness and beauty.

In *Legitimation Crisis* (1975 [1973]) Jürgen Habermas writes that "ethics of speech" (*Sprachethik*) is a way for members of a community to evaluate social norms in relation to "counterfactually projected reconstruction." He develops this idea further as "discourse ethics," which centers on a process following the guidelines of the "ideal speech situation" to ensure unbiased and honest dialogue between all participants to reach the best possible argument (Habermas 1990, 1996, 2003). The absence of social mechanisms for an ideal speech situation in Iran has kept viable avenues for honest dialogue from taking shape in the public sphere. Under such circumstances members of a community find new ways to express and evaluate the social norms. Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem's discourse allows for legitimization of ideals and cohesion towards a shared belief. Chapter Six, "*Akhlāq*, Autonomy and Authority in Music," examines

how the three *ustādān*'s discourse becomes an advocacy tool to determine what is good about music-making. This mode of discourse by the three master musicians is a form of religious and political rhetoric (contrary to that of the Shī'a authorities) that is (to an extent) open to logical and rational resolutions. Ideally, discourse is a way of presenting a standpoint where "no force except that of the better argument" prevails (Habermas 1973:108). Habermas develops his argument further by considering discourse as serving a dual role of social integration and legitimation. The three *ustādān*'s religious discourse allows for the legitimation of the status of music as an honorable practice, as it counters the Shī'a authorities' "counterfactually projected reconstruction" of music-making. The three master musicians' discourse is also a way for acceptance of music into Iranian society as good and beautiful (something the state has neglected and ignored). Their discourse sets out to promote music as an important cultural and educational instrument that creates social cohesion for the community.

Much like the Shī'a authorities' speeches, Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem's discourse projects authority as it seeks to justify their position as the "true" representatives of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. The three *ustādān*'s discourses are dominated by an unvarying argument about the position of music. The discourse is partly based on an ideological mechanism that maintains unidirectional views on music by both the *ustādān* and the Shī'a authorities. In short, moral deliberation produces a view by *ustādān* on music that demarcates it as suitable and good. It also produces a discourse that sets out an agenda to create and maintain an unwavering notion of music as righteous and spiritual. Ultimately, moral deliberation and the resulting discourse sets out to explain and consider an understanding of the truth. The intimate connection with *haqq* is realized through the purification of the soul. Chapter Five concludes by comparing Ibn Sīnā's understanding of *haqq* (truth) based on gnostic asceticism, where an individual develops the practice of self-discipline

and religious exercise to become connected to the Divine splendor, with Lotfi's account of a musician's journey.

Habermas has an inclusive view of public discourse, where members of society become engaged in public dialogue and debate. Habermas' idea originates from the Age of Enlightenment that emphasizes reason and rationality where "democratic governance rests on the capacity of and opportunity for citizens to engage in enlightened debate" (Hauser 1988:83). In other words, Habermas states that "we call events and occasions 'public' when they are open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs" (1989:1). By taking on a public role, Lotfi, Jankouk and Sālem have become politically engaged, giving voice to a discourse on music that is otherwise mediated and regulated by the Shī'a authorities. Chapter Four also explores the engagement of the master vocalist, Shajariān, in the public sphere, as a political agent who seeks to advance an admirable perspective on the status of music in Iran.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: *USTĀDĀN*, THE PREACHERS OF *AKHLĀQ*

This chapter examines how over the last three decades Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem (as well as Shajariān) have been able to use the public sphere to advance a political message in defense of music. The shift from the intimate settings of the private into the public sphere has given rise to a discourse by these three master musicians that not only presents music-making as good and suitable, but counters the frequent barrage of religious and political elites' antagonistic views on music. The transition into the public realm has meant that Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem's roles have taken on an added layer of political significance as they preach *akhlāq* in music. While historically some of the *ustādān* have utilized the public sphere, and engaged occasionally in political activism, the last three decades have seen an intensification in the role of the *ustādān* with respect to the public. As many Iranians are striving to transition into a more "liberal" and "open" society in the post-Khomeinī era, Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem are among the master musicians who have begun to take their message to the public through: a) reproductions and re-recordings of their music; b) concerts, masterclasses, music institutions, workshops, and ceremonies; c) newspaper, television and radio interviews; d) travels and residencies abroad that have brought international fame and accolades; and d) the Internet, in effect the use of social media. The gradual changes in the post-Khomeinī era have provided Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem with a platform as political agents to generate a discourse that confronts the ruling élite's authoritative ideologies by illuminating what is good and suitable about music.

Today, the public sphere in Iran remains politically charged, with debates among political, religious, intellectual, artistic, humanitarian and environmentalist factions, organizations and individuals (see further, Graham and Khosravi 2002). The last three decades have witnessed a significant number of master musicians advocating *akhlāq* in music-making, a

response to the regime's politicization and Islamization of Iranian culture and society. During the last three decades, Lotfī resided in Switzerland and the United States and eventually returned to Iran, where he held concerts, and workshops, gave talks and conducted master classes. Shajariān has had an enormous role inside and outside of Iran as a master vocalist through his music and political views. Jankouk has traveled extensively throughout Iran to hold talks and master classes. Sālem has never resided outside of Iran; her teaching of children in Tehran is a model of how a recognized female master musician has taken on a public role despite the constant obstacles and challenges faced by women musicians.

Habermas' notion of *public sphere* is an attempt to "reformulate a dialectical relationship between the socio-cultural and political system" (Hohendahl and Silberman 1979:89). Central to the public sphere are the transformational changes of cultural institutions through adaptations and restructuring of the political system as economic systems are reshaped. What is pertinent here is the cultural discourse Lotfī and Shajariān engage with to change the politics, which in Iran is inextricably tied to religion. In addition, Lotfī's and Shajariān's discourse generates a form of self-determination and political emancipation that instigates a shift in their role from private citizen to political activist. The self-determined individual is a private person who partakes in discourse by navigating through the prevalent political norms, the state's monopoly on power and its interpretations. Lotfī's and Shajariān's statements have the objective of offering a reasonable and logical perspective on the judgment of beauty in music to the public.

The public's view "institutionalizes itself with the goal of replacing decisionistic secret politics with a form of domination that is legitimated by means of rational consensus among participating citizens" (Hohendahl and Silberman 1979:89). The mediation between public and private is based on tolerance and freedom for a rational consensus to be formed among the

citizens. Lotfī's and Shajariān's discourse on *akhlāq* cultivates a judgment on beauty of music based on the presupposition that autonomous individuals can be induced to contemplate alternative views to these of the Shī'a authorities. Habermas considers the public sphere "no longer mediat[ing] between a society of private property holders and the state, but rather the autonomous public as private people secures itself a sphere of personal freedom and tolerance in the systematic organization of a state absorbed into the society" (1984 [1962]:143). The self-determination and political emancipation for Lotfī and Shajariān also means the audacity to stand up against the Shī'a authorities' "divine" perspectives on music as a sinful act.

#### 4.1. IRAN AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The public sphere in Iran would ideally be a space where rational discourse and open dialogue take place. The authorities have been successful in marginalizing and censoring the voices of women, youth and ethnic and religious minorities. To a large extent, some of the oppressed voices have found ways to participate in the public discourse. Nevertheless, in Iran, like many other places, public conversations and exchange of information takes place in semi-private assemblies, like coffee-houses, bazars, mosques and other community places. A vital example of the use of the public sphere is the shared taxi ride, where strangers travelling in the same directions compose a small public to discuss social and political issues. Since the 1990s the presence of satellite television has offered an alternative source of information and news to Iranians. A powerful medium of public discourse for Iranians is the cyberspace (Graham and Khosravi 2002). The Internet provides an alternative space to generate discussions that are not regulated by the state and corrupted by commercialism. Cyberspace may not necessarily offer a blueprint for justice or democracy, but it offers "different ways of *ordering* social life and one way to understand it is therefore to understand it as a place of alternative 'orderings'"

(Hetherington 1997:43; emphasis added). The Internet has made the Iranian authorities anxious, as they witness cyberspace as an instrument that “more or less [provides] uncontrollable streams of information into the country” (Graham and Khosravi 2002:226).

Certain political events, like the presidential elections, generate energy and enthusiasm. During the presidential campaigns the streets and public venues are transformed as many urban middle-class youth come out to voice their support for the moderate candidates. The reform supporters are not the only visible political agents; many come out to rally for the government during different events and ceremonies. The government-backed media also sporadically have programs that become sites for political debates and organizations that are not part of the state. Even *Ninety*, a popular late-night soccer program, at times becomes a public forum through which a heterogeneous array of views is aired. These small but powerful dialogues create an awareness based on rational discussion that is contrary to the state regulation of news and information. There are many social and cultural gatherings that also advance multi-layer and pluralistic discussions on politics, culture and art. Most of these gatherings take place in a particular *anjoman*.

Historically, an important platform for Iranian artists to express their views and to engage with other intellectuals has been through their participation in an *anjoman*. These have been vibrant spaces, filled with diverse views on philosophy, politics, religion, arts and other socio-cultural issues, especially since the Constitutional Revolution.<sup>7</sup> These public organizations can be divided into three categories: a) *anjoman-e sīāsī* (political organization); b) *anjoman-e mazhabī* (religious organization); and c) *anjoman-e adabī* (literary organization). *Anjoman-e sīāsī* were mainly created during the Constitutional Revolution in Iran. One of the most

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<sup>7</sup> I use *anjoman* (the singular noun) for the general phenomenon of a gathering or congregation as it would be used in Persian language, instead of the plural, *anjoman-hā*.

prominent political organizations that conducted its meeting in secret cells with a hierarchy of leadership was *Majma‘-e ādamīyat* (Organization for Humanity), which was established in 1958 (Algar 1976). *Majma‘-e ādamīyat* was founded by the chief publisher of *Qānūn* (Law) newspaper and later diplomat, Mīrzā Malkom Khān (1833-1908). *Anjoman-e okhowwat* (Brotherhood) was established in 1907 during the Constitutional Revolution. *Okhowwat* published four newspapers and a magazine during the early 1900s that contributed significantly to the public discourse during the revolution. *Anjoman-e okhowwat* was a significant musical organization, where prominent members like master musicians Darvish Khān frequently attended these gatherings.

*Anjoman-e mazhabī*, as Islamic organizations, as well as cultural and educational institutions began to take shape after the abdication of Rezā Shah in 1941 (Bayat 2013). The first was *Kānūn-e Islām* (The Institution of Islam), founded in Tehran by Āyatullāh Mahmūd Tālaqānī (1911-1979). *Kānūn-e Islām* focused on studying the Qur’ān, and published a periodical called *Dāneshāmūz* (The Pupil). While *anjoman-e mazhabī* are generally considered as the most powerful socio-political organizations in Iran, *anjoman-e adabī* has an extended history that stretches back to the eighteenth century. *Anjoman-e adabī* became prevalent after the Constitutional Revolution, providing a forum for literary scholars, writers, poets and artists to discuss ideas, reflect on social norms and debate political issues. It was also a place to recite poetry, read famous passages and publish journals. Fath-‘Alī Shah Qājār (1797-1834) ordered the creation of the first literary society called *Anjoman-e Khāqān*, which was organized by several court poets (Algar 1976). One of the most influential literary societies was established by renowned poet and scholar Mohammad-Taqī Bahār (1866-1951), who founded the *Anjoman-e Dāneshkada* (University Organization) in 1918.



There were few music *anjoman-hā*. ‘Alī-Naqī Vazirī (1887-1979), a celebrated *tār* master, founded *Kolub-e Mūsīqī* (Music Club), where some writers and intellectuals joined musicians to perform concerts. In 1949, Rūhollāh Khāleqī (1906-1965), a renowned composer and music scholar, established the *Anjoman-e Mūsīqī-ye Mellī* (Society for National Music). Today, the *Anjoman-e Mūsīqī-ye Iran* (Society for Iranian Music) and *Markaz-e Mūsīqī* (Music Center) have frequent gatherings to elect master musicians to an official capacity on the board, to discuss and put forth music programs and to hold performances and other events (for example, unveiling of a new CD).

In addition to the *anjoman*, over the last century master musicians have gradually utilized the public sphere through: a) recording music on gramophone, electrical recordings and magnetic tape recordings; b) teaching to a larger number of students (than in their private classes) in conservatory type music schools; c) affiliation with cultural institutions, such as the College of Fine Arts at Tehran University (established in 1939), the Center for Preservation and Propagation of Traditional Iranian Music (established in 1964), or the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents (established in 1965); d) concerts, such as participation in the Shiraz Arts Festival (1967-1977), or performances in the *Tālār-e Vahdat* (formally known as *Tālār-e Rudakī*) arts complex in Tehran; and e) the broadcasting of the National Iranian Radio (launch date 1926) and Television (launch date 1958) music programs.

In the contemporary history of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*, the first wave of master musicians who took on an active political role coincided with the Constitutional Revolution. For example, ‘Āref Qazvīnī, who “devoted his art to the people” (Aryanpūr 1971:357), used his poetry to highlight social injustice in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution. In Bahār’s description, ‘Āref Qazvīnī became a “poet of the common people” (Aryanpūr 1971:357). Even though some

*ustādān* gradually became more involved in the social and cultural lives of Iranians, the second wave of political engagement for the master musicians originated in the late Sixties and the Seventies. During this period Lotfī, Jankouk, Sālem and Shajariān had just moved to Tehran to pursue music careers and learn from the esteemed master musicians of the time. Lotfī and Sālem attend the politically charged College of Fine Arts at Tehran University, and Shajariān became a teacher. Sālem highlights the socio-cultural environment of the late Sixties and her political ideals:

I knew that SAVAK [short for *Sāzemān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar*, “Organization of National Intelligence and Security”] agents were always around the university, so I never talked about the regime in public, nor did I discuss my Leftist ideologies. I sometimes talked about the books I had read; most people knew my ideas were shaped by Leftist intellectualism. A group of us at the university wanted change for Iran; we wanted equality, we wanted our poor people to benefit from our rich natural resources. We looked to the West, and could never forgive them for what they had done to Mosāddeq [democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran from 1951 to 1953 who was ousted from power by a CIA-backed coup d'état] ...and to our democracy. I wanted some of the ideas of socialism to succeed in Iran. While I could never talk about my political views publically, I used music to begin exhibiting some of my thoughts on injustice and equality. For example, I held free concerts in the poor outskirts of Tehran or in small underprivileged villages. After the concerts, I would talk to the people and try to understand their pain. I wanted them to know that they are not alone in their pain... one day we will overcome the injustice in our nation. I wanted to remain true to the tradition and play music the way I had learned it from my master teachers. At times the poems and even the vigor and excitement of the music I choose to play spoke to a future of hope and freedom. I wanted to project optimism and courage, and to show that I am weary of our government; their corruption, nepotism and especially the “divine” rule of a king. (Interview conducted on July, 5 2016)

Lotfī's and Sālem's discourse centers on the political idealism of the public, collective and equal ownership of resources and social benefits for each citizen. Their political perspectives were also shaped by the revolutionary and socialist speeches of the religious intellectual 'Alī Shariatī (1933-1977) who preached for the creation of a “good” society based on Islamic values. Lotfī speaks about the influence Shariatī had on him during his youth while attending university:

I remember that a friend of mine would bring cassette tapes of Shariatī's speeches. We would listen carefully and envision a future where we could have justice and equality in Iran. I remember as we learned about Shariatī, we learned about Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino [Peruvian philosopher and theologian] and others...

I once went to Hosseiniyeh Ershād [a non-traditionalist religious institute in Tehran established in 1967] to listen to Shariatī's speech. Soon after the speech was over, I wanted to learn more about his vision of resistance and morality in action. I wanted to learn about Jean-Paul Sartre, Che Guevara and Simone de Beauvoir... Later, I learned from Sartre that morality is based on our choosing, and choices can only take place when humans are free. At the same time, many of us had read Samad Behrangī's *Māhī-e sīāh-e kūchūlū* (The Little Black Fish), or Jalāl Āl-e Ahmad's writings, where I was introduced to *Gharb-zadegī* [West-toxication or Infected by the West]. I read his *Zīārat* [The pilgrimage], which appeared in *Sokhān* newspaper in 1945, and *Modīr-e madrasa* [The School Principle] and *Nefrīn-e zamīn* [*The Curse of the Earth*]. Āl-e Ahmad made me believe that change was in the works and we should be less eager to conform to Western ideas. This was argued in his *Khedmat va Kīānat-e rowshanfekrān* ("The Services and Disservices of the Intellectuals." (Interview conducted on July 12, 2012)

The second wave of politicization of music is rooted in opposing the monarch, by advocating a political and moral position of the collective for the common good of the masses. As the flame of the revolution began to threaten the monarch's absolute rule, Lotfī, Jankouk, Sālem and Shajariān's music became more nationalistic, using poems that spoke to the people's pain and agency.

The adaptation of Marxist thought might be considered as one of the most powerful oppositional forces throughout the twentieth century in Iran (Abrahamian 1982; Katouzian 2003). Marxist ideology had significant influence amongst the intellectuals, poets and artists beginning in the 1940s and 1950s (Katouzian 2003). Marxism-Leninism and Maoism provided one of the main frameworks for intellectual thoughts and debates, based on a "vocabulary of partisan and guerrilla" that sought to present Iran with secular ideals of freedom and equality for all (Fayazmanesh 1995:99-101). The influential *Hezb-e Tūde-ye Iran* (Party of the Masses of Iran) had many intellectuals and artists as its members, including the renowned poet Hushang

Ebtehāj (b. 1928; pen name Sāyeh) and Lotfī. The second wave of music politicization centered on Marxist and leftist ideologies for Lotfī and Sālem, but it also incorporated “modern” Islamic ideas. Shariatī brought into conversation a synthesis of Marxist, existentialist and Islamic thought to revitalize what Durkheim called the *conscience collective*. I was not surprised when Lotfī told me he was greatly affected by his reading of Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). The political and economic injustice of the time led Lotfī’s and Sālem’s music towards a revolutionary political ideology. Lotfī and Sālem’s desire for justice was the reflection of Iranian society as the nation found itself embracing a revolution.

In the succeeding years of the Revolution, Lotfī’s Marxist and leftist discourse gradually began to be replaced by a spiritual and religious content. The Revolution effectively normalized an Islamic discourse that became germane to any socio-political conversation. Iranian master musicians, as political agents, also entered this Islamic driven discourse. The fall of communism in Eastern Europe meant Lotfī’s Marxist and leftist ideology would not generate as much interest as it did for his generation. Furthermore, the decades after the Iran-Iraq War necessitated a public discussion that was spiritual and meditative as Iranians began to heal from the wounds of an eight-year carnage. The mystical language brought a layer of tranquility and harmony upon the normalized Islamic discourses. In a way, political Islam, that for Lotfī had Marxist and leftist tendencies, now centered on mysticism and traditional values.

#### 4.2. THE REVOLUTION AND MUSIC

In November 1979, just nine months after the Iranian Revolution had succeeded, Shajariān and Lotfī (and the members of the *Sheydā* ensemble) performed *Sepideh* (“Dawn”) in the *Dāneshgāh Beheshtī* (University of Beheshtī). *Sepideh* was widely recorded and distributed amongst the masses, particularly the concluding *tasnīf*: *Iran ey saraye omid* (Iran, the Land of

Hope). The nationalistic and triumphant theme has made *Sepideh* into an “unofficial national anthem” (Nooshin 2005:241). When, in later years, Shajariān stated his displeasure with the leftist ideologies that some members of *Sheydā* brought (particularly with those of the *Hezb-e Tūde-ye Iran*), he criticized the government for playing *Sepideh* with images that stir sentiments of nationalism and patriotism as young soldiers were getting ready to be deployed to war.

Shajariān also became unsympathetic to the authorities as *Sepideh* became synonymous with the images of the triumphant return of Khomeinī from exile that were played repeatedly on the state-sponsored television. Lotfī, as the composer of this *tasnīf* and director of *Sheydā*, had a different perspective:

Back then, I thought that the people’s revolution had succeeded and would bring prosperity. Prior to the revolution, I had tried to make my music in line with my ideals, which were based on the collective and common good for all Iranians. As the revolution succeeded, I wanted to take part in this victory. *Sheydā*, back then, was about celebrating the hope of a better future, and remembering those who have given their lives and sacrificed all in the process. (Interview conducted on June 9, 2012)

Regardless of Shajariān’s and Lotfī’s different political views, soon after the Revolution they were forced to retreat from the public sphere due to the stringent Islamic ideologies implemented in the first decade of the Islamic Republic.

The events of the 1979 Iranian Revolution can be thought of as “a call for Muslims to think for themselves, [and] to discover true Islam” by the religious establishment (Fischer 1980:183). The return to the “original purity” of Islam centered on a discourse by the Shī’a authorities that took key concepts, rituals and historical events, and gave them relevance through current ethical and social interpretations. The formulation of the Islamic ideologies by the Shī’a authorities divided Iranians into friends and foes based on religious conformity. The Islamic

discourse utilized by Shī'a authorities is close to what Foucault views as “discourse as a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them” (1972:229).

In addition, the Shī'a authorities “claimed that the revolution itself was a purifying event for the participants” (Fischer 1980:184). In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon states that colonized populations can only eradicate their consciousness of inferiority through violent and self-liberating acts. The Iranian Revolution gave the Shī'a authorities a political success that required “a spelling out in political and institutional terms of what previously could be left in vague philosophical and moral language” (Fischer 1980:184). These political and religious undertakings of the first decade of the Revolution made Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān withdraw from the public sphere.

The 1979 Revolution was a rupture in the social, cultural and political lives of most Iranians. The first decade of the Revolution saw the Shī'a *marja'* (Source of emulation), Āyatullāh *al-'ozmā* (Great Sign of God) Khomeinī taking total political control as a *mujtahid* or *faqīh* (an expert in Islamic law). As the revolution ended over 2500 years of monarchy in Iran, Khomeinī implemented a theocratic political rule by Islamic jurists (a vision he had written about while in exile in Iraq), known as *Velāyat-e faqīh* (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist) (Rahimi 2003). His reign as the Supreme Leader saw the short-lived but democratic interim government of premier-designate Mehdī Bāzārgān (February 1979 - November 1979); the passing of an Islamic constitution; the hostage crisis that saw the political faction, Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line, take control of the American Embassy (October 1979); implementation of mandatory *hijāb*; creation of the *Sepāh-e Pāsdārān-e Enqelāb-e Islāmī* (Army of Guardians of the Islamic Revolution); a cultural revolution in universities and the education system; and the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1989).

Interest in Khomeinī's emphasis on "the spiritual over the material" (Sorenson 2007) began to diminish after his death in 1989. The post-Khomeinī era began with Akbar Hāshemī Rafsanjānī's presidency (1989-1997); his "economically liberal" agenda favored privatization policies over state-owned economic strategies (Ansari 2014; Ehteshami and Zweiri 2007; Khajehpour 2000). Rafsanjānī initiated a period of political and cultural stability that aimed to be more open and receptive to the globalized world than in the first decade of the Revolution. This era ushered in opportunities for substantial economic growth (compared to the first decade of the revolution), increased the flow of ideas and mobility, and generated small (yet effective) public platforms for ideas to be explored and debated. Most of these debates were held at universities or *anjoman-hā*, or written about in several reformist newspapers and progressive magazines. The transition into a quasi-free and democratic public sphere was never fully realized, but small avenues began to appear for the intellectual community to come together and reflect upon the Revolution and the future of Iran. At the same time, Rafsanjānī's administration was infamously linked to the notorious Chain Murders of Iran (1988-98). In eleven years over eighty translators, poets, novelists and political activists were conspicuously murdered or disappeared. The horrific serial killings only came to light in 1998 when the leaders of Nation Party of Iran, Dāriush Forouhar (1928-1998) and his wife Parvāneh Forouhar (1939-1998) as well as the writer and poet Mohammad Mokhtārī (1942-1998), were murdered in a span of few months.

In spite of the authorities' crackdown on public gatherings and their anxiety towards public congregations not in line with the Revolution, Iran's socio-political environment gradually began to change. The embrace of a free market and foreign investment meant more leverage to develop competing political discourses in the public sphere, particularly as President Mohammad Khātāmī took office (1997-2005). One of the most vivid examples of the public's engagement in

the political realm (unthinkable in the early days of the Iranian Revolution) was the July 1999 student protest known as *Hashtom-e Tīr* and *Kūye Dāneshgāh* (July University Dormitory Disaster). A peaceful demonstration that began on July 8 against the closure of a reformist newspaper was followed by a brutal raid into Tehran University’s dormitory. The raid—captured on video (one of the first acts of atrocity by the authorities recorded digitally that later spread through social media)—led to six days of demonstrations and riot throughout the country. In the aftermath of the student protests, seventy students disappeared and more than fifteen hundred were detained.

It took another decade for protestors to come out in public again. The 2009 disputed presidential election saw the *Jonbesh-e Sabz* (Green Movement) brutally decimated by the *Basij* militia (*Sāzmān-e Basij-e Mostaz’afīn*; “The Organization for Mobilization of the Oppressed”).<sup>8</sup> In the aftermath of the 2009 protests, Shajariān was one of the master musicians who opposed the authorities’ harsh crackdown on the public. Shajariān’s *Zabān-e ātesh* (“The Language of Fire) is an eight-minute song—famous for its first line: *tofangat-rā zamīn bogzār* (put your gun on the ground)—that became popular instantly upon its release through the social media in 2010. In a phone interview in the summer of 2009 with BBC Farsi from his residence in Tehran, Shajariān stated:

Under such conditions when our people are trapped in tears and shock, and when “dust and dirt” [a reference to a derogatory term used by President Ahmadīnejād to talk about his protestors in a rally after the election] are flying in the air due to the storm that Mr. Ahmadīnejād has created, my voice has no place in the government-owned radio and television of the Islamic Republic.... These nationalistic anthems that I sang in 1979 [beginning of the Revolution] were for the revitalization movement that people had ignited at that time and it was for that movement. (trans. Simms and Koushkani 2012a:166)

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<sup>8</sup> *Jonbesh-e Sabz* is also referred to as the Green Revolution, reflecting the “color revolution” theme.



As the popularity of *Zabān-e ātesh* increased, Shajariān's political and social status amongst Iranians expanded. In a television interview with the Voice of America Shajariān speaks about the ethical implication of *Zabān-e ātesh*:

Certain events have happened that are very disappointing and these events shouldn't have taken place in our country for the noble people of Iran. What they wanted [the people] was an answer to their question and it shouldn't have been countered in such a horrific way. This is unacceptable, intolerable. The images and videos that I have seen, and the people who have been beaten and killed on the streets, moved me so much... The message to the public is to know that you cannot say the right thing with guns and fire, but you should say it in another way—perhaps to sit down and talk about the issues. (trans. Simms and Koushkani 2012a:168)

*Zabān-e ātesh* forced the authorities to label Shajariān as unpatriotic, when the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance announced that his music will never be played on the radio and television (*The Guardian*; Dehghan 2013). In an interview during his music tour in Australia in 2010, Shajariān made clear his political views:

I personally was not in agreement with the Islamic regime from the beginning and I am still not in agreement with them. This Islamic regime must go, because it has made a coup d'état against itself. Religion must also be separated from politics.... This regime is a very dangerous regime. I mean, they can very easily call their opponents "enemies of God" and execute them without even a court hearing—they do this with utmost ease. Furthermore, they have robbed the country as well.

It has been thirty years that we have lived in fear, each week wondering what is going to happen next week, what will happen next month. There are so many intellectuals in Iran but they can never agree on issues and produce a result because the tools and the facilities are not there. (trans. Simms and Koushkani 2012b:170)

Compared to other musicians or artists who are lesser known, Shajariān's international fame makes it harder for the authorities to silence his voice. He has won numerous awards and distinctions, such as the French National Order of the Legion of Honour (2014) and National Order of Merit (2014), the UNESCO Mozart Medal (2006) and Golden Picasso Medal (1991). At the same time, recent international and domestic pressures have made it harder for the

government to crack down on artists and intellectuals, in the same manner as in the first two decades of the Revolution. Politics and art are central to the role Shajariān plays as a master musician. He perceives that

In artistic work my actions are not like those of a politician! I'm not saying that art isn't political; perhaps I'm saying that I can't place my work in the frame of political groups. It means I don't present music affiliated with political parties. But my art is political in the sense that I work for the promotion of rights, beauty and humanity, and I'm opposed to anything that is against these. (Shajariān et al. 2004:141-42)

Shajariān's message is not only conveyed through his music, but also as a political dissident and cultural advocate. One could say he is exhibiting the expected role that is bestowed on an *ustād*.

As the *Eslāh-Talabān* (Iranian Reformists) began to take more control of the political and social lives of Iranians, Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān found ways to reintegrate back into the public sphere. The last three decades represent the political and social struggles for Iranians to “transition to democracy.” The public sphere produces a set of values and platforms for private individuals to come together to engage in debate and discourse (Calhoun 1996; Habermas 1989). Exclusion from the state-regulated public sphere has led to the creation of a counter-public sphere and social movement (Calhoun 1996). Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān have engaged with the counter-public sphere to express their political ideas and oppose the Shī'a authorities' treatment of music. The years that led to the Revolution saw Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān use the public sphere to confront the political hegemony of the monarch's injustice. However, for them the last three decades have meant using the public sphere to be politically active, utilizing a discourse about *akhlāq* in music-making based on Islamic and mystic concepts (see Chapter Five) to combat the Shī'a authorities. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's newly-defined public role is conveyed through a political, religious and ethical discourse.

Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s ethical discourse is in response to the *‘ulamā’s* unidirectional claims about music. The master musicians’ discourse is a direct reaction to the hostile attitude towards musicians who have historically found ways to fight back against the *‘ulamā’s* claims. The *‘ulamā’s* unidirectional discourse is not set out to engage in discussion with Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān. There is little compromise on the side of *‘ulamā’*; they represent the words of Allāh as the unwavering Truth. However, as political and social mobilization takes place, “the structures that actually support the authority of a critically engaged public begin to vibrate. The balance of power between civil society and the political system then shifts” (Habermas 1996:379). As the political systems shift, the “counter-public sphere” begins to challenge the dominant public sphere, rather than simply be independent from it (Negt and Kluge 1972). Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s use of the public sphere (particularly the Internet) becomes partly a site of resistance. A counter-public “offers forms of solidarity and reciprocity that are grounded in a collective experience of marginalization and expropriation, but these forms are inevitably experienced as mediated, no longer rooted in face-to-face relations, and subject to discourse conflict and negotiation” (Downey and Fenton 2003:194).

Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān are reinventing the notion of music-making through discourse. This mode of discourse creates discussion amongst other master musicians, intellectuals, music experts and the public. It creates a discussion about other possibilities, generating ideas that both create conflicts and resolve issues. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s ethical discourse also presents difference and differentiation on what music-making entails. It is not simply a discourse to oppose the *‘ulamā’*, but a redrawing of what music-making means in today’s Iran. The master musicians, as a marginalized group, find their discourse as the “proliferation of a subaltern counter public” (Fraser 1992:69-70). Proliferation produces a wealth and abundance of beliefs

conveyed through discourse. A counter-public is a “matter of relationality, conjunctural shifts and alliances, making connection with other publics and other types of publicity” (Downey and Fenton 2003:195). Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s ethical discourse needs to be evaluated against the constant power of the religious and political elites (even economic capital accumulation) in Iran. Not only are the three master musicians independent of the dominate public sphere, they set out to challenge it.

The anxiety of Shī’a authorities is that the public sphere has, to a large degree, fallen outside the control of the state. Action in the public sphere can evade the control of the state media, as the “viewpoints suppressed in one medium almost inevitably find an outlet in others” (Eickelman and Anderson 2003:5). The reproductions and re-recordings of some of Lotfī’s music have been an effective medium that has reached out to the public since the 1990s. Lotfī viewed the re-recordings of his music as an outlet to the public:

I didn’t care about making money from my recordings. I was living outside of Iran and wanted the public to hear my music. What I thought was effective was to be able to communicate with the people through some of the videos or films of my concerts. People would see the way I conducted myself on the stage, how I sat, what I wore... I had changed from the youthful days of the pre-Revolution. The first decade of the Revolution, with all its hardship, made me reflect on myself and my music. I began to understand more about the connections of my music to *‘irfān* and *sonnat*. For me, it was an inner search for fulfillment; I realized how *sa ‘āda* [happiness] is the goal of life and how my music can help me attain this joy. Music became my tool, my objective was to play melodies that *man rā az hālī be hāl degarī bebārd* [take me from one world to another]. (Interview conducted on July 2012)

Through digital recordings, Lotfī began communicating his views of music to Iranians. The bootleg recordings of Lotfī’s music became a way for the public to understand his conduct and actions. For the music students, these recordings filled the absent place of a master musician. For many Iranians, Lotfī’s music became synonymous with mysticism and purity.

Lotfī continued by saying,

My performances illustrate to the religious government that music is *sharāfat* [honorable] and virtuous. It is not like they say...it is not about being drunk and having illicit relationships. When I left Iran, I felt that musicians are not wanted. In fact, that was the case. They only wanted their own kind of music and considered all other types of music forbidden. But this is not true, the tranquility and goodness that music brings needed to be conveyed to the public. I was cut off from my people, I was outside of Iran, and in Iran there was no place to hold concerts or even hold classes anymore. I quickly resigned from my position at the University of Tehran a few months after the Revolution. I spent much of ten to twelve years being apart from the people. A musician feeds off the public. (Interview conducted on July 2012)

The digital recording became a way to counter the Shī'a authorities' position on music. Lotfī's sentiments are shared by Shajariān, where in the special features of the *Hamnavā bā Bam* (Compassion for Bam) DVD he highlights the historical Shī'a authorities' ambiguous attitude towards music: "throughout the history of my land, many contradictory *fatāwā* [nonbinding but legal decree by a *marja* ']; singular *fatwā*] have been issued on music."<sup>9</sup>

Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's concerts and masterclasses, the establishment of their music institutions and their participation in public ceremonies have granted them unrestricted and direct access to the public. On his return to Iran in 2005, Lotfī conducted numerous masterclasses and workshops throughout Iran. These classes were held in cultural institutions and universities. In 2012, I accompanied him to Shīrāz (a city in southcentral Iran), where he held a week-long masterclass in *Dāneshgāh-e-Shirāz* (Shīrāz University). His masterclasses were about three hours long each day, with a break half way through. The classes all ended with a question and answer session that extended past the designated three hours. Lotfī began the question and answer session by stating:

Music needs to be played from the heart. The whole body and the mind must be *pāk* (purified). The soul must be *pāk*. If there is *kūdūrat* (darkness) in the head, a musician will play that *kūdūrat*. Music is the image of the soul. Your body and soul must be *pāk*

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<sup>9</sup> The quotation is my translation from *Hamnavā bā Bam*.

and unblemished. Because when the soul is *pāk* the music will take you places. The music is set out to take you away to a different universe.

After Lotfī's initial comments, a student asked how does a musician cleanse *kūdūrat* from his/her soul? Lotfī replied:

They really have been showing what music can truly bring [referring to the Shī'a authorities' use of state-sponsored media]. How would people learn about music? Have you ever heard them speak about the mystic elements of music or poetry on television? Do they ever show a music instrument? Deep inside them, they have this idea that music should be forbidden. They realize the pure and beautiful nature of music, the way it brings us together.... the only way to stop it is by standing against it. What are they against? Are they against the practice of learning music, having a loving teacher-student relationship, or understanding what the melodies and the poetry teach us? Our music is based on so many years of wisdom and knowledge, tied to our history, the thinkers, poets and others who have given music meaning. Music is the voice of Rūmī and other poets. It's the voice of mysticism. The poets use the verse and we use the verse with the melodies. If they come to this gathering with an open mind they would realize that music is not just for pleasure—though there is nothing wrong with pleasure—but it carries with it a message of love, divine and tranquility.

Lotfī draws on the political and metaphysical judgment of beauty in music to convey to the students that music must be untangled from the prejudicial views of Shī'a authorities. He also makes clear that the Shī'a authorities have communicated certain views on music to today's generation of Iranians that enable one to understand what is good and suitable in music.

In 1989, Khomeinī retracted his ban of music by issuing a *fatwā* that authorized the sale and purchase of instruments (Youssefzadeh 2000:39). He stated: “there are no objections to the purchase and sale of instruments serving licit purposes” (*Keyhān* Newspaper; 1989). This decree and “the very intention of abolishing music in public life,” taking place in the first decade of the Revolution, suddenly “led to increasing practices of music within the family circles by the younger generation of all social classes” (Youssefzadeh 2000:38). Sālem speaks of how in the

post-Khomeinī era middle-class parents began to enthusiastically register their children in music schools:

Back then I still did not have my own music institutes. I had rented a suite in a building to teach early childhood music education, and *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* to the youth. I hired three ladies to help me with the children, back then early childhood music education was very new to many Iranians. Gradually, the number of parents who registered their children in my classes were so many that I had put many of the families on a wait list. The families were happy to see their children engage with a musical activity. For me, it was a wonderful way of speaking about the beauty of music without really speaking about it. After so many years of assault on music, what better way than to reconnect with the public by teaching the youth about music. Sometimes actions can be more powerful than the words. I think what is lacking in Iran is an educational system that would teach children about the beauty and assets of music. The authorities have censored musical instruments on television. Many young Iranians do not even know what a *tār* or *kāmāncheh* looks like. It has been really wonderful to teach children to sing folk songs, have them be active to the beats of music, and teach them rhythm by playing percussion. (Interview conducted on July 2016)

The influx of middle-class urban families eager to learn music enabled Sālem to address the historical tension religion and music have had for some parents. The vast increase in the middle-class population over the past two decades has created a vibrant and diverse urban population with divergent political views and religious convictions. Sālem’s advocacy of what is good and suitable in music has had to extend to some families with strong religious convictions. She spoke about one of the families:

I have a young student from Qom [a religious city south of Tehran; known as the religious capital of Iran]. His mother drives him to class each week. She is very religious but educated. She has read about the benefits of exposing children to music, and how music is crucial to youth development. She is a music lover; she adores *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. In fact, she would like to learn an instrument, but she is conflicted about her religious views and her family’s Islamic beliefs. Often she says that she is debating whether music is good or it’s a desire that someone with strong belief should not take part in. She has also had difficulties with her family...many disagreements with her father and her husband about bringing her son to a music class. I sat down with her many times to discuss how music is not the sinful and wicked activity that religious people have made it to be. It is a healing process for both of us. I am reaching out and explaining—although on such a small level compared to a large population—the real aim of music. For her, it is

about untangling the religious beliefs that are baseless and untrue about music. (Interview conducted on July 2016)

Sālem's position as a music teacher, and her music institutes, become sites of political activism. Her music institutes are invitations to the public to access an uncanny understanding of music that speaks to the metaphysical beauty and the political aesthetics of music-making in Iran. As a political agent, Sālem's discussions with the anxious mother illustrate a slowly developing public sphere where beliefs about music are (re)shaped through an ethical and political discourse. In other words, political and social changes cannot take place without the creation, distribution and adaptation of ideas and thoughts in the public sphere. Access to conversation on social issues, like that of Sālem with the mother, as a matter of day-to-day governance is more effective than monologues on abstract political and metaphysical ideals.

Over the last three decades Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān have been able to gain access to a large public forum—far greater than their classrooms and concerts—based on the surge in the number of newspapers and journals, as well as the expansion of television and radio stations. The interviews have reached a large audience throughout Iran (and abroad) regardless of class, economic differences, social status and educational background. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's use of media might even be more effective than their bootleg digital recordings during the 90s. Their interviews facilitate public access to the rational and logical discourse of their informed political, social and artistic beliefs. Progressive newspapers, like *Hamshahrī* ("Fellow Citizen"), began to conduct interviews with master musicians, discuss music recordings and print advertising for concerts. Music journals—such as *Ketāb-e Sāl-e Shaydā* (The Yearbook of *Shaydā*, created by Lotfī) and *Fasl-e Nāme Māhūr*—also became a prominent medium for experts to discuss social, political, historical, mystic and religious issues on music.



In addition, literary journals, like *Bukhārā* (established 1998), became a way for the public to read about the works and thinking of famous Iranian and foreign scholars as each issue pays tribute to an intellectual. *Bukhārā* publishes articles on Iranian history, philosophy, literature and art. They have also had some special issues on notable world authors such as Italian novelist Umberto Eco (b. 1932), Russian poet Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938) or German playwright and novelist Günter Grass (1927-2015). The poet and literary critic Mohammad-Rezā Shafī'ī Kadkanī (b. 1939) is one of the chief editors of *Bukhārā*. What is effective about *Bukhārā* is that each issue is based on *Shab-hā-e Bukhārā* (“The Nights of *Bukhara*”), which are gatherings to acknowledge and celebrate the life and works of an intellectual or an artist. On February 2018, *Shab-hā-e Bukhārā* was dedicated to Iranian master musicians.

*Shab-hā-e Bukhārā* is an illustration of how social, artistic and political participation is altering the relationship between the public and established power. The new public sphere also influences the formation and expression of public opinion (Halloran 1970). Iran can be criticized for not having been able to create a viable democratic environment for information to be disseminated and political discourse to take place publically. This is largely due to the political sphere being controlled by the Shī'a authorities, who have been able to suppress political pluralism. Having said that, Iranians have been able to take advantage of a powerful and important public sphere, where the relationship between the ordinary people and Shī'a authorities' establishment of power is significantly changing. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān are involved in public discussion, aiming to shift the discourse from decrees from the Shī'a authorities to the people, to participation in democracy where the established power is compelled into a dialogue with the public.

The media, as a prevailing force in the society, is increasingly involved in constructing political events and managing the political discourse (Keane 1991). The monopoly and control over media by state-sponsored radio and television in Iran has marginalized the platforms and the media for political communication. Government-backed political factions dominate and shape the political, economic and cultural discourse of Iran.<sup>10</sup> These factions have been competing for political leverage and influence from within the Islamic Republic's power structures. However, the authorities have been very successful in suppressing political factions, trade unions, and other groups that are not in favor of the Islamic Republic's agendas and pursue agendas of their own. The public flow of information and exchange of ideas has been more influential in cultural and artistic gatherings or ceremonies. These occasions have produced a platform for the intellectual and artistic community to speak about the political and social issues.

The censorship of intellectual and artistic communities has been difficult for the authorities. Iranian cinema is a great example of bringing to light the social, cultural and personal issues in today's Iran. Another example is the poetry gathering in *anjoman-e Amir Kabir* in Tehran, which has been difficult for the authorities to control and regulate. Often poets read poems that have significant political and religious concerns vital to Iranians. Mohammad Rezā 'Alī Payām (born in 1957; his pen name is *Haloo*), a poet and satirist, is a distinguished and recognized participant in *anjoman-e Amir Kabir*. His poems focus on social injustice and corruption. He is well received by the audience at the poetry nights, and his poems are widely circulated on social media. 'Alī Payām is currently a political prisoner. Musicians have also been

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<sup>10</sup> Some of the important political factions in Iran are: *Osul-Garāyān* (The Principlists or Conservatives), the *Eslāh-Talabān* (Reformists) and Pragmatists, as well as associations like *majma'-e rowhāniyūn-e mobārez* (The Association of Combatant Clerics, a reformist group) and *Jāme'e-ye Rowhāniyyat-e Mobārez* (combatant Clergy Association).

able to use various public platforms to present their music and discuss relevant political and social issues.

In the winter of 2012, TV2 of *Sedā va Simā-ye Jomhūrī-ye Islāmī-ye Irān* (The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting) hosted Lotfī in a series of late night programs. He had also taken part in another series of music programs on *Radio Payām* (Message Radio) and *Radio Farhang* (Culture Radio). The recognition of music by state-sponsored media points to a rare opening into genuine public debate rather than passive spectatorship. Iran’s political system is not centralized, and the five centers of power—Supreme Leader, the Executive, the Legislative, the Judicial system, *Majles-e Khobregān-e Rāhbarī* (Assembly of Experts for Constitution), and *Majma’ Tashkhīs Maslahat Nezām* (The Assembly of Experts)—do not always express uniformity and clarity on issues. In other words, the Shī’a authorities in the powerful *Majles-e Khobregān-e Rahbarī* often have conservative views, whereas many in the parliament or the executive branch adhere to the reformist political agenda. The political structure of Iran consists of layers that at times manifest competing claims within its apparatus of power. Many in positions of power have most likely disapproved of Lotfī’s presence on television, while those with a reformist agenda embraced the music series.

Lotfī’s television interviews were watched eagerly by many music enthusiasts. He would cover a broad range of topics, speaking about the make-up of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, past master musicians, his experience as an artist, as well as the social, historical, political, religious and mystic implications of music. Speaking about his childhood in Gorgān (a city to the north east of Tehran), he said,

As a child, when I was four or five years old. I would get up and walk outside in the middle of the night. Everyone would be sleeping... I was not scared of anything. The silence of the night was really fascinating for me. There was a sense of peacefulness and tranquility even back then I was looking to find. It was a magical world for me. The way

my soul embraced the silence and peacefulness matched well with this music [*mūsīqī-e sonnātī*]. Since this music is internal and it heals the soul...it is *ma 'navī* [religious, spiritual or pious], then suddenly I realized the way this musical phenomenon affected my soul. I fell in love with the music.... This love is *ma 'navī*. Since music is in *donyā ma 'naye* [spiritual and pious world], and suitable sounds and melodies are made to affect the *seday-e bātenī* (inner essence's or the soul's voice) of humans.... music is the *ma 'na* voice entering the human being, therefore, it had a profound religious and spiritual effect on me.

In order to improvise, which is the most important part of our music, the capable musician needs his/her *hāl-e ma 'navī* [religious or spiritual disposition].... Even if master musicians don't find themselves responsive to *hāl-e ma 'navī*, and say they don't...in the essence of art and its judgment of beauty this receptiveness to *hāl-e ma 'navī* exists.... Music has become a tool for me to elevate my status to a higher position, and to become better first and foremost. It is also a tool for me to help others—provide I am capable of such a task—, to elevate others to a higher position.<sup>11</sup>

Lotfī's statement is contrary to Shī'a authorities, who have used the media to distance Islam from music. After his return to Iran in 2005 Lotfī created and legitimized a public dialogue, where his discourse centered on negotiations and mediations of values and beliefs instead of consensus of meanings. The media require a high level of mediated communication to the public to gain the community's consent. Lotfī presence on television generated a different discursive domain, as his statements transformed and reshaped the mediated communication to the public.

Another instrument of public involvement in the public sphere has been the Internet. Over the last two decades, the internet has been significant for Iranians communicating their social, cultural and political desires (Rahimi 2003, 2011; Sreberny and Khiabany 2010). In the ongoing battle over public opinion and consensus, “‘small media’ including audio cassettes and leaflets were used to great effect during the 1979 revolution.... The internet has just become the newest site of contestation and the latest set of technologies to offer an alternative mode of communication to those directly controlled by the state” (Sreberny and Khiabany 2010:x). The

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<sup>11</sup> The quotation is my translation from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wsnMzdo7vM>

Internet and social media have been used effectively by master musicians, as well as young musicians. Young female musicians, who often face limited opportunity to perform, post their music on video-sharing social networking services such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, where they are followed by a large number of viewers.

Habermas asserts that the public sphere is above all “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body” (1984 [1962]:49). The public sphere mediates between the citizens and the state. There are countless examples of how Iranian musicians are actively engaging with the Internet. Shajariān’s music is easily accessible online. In addition to posting music on the Internet, he has also used YouTube to speak to the public. A video called *The voice of Dust and Ash* was uploaded on YouTube in 2016, where Shajariān walks in a vast open land, eventually sitting under the shade of a tree. It begins with women narrating:

A legend can be anyone worth remembering for a very long time even when he or she has left the world. Icons and legends are remembered, and their tales are cherished as they leave behind a legacy not in terms of monetary value but a moral value. Their iconic nature comes not from one’s image or job, but from what one stands up for and believes in. It is not about getting famous, it is about someone worth remembering and being looked upon for inspiration and growth. And finally, it is about being free; for only those who are truly free can become legends.

Shajariān then sings a *rubā’ī* (quatrain) of Omar Khayyām, and then he ends the video by saying (in the subtitled translation of the video):

I am Mohammad-Rezā Shajariān, son of Iran. My voice is among the ancient voices of Iran that want to be remembered as the type of people we were. People of humanity, love, peace and purity. We have no other message for the world than that of friendship, love, life and happiness. And if we complain, it is to rid ourselves of societal problems, so our people can live.

As Shajariān struggles with critical illness, I consider the video to be his farewell to the public. Over the last three decades he has been able to use various means of communication to speak about what he considers to be just and pious publically, socially and artistically. *The voice of Dust and Ash* has been viewed more than twelve thousand times on YouTube alone.

Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān have ventured into an open dialogue with the public that illustrates the possibility of rational debate. The public has responded to their discourse differently: a) disregard by those with strong religious beliefs; b) ignorance by the youth; and c) approval by the middle class and the educated groups. This form of discourse offers the public “new forms of power and a new awareness of rights...it has also given [political] leaders a new visibility and vulnerability before audiences which are more extensive and endowed with more information and more power...than ever before” (Thompson 1990:115). In this way, the individual is defined as a citizen when he/she exercises the public right to debate. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān are part of a vibrant public sphere and have helped to create a “communal communicative space” (Habermas 1989), where the goal is to advance a set of principles and conditions to reach a collective binding decision that the public finds legitimate and rational. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s discourse is primarily conceived as a set of ideals shaped with regard to the existing religious and political institutions and practices of power. The outcomes can be “democratically legitimate if and only if they could be the object of a free and reasoned agreement among equals” (Cohen 1989:22).

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE LANGUAGE OF DEVOTION, GOODNESS AND BEAUTY

This chapter explores Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s use of politicized Islamic and mystical language that aims to convey the *suitable* and *good* in music-making. The use of Islamic and mystical language creates presuppositions and entailments that are meant to influence shared beliefs and the piety and virtue of Iranians. Such language—as used by Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān—helps make “the supernatural believable” (Harding 1987) and invokes devotion and faithfulness in the believer. The religious concepts tap into powerful and self-conscious tendencies of Iranians by means of a well-developed linguistic resource of Islamic and mystical vocabulary. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s use of Islamic language, where the manners of constructing a religious and mystical discourse present music-making as a righteous act, is distinct from everyday speech. This form of language use pays attention to “the relations among experience, concrete practices, and what is culturally constructed to lie beyond ordinary experience, whether that be in the past, the future, at a spatial distance, or across an ontological divide” (Keane 1997:48). William James finds religion to be the subjective experience of an imperceptible presence (1948 [1892]). The human experience is influenced by the religious and mystical language that invites admiration and devotion based on socio-historical understandings of Islamic convictions. Human convocation is shaped through ethical practices rooted in cultural norms and values.

The use of religious and mystical language by Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān also counters the Shī’a authorities’ antagonistic discourse on music. The Shī’a authorities’ use of Islamic language served as a powerful medium for dominating the political, social and moral life of Iranians since the beginning of the Revolution. As the Islamic Republic solidified its power after 1979, the utilization of an Islamic discourse by the authorities in the interest of political power

has been largely based on references to Shī'a historical events (e.g., the life of the Prophet, or martyrdom for Islam as a honorable act), selective Islamic hermeneutics, the *hadīth* (sayings of the Prophet), and passages from the Qur'ān. This “cognitive use of religious language” tends to be shrouded in “imprecision and mystery;” it can “hardly be verified and is profuse with symbols and imagery” (Stiver 2001:12). Islamic concepts are reflected in the ethical values adhered to in Iran. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān have been able to utilize a religious discourse to offer a distinctive perspective on music-making, one that speaks about *akhlāq* to elucidate what is suitable and good in music, while opposing the Shī'a authorities' views on this art.

In the summer of 2010, Ayatollah Alī Khāmeneī (b. 1939) spoke to a gathering of high-ranking government officials, stating that music is inconsistent with the Islamic Republic's values. As the second and current Supreme Leader of Iran, Khāmeneī acknowledged that “although music is *ḥalāl* [permissible], promoting and teaching it is not consistent with the highest values of the sacred ideals of the Islamic Republic” (The Guardian; Dehghan). Khāmeneī's speech was in response to the “liberalization” of universities under the direction of the reformist Minister of Science, Research, and Technology of the time, Mostafā Moeen. Khāmeneī added: “It's better that our youth spend their valuable time learning sciences, and developing essential skills or filling their time with sports and healthy recreations instead of music” (Dehghan 2010). Khāmeneī—as the holder of the highest political office, and *marja'* (highest level of Shī'a authority)—holds the legal and religious right to declare his views on music as *fatwā*.<sup>12</sup>

The powerful role of the conservative '*ulamā*' was evident during the winter of 2017, when based on the judgement of a number of Shī'a authorities several *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* concerts

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<sup>12</sup> In the Shī'a tradition there is often a number of *marāji'* (singular *marja'*) at once. A *marja'* presides over the religious, political and social lives of his devotees or followers.



were canceled. General Prosecutor Gholām-Alī Sādeqī explained the cancellations: “There were some problems regarding the content and performance of concerts, as well as the outfits of the audience. ... [leading to] seminarians and senior clerics complaining to the prosecutor’s office about concert performances” (Dehghan 2010). The prominent government-backed cleric Ahmad Alamolhodā, a staunch supporters of the music ban, stated during a Friday sermon:<sup>13</sup>

This is a religious city [Mashhad, a city in northeastern Iran, known as one of the country’s two holy cities in Shī’a Islam], and not a city for leisure activities to be made into a center for music and *‘aiyāshī* [addiction to pleasure, sensuality, carousal, and debauchery]. This is not a city to bring *fasād* [perversity, wickedness, mischief, and sedition] into.... Different television stations broadcast music, but not the Qur’ān channel. There is a reason why the Qur’ān channel does not broadcast music. One cannot play the *tār* next to the Qur’ān. This is against the *qudāsāt* [sanctity, holiness and paradise] of the Qur’ān. Next to the shrine of Imām Rezā [the eighth of twelve spiritual and political successors to the Prophet Muhammad, buried in Mashhad] no music concert can take place. It is against the essence, and the spirit of this holy city. If one wants music concerts, then don’t be from here; go live elsewhere. If someone wants to live in a city where one could be free to be an *‘aiyāsh* [pleasure-seeker, libidinous, and sensualist], free to listen to music, and to participate in such activities, then why choose to live in a holy city? .... This city has so many lovers of Imām Rezā; they would never allow any illicit act and *‘aiyāshī*.<sup>14</sup>

Alamolhodā refers to musicians as *‘aiyāsh*, music as *‘aiyāshī*, and the act of music-making as *fasād*. Yet, when describing the Islamic perspectives, Alamolhodā uses *qudāsāt* (sanctity, holiness, paradise), a word with significant Islamic connotations. In his speech, the Islamic words highlight the purity and innocence to which Muslims must adhere, as music takes on a tainted and corrupt representation.

At the heart of Alamolhodā’s case against music rests the Shī’a doctrine that music evokes illicit activities that detract from Islamic values. Since music is not a “pious” act,

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<sup>13</sup> Ahmad Alamolhodā (b. 1944) is a Shī’a religious leader, who leads the sermon for the Friday Prayer in Mashhad. He is also part of the powerful *Majles-e Khobregān-e Rāhbarī* (Assembly of Experts), whose main task is to choose the next Supreme Leader of Iran.

<sup>14</sup> The Quotation above is my translation from a video on YouTube.

Alamolhodā is compelled to use idioms that are derogatory in nature. The derogatory terms come from everyday speech, while piety and righteousness are presented by Islamic concepts. *'Aiyāshī* is a form of pleasure-seeking with little remorse over one's failure to be "righteous." It is to act by impulse and participate in voluptuous conduct. Words such as *'aiyāsh*, *'aiyāshī* and *fasād* point to moral fallacy and hollowness in devotion; they are used by Alamolhodā to highlight infidelity to Islamic ideals, and transgression from the accepted norms. These words are loaded with cultural stigmatizations. In everyday usage, an *'aiyāsh* or *fasād* refers to those who have no goal in life, who often spend their days wandering the streets, creating havoc for others. For instance, *fasād* is used for individuals who partake in illicit sexual activity with many partners. In short, Alamolhodā's use of *'aiyāsh*, *'aiyāshī* and *fasād* serves to highlight both the religious and socio-cultural moral shortcomings of music-making.

## 5.1 THE LANGUAGE OF TRUTH

For the *'ulamā* the discourse on ethics channels through a highly ritualized performance that limits the agency of the audience based on the words of the Divine. In their discourses, questioning the words of Allāh, or the ultimate Truth, is considered an act of infidelity (Keddie & Richard 2003). The authority, or the "divine legitimacy," of this mode of language arises from its heavenly messages, providing a renewed revelation and imparting celestial guidance and law to humanity. The religious use of language has been a predominant symbol of group identity for many Iranians. This language use operates "by taking images derived from the world of sense experience and using them to speak of that which transcends them" (Fawcett 1997:30). Using religious-politicized language has allowed the Shī'a authorities to direct and control Iranian society by determining ethical values and spiritual needs. This form of language "calls upon man

to play his part in the dialogue between God and man.... language becomes a kinship symbol inculcated to loyalty, respect and obedience” (Fawcett 1997:31).

The Shī’a authorities’ discourse is unidirectional, aimed at audiences who anticipate hearing the words of Allāh conveyed by “guardians of Islam” like Alamolhodā. Mikhail Bakhtin holds that an utterance or word is characterized by its “addressivity” and “answerability” (1981). An utterance is always addressed to an audience, as it anticipates some form(s) of response from its recipient(s). Islamic discourse (as a string of utterances utilized by the Shī’a authorities) inspires a kind of addressivity with an answerability that demands a particular emotional and unquestioning response from its audience. Alamolhodā’s use of *qudāsāt* (holiness and paradise), for example, is identical with the image of the Prophet, or the infallible *athnā’ashariyyah* (The Twelfth *Imam*; the *Imāmat* in Shī’a doctrine is the twelve spiritual and political successors of the Prophet) tradition and theology. The Prophet’s *qudāsāt* is based on his *hikmat* (wisdom), which according to Mollā Sadrā Shirāzi (1571-1620) is “coming to know the essence of beings as they really are” (Cooper 1998:595). The addressivity and answerability of a religious discourse is based on historical contingencies inseparable from Iran’s political past, social institutions and cultural understandings, all of which are informed by Shī’a tradition. The utilization of *qudāsāt* is an example of how an Islamic language (re)constructs a reality that reminds the audience of what pious deeds and devotion entail.

In this form of “addressivity,” language demands acceptance, as it is perceived to be hierarchically elevated and historically validated since it derives its mandate from Islam. As Bakhtin states:

The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be

hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is a *prior* discourse. (1981:342; emphasis in original)

The acceptance of religious discourse as the ultimate Truth and the Shī'a authorities' "fidelity" to the truth in their deliberation is not based on provisional agreement by the audience. Rather, such utterances require complete obedience from their audiences. The acceptance by the audience of such language is an act of devotion that is based on Islamic cultural and historical specificity engrained in individual and social consciousness. In these instances, "words become anonymous and are assimilated (in reworked form, of course); consciousness is *monologized*. Primary dialogic relations to others' words are also obliterated..." (Bakhtin 1986:163; emphasis in the original).

While Islamic discourse is interwoven with political and social mandates in today's Iran, the exploitation of Islamic remarks remains in the control of those who retain the relevant antecedent. For instance, the Shī'a authorities have been able to give *qudāsāt* a specific meaning and importance that reflects the goals of the Islamic Republic. *Qudāsāt* has been politicized for the public. In the Shī'a authorities' ideology, the image and the deeds of *Panj-tan-e Āl-e Abā* ("The Five People of the House," or the family of the Prophet) are considered as the source of purification. For instance, the immaculate and pious life of Fātimah (the daughter of the Prophet, wife of 'Alī, and mother of Al-Hasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib and Al-Hossein ibn Ali ibn Abī Talib) is used by the Shī'a authorities as a role model for Iranian women. The illumination of her actions—particularly her suffering and death as the first tragedy in Islam and her image as the "eternal weeper" and the "judge in the hereafter" (Ayoub 1978:40)—combined with meanings given to *qudāsāt* by the Shī'a authorities sets out to convey a political agenda. *Shuhadā* are

revered in the Islamic Republic as exemplars of *qudāsāt* tantamount to Hossein at the Battle of Karbalā (680 AD), and images of *shuhadā* are depicted in public next to images of this battle.

The Shī'a authorities' use of Islamic concepts creates a unidirectional mode of language that is commanding, convincing and influential. It requires the praise and admiration of the audience. Bakhtin explains that the

Authoritative discourse may organize around itself great masses of other types of discourse (which interpret it, praise it, apply it in various ways), but the authoritative discourse itself does not merge with these.... it remains sharply demarcated, compact and inert; it demands, so to speak, not only quotation marks but a demarcation even more magisterial, a special script, for instance... (1981:343)

To solicit allegiance from the public, vital in prolonging political authority and cultural legitimacy, religious figures like Alamolhodā produce a discourse (“monologized” in nature) that can be labeled as “traditionalizing” (Bauman 1982; Kroskrity 1993). In this way, a discourse “derives a special authority by connecting to the prior discourses” (Kroskrity 2012:172). Lukas Tsitsipis explains this as the “totalizing nature” of authoritative discourse; “whether it is rejected or accepted, it is viewed as an unfragmented whole” (2004:571).

The control of Islamic language has historically been reserved for the *‘ulamā’*. This ownership of repertoire has been guarded by the religious elites when other intellectuals, political activists and artists have utilized Islam as a discourse of social and political dissent. The repertoire is based on a religious language that demands esoteric knowledge of speech genres and lexicons requiring years of education and access to Islamic resources. The ownership of the repertoire language forbids others from using Islamic discourses and explicitly outlines possession of this form of religious discourse by the *‘ulamā’* as a “monologized” voice. The *‘ulamā’*'s Islamic repertoire can be understood as based on four central components of religious

representation: the “supernatural, religious normativity, rationalized contents, and religious affect and motivation” (Downes 2011:14-15). According to William Downes, “the supernatural” depiction of religion occurs when a speaker discusses a particular subject in terms of human characteristics with references to supernatural entities (2011). The second component of religious representation in language, for Downes, is “religious normativity,” or how a speaker may “present not only what is, but what *ought* to be” (2011:15).

Religious language generates “rationalized contents” when a speaker’s “representations can be rationalized to a greater or lesser extent when processed by meta-representational and language capacities and become abstractions or generalized” (Downes 2011:15). The use of Shī’a historical events and the *hadīth* and the Qur’ān references creates a language that is abstract and shrouded in idealism related to the divine and mysterious powers of Allāh. The abstract language represents images of the ideal that are “the output of meta-representational and language capacities, in the broad sense of ‘language,’ which put the contents into words and communicate them within religious discourses” (Downes 2011:15). The remaining component of religious representation in language is the affects and motivations such utterances convey to the audience. This refers to how communicated content arises from culturally shaped religious affectivity and generates dispositional states of will and commitment. These contents “satisfy the input conditions for affective-motivational systems and generate specifically religious feelings, desires and motives” (Downes 2011:15).

What is central is how the use of Islamic language—a repertoire owned by the *‘ulamā’*—has been appropriated and utilized by the intellectual community, political factions and artists. Over the past three decades, many Iranian master musicians have effectively used an Islamic language to elevate the position of music. Islamic utterance is a production of vocabulary in

accordance with conditions, needs and political and social motivations. Pierre Bourdieu explains that “language is not simply a means of communication, but rather, also a medium of power...once we exclude the extra-linguistic circumstances which condition the production and reception of speech, we have lost a crucial percentage of the meaning of the relevant linguistic exchange” (1991:123). Islamic discourse is created and shared collectively by Iranian society; it has a performative nature that functions within a complex social, economic and political environment that ranges from the secular to conservative Islamic institutions.

The use of Islamic language embodies a religious practice that privileges moral thought over action. As in Kantian philosophy, this formulation of language presents a view that is based on abstract and universally valid human rationality and reason, where individual actions take place regardless of personal desire, but according to knowledge and moral disposition (Kant 1993[1785]). Moral actions are guided by rationality and reason based on established and verified information developed through social institutions and beliefs. To construct a vocabulary of human rationality and reason, an individual in the position of authority often uses a moralistic language of virtue, values and justice. The use of Islamic language allows for the non-perceptible being or spirit of the Prophet or the *Panj-tan-e Āl-e Abā* to play a vivid role in the Iranian’s psyche. The use of Islamic language presents a sense of moral conviction that, for many, is unmatched by any other cultural norms and values. Political dissidents have used Islamic concepts or events to tap into the cultural and moral psyche of the Iranian community. In his 1974 televised military trial, journalist, poet and communist activist Khosrow Golesorkhī (1944-1974) told the court that the struggles of Iranians are similar to those of the revered martyr Hossein (Behrooz 2000). As a socialist, and “Che Guevara-like” figure for young Iranians, at his trial Golesorkhī stated:

I begin my speech by [talking about] Hossein, the revered martyr of all the people of the Middle East. I am a Marxist-Leninist. From the beginning, I sought answers and solutions to social injustice in the Islamic tradition, and from Islam I came to socialism.... I began my speech with Islam. True Islam has always been an enabling and motivating force for the liberation movements in Iran.... ‘Alī says: “No palace could be made without the hardship and humiliation and starvation of many.” The life of Hossein symbolizes our life today; where we hold our bodies in our hand and [we are] ready to die for injustice. (YouTube, Khosro Golsorkhi)

Islamic language in Iran has been utilized by various factions to present what they envision as honorable and virtuous socio-political views. Golsorkhī’s speech is an example of the use of Islamic discourse even by leftist and communist political groups who are known to advocate an ideology that discounts or even disdains religion. The use of Islamic discourse also challenges ordinary habits by situating issues in religious contexts rather than the parameters of everyday speech. The religious context of language is based on shared ideas and ideals that form the default assumptions of a community (Hanks 1996; Sperber and Wilson 1995). Parting from everyday speech, the use of Islamic language is meta-pragmatic. The use of religious language generates a sense of coming together and cohesiveness in a community. It also restricts the creation of divergent views and generation of new discourses. The esoteric knowledge that gives rise to Islamic discourse becomes a scarce resource for political power, where Shī’a authorities, and other factions or individuals with unique viewpoints, utilize this speech genre and its lexicons to advance their beliefs in the public sphere.

## 5.2. MUSIC AND A MORAL DISCOURSE

Language is shaped by the political and social conditions of a community. Islamic discourse is a multifaceted connection between the historical, political and social, reflecting “the economic and social conditions of the acquisition of ‘legitimate’ competence, as well as the constitution of the linguistic market in which this definition of the legitimate and illegitimate is



established and imposed” (Goke-Pariola 1993:220). The Islamic language is a discourse in accordance with conditions, needs and political and social motivations, notably subjugation of the masses by the ruling elites and cultural perceptions of the moment. Islamic discourse is shared collectively by Iranian society; it has a performative nature and functionality within its complex social conditioning.

Language is the medium through which actions and power are negotiated, mediated and regulated. The power of Islamic discourse is grounded in Iran’s social institutions and the practices of political, religious and cultural institutions. Bourdieu explains that,

Every speech act and, more generally, every action, is a conjecture, an encounter between independent causal series. On the one hand, there are the socially constructed dispositions of the linguistic habitus, which imply a certain propensity to speak and to say determinate things (the expressive interest) and a certain capacity to speak, which involves both the linguistic capacity to generate an infinite number of grammatically correct discourses, and the social capacity to use this competence adequately in determinate situations. (1991:37)

The power of speech resides not in language itself, but rather in outside forces; social institutions govern utterances in society by constructing a reality that forces individuals to act in a certain manner. The power of words and language

is nothing other than the *delegated power* of the spokesperson, and his speech—that is, the substance of his discourse and, inseparably, his way of speaking—is no more than a testimony, and one among others, of the *guarantee of delegation* which is vested in him. (Bourdieu 1991:107)

The social forces that generate the performative aspect of language—think, for example, of Austin’s “speech act theory”—make it clear that it is the residual power of social institutions surrounding words, rather than words themselves, that produces action. Language is never ideologically neutral. Bourdieu introduces three critical concepts: “habitus” (a reference to the structured socially acquired set of dispositions, due to reactions to different stimuli, in any field

of individual experiences); “field” or “market” (structured spaces where individuals interact); and “capital” (the cultural, economic and symbolic capital that each individual accumulates at any given time and throughout a lifetime). Linguistic utterances are the product of the relationship between a “linguistic *habitus*” and a “linguistic market/field” (Bourdieu 1991).

Sālem has been able to utilize an Islamic and mystical discourse that incorporates words with religious connotations that are politically driven and ideologically predisposed. During my visit to her music institute in the summer of 2016, she said:

In my view, music is an ‘*ibādat* [service or worship]. By ‘*ibādat*, I mean an honorable deed achieved based on a human’s desire to connect beyond the mundane and the material world—music is simply an instrument that makes the mystical journey possible. Music gives meaning to life; it’s been part of our rituals, ceremonies, cultural heritage for millennia. Music powerfully affects us and connects us to our past, beliefs, and aspirations. . . . From a young age, there was a clear connection between music and mysticism in our house; my father used to say: “music is *the* medicine for the soul, a way to find *rastagārī* [deliverance]; it gives us refuge from the impure and the harmful.” A large part of my identity is shaped by music. Having said that, even as a child, I quickly realized that my views on music are not shared by many. As a young girl, it was perplexing for me to conceal my love for music in some public places—as if there is a paradoxical thinking on music. It is a far cry from how musicians—particularly, women musicians— think about their role today. Progress has been made after the 1979 Revolution, not because the authorities or religious factions have allowed it, rather the public’s insistence and resistance has kept us moving forward. With all the progress made, the perplexity, or paradox, I felt as a child remains. I think, it is largely the legacy of centuries of religious doctrine, in addition to the traditional norms that came from it—it is so entangled that we are not able to escape.

In her music institutes, Sālem’s use of Islamic discourse is not simply a means of communication, but also a medium of power. Her conversation is mediated through social institutions and social behavior. Following Bourdieu, it can be said in this case that linguistic encounters are the product of the relationship between a “linguistic *habitus*” (Salam’s use of an Islamic concept, for example, that creates a connection to the metaphysical and the good in music) and a “linguistic market” (e.g., Sālem’s music institutes or other public venues in which

she presents her views on music). Linguistic utterances can be chosen to shape the view of individuals, who are conditioned by the demands of the target “social field/market.” Sālem’s use of Islamic language makes use of the intimate connection of her audience to religion. Every linguistic interaction displays “the social structure that it both expresses and helps to create” (Goke-Pariola 1993:221).

Sālem is not the only master musician to draw on the connection of the divineness and sacredness of ‘*ibādat*’ to music-making. Lotfī also considers music to be a form of worship, through which individuals can connect to a higher being:

From a young age, I thought of music as a form of ‘*ibādat*. Music is a way to communicate, to invoke or act to correspond with the universe and the divine. For many ‘*ibādat*’ is to worship Allāh by praying, and only by praying; but ‘*ibādat*’ can be a hymn, incantation or a melody. What is the difference? If the purpose of ‘*ibādat*’ is to seek guidance, and to express thoughts and emotions to Allāh, then what better way than music’s power to draw closer to spirituality and divine? If we want to think of ‘*ibādat*’ in its traditional sense permitted in religious practices then we are limiting ourselves from its true meaning which is about being liberated to attain a connect to a higher being. ‘*Ibādat*’ is a form of communication; how is playing music not the same as *du‘ā* [“invocation”]? ‘*Ibādat*’, much like music, is a medium of giving to the universe; it is a way of giving to the divine. The means and practices of how one prays might be different, but the purpose and the aim is always towards the divine. After all, humans find different ways of praying to seek *rastagārī*, and music is a way to find the light, as melodies guide us out of darkness. (Interview conducted on July 2, 2012)

*Rastagārī* is a state when the human soul achieves peace and tranquility; it is a preeminent state of happiness. These sentiments are shared by Shajariān. Part II of this dissertation began by quoting a passage from Shajariān’s talk at Stanford University: “music is an ‘*ibādat*’ [service or worship]; it has always been a part of my people’s life. But, in my country music has been *harām* (forbidden). And, they [religious authorities] have used the musicians’ instruments to beat them over the head.”

The reflections on the position of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* (traditional music) by Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān are inevitably entangled with words such as *ibādat*, *harām*, and *rastagārī*. It is no coincidence that the quotes above are filled with Islamic and mystical concepts to combat the very religion that has been used to oppose music. There is an urgency for them to distance *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* from what is regarded as an “immoral” activity by many ‘*ulamā*’. If music is an ‘*ibādat*, then this act of servitude safeguards *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* from “impurity.” Similarly, *rastagārī* speaks to an effort that shields music from notions of *harām*. *Ibādat*, *harām* and *rastagārī* pose significant moral implications by pointing toward achievable ideals.

These words highlight ethical norms put forward by the society or institutions (such as Shī’a doctrines) that are accepted by individuals as their own conviction. In other words, the use of Islamic and mystical words is an acknowledgement of Shī’a and mystical ideals as the accepted ethical values in Iranian society. These words also bestow certain divine and supernatural qualities on music that recognize this art form as righteous and transcendent. *Ibādat*, *harām* and *rastagārī* shield music from the charges of Shī’a doctrines; implicating Islamic and mystical concepts sets music on the course of purity. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s discourses make clear that, not only can music-making be virtuous, it can achieve ideals and values closely resembling those of Islamic creeds. The use of Islamic language offers a perspective about music-making that is as much about *rastagārī* as Islam is about salvation. It was not uncommon for me to hear Lotfī refer to music as *rūh-parvār* (nourishing the mind or soul), or music as a vehicle for human’s souls to be fulfilled with *tajāllī* (luster, brightness and transfiguration). During a television interviews in 2012 Lotfī stated: “music is *qadr* [holds a majestic or honorable place] for human beings. The human essence and existence attains *shā’f* [delight] by hearing good music.... Music offers humans a *rouhānī* (spiritual, holy and

contemplative)-like feeling.” The Islamic and mystic language used by Lotfī explicitly delineates how music-making falls within the accepted ethical norms. This is precisely the reason Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān use concepts such as *‘ibādat*. It is also a way to contest Shī’a authorities’ use of derogatory concepts to criticize music, like *aiyāshī*, and to solidify music’s position in Iranian society as something that is righteous and honorable.

Austin (1975) explains that to utter a performative sentence is to be evaluated in terms of what might be called the “conventionality,” “actuality” and “intentionality” of the utterance or speech. He describes a sentence in terms of the “speech situation” defined by the social and personal nature of the speaker, and how social institutions affect the act of utterance. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s discourses are based on the “conventionality” of Islam, on a conviction that their words were validated as the words of divine and ethical norms. Islamic utterance is closely related to the social beliefs of Iranians; the “actuality” of this form of utterance resonates and creates an intimate bond with the audience. This form of language use has an “intentionality” to induce a certain desirable reaction (or outcome) from the audience. The intentional “linguistic act,” according to Austin, is “a relation among linguistic conventions correlated with words/sentences, the situation where the speaker actually presents something to the hearer, and associated intentions of the speaker” (1975:121).

In short, Austin’s idea of “speech act” can be explained by the steps involved in uttering a performative sentence. A speech act takes place when the speaker indicates a certain speech situation (e.g., using a religious term like *‘ibādat*) and where certain conventions and conditions exist (e.g., the intimate socio-cultural relation of Iranians to Islam). Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān are all examples of language practitioners who have taken Islamic concepts and tapped into the power of social institutions, generating utterances associated with the explicit beliefs or implicit

assumptions that accompany religious notions. Islamic discourse has been a form of language ideology that helps maintain the status quo, but also a rhetoric of social and political dissent, and a medium to (re)shape ethical convictions.

Islam continues to provide a vital metanarrative to Iranian society. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān have, to a large extent, been able to anchor their views and judgment of music within this narrative, which points to human deference towards the ultimate being. Islamic discourse allows certain ethical norms to become possibilities in an individual's lifeworld. Martin Heidegger explains that "language makes things into possibilities of experience" (Deetz 1992:46). Based on this notion, a word such as *rastagārī* is not an object of representation but a stance or a worldview. Heidegger would assert that to "name a thing is to reveal, illuminate, it in a certain light, in a certain World with particular action possibilities" (ibid.). *Rastagārī*, then, becomes an action to achieve a stance, where it is understood as a collective ethical conviction. Heidegger provides experiential insights into how individuals perceive *rastagārī*, a belief and practice that is not based on one set of ideals, rather through their principles and actions. Words do not "elicit images and emotions at the very root, though they may also do this; rather, language is an ongoing aspect of becoming aware in a particular way" (ibid.). In short, "language is not an invented tool of man nor is man a symbol-using animal, but rather man and language co-act" (Deetz 1992:47).

*Rastagārī*, as a religious conviction, was utilized by Lotfī, where the audience would have a chance to alter their stance towards this Islamic and mystical concept vis-à-vis their understanding of Islam as Iranians. As Alessandro Duranti states, "phenomenal modification" occurs when an individual's "natural attitude" remains the same, while the object under scrutiny changes its meaning (2015:198). Thinking along this line,

intentionality, then, is deemed as “the property of human consciousness of being directed toward or being about something (another term for this notion is ‘aboutness’)” (Duranti 2000:134). As illustrated by Lotfi’s use of *rastagārī*, intentionality creates a relationship between the phenomenal and the audience’s consciousness. Duranti states that, “intentionality is sometimes synonymous with attention or attentiveness, a ‘turning toward’...or ‘being directed at’ such entities” (2015:238). The process of “turning toward” demonstrates the audience’s engagement with the world; there is a temporal dimension in the way understanding is modified and reshaped.

Heidegger explains that the “world” is not simply the environment that surrounds one, but rather a function of the subjects’ interactions within it. For Heidegger, “Being-with” refers to how the self is defined through its relation to the social world and other subjects within it. *Dasein* is distinguished from an object; its “essence is grounded in its existence” (Heidegger 1962:152). An object’s essence, however, is given prior to its existence. Heidegger states that, “*Dasein* is an entity which is in each case I myself; its Being is in each case mine” (1962:150). In this manner, “Being” is distinguished from “present-at-hand,” which refers to an object that cannot be concerned about its Being. If the essence of *Dasein* is based on its very existence, and it continuously lives out possibilities through Being-with others, then on one level *Dasein* is temporal and indicative of future possibilities. It is through this future of possibilities that Lotfi presents an understanding of *rastagārī* to the audience to reshape the antagonistic views towards music into something more honorable and pious.

Meanwhile, if Being-with, for *Dasein*, is essentially “for-the-sake-of” Others (Heidegger 1962:160), *Dasein* also speaks of the limit of possibilities. It carries with it

the phenomenon of the past, so Being finds itself limited by social practices, historical conditions, and the material world. Heidegger explains that if “Being-with” is an existential constituent of “Being-in-the-world,” then there must be a sense of “now” (an element of the present) that Being experiences. “So far as *Dasein* is at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being” (1962:163). *Dasein* is grounded in its existence. Moreover, *Dasein* in the “world” is attentive to those “entities” highlighted by “concern” with the environment (Heidegger 1962:95). *Dasein* is a continuum of the past into the future of possibilities. It carries itself as a historical Being tangled in a web with its historical specificity. The limit of possibilities creates for Lotfī a certain model of the life-world based on the history and socio-cultural implications of Iran and Islam, as he utters religious and mystical concepts. *Rastagārī* is liberating, yet limits the possibilities to present music-making, and the judgment of it, separate from Islam and mysticism. While Lotfī strongly believes that the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is based on the metaphysical, the use of Islamic language creates an ethical discourse that is, to a large degree, inherently unidimensional and authoritative.

Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān effectively use Islamic and mystical language to counter the Shī’a authorities’ antagonistic views on music. The Islamic language used by these master musicians offers a perspective on music that is tranquility and transcendence. The close connection between *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* and Shī’a ideology, *‘irfān* and *sonnat* is clear, and during the last three decades master musicians have found different ways to advocate for these values. Therefore, on one level, Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s discourse is liberating and transcendent. It largely sets out to counter the authoritative views of the Shī’a authorities, while providing the public with a unique and



honorable understanding of music. On another level, the use of Islamic and mystical language is designed to maintain certain perspectives and ideals related to music that require the use of a lexicon that becomes authoritative and inflexible.

## CHAPTER SIX: AKHLĀQ, AUTONOMY AND AUTHORITY IN MUSIC

In his *Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle*, Ibn Sīnā explores the power of poetry as a collective and cohesive force for the community. Al-Fārābī makes similar claims by asserting that poetry's power is realized in the way it binds people together in the community of the Virtuous City. For al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā poetry lacks the necessary characteristics to be a guiding model for individuals to attain moral character, but it is a vital force as an instrument of power in the way political and social life operate in the public domain. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's discourse has centered on how music brings individuals in the community together by utilizing a lexicon that is ethical, religious, social and political. Their ethical discourse grants the audience a recognizable and justifiable mode of language that conveys ideals based on collective conviction. It brings the social and political power of music within an ethical and socially accepted realm of the everyday lives of Iranians. Their ethical discourse is about how music effectively maintains social and individual relations based on ideals and values seen by the community as honorable and pious. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's discourse speaks to a moral consensus among most Iranians that offers a path for individuals to attain the "good life" in the community.

This mode of discourse used by Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān sets out a logical and rational argument for the public. Their discourse serves what Habermas refers to as the integration and legitimization of ideas in the public sphere. This chapter examines the dual functionality of Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's discourse: a) constructing a language that is based on equality, cohesion and the common good of the community; and b) the authoritative and unyielding construction of viewpoints through a language that presents a fixed perspective of ideals and values. Their discourse serves to create a sense of transcendence and tranquility about music that is pious. The

implication of transcendence and righteousness in Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s discourse enables a close and intimate connection between music and ideals revered in Shī’a tradition and *‘irfān*. In addition, the use of discourse is fundamentally related to freedom. The discussion of *akhlāq* is about some degree of autonomy from external coercion, and a level of freedom to express a certain view that opposes the historical and religious constraints on music-making. However, the emphasis on autonomy also creates authority through a language that delineates proper ethical acts.

In *Truth and Justification* (2003), Habermas states that moral rightness and moral actions are “constructed” rather than revealed. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān are evoking ethical values based on language that have been historically and socially accepted and normalized. Thus, their discourse is grounded in universal validity. Habermas asserts that universal validity arises based on a “communicative action” that enables the acceptance or rejection of a claim through argumentation (1990). Central to communicative action is the rational capacity, through a discourse, to validate and arrive at universally accepted norms. The accepted norm is the common good that brings a community together. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s ethical discourse seeks to establish the freedom to institute certain values as norms based on the rationally motivated ideals. Their discourse presupposes a sense of equality, whereby they have a voice equal to other established factions and groups in proposing and discussing norms and values. Discourse on moral norms recognizes that, while there are different beliefs and convictions, there is a universally shared capacity for members of a community to rationalize and believe in a set of ideas. The core principle of discourse is reason, which offers individuals the autonomy and freedom to express their ideals. Discourse is grounded in the assumption of universal validity, as it seeks to develop a universal norm for all members of the community.

The Islamic and mystical discourse used by the master musicians creates conditions for acceptance by most members in the community. In *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (1990), Habermas states that “*All affected can accept the consequences and the side effects its [a proposed moral norm’s] general observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of everyone’s interests (and these consequences are preferred to those of known alternative possibilities for regulation)*” (65, italics in original). The use of Islamic concepts and *‘irfān* is familiar to Iranians and approved collectively, so the discourse is seen as legitimate and valid. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s discourse is an invitation for others to freely evaluate the master musicians’ claims based on knowledge and rational thinking. There is a freedom to participate in dialogue (and argument) generated by the master musicians and constructed upon the exchange of ideas or contemplation of perspectives. This mode of dialogue is not structurally possible in religious speeches due to the hieratical nature of the speaker and the audience. The formation of dialogue offers master musicians a way to conduct an ongoing conversation with the public that is consensual and embraces the collective. Discourse presupposes a public sphere where multiple and divergent voices are active.

Another effective tool at work in Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s discourse is the sweeping and generalized way they discuss concepts like *‘ibādat* (service), which even within the Islamic tradition (let alone other Iranian socio-cultural practices) consists of diverse rituals and understandings in various communities and religious orders. What makes Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s discourse of *‘ibādat* substantial to the public is not the need for a coherent definition of *‘ibādat*, but rather the admiration and solidarity this Islamic and mystical concept generates for people. Habermas characterizes discourse ethics based on the equality and commonality it brings, stating that,

Every morality revolves around equality of respect, solidarity, and the common good. Fundamental ideas like these can be reduced to the relations of symmetry and reciprocity presupposed in communicative action. In other words, the common core of all kinds of morality can be traced back to the reciprocal imputations and shared presuppositions actors make when they seek understanding in everyday situations. (1990:201)

Discourse, then, can be based on some notion of equality and freedom. This sense of impartiality and autonomy of discourse is only nourished in a pluralistic public sphere where a single ethical authority no longer dictates principles and values for citizens. The last three decades in Iran have seen major strides in the formation of a pluralistic public sphere, more evident in culture than in politics. This is not to say that the Islamic Republic is a free and open society, but to recognize how the public have been able to hear and create vibrant, divergent and competing narratives through various public platforms. What is fundamental about Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's discourse is that it sets out to reach a shared understanding in today's Iranian society where a single ethical authority no longer exists. Their discourse achieves a rational consensus and brings ethics into the realm of the political and social lives of Iranians.

While Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān never clearly define *'ibādat*, a mutual understanding is achieved between them and the listeners in this dialogue. The discourse of these three master musicians finds its source in formal pragmatic preconditions of speech and language, but it also uses religious and mystical conviction, adding a layer of assertiveness, assurance, certainty and sincerity to their perspective. Discourse does not seek to generate and justify moral principles and values, rather it enables a process whereby argumentation and dialogue actively assess and scrutinize the moral claims (Phillips 2003). *'Ibādat* is taken as a subject of dialogical argumentation among Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān, as they aim to generate and justify the ethics of music-making. Lotfī believes *'ibādat* to be a constant work on the soul or disposition, a form of action that is necessary to be taken up by a devotee, whereas Sālem understands it on more

abstract terms, as a practice to cultivate virtue. Habermas argues that individual reason and self-reflection are insufficient for generating and justifying any ethical principles, since each person will advance a different view leading to a different conclusion. The discussion of *'ibādat*, then, is not a subjective and personal view passed on to the audience by a master musician, but is rather based on collective values embedded in Iranian society.

What Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān must convince people of is not *'ibādat's* religious and mystical connotations and relevance for the public, but how a religious concept relates to music.

Lotfī explained the relationship of *'ibādat* to music:

For musicians, there is an inner *nadā* [voice or call] that speaks to them, much like a *vejdān-e sotī* [a sound of consciousness]. I seek to find a way to get these *nadā-ha* [voices] out, or to discover these *nadā-ha* from within. It is important to make a connection to *bātin* to hear what is within, to discover *nadā-ha*. This intimate connection to one's within, to *bātin*, the discovery of *nadā-ha* which are pure, and untainted is *'ibādat*. *'Ibādat* is to cultivate and nurture *bātin* so it's pure so that the inner *nadā* can resonate outwards. This discovery of *vejdān-e sotī* is *'ibādat*. (Interview conducted on June 3, 2012)

Lotfī's use of *'ibādat* is subjective and based on his personal experience of mystics and spirituality. The idea of *vejdān-e sotī* is purely subjective. Having said that, each of the Islamic and mystical concepts has powerful effects on the collective consciousness of Iranians. Social consciousness is formed not by the subjective experience of *'ibādat*, but rather by the collective use of this term. *'Ibādat* is socially validated and legitimized. Habermas argues that "achievement of general acceptance of any norm can therefore...only be obtained through a process of dialectical argumentation" (2003:11).

Using a concept like *'ibādat* brings Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān social and political legitimacy. The use of discourse is, to a large degree, a discussion about the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* based on the metaphysical understanding of beauty. The use of Islamic and

mystical language produces political and social leverage and empathy among Iranians. It also helps to maintain a platform in Iran's public sphere, which is strongly influenced by government censorship and control. It is much harder for the government to repeal and disapprove of Islamic language that has been fundamental to the revolutionary rhetoric. Thus, using concepts like *'ibādat* enables Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān to share a public sphere with more traditional and powerful factions, particularly the Shī'a authorities. Discourse on moral norms also allows Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān to combat the religious elites through the use of language similar to that used to speak antagonistically about music. Most importantly, this discourse would create an equal platform where dialogue can take shape; Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's language is not based on a hierarchic relation, but rather a dialogue between musicians and the public. Habermas states that "a norm is valid when the foreseeable consequences and side-effects of its general observance for the interests and value-orientations of each individual could be jointly accepted by all concerned without coercion" (2003:42). Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān need public validation as they advance their dialogue with the people, whereas the Shī'a authorities find their legalization in their interpretations of the words of Allāh. For Habermas, any mode of language needs to be part of, and subject to, debate and conversation.

Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's discourse is emblematic of how their message to the public is meant to help create a consensus on generalizable maxims (like *'ibādat*) based on the evidence they convey about the conditions, criteria and acceptance of *mūsīqī-e sonnati* as a pious and honorable practice. After a music class Lotfī explained to me that

Our music [*mūsīqī-e sonnati*] comes from a place of love and affection. It is based on a history that unites us all. When you hear new music, for many of us it is unfamiliar and strange. But we don't have that with our music. It is just like our language and our interactions, there is something familiar in it that brings us together. When we hear our poetry or our music, we have no doubt about its origin and its practice. No one questions Rūmī's spiritual journey. It is very much the same situation with our music. Our music is

full of similar spiritual journeys as discussed by Rūmī and other iconic poets many years before. There is a message of unity and harmony in our music that brings us together. This message is based on our religious views, mystical understanding and our history.

The consensus is formed by Lotfī's elaboration on *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* as an art form that has developed organically as religious and mystical ideals have taken shape in Iran. This connection to history creates a condition of acceptance and admiration for *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* among the public. It also legitimizes this art as the only true and authentic music based on a rich history and cultural trajectory.

In expressing his message, discourse for Lotfī becomes a catalyst for moral learning by setting out guidelines to communicate ideals. The goal of Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's discourse is to generate an understanding of goodness. Habermas states that this form of practical reasoning centers on that which is "good for me" or "good for us" (1996:161).<sup>15</sup> The understanding of good is based on the history and cultural practices of a certain group; it creates a social cohesion that binds individuals in community.

#### 6.1. THE RELATIVE VALIDITY OF ETHICS AND TRUTH

If the understanding of good is based on specific values shared by members of a community, then discourse has relative validity (Finlayson 2005). The relative validity of discourse implies competing claims about the truth. Discourse is free to engage with various dialogues and viewpoints that give rise to a claim. However, to support the validity of a claim, the speaker needs to be assertive and unyielding to other claims. The presumption of truth for Paul Ricoeur implies "that confident reception by which we respond, in an initial move preceding all criticism, to any proposition of meaning, any claim to truth, because we are never at the

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<sup>15</sup> Habermas distinguishes three forms of practical reason: pragmatic, ethical and moral (1990, 1996). The three master musicians' discourse moves from a pragmatic into the ethical and moral realm.



beginning of the process of truth and because we belong, before any critical gesture, to a domain of presumed truth” (1985:227). Truth, for instance, is shaped by the argumentation or the authority with which *‘ibādat* is presented to the public. After all, the use of Islamic and mystical concepts by Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān offers their claim a legitimacy even before the audience can fully engage with their assertions.

Discourse is constructed to make claims to the truth based on past knowledge that is never objective—truth is created as part of one’s subjective experience in relation to others and the world. Truth, then, encompasses “language as both a disclosure of meaning and rationally-achieved consensus” (Kaplan 2008:203). Duranti draws on the Aristotelian model of the truth, where “the essential nature of truth is a correspondence between human judgment (in the mind) and things (in the world)” (Duranti 2015:104; see also Duranti 1993). The “proposition” (e.g., Shajariān’s statement: “music is an *‘ibādat*; it has always been a part of my people’s life”) needs to correspond to the “state-of-affairs” in different phases of a person’s life (e.g., a different understanding of *‘ibādat*) (Duranti 2015:105). Based on this approach, “to understand a proposition means to be able to match the states-of-affairs represented by an utterance with their respective truth-values in specific ‘worlds’ or domains of discourses” (Duranti 2015:105). There is a distinction between “contingent truths,” which most everyday talk and experience is based on, and Kantian “analytic truth” (Duranti 2015). This binary interaction between truth and proposition, as a “starting hypothesis,” is developed through social interactions (Duranti 2015:106). What needs to be considered is how truth becomes a social affair. Truth

[is] typically a social matter because of the ways in which people work around it and through it. This is so not simply because we need conventions and public criteria for the assessment of truth, but because in social life truth itself becomes an instrument, a mediating concept living in particular practices, through which important social work gets done. (Duranti 2015:106)

Discourse can be explained as different ideologies and viewpoints pushing truth in different directions among the public. Yet, “it is through the confrontation for different versions of truth that a collectively acceptable reality is searched for, one where divisions and differences will not be resolved ever but can momentarily rest, until the next social drama .... breaks out” (Duranti 2015:106).

What distinguishes truth in the language of Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān is the fact that truth exists with a clear true and false dichotomy, instead of endless possibilities. Taking Shajariān’s statement as contingent truth (“music is an ‘*ibādat*’; it has always been a part of my people’s life”) indicates a certain and defined way that music has always been viewed and practiced in Iran. Truth in Shajariān’s statement is based on possible relations between the subjective, intersubjective and collective. Therefore, instead of thinking of the way Islamic concepts are used in ethics as true and false, Shajariān’s intentions become important. Duranti states that, “unlike truth, which implies only two values, true and false.... Intentionality implies a potentially unlimited set of relations between the mind and the object or situation. ...the same thinking/feeling/perceiving subject can at different times entertain a variety of intentions toward the same entity” (Duranti 2015:106). Intention in the use of ‘*ibādat*’, which allows for countless possibilities and realizations for the audience, replaces the dichotomy of true and false. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s intent is clearly to bestow on music a pious and honorable status. ‘*ibādat*’ is a symbolic representation of the good, as distinct from the depraved and immoral. Specific ethical discourses draw on a dichotomy of good and bad, as the use of Islamic language intends to present *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* as an ethical practice.

The dichotomy of good and bad is also present in religious views on music. In fact, Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s discourse language is in large part a response to the dichotomy created by Shī’a elites. I met Mohsen Kadivar (b. 1959), a philosopher, leading intellectual reformist and professor of Islamic Studies at Duke University, during the summer of 2017 to discuss Shī’a perspectives on music. As a leading intellectual reformist, Kadivar has progressive and liberal views on Shī’a doctrine, particularly in relation to political Islam. Our conversation at Duke University focused on the competing claims about music based on Shī’a ideologies. Kadivar asserted that music is not *harām*, and that claims that forbid music are baseless in *Usūl al-fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). He stated that some of the *marāji’* (singular, *marja’-e taqlīd* or *marja’-e dīnī*; “source to imitate or follow” or a “religious guidance”) have generally divided music into two categories: a) *ghinā’*, vocal music which is viewed as good or permissible music; and b) *lahw u la’b*, instrumental music which is forbidden. It could be concluded that regardless of the positions Shī’a elites hold on music, their perspectives do not disengage from the dichotomy of good and bad.

Even for Kadivar, who explains that music is not *harām*, the dichotomy of good and bad exists in his division of what he believes to be “good music” and “bad music.”

He explained that,

About ninety-nine percent of music is good music. It is permissible and there is nothing wrong with listening to it. I do not understand how some *marāji’* have divided music into vocal and instrumental. They argue that instrumental music is forbidden. That is, in fact, the reason why televisions in Iran do not show the instrumentalist but show the vocalist sing. But, I do believe that one percent of music is not permissible and is bad. For example, like a music that drives a person insane; a music that is loud and really leaves a scar on an individual’s *bātin*. Good music ought to help create peacefulness and tranquility. It does not have to be Iranian music, it could be from anywhere. For example, I listen to Bach as much

as I listen to Shajariān; they both have a peaceful and tranquil nature and help transport me to a different place. That is the main purpose and aim of good music.

A connection is made between good music and transcendence, a religious and mystical phenomenon that to a large degree functions like *'ibādat*. Discourse on moral norms legitimizes what is virtuous and pious about music. The use of Islamic and mystical concepts is also grounded, delineated and aimed at a consensus based on the dichotomy of good and bad.

Lotfi expanded on this dichotomy during a television interview in 2012:

First we have to consider that there are two kinds of music: *mūsīqī-e jeddī* [serious music] and *mūsīqī-e sabok* [light or dismissive music].... [for instance], some of the rap music that is prevalent and favored by the youth, from the beginning it starts with derogatory and insulting words. This form of music is a stain on our society.... *Mūsīqī-e jeddī* is not a commodity to be used and then thrown away. It takes a lot of thought and contemplation and has a history behind it that brings out the best and most important part of our culture. It is almost like comparing a heavy and light object. *Mūsīqī-e sabok* is light and with the most insignificant wind will fly away....much like a commodity people use and then forget about, it does not require much thought. *Mūsīqī-e jeddī* is like a heavy object planted soundly in the ground. It is difficult to move or erase it.

The dichotomy of good and bad is also based on creating what is perceived to be the truth. Islamic concepts used in ethical discourse are founded on the Truth of Allāh's words. There is little dispute about the Truth of a concept like *'ibādat*; it is to worship Allāh through the Muslim ritual of *namāz*. While different meanings can arise in Shajariān's discourse of *'ibādat*, he intends to convey a clear dichotomy between good and bad. The most notable form of truth centers on two terms that are used in the Qur'ān: *al-haqq al-yaqīn* ("the certain truth") and *dalāl* ("going astray"). Kadivar believes that there are various methods for reaching the truth, but *al-haqq al-yaqīn* and *dalāl* are vital in discussing "the Islamic revelation and ignorance of it" (Mahdi 2001:176). Based on

this dichotomy Islamic concepts create a sense of *bātil* (falsehood) and *haqq* (truth). The push and pull between *bātil* and *haqq* is evident in Lotfī's discourse, which generates language that is unidirectional and no longer a dialogue with the hearer:

When you think about the way music and poetry speak and represent *'irfān*, then it leaves no question about the *khalāsat* [genuineness] and *safā* [purity] of our music. Once a listener is able to take the veil of self-ignorance off, then the connection to the *haqqiqat* [authenticity and sensuousity] becomes apparent. Music speaks the words of *haqq*, and to think otherwise is not to acknowledge our history of *'irfān* and mysticism. There is an order that has given rise to the *zibā* [beautiful] in our music, which assists us in seeing the divine. To say otherwise, is to be ignorant of oneself and *bātin*. (Interview conducted on July 2012)

The legitimacy of truth is based on historical, religious, social and political domains.

Lotfī's use of *safā* is a moral consideration linked to discourse that evaluates *bātil* and *haqq*. The moral evaluation is legitimized by references to the transcendent, the sacred and one's duties and conduct towards the ideals and the good.

Foucault asserts that every discourse or statement is, to some degree, a product of the social power of the speaker (1972:50). Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān, as master practitioners, must have some moral authority to assert claims about music. The credibility and authority of their discourse, based on the dichotomy of *bātil* (falsehood) and *haqq*, requires acceptance from the public without recourse to coercive power. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's discourse produces an expectation that distinguishes true belief and practice from disreputable and unfit actions. Ultimately, authority is linked to legitimacy. Legitimacy itself is built on what is perceived to be the truth.

## 6.2. THE PATH OF TRUTH

For Ibn Sīnā, *haqq* is a form of gnostic asceticism where the practice of self-discipline and religious exercise becomes the way to accumulate goodness for the eternal world. The

legitimation of moral considerations built on *haqq* is attained based on a gnostic understanding that leads to the path of *quds* (sanctity). Moral legitimacy arises through the authority that *haqq* (the Truth of the Divine) produces as it repudiates *bātil*. For an individual to attain *quds*, *bātin* needs to be purification of the soul allowing one to have an intimate connection with *haqq*. Part of the purification process is the use of communicative tools at-hand, leading individuals to worship a higher being. For instance, ‘*ibādat* is a communicative medium facilitating this connection to the Truth. Lotfī, Sālem, and especially Shajariān, make a similar argument that music becomes an instrument for one to attain *haqq*. Both music and ‘*ibādat* function as communication media, exercising the imaginative faculties of the soul that enable individuals to experience the good or *quds*. In fact, *salāh* (worship in Arabic) means “communication.” In *Ishārāt wa Tanbīhāt*, Ibn Sīnā asserts that once *quds* is attained individuals will

abide in peace with the intimate (*sirr*) of the inner self, when Truth turns its effulgence upon them with nothing to mar the light. It is then that the intimate of the inner self becomes enamored of the brilliant dawn; and that love and devotion become an established habit; so that whenever it wishes to penetrate into the light of truth without doubts or fears to obstruct, it will be encouraged by that light until it finds itself wholly and completely in the path of sanctity (*quds*). (trans. Afnan 1958:190)

In contrast to most everyday actions directed towards earthly purpose and material gain, the path to *quds* and attainment of *haqq* is sought for its own sake. There is nothing that a devoted individual would prefer to do other than attaining *haqq* and worshiping Allāh only for the sake of worshipping Him.

This unquestionable desire and devotion positions the individual in a honorable relationship with Allāh. It is only then

that the truth is no more the goal, but an intermediary leading to Him who is the ultimate goal. And yet he who gives an intermediary position to truth is to be pitied in a way. It means that he has not yet attained full satisfaction and joy. He

stands to the real gnostic as a young boy in comparison to the man of mature experience. (trans. Afnan 1958:191)

To attain this unquestionable devotion an individual needs *al-irāda* (the will). *Al-irāda*—for example, through the practice of ‘*ibādat*—becomes the tool that strengthens an individual’s resolve to exhibit and validate connections to Allāh. Ibn Sīnā asserts that *al-irāda* enables an individual to gain

the ardent desire to bind himself with the bonds of faith; to attach himself to the unfailing source of determination, and thus bring peace to his soul. It is then that the intimate of his inner self moves towards the realms of sanctity that it may profit from the bliss of attaining that goal. (trans. Afnan 1958:191-2)

Ibn Sīnā explains that two criteria are needed for the inner self to move towards the realms of *quds*: one must become *murīd* (the seeker) and practice *riyāda* (discipline and self-sacrifice). Both terms are fundamental for Lotfī in his discussions of *adab* (see Chapter Three).

For Lotfī, discipline and self-sacrifice are motivated by a desire and intention:

A musician needs to develop *irāda* [intention] through hard work and sacrifice to nourish purity. *Irāda* is to seek out the desires and aspirations; it is to seek love the way a *murīd* seeks for the Beloved. To develop *irāda* a musician needs to give up self-indulgence and ego; it is a human will to be pure and virtuous. Nowadays, there are lots of musicians who do not have the right intent—or never learned to develop it—so their will and intent lay elsewhere. *Irāda* comes from the way we have valued music and how we have thought music can transcend us, how it can purify our soul to become clear and *zolāl* [transparent]. (Interview conducted on July 5, 2012)

*Irāda*, in Lotfī’s perception, is developed based on an Islamic principle that requires submission to its codes of conduct. *Irāda* is to practice *riyāda* to meet Allāh’s acceptance. In *sūrah al-Isrā’* (17:19) the intention and wish to receive Allāh’s acceptance is made clear: “Those who do wish for the (things of) the Hereafter, and strive thereof with all due

striving, and have faith—they are the ones whose striving is acceptable” (trans. Siddiqui 2008:115). As noted in the introduction of this dissertation, a master musician like Lotfī, does not study the Qur’ān to draw comparisons to music. Nor does he read Ibn Sīnā to develop an understanding of beauty in music. *Akhlāq in mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is permeated with the religious, mystical, social and cultural norms and practices of Iran. The religious and mystical values are infused in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* mainly through poetry, which often carries a similar understanding of beauty and the good.

A *murīd* as the seeker of *haqq* creates a close connection to Allāh (through *riyāda*) based on the unyielding and intimate bond to His Divine love. According to Ibn Sīnā, three forms of worship exist to attain *haqq*. The first is through *riyāda*; it is to discipline the self to be pious. The second centers on the ritualistic aspects of a religious community and its ceremonies; it focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of the performance of worship. Ibn Sīnā writes in *Ishārāt wa Tanbīhāt* that the third form consists of subtle thought and “pure and chaste love directed by the beauty of the beloved, not by the force of passion” (trans. Afnan 1958:192). For him, the three phases represent the stages of preparation, in which the individual develops and uses will, resolve and discipline to attain self-purification.

Once self-purification is completed, Ibn Sīnā asserts that the light of Allāh begins to be revealed to the *murīd*. The analogy of light and the revelation of Allāh is advanced by Ibn Sīnā:

Like lightning they appear and they are gone. These are the occasions they themselves call ‘moments’ (*awqāt*). And these moments are preceded and also followed by periods of ecstasy (*wajd*)—one period leading to the moment, and the other following the mystic experience. (trans. Afnan 1958:192)



After a summer afternoon of classes in 2009 in Tehran, Lotfī asked a few of the students to stay at his music institute for dinner. By late evening he began to play his *tār* for about an hour and a half. As always, I sat quietly and attentively, eager to see how he would weave the melodies together; I fervently awaited hearing how each moment of his performance was developed and elaborated—what he called “a musical journey.” After he finished playing, he explained how *wajd* is an essential element in music-making:

The truest form of performance is one that brings *wajd*. First, a young musician needs to look elsewhere to understand and experience this feeling. For me, as a young child, it was the quiet nights in my father’s yard. I connected with nature, giving me a joy that was unexplainable. Then, I slowly developed a desire and will, a *mastī* [intoxication] when hearing the master musicians of the day. I began to have feelings of profound joy, it was not easy to explain. Eventually, I started to develop similar feelings when I would play music, but they were rare and momentary. With time, as my understanding of music developed, they became more and more frequent. They became so essential that each note became a spiritual dance for me, it brings for me a profound *wajd*

This experience of moments of the revelation of Allāh’s light becomes more frequent as an individual develops more self-discipline and self-purification. Ibn Sīnā believed that once an individual achieves complete self-purification, he/she is in *ittisāl* (contact) with Allāh. He explains in *Ishārāt wa Tanbīhāt* that when the realm of *quds* is attained the individual

sees the Creative Truth in everything; his labours have borne fruit; he has reached the highest degree and attained the goal.... The long periods of quietude (*sakīna*) have ended... And yet he can proceed still farther. Exercise can carry him to the stage where his ‘moments’ would be thought to be periods of ‘quietude’; his ecstatic escapes would become habitual; and the lightning glimpses would be transformed into flames of light. He gains an acquaintance that will remain permanently with him and whose constant companionship affords him profit and satisfaction. Should that acquaintance ever desert him thenceforth, he would be left sad and perplexed. (trans. Afnan 1958:192)

This process for Ibn Sīnā is perceived as the journey of an *‘ārīf* (gnostic) along the spiritual path of the quest for knowledge, known as *‘irfān* (gnosis). *‘Irfān* is the stage of “complete knowledge” of what is revealed to a purified and virtuous person (or what humans have the capacity to know).

Ibn Sīnā calls the attainment of complete knowledge *ma ‘rifā*. Derived from the Arabic root “to know,” *ma ‘rifā*, or complete knowledge, is when an *‘ārīf* gains a willing acquaintance of the Divine love or *ma ‘rifā*. At this stage, an *‘ārīf* is transformed as “the intimate of his self becomes a highly polished mirror turned towards the Creative Truth. And pleasures from on high will come pouring down upon him; and he will be overjoyed to find that his soul has traces of God upon it” (trans. Afnan 1958:194). Lotfī would use a similar analogy, stating that “good music only appears when someone has a *bātin* that is *shaffāf va zolāl*” (transparent and pure). The goal of *quds* is to ultimately relinquish the self while never losing focus on the splendor of Allāh. When playing music, Lotfī would say that he was “*az khod bīkhod*” (being lost in something). To “be lost in something” one needs to relinquish the self.

Ibn Sīnā calls this “being lost” or the relinquishment of the self *al-wusūl* (arrival or becoming) (Afnan 1958:204). An *‘ārīf*, then, embarks on a journey where he/she begins to experience *awqāt* (moments) of Allāh’s light, and after comes the more periodic realizations of *sakīna* (quietude), then with increase in the repetition *ittisāl* (contact) is achieved. *Ittisāl* then leads to *al-wusūl* (arrival) where an individual is in union with the Creative Truth. This journey sets out to completely transform an individual, much as a traveler who reaches a destination finds him/herself transformed. This is precisely why Lotfī refers to music-making as *sair va sulūk* (journey and seeking the path) (see Chapter

Three). Music transforms individuals, as Lotfī would say, “with each note and with each interval of silence.” This transformation effectively occurs with music. Music transforms the soul, in a process often referred to by master musicians as a spiritual journey. Music becomes a mystical quest.

The execution of these acts in an ‘*ārif*’s mystical journey that unites him/her with Allāh is based on a) separation, leaving things that might tempt the individual away from taking on the quest; b) denunciation of earthly desire; c) renunciation of impurity to gain autonomy to strive towards Allāh; and d) refusal to seek anything other than Allāh’s love. Once these acts are executed fully a union with Allāh takes place as *wuqūf* (standstill) takes hold. This stage requires one to be steadfast:

At the proper conception, one has to be a man of contemplation and not of lip-service, of personal insight and not of hearsay; one must be of those who have reached the foundation-head, not of those who have only listened to the tale. This is why the gnostic is so happy and gay; modest and humble withal. He could not be otherwise now that he sees the truth in everything; and finds man an object of pity in search of what is utterly futile. (Afnan 1958:195-6)

I often think about a comment that Lotfī made frequently: “*dar ‘ishq bāyad sābet qadam bud*” (For love one must be steadfast and certain). He claimed that to truly learn about the *zibā’i* (beauty) of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* one needs unwavering love, “a willingness to let the soul be free to be transformed by music.” I am now beginning to realize what Lotfī meant when he told me learning music is the first step of becoming a musician. Reliving the classes I took with Lotfī when I was a youth, I recognize music-making was a ritual of ethical practices through which he embarked on the journey of love towards the truth. For him, the truth was found as an ‘*ārif*’ who took his mystical journey through music.

### 6.3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Part II of this dissertation examines how *akhlāq* in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* takes shape publically through the discourse of Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān. Over the last three decades each of the three master musicians discussed in this section has found unique and effective ways to convey their message to the public. A message of *akhlāq* in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* that was often discussed and contemplated in private spaces has now found new platforms to express what is good and suitable about music-making to the public. An effective instrument in conveying ideas about *akhlāq* in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* has been Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān's use of an Islamic and mystical language. The use of sacred concepts validates what is already confirmed and accepted by most Iranians, and given a degree of authority and legitimacy to *ustādān*. It also counters the Shī'a authorities, who often disapprove of music-making as an illicit and impure act.

The use of a discourse by Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān that centers on Shī'a ideology, *'irfān* and *sonnat* also creates a powerful language that directs individuals to an understanding of *haqq* through what Ibn Sīnā (and other philosophers and mystics) considered to be an *'ārif's* mystical journey. The Truth is only realized in the unconditional worship of Allāh that unites one to His splendor. Through self-sacrifice and absolute dedication individuals embark on a journey where His worship is only for his sake and no other benefit. Similar parallels are made between what is conceived as seeking the truth and a journey a musician ought to embark upon to achieve this goal. Music, then, becomes a realization of the unknown, a transcendent experience to seek the light of good through the exercise of hard work and dedication to Divine love.

In discovering what the judgment of beauty means in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, *akhlāq* shapes what is deemed as beauty. Beauty is implicated in metaphysical understanding of the good and suitable closely related to Shī'a ideology, *'irfān* and *sonnat*. Part II of this dissertation builds on the metaphysical judgment discussed in Part I to argue that beauty is conveyed through a

language of logic that is immersed in religious and political ideals. To understand beauty is to seek *haqq*, as music transforms individuals beyond the everyday. As Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān speak about the metaphysical judgment of their music, their message is based on a language of logic and conviction, which finds its moral legitimacy in the religious practices, mystical understanding and political norms of today's Iran.

### PART. III—THE JUDGMENT OF BEAUTY AND TRADITION

Part II of this dissertation examines how Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān have entered the public sphere to generate a discourse to convey what is good and suitable about music-making in Iran. Their mode of discourse centers on Islamic and mystical concepts that are open to logical and rational interpretation. Lotfī, Sālem and Shajariān’s statements on *akhlāq* repudiate the Shī’a authorities’ hostile views on musicians. The engagement with the public sphere by these three master musicians is an attempt to reconstruct the relationship between socio-cultural and political structures of power in Iran. However, master musicians’ discourse is not always confined to religious and spiritual conceptualization of *zibā’ī* (beauty). In the contemporary history of *mūsīqī-e sonnati*, many master musicians have used ethical values to confront the condemnations faced by music on two fronts: a) Shī’a dogma, the ‘*ulamā*’s views on musicians (discussed in Part II); and b) the dichotomy between tradition and modernity. In Part III, the focus shifts to the *ustādān*’s discourse on the *sonnat* (tradition) of *mūsīqī-e sonnati*, which stems more from historical facts and cultural norms than the religious and mystical practices.

Part III analyzes how *sonnat* carries an ethical importance in the *ustādān*’s perception of *zibā’ī* in *mūsīqī-e sonnati*. *Sonnat* represents a reality of the past (which could at times be romanticized), providing a protective and preferential form of language to convey the ideal practices. At times, discourse on *sonnat* is furtively implicated with Islamic and mystical ideas, but many arguments on tradition are based on socio-cultural and historical relevance. As discussed in Part I, there is a close relationship between Islamic revelation, ‘*irfān* and *sonnat* (see Benjamin’s concept of “constellation” in relation to *ab ‘ād-e akhlāqī*). The *ab ‘ād-e akhlāqī* (ethical dimensions) ultimately shape a form of *zibā’ī* in *mūsīqī-e sonnati* that, as Nasr states about Islamic art, illuminates “an aspect of the Islamic revelation, a casting of the Divine

Realities (*haqā'iq*) upon the plane of material manifestation in order to carry man upon the wings of its liberating beauty to his original abode of Divine Proximity” (1963:13). In some schools of Western thinking, *'irfān* is often understood in the context of the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. There is, however, no reason to perceive the relationship between Islamic art and Islamic spirituality as dichotomous. In fact, *sonnat* has a close socio-historical relationship with Islamic ideals and practices. Nasr explains that, “the more one penetrates into the significance of Islamic art the more one becomes aware of the most profound relationship between this art and Islamic spirituality” (1963:13). *Mūsīqī-e sonnatī* is not merely the product of external historical factors divorced from the principles of Islamic revelation and *'irfān*. The discourse on *sonnat* is based on the historical facts tied to religious ideals, even if the language used is often divorced from Islamic and mystic concepts.

Based on its everyday use, master musicians’ discourse on *sonnat* takes on more cultural and historical significance rather than an Islamic importance. This is mainly because *sonnat* has been implicated in the social consciousness of Iranians as part of a dichotomy between modernity and tradition. The dichotomy between *sonnat* and modernity has been central in the ethical lives of Iranians, necessitating that many (re)evaluate the self and others in the community, as well as the historical events and political circumstances. This form of ethical life extends from religious and mystical understanding to the social norms, political practices and historical events. Following Durkheim’s “total social fact,” which stresses the habitual and pervasive communal life, it can be concluded that different social phenomena are as vital to the construction of an ethical life as religion is. *Sonnat* comprises ethical values that address social cohesion, and it situates ethics in the habits and practices of ordinary activities, by emphasizing the role of cultural practices, history and other resources in a community.

To understand how *sonnat* shapes the discourse on moral norms, Part III draws on Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem’s perspectives on traditional values and practices they view as important in shaping the judgment of beauty in music-making. This section also draws on Lotfī’s students on the relationship between *sonnat* and *no-āvarī* (innovation). Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem’s discourse on *sonnat* must be examined in terms of virtue (practice or disposition). *Sonnat* is based on an explicit set of rules the *ustādān* understand and inhabit. In practice, *sonnat* fosters the inculcation of distinct habits and specific ways of thinking guided by the *ustādān*’s perception of *sa’āda* (happiness). Being inculcated in *sonnat* places traditional values in the realm of subjective understanding, where conventional values are formed based on individual experiences of a master musician’s perception of cultural ideas. Thus, *sonnat* needs to be viewed as a fluid process, a changing entity where the *ustādān*’s views of tradition alter over time.

This evolution of perspective creates tension among the *ustādān* regarding what best represents tradition in *mūsīqī-e sonnati*. *Sonnat* also creates another ethical dilemma for master musicians, as it represents a deep-seated historical dichotomy between safeguarding traditional values and receptivity to *no-āvarī*. *Sonnat* is built on cultural values that are inherently based on Islam and *irfān*, yet its ethical discourse includes language about *tajaddod* (modernization) and renewal. The discourse on *tajaddod* is relatively new in Iranian history. *Tajaddod* in Iran is based on “the desire for change and innovation, shaped by temporal conditions and national identity” (Behnam 2004:9). This plea for change, particularly since the Constitutional Revolution (1905-11), necessitated the use of an everyday language that was accessible to the public, while remaining true to traditional values. Islamic ideals have been one powerful medium of discourse. The discourse of *sonnat*, on the linguistic front, separates itself from religion to address



nationalistic, secular, revolutionary and cultural sentiments prevalent among Iranians. A concept like *sonnat* has both Islamic relevance and non-sacred significance.

Part III addresses the conflicting viewpoints that emerge between *sonnat* (the need to protect the core values), and *no-āvarī* (to embrace new, and uncharted terrains) in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. *No-āvarī* is an important process in artistic progress; art is inevitably innovative, otherwise it becomes static and repetitive. *No-āvarī* has been vital in Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem’s artistic maturity. For instance, Lotfī’s *tār*-playing pioneered new plucking techniques that many students still emulate. However, during the past two decades *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* has been experiencing what Jankouk calls a “hollow and insincere” process of *no-āvarī*. He believes that innovation needs to take place organically with the full awareness of *sonnat*. Jankouk would adamantly say: “*no-āvarī* is now just for the sake of change....as if our music lacks something. These uncalled-for changes have created ambivalence and uncertainty about what is proper and just about our music.” Today, *no-āvarī* has become a popular practice in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. In many music circles “innovation” has become synonymous with what is needed and suitable; it is rather *sonnat* that for many has come to be perceived as backward and out of synch with the “modern” world. Jankouk explains that “*no-āvarī* is fashionable now in most places I go to hear music.”

Chapter Seven, “The Relevance of *Sonnat*: The Guardians of the Past,” examines how ethics relate to traditional values for Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem. The term *sonnat* became popular during the early 1970s when a new generation of young Iranian musicians began to construct a discourse around “tradition” that focused on resisting the models of modernity and Westernization implemented by the Pahlavi regime (1925-1979). *Sonnat* was also to safeguard the oral tradition of the *radīf* as the crowing jewel of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. While the 1970s began to

shape the discourse around *sonnat*, the events after the 1979 Revolution crystalized and popularized its use in the social consciousness of Iranians. Based on this history, this chapter examines how *sonnat* is used in the production of discourse to resist outside interference that came in the form of the attempts to redraw past pedagogical approaches and performance practices. *Sonnat*, as a discourse, has postulated an ideological stance based on a meticulous recreation of history. At the same time, the need to venerate traditional values has created an authoritative discourse used by master musicians, who situate themselves as the guardians and custodians of cultural knowledge vis-à-vis the *sonnat*.

Chapter Eight, “An Intangible Past and a Future of Uncertainty,” examines the paradox created in the discourse of *sonnat*. As Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem emphasize the importance of being dedicated to the past, the intense changes in today’s unpredictable Iranian socio-cultural environment have generated an inescapable apprehension about the course *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is taking. If the traditional values once upheld as important are becoming fragmented and ignored, then *sonnat* needs to be examined more as a discourse of resisting intrusions (or at least a way of minimizing and filtering the outside influences) that bestows certain values and an ethos constructed on the notion of tradition.

#### BETWEEN *SONNAT* AND MODERNITY

If the discourse of *sonnat* is based on a moral conviction that celebrates the past, and on ideological resistance that aligns with the ideals of authenticity, then this discourse comes into conflict with a force that is constantly trying to reintegrate the present desires of the musicians. Tradition for Henry Glassie has a performative aspect; individuals create their future based on their past (1995). *Sonnat* becomes a continuum, a resource of knowledge that connects the past to the future. It is a resource, an ideal to aspire to and from which to draw knowledge and

information. At the same time, tradition operates as a process (e.g., Lotfī or Jankouk’s selective choosing of one repertoire as *the* tradition). Tradition hands down prejudices, sets of inquiries, and issues that incite reason and human understanding. If *sonnat* is engaged with reason and the process of inquiry, then it is more of a provocative force than a mechanism for conserving the past. The authoritative discourse of masters is grounded in the ways certain prejudices are crystalized as the only accepted perspective (conserving the past) on *mūsīqī-e sonnati*. The paradoxical nature of this discourse centers on the forces that pull *sonnat* out of its confined structure dedicated to conserving the past. The conserving force, as a discourse, is based on an ideological mechanism that aims to reconcile the provocative dynamisms by shaping a unidirectional view on music. For many master musicians, *sonnat* stands at the crossroads of an unresolved championing of the past and an attentive desire for *no-āvarī*.

The tension between *sonnat* and modernity has been “a durable and influential factor in the political and cultural formation of Iranian society for the past 150 years” (Jahanbegloo 2004:x). The past century and a half has made many Iranians contemplate a multifarious tension between progressive and liberal values of modernity and the degenerating forces of tradition. Many in the intellectual community, like Abdolkarim Soroosh, believe that “we can no longer think in those terms [tradition versus modernity]. The world has left that false opposition behind” (Jahanbegloo 2004:x). While Soroosh’s view has grounds in the religious and political realms, the dichotomy between *sonnat* and modernity is vivid in the social and cultural lives of Iranians. It is a frequent concern of many master musicians and a popular topic for most in the intellectual community. At the center of the discourse on *sonnat* stands the ethics of religious ideals, national identity and cultural authenticity.

During the first decade of the Islamic Revolution, many Iranians developed a strong sense of national pride linked to a renaissance of traditional values, a backlash against the Shī'a authorities' religious ideals. It is important to mention that many among the masses supported the Islamization of Iran. Yet, many others rejected the changes being implemented in the society. Moreover, there needs to be a clear distinction between an individual's belief in Islam (many Iranians are devoted Muslims) and the Shī'a ideologies prescribed by the ruling political elites. A counter reaction against the Islamic doctrines put forth by the state created a discourse about Iranian national identity and cultural authenticity that privileged pre-Islamic ideas and Persian literature and national heroes.

The discourse on tradition thrived for the first two decades of the Islamic Revolution. However, this awakening to *sonnat* has since been fading, as youth are disillusioned about cultural values and a history (both closely tied to Shī'a ideology) that created an Islamic monopoly on political power and guardianship over implementation of the "right" social and cultural norms. As Iranians grapple with a stagnating economy, lack of a viable democratic political system, absence of public resources, and social injustice, a severe criticism by youth attacks the values and ideologies that brought a fruitless revolution. In addition, a shift from a more communal and collective way of life to an individualistic and goal-driven society has introduced new ideals and desires. Furthermore, a large segment of the Iranian population is under the age of 35 and lives in urban centers. These circumstances have prompted many Iranians, particularly the youth, to reevaluate their ethical values and ideals, breaking down socio-cultural practices and traditional values and creating a space that is neither "traditional" nor entirely "modern." The existence of this in-between space has then intensified questions about normative values.

The discourse on *sonnat* might have lost some of its significance among young Iranians. However, this discourse is still a powerful mode of objectification, decreeing categories of acts (for example, lists of things normative to the performance practice of music-making) and depicting individuals (past master musicians) who are immediately cognizable as models for human flourishing. Most Iranians retain some connection to traditional practices, rituals and the institutions that offer the possibility of constructing a national identity. The writings, practices and institutions that facilitate the making of these ideals are based on the production of “historical objects” (Keane 2016). Keane asserts that they are “objects” due to their “explicit character that people can focus on cognitively, much as one might learn a set of rules” (2016:201). They are “historical” because they show “persistence and stability,” as well as being “subject to transformation” (Keane 2016:201).

One of the unintended consequences of the Islamic Revolution has been the public’s (especially the youth’s) reactions to the Islamic ideals implemented by the Shi’a authorities. As Iran nears the fortieth anniversary of the Revolution, many find themselves questioning and criticizing the Islamization of society. The vision of a utopian *ummat al-Islām* (the Islamic community) has been replaced by the harsh economic realities, social inequality and class division due to the elite’s political injustice. Most Iranians find themselves in the middle of a self-reflective moment, contemplating how to best reconcile (or reshape) the traditional values that brought forth the Revolution. The criticism has taken shape publically in a “complex interplay between dynamics of sociopolitical opening and contraction” (Brumberg and Farhi 2016:283). The interplay between freedom and restriction on public dialogue has made political activism the “collective actions of non-collective actors” (Mohseni 2016). This form of action has resulted in disengagement from the development of an Islamic, mystical and traditional

ethical self-awareness that is spontaneous, habitual and routine. The “openness to criticism and defense makes ethics available for purposeful endeavors such as religious revivals, social movements and political revolutions” (Mohseni 2016:21).

This chapter pays close attention to Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem’s discourse on *sonnat*. These three master musicians discuss tradition in terms of a romanticized past that needs to be protected and transmitted as “authentically” as possible to the next generation of musicians. However, *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is in forward motion. Tradition never stays the same. Therefore, Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem’s view of *sonnat* must be examined as a subjective view that draws on ethics to produce a discourse with a connection to the past that enables them to define beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* and situates them as the guardians of this oral tradition.

Today, the conventional way of speaking about Iranian music is based on its “double-barreled” name: *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. The suffix *sonnātī* plays a fundamental role in the discourse that distinguishes Iranian music—grounded on a “defined” history and cultural ideals that emblemize a pedagogy and performance practice—from other musical genres. This linguistic construct has been incorporated in the everyday vocabulary of the public, rendering “tradition” synonymous with Iranian music. *Sonnat* means “the way of,” or “the manner in which” and is also explained as the “convention,” the “rule,” and the “establishment” based on a past conviction (Dehkhodā 1955:212). *Farhang-e Mo’īn* (Moeen Encyclopedia) states that *sonnat* is the “constitution,” “institution,” “precedent,” and “tradition” (1972:167). *Sonnat* derives from the Arabic root *sonn*, meaning “the essence,” “the nature,” or “the conduct” (Moeen 1972:167). *Sonnat* also connotes important Islamic understanding; it is the way of Prophet Muhammad (Hodgkin 1980). *Sonnat-e payāambar* (the way of the Prophet) is a common reference in Farsi, advocating the recovery of the righteous path based upon the conduct and behavior of Muhammad. The most acceptable and honorable path for a Muslim is to learn from the origin of

Islam, and the Prophet's way of life. His way is viewed as the "purest" and most "authentic" way of being in Islam (ibid.).

In addition to its religious relevance, *sonnat* has been central in constructing social, cultural and political ideals for Iranians. Since the nineteenth century, the intellectual community has had contradictory feelings of beguilement and abhorrence towards modernity and Westernization. For instance,

Malkum Khan [prominent modernist] advocated unequivocal acceptance of the Western civilization and culture, Syyed Hassan Taghizadeh [influential politician and diplomat] wanted the same, with the condition that the Persian language be preserved. Ali Akbar Dehkhoda [prominent linguist, and Dean of the School of Law of the University of Tehran, political activist and Member of the Parliament] spoke of acquiring selective components of modernity. Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh [prominent short-story writer] preferred a kind of "engagement" with Western civilization, and Mohammad Ali Furughi [nationalist, writer and professor] preferred the "contemporary civilization." (Behnam 2004:8)

These intellectuals advocated a form of modernity not merely as an imitation of the West, but the revitalization of Iran based on "conditional adaptation of modern civilization" (Behnam 2004:8).

For the intellectual community, the turn of the twentieth century in Iran meant confronting political authoritarianism and economic stagnation in a decentralized nation. The parliamentary aspiration, a pluralistic representation of political discourse based on Western systems, was one model of modernity cherished in Iran. As the country proceeded towards the status of a modern nation-state during Rezā Shah's reign (1925-1941), its economy became government-directed and depended on the surging oil revenues. After the Second World War, Iran intensified its embrace of modernity via economic, military and political development. Nevertheless, modernization was sporadic and benefited only certain classes.

Subsequently, "cultural dualism [of] pro- and anti-Westernization forces quarreled" (Behnam 2004:9), creating vibrant debate over the notion of *sonnat* in Iran. Many in the



intellectual community pondered how to remain loyal to the values important to Iranians and yet integrate what is “best” about Westernization and modernity. Many intellectuals viewed modernity as needing to be tailored to the cultural ideals and normative values of Iranians. Islamic and secular thinkers sought ways to harmonize the benefits of modernity in relation to the needs of Iranians. However, this harmonization was challenging and ultimately led to antagonism towards Westernization sentiments in the years leading to the 1979 Revolution. The Revolution brought out in force the anti-Westernization consciences that aimed at rejecting “modernity in its conventional meaning in general and at preventing a ‘Western cultural invasion’ in particular” (Behnam 2004:10).

Ultimately, the Islamic Republic labeled the West as *dar al-harb* (the land of conflict) and the land of *kofār* (infidels). The labels are a clear attempt by the authorities to depict the “immoral” nature of Westernization. *Sonnat*, based on a view of the Prophet’s life prescribed by the ‘*ulamā*’, was advanced as the pious and ethical way of being for Iranians. A bipolar political view of the world developed in the Islamic Republic that at its foundation situated Westernization against anti-Westernization. Today, the dimension of this debate has broadened, even to the point that many in the intellectual community believe (like Soroush, quoted above) that

tradition and modernity are not mutually exclusive.... Therefore, to position them in opposing camps is not proper.... In other words, modernity does not mean that people have to forget their collective memories and abandon their ethical and religious beliefs” (Behnam 2004:12).

As the texture of Iran’s social, cultural and political landscape changes, *sonnat* has come to be synonymous for many youth with the repugnant legacy of a revolution that solidified the Islamic Republic. A cultural dualism between *sonnat* and Western modernity that resulted in the

Revolution has been weakened as Iranians have disengaged from their collective memory of ethics and religious beliefs.

### 7.1. MUSIC IN TRANSITION

*Mūsīqī-e sonnātī* has also been greatly affected by the juxtaposition of traditional practices and the advances of modernity. From the early 1950s, *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* slowly began to lose some of its intimacy and serenity as performances shifted to modernized concert halls, classrooms and recording studios. Through the new modern spaces for music, government-supported institutions such as the Tehran Conservatory of Music became the venue for “exceptional” musicianship. Concert halls were being advertised as home to advanced models of performance, while private spaces were at times criticized as suitable only for leisure-seekers and neophytes. Lotfī states,

When I was beginning my music career [early 1970s], the major struggle for me was to reintroduce the *radīf* to the public. Many of my master musicians were sidelined, because Iran was becoming modern. Television would often show popular music, and some of it...really bad quality. It felt like Westernization was the only concern for us. Some people would make fun of me when I talked about *sonnat*. I felt my music was alienated. People did not know about the origin of my music. Even when it was played, some of the proper routines and practices that once were so important were forgotten or purposefully neglected by some master musicians. It was important, for me, to depend and draw on the oral tradition by highlighting the *radīf* and its performance practice.

In the *radīf* I found a clear connection to *sonnat*. This connection was not only in the melodies but the stories that connected my music to the past. The past certainly obligated me to think a certain way and to practice my music based on certain values and judgments that were passed on to me. But, all of a sudden in the 60s and 70s I felt that people did not care about the past. I had a feeling of inferiority to the West. Some of our master musicians had begun to look to the Western orchestras to “complete” or make *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* “improve.” We were losing what we had; we were losing an irreplaceable treasure. (Interview conducted on August 11, 2012)

It was during the 1979s when the concept of *sonnat* started gaining prominence among emerging young and accomplished musicians. As Lotfī states above, *sonnat* is a focus of a discourse that

aims to safeguard the oral music practices from the forces of Westernization and modernity. The concept was meant to protect a musical tradition that many had dismissed as inferior and backward in comparison, particularly, to Western classical music and popular music.

To combat this “self-made inferiority,” according to Lotfī, *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* arose based on two historical timelines: the 70s saw the beginning of a discourse on *sonnat*, and the events after the 1979 Islamic Revolution crystallized an understanding of tradition and its values. The post-Revolution period popularized the discourse of *sonnat* in the cultural fabric of music-making. During the 70s, the new generation of musicians like Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem sought to create a shield against Westernization and modern intrusions by reconnecting *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* to its past. Lotfī states that during the Shiraz Festival of Arts (an annual international summer art festival, held from 1967 to 1977),

Shajariān and I decided to play the *radīf* of *rāst panj-gāh* exactly as I had learned it. I wanted to introduce the audience to the *radīf*. I wanted to honor this *sonnat*, as something that is bigger than any music or musician. Iran’s music is rich, no need for us to look elsewhere for musical inspiration. The Shiraz Festival has Western musicians, and other musicians.... many thought we should learn their sophisticated music. Asking why our music does not have large orchestration or compositions as good as Bach or Beethoven? Yet, the *shokūh* [splendid] *radīf* has always been in front of us. We choose to neglect it for something we thought would be “modern” and better. That should have never been the case. I do not disagree with the positive aspects of modernity, but our music is our history, our culture, our people.... to change that is to change our history, to change our identity, to change the way we communicate. Instead, the *radīf* of *rāst panj-gāh* at the Shiraz Festival was a way of reconnecting with our national pride. (Interview conducted on June 3, 2012)

This redrawing of *sonnat* also had socio-political implications. The new generation of musicians’ tendencies were more in line with leftist and Marxist ideologies that defied the Pahlavi regime’s aspirations for Westernization. Musically, tradition symbolized a search from within as opposed to the imposition of the foreign. The motivation was to manifest a musical style that was genuinely intuitive, an art that was *asīl* (authentic) with respect to Iran’s past. Lotfī

saw the construction of a discourse around *sonnat* as an essential part of the production and protection of the orally-transmitted music, which needed to be differentiated from other musical styles and shielded from Western domination and modernization that were perceived as an artificial system imposed on Iranian music. In Lotfī's comments, nationalistic sentiment also revolves around the movement to nationalize Iran's oil industry, led by Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1951. Although the government of Iran's democratically elected prime minister was illegally removed by a CIA coup d'état in 1953, Mosaddeq galvanized a nationalistic discourse that looked within Iran for independence and sovereignty. The failure of 1953 became part of the public discourse that stressed nationalistic sentiments that inspired the youth of the time, including Lotfī. In addition, the letdown of 1953 took years of social and political recuperation for many Iranians, but brought with it a collective consciousness that public mobilization could have tremendous socio-political ramifications.

The second wave of discourse on tradition took place after the Revolution. In the first decade of the Islamic Republic, one of the most remarkable features had to be the “renaissance” or “returning to Persian roots” in Iranian society (Griffiths 2006:189). The public's reaction to *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* resulted in a widespread consciousness of the traditional values it has long shared. This created support for the reappearance of dormant oral practices of music. During the Revolution, and the following eight-year war with Iraq (1980-88), Iranians felt that much had been sacrificed and lost; by drawing on the past, a form of renaissance was meant to take shape to bring back a desired past. Jankouk recalls,

I had so many students registered in my classes that many had to be put on waitlist. What a contrast to the first years of the Revolution where we were silenced. There was a wave of young students who were so engaged to learn music as it should have been. They used to embrace the oral transmission of the *radīf*, the way it was done for me. They asked about my master musicians, wanting to know all the details about the past...for example, how did *ustād* 'Alī-Akbar Shahnāzī talk about the *radīf*? How did he learn it from his

father? How did he teach me? These questions were not so important to many music students before the Revolution. (Interview conducted on June 11, 2004)

After the Revolution, the young generation (through the guidance of master musicians), became the new backbone of the traditional approach. The traditional approach idealized the oral transmission of the *radīf* and its history, a performance practice that was modeled after the late Qājār era (sitting on the ground and traditional dress codes for concerts) and included a heavy reliance on spirituality (the popularization of mystical poems such as Rūmī's and integration of Sūfī-style instruments like the *dāf*). The Revolution became a platform for the reawakening of Iranian music, especially its traditional oral practices.

Sālem addresses how this reawakening took form:

What we had started in the 70s was fully stopped by the Revolution. Then, as things progressed during the Revolution—in fact things for people became much tougher—the society had this eagerness and fondness for *sonnat*. I remember many places became synonymous with *sonnat*: teahouses or restaurants. Different recordings of the *radīf* were published. And master musicians began to talk about *sonnat* and make it an important part of their music training and practice. I sat with other musicians and discussed what our master musicians meant by *sonnat*. We all had different views of *sonnat*, but we all knew how vital it was to our music. We knew it was now our role to pass these values on to the next generation of musicians. What better time, I used to tell myself, than when people have become so conscious of *sonnat*. (Interview conducted on July 12, 2016)

Glassie's notion of tradition characterizes the individual as an agent who takes on the central role in constructing his/her tradition based on the continuous exploration of social norms and other cultural experiences. Sālem describes how she and other master musicians discussed and reflected upon *sonnat*. *Sonnat* is performed—enacted—through the individual's creativity, ability and will. This creativity and ability produce a set of rules and ideals that are cherished as vital in the understanding of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnati*.

Tradition arises from performative acts by individuals committed to “the creation of the future out of the past” (Glassie 1995:395). The way in which Sālem constructs *sonnat* is first and foremost based on a discourse of historicity and cultural ideals. The social norms and cultural experiences of the 70s, and then the Revolution, situate her within a musical culture that needs to resist what is not in line with the values of her music tradition. Sālem’s defiance is manifested in the enactment of what she perceives as *sonnat*, based on her understanding and knowledge—her representation of *sonnat* as a performative realization of the past. The performativity of *sonnat* meant a redrawing of the past, but never the reproduction of it. Therefore, *sonnat* served as an ideological conviction that looked to preserve certain ideals by tapping into its past resources. The drawing on the past is subjective, based on Sālem’s understandings of the knowledge passed on to her.

Meanwhile, discourse on tradition is a way of validating the master’s lineage and connection to the past as a “genuine” adherent of *mūsīqī-e sonnati*. Master musicians often draw on their lineage, positioning themselves as holders of the tradition. Jankouk often asserted that

the *radīf* is an identity, a character that has been passed to us from our past master musicians. This form of learning is repeated every generation. But it is not only learning, the *radīf* is not just handed to the next generation of musicians but it is an *amānat* [a borrowing from the past that needs to be cherished or beholden], therefore we know who transmitted it and what our responsibilities are towards it. Nowadays, young musicians have no sense of this heritage or *sonnat*. This *sonnat* is not only in music; for example, calligraphy, its constant practice of rewriting for a calligrapher to develop mastery of this art. When we look at a work of one master calligrapher we see the work of past masters in his/her work. An artistic journey is never taken alone, what gives it value and importance is to look back and see the footprints of the past master musicians on this path. (Interview conducted on July 18, 2007)

*Sonnat*, in a way, both shapes a master musician’s perception of beauty and serves to (re)produce authoritative claims. Jankouk, as an agent, situates his musical ability and knowledge based on the exemplary model passed on to him. *Sonnat* creates an ethical duty or an obligation to the

past. Having said that, the ethics of *sonnat* also has a performative aspect, that is, to shape and maintain authority. Jankouk draws on his master teachers to create a future where he is the exemplary source of knowledge and practical competency. While his lineage to the past is a claim to the authentic way of performing, Jankouk becomes an agent who constructs his tradition through his life's journey as a musician based on the contemplation of rationality, political authority, ethos, cultural knowledge and practical competence. Jankouk's life journey creates a trajectory where *sonnat* becomes an ideological stance that shaped his understanding of music and pedagogical practices.

Jankouk's performance of *sonnat* is enacted by his desire to connect the past to the anticipated future, drawing on tradition as a resource, a reservoir of knowledge. Knowledge is a resource handed down through Jankouk's stances, ideals and discourses, which are constructed to convey his position on music. The handing down of tradition is never objective, but rather filtered through the subjective ideals of each master's standpoints. The use of this resource gives tradition vitality; history and tradition "exclude more than they include, and so remain open to endless revision" (Glassie 1995:395). In short, *sonnat* has two main qualities: it serves as a resource and it operates as a process. In this sense, *sonnat* becomes a reservoir Jankouk uses to portray authenticity and ownership of cultural knowledge. The claim of his link to past master teachers is also a selective process depicting certain elements of tradition that are important to him.

In this regard, Jankouk represents his version of a tradition amongst traditions, allowing the creation of an idiosyncratic and informal understanding of his music. Tradition becomes an inherently dynamic process as each master musician filters and shapes *sonnat* based on his/her musical experience. Glassie states that "tradition is a people's creation out of their own past; its

character is not stasis but continuity; its opposite is not change but oppression, the intrusion of a power that thwarts the course of development” (1995:396). Musicians (like Jankouk) are constrained by their subjectivity (the same subjectivity produces unique and profound works of arts), while living through a web of history and culture that separates tradition from its association with stasis.

Tradition also incorporates a temporal dimension that constantly creates “flows in variation and innovation” (Glassie 1995:406). The discourse of *sonnat* also brought a sense of stability during a fragile time, when the character of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* had been under scrutiny. Tradition as process is, in Glassie’s terms, “volitional, temporal action” and “the means for deriving the future from the past” (1995:192). The temporal component can define tradition as a culture’s dynamic, or as the process by which culture exists. In this manner, tradition serves as a “swing term between culture and history, the missing piece necessary to the success of a cultural history” (1995:399). This connecting role that tradition provides is, nonetheless, a sense of stability (connecting past to future) that projects a representation of continuity and authenticity based on a false perception of a singular (and a “rightful”) historical trajectory.

The tension between *sonnat* and *no-āvarī* is situated in a socio-cultural practice deeply rooted in the discipline of *sinah-ba-sinah* (from one-to-the-other by breath). The socio-cultural understanding of tradition in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* is formulated based on the desire to achieve *asālat* (authenticity) by remaining *khāles* (pure) with respect to the “original” principles. For this reason, many refer to *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* as *mūsīqī-e asīl* (authentic music). Jankouk explains *asīl* as

Something that has a known history or a defined past. Think about a horse.... actually *ustād* Borumand [renowned master teacher of the *radīf*] used this example sometimes: We say a horse is *asīl*, because we know where the horse was born, who the parents are and what kind of horse it is. Our music is very much the same. We know who has passed



it on to us, that is what we mean by *sonnat*. I know what my master musicians thought about music and how they played their music. I have a clear connection to the past. This connection needs to be passed on to the next generation. This is how *sonnat* is kept alive; of course, it changes with time, but this change is gradual and within the accepted norms and proper practices...not like today where things change overnight and change in unfamiliar and improper ways. What gives our music *asālat* [authenticity] is the connection to the past. Without *asālat* music has no message, it has no history and no meanings. It becomes a voyage on a road to nowhere. (Interview conducted on June 12, 2004)

Jankouk's discourse on *sonnat* envisions ideals that are based on long-established practices, achieved only through the acknowledgement of and adherence to the master musicians' understanding of tradition. *Sonnat* is shaped, maintained and transmitted by master musicians, who serve as living cultural testaments to the oral repertoire. This compliance with tradition confers indisputable knowledge of music and performance practices, as well as understanding of the past masters' lineage, on today's master musicians. The discourse of *sonnat* demands a pledge to a defined history, highlighting the validation for steadfastness of authenticity and integrity. In short, appealing to *sonnat* elucidates an adherence to a fixed and demarcated history of *mūsīqī-e sonnati* that has shaped an authoritative discourse targeted to protect this music's prosperity and integrity. The adherence to an ideal generates a vision that is ideologically driven in its essence.

*Asālat* (authenticity) is closely related to the word *usūl*, meaning fundamental principles. *Usūl* has a religious connotation based on two schools of thought: a) *usūl ad-dīn* (the foundation of the faith or theology); and b) *usūl al-fiqh* (the analysis of Islamic jurisprudence). For both schools of thought the Qur'ān is the primary legal and ethical source. *Sunnah* (Arabic word meaning "habit" or "practice") refers to the legal and social practices of the Islamic community. *Sunnah* means "the manner of acting" (Juynboll 1997:878) according to the *Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'ah* (the community and the people of the tradition who followed the Prophet). On the

surface, Jankouk's use of *asālat* is intended to draw a connection to his lineage of master teachers. *Sonnat*, for him, is defined based on this lineage. At the same time, Jankouk's use of *asālat* is implicated in Islamic practice and philosophy. The word *asālat*, while it may not seem religious to Jankouk, is shrouded in ethics and ideals based on Islamic revelation and mysticism. Thus, *asālat* has an everyday use in language, as well as a deeper abstract and metaphysical understanding.

For al-Ghazālī, *usūl* or “the roots of character traits” are part of the main four *arkān* (parts or pillars) of virtues or good character: wisdom, courage, temperance and justice (Abul Quasem 1975:86). *Usūl* consists of what al-Ghazālī calls *ummahāt mahāsin al-akhlāq* (the mother of good character traits or ethics). The *usūl* or “the roots of character traits” need to be attained by everyone, as they are the key to happiness. In *Ihyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn*, al-Ghazālī states

The man who has acquired all these four virtues in their perfect degree deserves to be a king, who should be followed in all matters. Such a man was the Prophet. No other human being can acquire these virtues in their fullest form, since it is impossible to observe the right mean. The man who is completely deprived of all the four virtues resembles the devil, and should be expelled from society. (trans. Abul Quasem 1967:431)

*Usūl* become important in the four *arkān* of determining good character traits. In al-Ghazālī's ethics of character, *usūl* elucidate the means for individuals to attain good character through *as-sūrat al-bātina* (inner soul).

Other words with religious connotations are also often used to shape an ethical worldview. In discussing *sonnat*, Jankouk often would state that it is “*wājab* [necessary] to learn the *radīf* the way past master musicians played it.” *Wājab* has two generic meanings. It has a logical meaning of “necessary” an action is needed to lead to some possibility in the future. The logical understanding of *wājab* is an everyday connotation and does not have to concern ethics. *Wājab* also presents a “prudent” or sound judgment “when from the standpoint of self-interest its

performance is preferable to its omission in a decisive way” (Hourani 1985:138). If the universe is constituted and commanded by Allāh, then *wājib*, according to al-Ghazālī, means “necessary because commanded by God” (Hourani 1985:140). Before al-Ghazālī, many Islamic philosophers viewed *wājib* as “commanded by God” (Hourani 1985:140).

## 7.2. BEYOND THE MYTH OF *SONNAT*

The legitimization brought forth by tradition is precarious (this is the paradoxical nature of *sonnat*). History is central in that it connects Jankouk to the tradition of *mūsīqī-e sonnati* through his efforts to draw on his place in the lineage of his master teachers and his use of words with significant ethical connotations. This emphasis on uniformity and authenticity is potentially misleading. In other words, authenticity only has validity so far as tradition is defined based on a well-defined historicity, and is given meaning in light of the future. For instance, as history progresses the perception of how the *radīf* ought to be performed changes. Even within Jankouk’s life his performance of the repertory changed from his young days to his old age. *Sonnat* encompasses a temporal aspect that forces a flow of creativity and innovation; otherwise, music would remain simply a repetition of its past. The volatility that destabilizes preconceived notions creates the unique and unbounded nature of exemplary music. In fact, what makes master musicians unique is that while they maintain and incorporate elements of tradition, they innovate new ways to play a *radīf*.

As Glassie explains, “wills collide and converge in new situations; continuity permutes through elaboration or compression, and stages emerge in history” (1995:405). The colliding wills of individuals raise questions of authenticity and ethos in the search for the “proper” way of presenting the music. Conformity to tradition becomes the basis of Jankouk’s discourse (particularly regarding his style of playing); his cultural knowledge and practical competency

characterize him as the exemplary artist, offering him the cultural and social capital to affirm what ethos and practices Iranian music ought to follow. The individual conviction regarding tradition and the human will for change bring into play tensions between conforming replication of past practices and inspiration for innovation. Those who stand to benefit from repeated patterns of the past ultimately subscribe to a tradition limited through the lenses of certain ideological stance(s) toward the status quo.

This tension between conformity and innovation also becomes the source of competing claims amongst master musicians. Once novelty in music is presented, a new claim arises. However, the claim could only have authority when delivered by a musician who has the required cultural knowledge and practical competency. The master musician is recognized as the authority. This is where the paradox of *sonnat* takes shape. On one hand, a master musician claims ownership of tradition through his lineage and cultural knowledge. On the other hand, he/she is not the absolute master of the tradition. This means that Jankouk becomes a prescriber of knowledge, but in order to prescribe and transmit his knowledge he can only conceive of a tradition that is defined based on his authority. While Jankouk attempts to give tradition uniformity and authenticity, it remains disjointed, fluid and multifaceted.

Tradition is “fragmentary, ad hoc, and resistant to systematization” (Glassie 1995:399). In this push and pull of continuity and variation, what is certain is that handed-down knowledge and ways-of-knowing allow individuals to (re)create their future based on their history and current cultural norms. The future is based on the fragmented past; which is selectively, and at times subconsciously, recounted to construct the present, thereby reorienting individual(s) to (re)shape the future. The past is fragmented due to the biases found in the authoritative discourses that allow each master to claim ownership of the tradition. *Sonnat*, therefore, denotes

a transmission of knowledge from a person or a generation to the next. Even though inevitable, the departures arise when knowledge is altered during transmission. The preservation or alteration of knowledge, for example, is a constant point of contestation in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*'s oral tradition. No two individuals are perfectly alike, and alteration, whether minute or expansive, inevitably occurs. If it is accepted that alteration is inseparable from the handing-down of knowledge, then this amounts to a defection from or revolt against past wisdom, a tradition-breaking apostasy. *Sonnat*, as known or advocated by *ustādān*, would cease to exist.

There is also an ethos, a form of cultivation of virtue, at play when considering tradition in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. There are competing claims as to how best to portray *sonnat*. For Jankouk, there is a strong lineage to his past master teachers. Lineage creates a discourse that enables Jankouk to declare indebtedness to his teachers vis-à-vis *sonnat*. However, lineage also allows a claim to the prescriptive (how one *ought to*) and the exercise of authority as the source of *sonnat*.

### 7.3. THE AUTHORITY IN *SONNAT*

Hans-Georg Gadamer explains that “history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live” (1994:276). He elaborates by stating, “the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being” (1994:276-277). Prejudice in this sense can be seen as knowledge that shapes subjectification of history and culture. For Gadamer, however, individuals are unable to acknowledge in advance which prejudices are worthy of preserving or rejecting. In short, prejudices arise based on subjective knowledge.

Based on Gadamer’s analogy, prejudice, then, can be associated with the *sonnat* a master musician is born into, and which is handed down to him/her. Individuals are naturally social

creations of their surroundings who are influenced by tradition through their prejudices.

Gadamer states that “all human beings are finite, historical beings that find themselves situated in (or *thrown* into) a particular tradition, which shapes their understanding of things” (Vilhauer 2010:52; emphasis in the original). Thus, master musicians’ understandings are influenced by their place in musical tradition and its history. All consciousness is “historically effected consciousness” (1994:279). Lotfī conveyed this historicity when he spoke about how

All genuine *tār* performers need to model their playing after Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh and his brother Aqā Hossein Qolī. It all originates with their playing. The way they played the *tār* was exceptional. Whoever came after, even master musicians, were basically trying to imitate them—perhaps with a few exceptions—many unaware of the fine details that these two *ustādān* possessed; their technique and understanding of the *radīf* was distinctive. That is what I try to teach the students. Many musicians are unaware of this history. This history holds the key to musical maturity, it is the answer to truly understanding the music. Many nowadays have taken shortcuts into fame without really having the ability to discover the true knowledge of *tār* playing. (Interview conducted on July 12, 2012)

Lotfī’s perception of *tār* mastery is formed by his prejudices, and reflects on his stance about the history of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. Individuals draw on history by “furthering of an event that goes far back” (Gadamer 1994:xxiv); for Lotfī the *tār* playing of Mīrzā ‘Abdullāh and Aqā Hossein Qolī sets out the future horizon of musical experiences. This form of “historically effected consciousness” situates Lotfī as an authority in representing the *sonnat*, but not in a position of absolute mastery (never *the* owner of tradition). Tradition, then, becomes “something we are connected to and *belong* to as historical beings” (Vilhauer 2010:52; emphasis in the original). The furthering of the past based on *tār* mastery provides an orientation in shaping the musical experience, its practice and its ethos.

The tradition to which “we belong offers us the terms in which we initially understand new things, and forms the *horizon* of understanding with which we always start when we

encounter something new” (Vilhauer 2010:52; emphasis in the original). “Horizon of understanding” is based on the context of meaning in which Lotfī integrates his musical experiences. The horizon of experience shapes an understanding of *sonnat* that is innovative and performatively fluid. However, it also gives rise to an authoritative discourse that seeks to constitute and cement a particular view on *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. Lotfī also discusses the *radīf* as

something the students must learn note-by-note. It is important to learn all the small details orally from a master musician. The *radīf* is very complicated and it should be carefully learned as the main component of our music. Nowadays, there are notations, and CDs, but that is not enough. This is a work of 15 years or more under a master musician. The *radīf* can only be learned under a master musician, who knows this tradition exceptionally well, and has great command of it. I spent many years with different master teachers to learn the *radīf* properly, as it should be. (Interview conducted on July 11, 2012)

Lotfī’s discourse of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, based on the *radīf*, is an indication that he is able to obtain first-hand knowledge of *sonnat* from previous master musicians. The way he places himself in a position to claim ownership of the tradition shapes an authoritative discourse that limits other views, and situates “tradition” based on his historical perspective. This argument is based on cultural competency. What gives authority over competing claims is Lotfī’s appeal to ownership of tradition as a master of this art.

Lotfī creates new horizons of experience of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* that transcend time and become a template for other musicians to follow. A horizon of experience is not necessarily a novel or innovative understanding, but rather a new construction of performance practices based on a past history. The shaping of reality based on the prejudices of experience becomes an authoritative discourse that is uncompromising toward other viewpoints. The horizon of experience serves

to capture the way our past and present understanding and self-understanding meld together in a continuous manner, and to show the way in which we can only grasp new

experiences by integrating them into our present context of meaning. This process of integration, in turn, transforms and alters that context, allowing it to shift and move, even grow and become enriched. (Vilhauer 2010:62)

Individual prejudices are the expression of this horizon of experience and “historical realities which support the individual and in which he at once expresses and rediscovers himself” (Gadamer 1994:227). The “horizon” (*Horizont*) thus occurs from within a particular orientation determined by our historically determined situatedness. The horizon of understanding is not static (it is, after all, always subject to the effects of history), but the claim to *sonnat* by the master musicians situates an illusory temporal fixity in its nature. This situation stands in tension with the horizon of understanding, creating what can be labeled as a “fusion of horizons.” This resembles how one’s prejudices are brought into question in the process of being-in-the-world (e.g., in encounters with others).

The prejudices that individuals have at any given time “constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present” (Gadamer 1994:306). The discourse of *sonnat* allows for maintaining a singular horizon that depicts a particular reality of the present. Prejudice, then, “does not hinder our achievement of genuine knowledge, but rather makes the process in which we come to such genuine knowledge possible by providing us with a context in which we can make at least some preliminary sense of new experiences” (Vilhauer 2010:52). The discourse of *sonnat* could restrict expansion of the horizon of possibilities. Horizon can be considered as a process of the “fusion of horizons.”

The consensus among many music scholars in Iran is that Lotfī’s techniques and delivery in performing the *radīf* are unique. This rendition of the *radīf* incorporates both the familiar (reliance on the repertoire) and the strange (his unique style in playing the *tār* or the *setār*). Thus, the new horizons, Lotfī’s novel incorporation of vibrato and plucking of the *tār* or the *setār*,



would be intelligible to those familiar with the *sonnat*, the subject matter at-hand. Gadamer states: “hence the most basic of all hermeneutic preconditions remains one’s own fore-understanding, which comes from being concerned with the same subject” (1994:294). Fore-understanding, according to Gadamer, “enables” prejudices (1994). The “enabling” of prejudices serves to “make new understanding possible first by anticipating meaning in advance, and then subsequently by being tried, tested, or ‘worked out’ so that the revision necessary for us to improve our understanding can take place” (Vilhauer 2010:53).

Lotfi’s prejudices find an authoritative voice only when the claim to *sonnat* is untested or unchecked. One ought to be cautious of how understanding could be dominated by one’s interpretation. Neither Lotfi nor other musicians are locked into the same principles and points of view as past Iranian master teachers. Understanding is thus always an “effect” of history, while hermeneutical consciousness is itself that mode of being that is conscious of its own historical “being effected”—it is “historically effected consciousness” (Gadamer 1994). Lotfi and other master musicians do not replicate the *radīf* as played in the past, but they reshape it by confirming, denying and revising aspects of this mode through their encounters with the world. This process of revision is how the *sonnat* is handed down from one master teacher to another.

What is handed down is transformed in a manner that is culturally specific to its time; the *radīf* is not transcendent so far as it is shaped by individuals who transmit this repertoire based upon their history, politics, and cultural and religious understanding. In this way, *sonnat* becomes a process where “the way *we* understand things need not be—and, in fact, will not be—the same as the way our predecessors did, because our experiences, interests and concerns, in which the meaning handed down by tradition will find its relevance for us, are different from our predecessors’ experiences, interests, and concerns” (Vilhauer 2010:55; emphasis in the original).

*Sonnat* serves as the condition of an individual's knowledge. One can never begin from a tradition-free position. Tradition does not exist in a vacuum; it thrives amongst social interactions and is created based on the historical endeavors and cultural norms of communities. Meanwhile, tradition also appeals to those who strive for change. Tradition becomes something of the past, even a web of historical entanglements that one ought to move beyond. Tradition is inherently volatile and creates ruptures. Furthermore, all striving to enliven tradition necessitates modifying it so as to make it relevant for the current context. This is observed in the tension that the "one-sided preference" for tradition creates; it stimulates a struggle for change, while preserving a framework of tradition, with the aim of appealing to the current generation by being innovative.

There is also a tendency, Gadamer explains, to establish the "validity of what is old" (1994:273). Validity of the old is a form of romanticization; giving the past an authority that is idealized and adored. Gadamer states that "preserving the Enlightenment's presupposition results in the paradoxical tendency toward restoration—i.e., the tendency to reconstruct the old because it is old, the conscious return to the unconscious, culminating in the recognition of the superior wisdom of the primeval age of myth" (1994:273). The core of the presupposition in question is the contrast between myth (and its authority) and reason. The common inclination views myth as part of the collective consciousness that is "as dogmatic and abstract as that of a state of perfect enlightenment or of absolute knowledge" (Gadamer 1994:274). For instance, since parts of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* are closely linked to spirituality (with certain mystical narratives), there is an understanding that one ought to play music based on the spiritual-mythical understanding. At the same time, the spiritual dimension characterizes that which has been sanctioned by tradition and custom as having authority. Gadamer explains that "our finite historical being is marked by the

fact that the authority of what has been handed down to us—and not just what is clearly grounded—always has power over our attitude and behavior” (1994:280).

The *radif* is representative of different musical elements and characteristics. For many master musicians, this would imply that while multiple meanings and understandings of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* emerge, this does not indicate that meaning can be arbitrarily attributed to this music. For Gadamer, the freedom of reason does not stand as the antithesis to authority embedded in tradition. He states that in tradition “there is always an element of freedom and of history itself” (1994:281). History is constantly both constructed by and in tension with current modes of reasoning, where even the most “pure form of tradition cannot persist because of the inertia of what once existed” (Gadamer 1994:281). Tradition is “preservation,” dynamically engaged with historical changes that affirm, embrace and cultivate acts of reasoning. To problematize the notion of tradition further, Gadamer states that “we are always situated within traditions, and this is no objectifying process—i.e., we do not conceive of what tradition says as something other, something alien” (1994:282). Tradition is part of each individual; it is “a model or exemplar, a kind of cognizance that our later historical judgment would hardly regard as a kind of knowledge but as the most ingenious affinity with tradition” (Gadamer 1994:282).

Ultimately, in assimilating a tradition individuals embrace a certain historical trajectory, alter it, and then claim it as something “authentic” that is passed down from the past. This embracing would mean “tradition is not just something we belong to, but is also something that *belongs to us*. It is always being reworked and modified by us, which is in fact the way it is *kept alive*” (Vilhauer 2010:61; emphasis in the original). Therefore, for master musicians, tradition lives only through their continued understanding of it (teaching, performing or conducting workshops). In this case, “tradition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it

ourselves inasmuch as we understand, and participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves (Gadamer 1994:293). Tradition, then, “means our *different* understanding of it and *appropriation* of it, in which we accomplish the task of mediating past and present” (Vilhauer 2010:61; emphasis in the original). The *radīf*’s relevance, for Lotfi, would mean that he speaks to the relevance of past meaning associated with his master teachers in light of the current situation, which produces a discourse not just adopting the past meanings, but evaluating them in reference to his position within his current world.

#### 7.4. THE TRUTH IN *SONNAT*

“Truth” for Paul Ricoeur refers, in a case like the one under examination here, to the argumentation or the authoritative language with which *sonnat* shapes the musical experience. This discourse is constructed to make claims to the “truth” based on past traditional knowledge that is subjective. This appeal would mean that master musicians stand in the position of complete understanding of tradition. Truth, then, encompasses “language as both a disclosure of meaning and rationally-achieved consensus” (Kaplan 2008:203). For Ricoeur, tradition is never “a static repository of the past, transmitted conservatively; instead it is a living tension of both innovation and sedimentation, old and new, progressive and traditional interpretation” (2003: 42). Jankouk’s discourse on the *radīf* illuminates a tension between *sonnat* and the desire to be innovative. He states:

The *radīf* needs to be played so it keeps its essence of the past...my master teachers played it with particular gestures and dynamics that are hard to play today with our instruments...nowadays, the instruments have changed...we no longer use silk strings...the metal strings cannot truly play the vibrato accurately, they don’t flex for string bending.... But what is important to keep is the philosophy and the ideas of *sonnat*. The thinking, the perception and the understanding need to remain the same, as the dynamics of music change. The changes in the dynamics allow for various forms of technical freedom, yet one needs to remain true to the *sonnat*. Therefore, what is essential is to keep our thinking and philosophy with the past masters as our music dynamic changes. (Interview conducted on May 15, 2008)

Jankouk's understanding of the *radīf*'s function is based on past sentiments, yet also constantly seeking to recreate and renovate. In this sense, Jankouk is always heir to tradition, but constantly renegotiating the values and ideals within the tradition. David Kaplan explains that “traditions are bearers of meaning—or better, proposals of meaning to be interpreted” (2003:42). *Sonnat* is embodied in meaning, therefore by nature it needs to allow for inquiries, exploration and answers. *Sonnat* offers a space of receptivity and explanation based on its fluid nature and its continuity that links the past to the future in the present. Ultimately, “what validates the authority of tradition is a process of commutation and discursive argumentation” (Kaplan 2003:42).

The paradox of *sonnat* arises from the tension between a condition of possibility and a past conviction. The condition of possibility arises from the autonomy and vulnerability that make “autonomy remain a condition of possibility that judicious practice turns into a task” (Kaplan 2003:72). *Mūsīqī-e sonnatī* faces a challenging time in that it has, inevitably, been moving towards unfamiliar terrain. Yet, there is a need to remain loyal to the *sonnat*. Meanwhile, the current form of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* has become somewhat detached from the musical experience that the younger generation seeks.

The poet and music critic Hushang Ebtehaj has said that “today's Iranian music does not satisfy the needs of the society. It is lagging behind, and is in need of restructuring.” The pressure to restructure places master musicians in a difficult situation. The first issue is how to mediate between *sonnat* and innovation, being creative without jeopardizing the essence of tradition. The second issue is how to be innovative without popularizing and risk losing the “high culture” of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. A third concern arises based on the trajectory of Iranian society today. Iran is facing an ambivalence and uncertainty in the fabric of its social norms (Amin

2002). This has created fast-paced multi-dimensional spaces, where conceptions of tradition and modernity (amongst other things) have played an inviting and also antagonistic role in shaping Iranians' socio-cultural practices.

Human capabilities are bonded with social practices, and also specify for the agent a sense of responsibility to oneself and the larger community. Such expectations bring forth, based on human capabilities, social and moral obligations and expectations. Ethos as normative ethical practices, obligations, individual capabilities and identity is closely tied to social institutions. The ethos gives rise to identities and ideologies that are based on certain views and beliefs. For Ricoeur, understanding the capabilities of individuals also points to their inabilities. The paradox of autonomy and vulnerability, then, highlights how individuals embody and are exposed to both sides of the contradiction. Furthermore, autonomy and vulnerability are not necessarily in opposition. Ricoeur notes of this paradox that the “autonomy in question is that of a fragile, vulnerable being” (2007:73). What stands as human autonomy also stands as his/her vulnerability.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: AN INTANGIBLE PAST AND A FUTURE OF UNCERTAINTY

This chapter examines how discourse on *sonnat*—particularly over the past decade—has shifted from a language of defiance about safeguarding traditional ideals into a dialogue about an uneasy and apprehensive future of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. For Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem, the anxiety stems from the ways in which the concept of *no-āvarī* (innovation) has become one of the main issues in the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. Today, *no-āvarī* is as much about repudiation of the past by opposing *sonnat*, as about an organic process of music-making. Lotfī states that “*yek tajrobeh vāqaī-e mūsīqī* [a true musical experience] ought to be unbounded and free in spirit, yet needs to be grounded in its past.” In recent years, many young musicians have embarked on new musical experiences, ignoring the values in tradition for more appealing and “forward-looking” *no-āvarī*. Often the views on *no-āvarī* center on how the *radīf* and its principles that shape the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* are prearranged and fixed; according to some young musicians, limiting artistic creativity. Over time, the ideals that have defined the *radīf* have become less crucial for many younger musicians to uphold. This has meant a considerable rejection of the past by youth, creating a breakdown of the ethical values central to the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*.

One of Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem’s main tasks has been to mediate between *asālat* in music-making, and the youth’s desire to bring about new understandings of the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. The predicament for Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem is based on the question, how far the unbounded and free spirit of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* can be extended without jeopardizing the “core” values. Jankouk expressed this dilemma by posing two questions about the intervention of *no-āvarī*: “how far can the new ideas be pushed onto our music before it completely changes its form? Is innovation the main (and maybe the only) goal, or playing

*mūsīqī-e sonnātī?*” Jankouk’s questions concede that the drive towards *no-āvarī* for young musicians is inevitable. The issue for him becomes how to channel ideas of constructive and affirmative innovation, and yet limit what can potentially impair the values in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. Jankouk sees his role as a guardian of *sonnat* against the intrusion of *no-āvarī*.

To engage with the younger generation of musicians—in a socio-cultural and religious environment where many of the ideals are being reevaluated—is to allow greater leeway for explorations and flexibility in what ought to shape the judgment of beauty of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. A central question is who decides what factors and elements shape the perception of beauty. Would it be morally wrong to disregard the values in *sonnat*? Over the past decade, it has become harder for Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem to find the appropriate balance between *sonnat* and *no-āvarī*. Amir, a young, talented student of Lotfī addresses this juxtaposition:

It has been important for me to learn from *ustād* [Lotfī] about the traditional practices. Today, musicians play “modern” music, or what they call “new age” music. Their music has no roots and no history, which is troubling. Their performances—since they have nothing to do with *sonnat*—are strange and unfamiliar. In this modern world, I guess for many, it is not easy to learn the *radīf* and endure all the years of strenuous practicing. Young musicians want quick results, they want to become famous...it is no more about the music itself or the values we hold as important in music.

Looking at our society, similar things are taking place in our communities. Many political, social and cultural events have taken place over the past four decades, and now people my age have a different attitude...my friends say: “leave all of that stuff in the past behind! What is the point of knowing this troubled history? What has our tradition done for us other than causing us to go backwards in the name of Islam or *sonnat*?” My friends all believe that we need some other approach...We ought to seek something else; I am not sure what this something else would be, but these changes are obvious in the youth’s attitude...Their attitude is reflected in art...music is always a reflection of what we think; it is a representation of our society and our people. It is no coincidence that even some renowned master musicians are now experimenting with musical instruments or the music itself. They—much like the larger society—are looking for alternatives, for a way out. Some of our masters are even becoming part of this fast trend towards a modern, impatient and individualist world. Sometimes I find it amusing, our music is supposed to be about purity and spirituality, but some of our master musicians are looking for celebrity status; as if *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is like Hollywood...they love to go to public events, pose for pictures, walk on the red carpet and even now talk like celebrities.



I ask myself: Why do we need so much change so fast? It is because we have lost touch with the past; is it because the political circumstances have made us reject what we are. Is it because our society has changed so much that many of our musicians are so goal-oriented to reach a high social status? I feel as if we are disoriented; this disorientation causes fragmentation and disruption. No one knows what the expectations are for *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* anymore...no one knows what to really expect anymore. It feels like anything goes and no standards exist anymore. I feel that the past has become unbearable; it has become a burden for our future “progress.” (Interview conducted on July 22, 2016)

At the heart of the issues raised by Lotfī’s student is the fact that many young musicians consider *no-āvarī* to represent a future of possibilities, a space where autonomy and freedom are conceivable. The lack of freedom in Iranian society, and the anxiety of an uncertain future have pushed many musicians to explore alternatives to what has been handed down historically. *No-āvarī* signifies a form of individual autonomy and liberty that many musicians have not been able to experience both during their music training, and in their everyday public encounters. As *no-āvarī* creates uncertainty for many master musicians, for the young generation it presents a path to artistic creativity based on spontaneity and individual desire rather than a work of art rooted in *sonnat*.

*No-āvarī*, as a product of modernity, is nothing new in the contemporary history of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. For example, the creation of conservatory-type music schools, the advancement of music notation and Western-type orchestrations are all products of modern implementation of a systematic and secular position on music-making. These advancements originate from the desire of Iranians (at least the intellectual community) for a nation to develop an understanding of what it means to be free, enlightened individuals who engage with secular institutions, where a space is created for the enhancement of rational thinking. At its core, *no-āvarī* is part of a discourse of enlightenment in Iran that flourishes through modern practices of the West, universalism and the prospect of “progress.” The evolution towards enlightenment is to

distance individuals from religious institutions and traditional practices—modernity is understood to be a community’s engagement with secular progress. It is also about the capacity of an emancipated individual in society to make his/her decisions. For many in Iran, since tradition cannot be separated from its religio-cultural history, the advancement of the secular and free individual vis-à-vis the separation from Islam has meant to disengage with *sonnat*.

As the Revolution took place, many in the intellectual community sought to define Iranian society according to an ideal that would reconcile liberal and universal modern tendencies with cultural identity politics and nativist terms. However, these aspirations led to radical revolutionary sentiments of Shī’a doctrine. A Hegelian analogy helps illustrate the totalitarianism resulting from the Revolution:

existing “alienated” forms of religion and culture must be superseded in a revolutionary dialectical resolution of history into one absolute future. Ultimately, in the very moment that the projected totality or “conflict-free society” becomes empirical, it necessarily becomes totalitarian, refusing any difference or outside beyond itself. (Mirsepassi 2011:69)

For a large number of the youth in Iran, Islamic Republic’s oppressive governing has now brought forth a rejection of past ideals, creating a lack of moral clarity that now even disregards various aspects of Islamic values. The lack of concern with spiritual and religious sensibilities among the youth has created a fragmented society, an ambivalence towards the cultural ideals and values practiced in Iran. The rejection of the past has made a large number of Iranians desire Westernization and modernity to an even greater extent than before the Revolution. The aspiration towards Western ideals is not a new phenomenon in Iran. However, since the revolution there has been an added layer of disengagement with Islam that has assisted in the reputation of *sonnat*. The rejection of the past has opened the possibility of a new and seductive window (some might argue an idealistic one) to a prospect of a liberal society. To find escape,

young Iranians look to the West, thus away from their cultural norms and history. This is contrary to a society that in the 1970s believed ‘Alī Shari’atī, who said: “It is a saying of Heidegger’s that we become part of what we know and therefore, the only hope for us to be saved from the disease of Westoxification and the contemporary sickening modernity is to understand the true face and spirit of the West” (Mirsepassi 2011:85).

For many musicians, *no-āvarī* is a medium to explore opportunities and alternatives that eradicate the past, as *sonnat* becomes an impediment to individual autonomy and an obstacle for collective success. The past hovers like a scare, a disturbing experience on the social consciousness of Iranians. Over time, the juxtaposition between *no-āvarī* and *sonnat* has become more difficult to navigate. To reconcile *sonnat* with *no-āvarī*, Lotfī viewed tradition not as something that is static, but rather as transmission of resources of knowledge and experience that informs the future. The transmission inherently creates innovation based on the knowledge the master musicians hand down to the next generation. In a way, innovation is regulated through the transmission of knowledge.

Lotfī emphasized the importance of *sonnat* as values in tradition (*ārzesh dar sonnat*), rather than traditional values (*sonnat-e dāri-e ārzesh*). Traditional values imply something that is static and frozen in time. However, Lotfī stressed values in tradition as more about the ideals that have been passed on through generations; he claimed that “musicians and musical instruments all change form through time, but the core values that represent what is beautiful about music ought to remain the same.” In defining beauty, the values remain constant at the core, while the outer layer changes its form, representing music differently for each generation.

Lotfī elaborated by saying

Many do not accurately understand the meaning of *sonnat*. *Sonnat* represents the way to discover what is beautiful and worthy in music; without it a musician is an abandoned

traveler on a dark road. *Sonnat* is the path and the torch is the knowledge that lights up the path, otherwise the traveler is unaware of which direction to take, therefore oblivious to its purpose and beauty.

What worries me is that *no-āvarī* has come to take over the whole experience of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* for many youth. Nowadays, young Iranians are making a stand—they are protesting, opposing their cultural and traditional values as if it is poison. They think *sonnat* is about holding them imprisoned in the past... it is not their fault. They have witnessed—been imprisoned—by forty years of injustice and lack of advancement in Iran... naturally they fault their own history, their past... they fault us, their parents... older people who protested for change. They also look to the West and see luxurious music halls, advanced music schools, governments that support art and artists, and say to themselves what about us? Why cannot we be in the same position or have the same facilities? These questions are true and important... it was our responsibility as the so-called intellectuals to come with answers, we never did! The intellectual community has not come up with satisfying and credible answers to convince the youth, so they decided to go their own way.

Also, we have too often looked to the West as a superior musical culture. This kind of thinking has a historical life of its own that is much older than the Islamic Republic... I struggled with it when I was a young musician... I know my master teachers did as well. Now, it has intensified. The failures of the Islamic Republic over the past forty years have made our youth walk away from their morals. Sometimes, I am not even sure if I am hearing *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*... even some master musicians... those who are my own friends... people who sat next to me to learn from the same master musicians as I did are doing things that are unimaginable; their music has no roots in *sonnat*. I discuss some of these issues with them, telling them: we need to recognize and acknowledge our tradition to understand the values that are important to us. This does not mean tradition is something replicated and played exactly like the past, no one wants that... that would not be art.

When we value our *sonnat*, we respect the principles and ideals it has brought us, we ground ourselves in it, and from there we explore new things. The values *sonnat* holds should not be neglected; they need to be held close to us. Otherwise, we have nothing to judge our music by... we lose the light and we become abandoned on a dark road as travelers. If we neglect our morals, without the values that construct the fabric of the society, nothing remains valid... we would have a breakdown in the system and a disarray takes hold... pretty much something like what we have today. We lose our understanding of the past, which leads to lack of clarity at present and lack of originality for the future. The future becomes dark without its past. (Interview conducted on July 11, 2012)

Lotfī's apprehension about the youth's neglect of *sonnat* is symptomatic of the larger social issue in Iran. What concerns him is how changes in the worldviews of young musicians have affected the ethical principles essential in the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*.

The evolution of instrument making is an example of how *no-āvarī* has affected the perception of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. On his last music tour in 2010, Shajariān introduced the audience to some of his new musical instruments. His reasoning behind these innovations was that *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* needs "a full orchestration" and lacks lower-register sounds found in Western orchestras. His musical instruments were unveiled in Tehran during the spring of 2011.

MEHR News Agency wrote:

The instruments named *arghanun* (organum) and *barbad* (the name of renowned musician during the reign of the Sassanid king Khosrow II) will be among 14 string instruments all of which have been made by Shajarian and will be put on display in an exhibition at *Bahar* Hall of the Iranian Artists Forum from May 9-13.

Shajarian has unveiled the instruments named *shahrashub*, *sorahi*, *saghar*, *sabu*, *kereshmeh*, *bamsaz* and *tondar* over the past three years.

"Over the past 50 years of my career, I have felt the need for new sounds and the lack of them has always bothered me," he said in an interview in 2008.

"No one, except for a few people, has made any efforts to overcome this tonal deficiency by inventing new instruments, which could expand the melodic richness of Iranian traditional music," he added.

He said that the new instruments, which were invented over the past few decades, were either irregular or else no one could understand them. "As a result, the instruments never gained widespread acceptance among people," he stated.

"However, I have spent all of my life in studios and on stages, so I deeply felt the need for new sounds and additional supporting instruments among those musical instruments in use today," Shajarian added. (MEHR News Agency, May 7, 2011, original in English).

The appeal for "new sounds" illustrates Shajariān's desire to be original and creative. Having said that, he based the premise for *no-āvarī* on Western practices. An argument could be made that Iranian rhythmic practice lacks the cyclic complexity of North Indian musical tradition.

However, it would be surprising for a master musician like Shajariān to look elsewhere other than to the European music tradition. This is symptomatic of a larger social attraction Iran has had towards the modern West. *No-āvarī* in such instances becomes an instrument of modernity, and not necessarily an artistic discovery that is organic and rooted in *sonnat*.

Part of the anxiety of many master musicians is based on the youth's lack of respect for the rapport that is formed between an *ustād* and a disciple. Jankouk would often advocate the need for a master teacher to guide the students. The *ustād* is representative of knowledge and the experience gained from the past. Jankouk would often refer to the master musician and disciple relationship as an honorable one, calling it *ta'līm* va *ta'allum* (teaching and learning) (see Chapter Three). The use of *ta'līm* and *ta'allum* has a specific ethical connotation for many students. I recall my youth in Iran, where each one of my school textbooks began with a quotation from Āyatullāh Khomeinī: “*ta'līm* and *ta'allum* ‘*ibādat hast*” (to teach and to learn are to worship Allāh or an act of service towards Him). For Jankouk, the only way to stay true to *sonnat* is through the training an *ustād* provides.

The appropriate training to attain a higher moral being is an important ethical issue addressed by al-Ghazālī in *Al-Imlā'* ‘*alā Ishkālāt al-Ihyā'*, who also emphasizes the centrality of *sonnat*. He believes it is possible to attain piety through “effort and appropriate moral training” (trans. Abul Quasem 1975:87). Al-Ghazālī asserts that the main task of Islam is to guide individuals to refine their character. The appropriate moral training is the principal means to attain happiness. In short, *'ilm* (knowledge) and *'amal* (action) inform individuals on what is morally appropriate that leads to happiness. Only an informed individual can attain happiness by performing pious acts. *'Amal* refers to good deeds both related to an individual's *zāhir* (outward) character and *bātin* (inward) disposition. *'Ilm* is the awareness gained by pursuing Allāh's Love

through His path. His path is achieved based on a form of knowledge gained from understanding of *sonnat* based on the Prophet's life and sayings. Thus, *sonnat* enables the path to Allāh vis-à-vis acquiring 'ilm through the Prophet's deeds and actions. To gain awareness of Allāh is to attain "divine essence, attributes, and works. This knowledge is 'knowledge of revelation,' usually called the science of gnosis (*'ilm al-ma'rifa*)" (trans. Abul Quasem 1975:66). The most important form of 'ilm is *īmān* (faith), which is the knowledge associated with "the people of truth and the *sunna* (*ahl al-haqq wa s-sunna*)" (trans. Abul Quasem 1975:66). Essentially, *īmān* in the Divine is incomplete without the belief in the Qur'ān and *sonnat*. Thus, *sonnat* has significant ethical implications for al-Ghazālī, where the past informs the future based on 'ilm and *īmān*.

It could further be elaborated that *sonnat* brings the individual an awareness through knowledge. That is precisely the reason why Lotfī used the analogy of the dark abandoned road for the traveler and the lighting of the torch. The light represents the guidance that enables one to see the road based on *ta'līm* and *ta'allum* that an *ustād* and disciple engage with to transmit knowledge of *sonnat*. Consequently, an intimate understanding of *sonnat* enables one to develop good character. For Lotfī and Jankouk a musician's good character and moral judgment is based on adherence to the *sonnat*. For instance, these two master musicians have a clear understanding about individual conduct in the classroom, performative elements, teaching methods and public performances. All these practices are explained and elaborated by Lotfī and Jankouk as knowledge of what is deemed good, gained only through *sonnat*.

Al-Ghazālī believes that *sonnat* produces the knowledge that enables *hay'a rāsikha fīn-nafs* (the established state of the soul) to bring together *ma'rifa* (knowledge of good and bad), *fī'l* (action of good and bad) and *qudra* (the capacity for good and bad). *Sonnat* plays an important

role in the coming together of the soul: history and practice teach *mujāhada* (mortification) and *riyāda* (self-discipline). In other words, *sonnat* is an ethical practice that takes “pains to perform those actions which proceed from good character until they become habitual and pleasant” (Abul Quasem 1975:89). Al-Ghazālī’s understanding of tradition is based on *sonna* (the way of the Prophet). *Sonna* is a model for individuals to live a happy and pious lives. It is “the approved, normative ethos of tradition” (Moosa 2005:192). The parallel of *sonna* with Lotfī and Jankouk’s perspective on *sonnat* are the ethos each tradition provides as ideals and principles to uphold.

Lotfī and Jankouk similarly believe that *sonnat* of the *radīf*—the only way to achieve the “authentic” experience of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*—teaches *mujāhada* and *riyāda*. The moral character of a musician is formed through the appropriate knowledge and action transmitted from the past. As stated above, one of the aspects of value in tradition is the ethical practice of becoming selfless. Jankouk believes in what he calls “an act of selflessness” that a musician needs to attain as he/she achieves competency in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. He explains,

An important behavior for a musician to attain is to be humble—to learn to give to others. A musician should be *bī qal va qash* [“without color or dirt;” to be pure and transparent]. This was one of the first thing I learned from my masters. They used to tell me about the way they learned to behave in front of their master teachers. Today, these practices are regretfully gone. There is no humility in being a musician anymore. No one has time, or even wants to help others, kind of like we are in a boxing match and everyone needs to come out the winner. Musicians do not have time to care anymore...even for something as simple as the proper explanation of music to their students. During my days, I did not have the audacity to question my teachers. I am not saying that was completely good; sometimes I had music I had composed, but never dared to play for my teachers. Today, after a few classes some of the young musicians do not even recognize their teachers, much less listen to the guidance they provided. Things have changed now. The values that were held in the music classes are now losing their importance...naturally, some young musicians begin to experiment without knowing what it is they are experimenting for.

There are still lot of talented musicians; but it seems like the values have changed. Today it is all about *no-āvarī*. But innovation does not just happen on its own. There is a history that needs to be first practiced and followed. Once a musician becomes accomplished—*never, never*, without hard work—then *no-āvarī* takes places on its own; it is organic and



fluid. Young musicians are skipping steps, all of a sudden from their limited knowledge to *no-āvarī*. There are many layers...it is a journey that takes years to master. Skipping these steps has brought a high degree of self-centeredness and insensitivity to the past, to the ways in which things were done and need to be done now.

Many young musicians are *az khod rāzī* (self-satisfied). For instance, some are now making what they claim to be their innovative musical instruments...which no one really knows based on what principles, theory or need. For years and years, we have had master musicians who have played beautiful music with our “regular” instruments...all of a sudden we need to invent new instruments. Yet those who do these innovations mainly do not truly know the *radīf*. Is that possible in any music culture? Someone who does not fully know the musical tradition sees fit to begin innovating. (Interview conducted on July 12, 2006)

Moral character is nourished through the master-disciple relationship, where an intimate space allows for the fostering of *akhlāq* through *mujāhada* and *riyāda*. The merit in *sonnat* is the transmission of these principles to the young musicians through years of devotion to knowledge. There needs to be an element of will and self-consciousness present for the music students to practice values revered in *sonnat*. The principles in *sonnat* are manifested when an individual willingly participates through earnest effort and humility. In effect this is one of Lotfī’s main lessons on the *radīf*.

Al-Ghazālī believes that good conduct is only achievable by “pleasure [as] the criterion of the acquisition of a character-trait, and that perseverance in good deeds through life is necessary” (Abul Quasem 1975:89). He calls this achievement of good character *i’tiyād* (habituation), this form of character-trait can only be based on guidance from the Qur’ān and the *sonnat*. *I’tiyād* is to be observed by emulating those with the vast and proper knowledge of *sonnat*. Al-Ghazālī believes since human beings are imitative by nature, both good and bad are character-traits that can be learned. He advocates for *ta’allum*, as a method of “learning good traits by observing the good” (Abul Quasem 1975:90). *Ta’allum* is then a form of association by

observation and emulation of those with the knowledge of tradition. Therefore, *sonnat* represents a form of knowledge that constructs the ideals or what is deemed good.

*Ta 'līm* and *ta 'allum* exemplify the way in which knowledge of the good is constructed in music-making. In short, *sonnat* is the resonance that informs the understanding of the good. Nonetheless, the dichotomy between modernity and *sonnat* has disturbed the dissemination of knowledge based on its past practices, resulting in the reshaping of the production of *ta 'līm* and *ta 'allum* between a master teacher and a student. Drawing back on Lotfī's comment about the "value in tradition," *ta 'līm* and *ta 'allum* become the means to attain the knowledge and the experience of music-making. Lotfī elaborates by saying,

The *radīf* is structured in a way that is based on the interactions between those who have the knowledge and those who want to learn this knowledge. Of course, each time the teaching of the *radīf* becomes a discovery; it produces new meanings for both the teacher and the student. This is the reason why I truly think that *ta 'līm* and *ta 'allum* is an *'ibādat*. Music-making is an *'ibādat*, because it deals with *sharāfat* one of the most honorable human traits, the passing on of knowledge. Based on our *sonnat*, we develop a sensitivity towards this honorable act of knowledge-sharing between the master and disciple. *Ta 'līm* and *ta 'allum* are basically a Sūfī idea...an individual's inhalation of knowledge. This is the *ārzesh* (value) in *sonnat* of the *radīf*; the creation and transformation of knowledge it holds.

I am afraid this very important *ārzesh* of the *radīf* is now being neglected. Younger musicians think of *sonnat* as something that needs to remain in the past, but forget that knowledge is essentially the work of history, the previous master musicians with the knowledge of the *radīf*.... Think of it this way: the transmission of knowledge is like giving birth. It takes nurture, care, pain, the right diet and exercise for a child to be born. *Sonnat* is the same way, each passing on of a generation needs nurturing, caring, and enduring the pain to attain the appropriate knowledge. Today, these factors are neglected. Does *ta 'līm* and *ta 'allum* have the same meaning today as it did in the past? That is why our music—also our society—is at a loss. I am worried that today we have embarked on a musical experience that is about being strange and unfamiliar. We are more in favor of creating a future that is uncertain and unpredictable. (Interview conducted on June 3, 2012)

Lotfī's anxiety centers on the fact that a rupture has taken place between the past and the future.

It has left master teachers like him in an unaccustomed and strange position. For past master

musicians, the judgment of beauty was always a matter that was passed down to the younger musicians—it was basically hierarchical. Nowadays, younger musicians believe their knowledge is adequate to reshape the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*.

For Lotfī, however, innovation and recreation of the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is the final step for a well-accomplished musician only after years of learning from an *ustād*. I recall Lotfī saying after his 2001 solo concern in Seattle:

It is not easy at all to create something new. My performances are all improvisation; they happen at the moment [what he called *ān*; the moment; Arabic, *al-ān*] each moment takes me to a new place. Yet, almost all of what I play in some form is something I have played before. If anyone goes on the stage and can have 3 minutes of something that has never been played before, then he/she is truly a master. Innovation just does not happen on its own. Also, how could any form of innovation be possible without having someone to guide you through it? Even after so many years of maturity as a musician I still feel there are moments where my teachers could provide insightful advice for me. That does not even mean they would play the music better than I would—some of my master teachers were old and did not have the physical power or energy to play as well as in their younger days; but their sensitive ears and their knowledge of the music would provide the guidance. One has to always look to the past teachers as knowledge is produced in the past, reshape by musicians today and transmitted to those who—hopefully with the proper training—will reshaped it for the following generation of musicians.

*Sonnat*, then, connects the past master teachers to the young musicians through the knowledge of an *ustād*. The connection takes place provided there is proper association between the master and disciple to develop good character.

Al-Ghazālī states that good character is based on nature, habituation and association. He suggests that *ta'allum* is to attain excellent character through association with a *shaykh* (spiritual guide). He states, “a true guide is the one who is gnostic (*‘arif*), intelligent, a seer of the soul’s diseases, kind-hearted, admonishes others in religion, has completely purified his own soul from evil character-traits, and is eager to assist others in their efforts for purification” (Abul Quasem 1975:91). Therefore, a man without guidance is led astray by evil or the bad. Those who carry

appropriate knowledge need to be respected and observed. If this connection is removed, then individuals are in danger of taking the wrong path. This model of master-teacher relationship (see Chapter Three, on the mystical rapport between the *murīd* and *murād*) is prevalent in the tradition of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. *Sonnat* enables the flourishing of this relationship. The annihilation of the *murīd*, therefore, is in the *murād*'s knowledge of the tradition, a process that enriches the disciple's awareness and experience of the world. Without the awareness, the ideals and values break down, creating an ambivalence in representing the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*.

As the desires and interests of youth change, the understanding of a society's ideals also alters. The remaking of the ethical norms has created ambivalence in how to define the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. The detachment from the past has created uncertain experience of what is deemed good in music-making.

An accomplished instrument-maker maintains that artistic creativity in fact arises from uncertainty in traditional values:

For many years, musical instruments have been built in one way...it has always been the same structure and same sound. For years, they knew [master musicians and instrument makers] that their instruments have problems and shortcomings. Yet, they never did anything about it. Was it because they were not innovative or real artists? No, it was not. The fact that they had to stay within the same practices that they had learned made innovation harder. They neglected all the issues and shortcomings of the instruments. For example, the tuning pegs on the *tār* or weaving strings neatly onto instruments. It was not because they were not innovative individuals, it was because *sonnat* did not allow them to move ahead.

We were always told we must stay within a particular *olgu* [framework]...like within a set of principles that we have learned. What happens if we move past them? Is our music made to limit us? Or, should it be made in freedom and total autonomy. I think creatively needs a space to mature; it needs to be nourished; however, *sonnat* limits progress.

Besides, what has our past done for us? Many of the problems we are experiencing today—surely, I am not the only person to tell you this—has been because of our past beliefs and values. The Revolution was a huge factor, most people have realized that now, but it also goes back years in our history. The Revolution was an avalanche that

intensified our past beliefs and values. Our progress forward, towards the modern has been kept at bay because of our past.

Let's look at the *radīf*...who says it must be played only the way a student learns it from his/her teacher. Why can I not play it differently? In fact, if we look at the history of the *radīf* we see it is such a new phenomenon...so *sonnat* is not even what the master musicians say it is, it is always changing...*sonnat* is not historical or really the past. *Sonnat* is something constructed based on someone (or a group of people's beliefs), and then everyone else is expected to follow it...because some famous musician played in a particular way. I am glad to see that many are finally moving away from all these things that have held us back. (Interview conducted on August 11, 2016)

A major concern for many master musicians is the intention of young musicians to change the past. Jankouk believes that *no-āvarī* is possible when “an accomplished musician is able to create music that is *khāles va sādeq* [pure and sincere]. Many young musicians are looking to become famous. They are not patient, and do not want to learn music *mokhlasānah* [with genuineness].” Jankouk believes that sincerity and intention create a virtuous position towards the music, a viewpoint that ought to remain truthful to its past. The intent of many young musicians to disregard *sonnat* is an ethical dilemma for Jankouk. For master musicians, sincere and truthful intentions in music depend on *sonnat*.

In *Kīmiyā-ye Sa'ādat (The Alchemy of Happiness)*, al-Ghazālī writes about three inseparable and related virtues: *niyya* (intention), *ikhhlās* (sincerity) and *sidq* (truthfulness). *Niyya* is the basis of devotional acts; any action that is virtuous needs proper intentions. Lotfī often said a musician *bāyad niyyat-e khob-e dāshtah bāshad* (must have the proper intentions). Without the appropriate *niyya*, al-Ghazālī believes, an action cannot become adequate. *Niyya* requires a form of action based on *ikhhlās*: since these acts are sincere they will have the right effect on the soul. It is “only action with truly sincere intention that is useful to the novice, in his task of making the inward self beautiful, in mysticism great emphasis is laid upon sincerity and truthfulness, and al-

Ghazālī even goes so far as to call them means to salvation (*asbāb an-najāt*)” (Abul Quasem 1975:170).

For Jankouk, truthfulness is based on the intention to keep the *asālat* (foundation) of *sonnat*. Al-Ghazālī states that good intentions create in the soul a *meyl* (inclination) to Allāh. Thus, the proper intention orients one towards the good. For al-Ghazālī, good intention is not just a desire to be moral, but *‘azm an-niyya wa l-himma* (a sound determination). For the three master musicians, *sonnat* is a guideline that allows for the good to take shape. There are various *wasā’il* (ways or forms) of good through which an individual can attain happiness. *Sonnat* brings forth the merit and goodness, what al-Ghazālī calls *fadīla* (grace). In order to attain happiness, *sonnat* becomes the path to attain faith or knowledge; good qualities are achieved by means of *‘amal* that emerges through *‘ilm* of the past.

#### PART. IV: THE ETHICS OF BEAUTY IN MUSIC

##### *Inna Allāh jamīl yuhibb al-jamāl*

(Arabic; Indeed, Allāh is beautiful and He loves beauty)

*Hadīth*; al- Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ 6902. Grade: *Sahih* (authentic) according to Al-Albani.

Speaking to a gathering of Iranian university students in the spring of 2010, the philosopher and author Hossein Mohyeddīn Ghomsheī stated:

Music's most important *payām* [message] is its *jāvdānagī* [preeminence or eminence]. Music's *payām* is an invitation to take one on a journey to another place... a journey to a transcendent world facilitated by each beautiful melody played representing how *moqaddās* [pious] this art is. No one is more aware of the Heavens than a musician. A musician has full appreciation of the other world... Such a musician does not change a tune or a note to make music appealing to the ears; the inspiration for the beautiful melodies comes from the insights the musician has of the divine world.

When I listen to our master musicians, particularly the solo performers, I realize how pure and sinless their souls must be to play so beautifully. They played each note with such clarity and purpose, as if the music is in conversation with us. Their music indeed speaks to us; it provides us with an image of the Heavens... their music presents us with an image of a place that is truly beautiful and untainted. A place where darkness does not exist, where the soul is illuminated with joy of knowledge and awareness of endless love.<sup>16</sup>

Ghomsheī describes music's *payām* by using a metaphysical and spiritual language to convey its *jāvdānagī* as something that goes beyond the mundane world. According to him, music-making is immanence because it refers to the human experience with the Divine, where the union with the Beloved is attained and the absolute and infinite form of beauty is realized. Ghomsheī's metaphysical and spiritual language explains the possibility of human experience to attain the Divine love, a metaphorical face-to-face encounter with the Beloved. Therefore, the judgment of

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<sup>16</sup> My translation of Hossein Mohyeddīn Ghomsheī from Persian  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZiR\\_0SWamc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZiR_0SWamc)

beauty in music-making takes on a phenomenological inquiry as well as a journey toward an ontological understanding. *Jamāl* (Arabic, beauty) is “the manifestation of God’s loving and consoling qualities” in the human heart, where the heart rejoices in this love and projects it outwards “as the manifestation of God’s grandeur and power” (Schimmel 1975:132).

For Ghomsheī, music-making also has a logical and educational purpose; it serves to improve the morals of the community. Beauty is about cultivating the principles and ideals of a community—art has an ethical message by educating individuals about proper conduct and beliefs. Ghomsheī states,

Music is certainly a kind of *bidārī* [awakening] of the *rūh va ravān* [the soul and essence] towards the Beloved. But, it also has another purpose: it educates and creates an awareness for people to understand what is good and what is right. Without this objective in music one cannot attain *sa’āda* [Arabic; happiness]. Music has a purpose in our everyday life, it helps us become better individuals through the *dānesh* [knowledge] and *bidārī* we gain from it. This is the first step of becoming liberated, it is the first step to attaining *sa’āda*. This awareness, this educational process about the truth is needed before any attempt to understand the perfection and absolute love of the transcendent world.

Lotfī would say: “you never hear anyone say that they play music because they want to learn to act ‘inappropriately’ or that their objective is to acquire ‘improper’ conduct. Music by nature is to educate us about *sa’ādat mandī* [attaining happiness].” As Ghomsheī asserts, the judgment of beauty in music-making is based on two objectives: a) logical validity presented through a rhetorical and poetic production of syllogistic discourse to rationalize the function and status of music as a pious and virtuous act; and b) metaphysical and spiritual perspective on music as a quest for the union of the human soul with the perfect and absolute goodness of the Divine love. Part IV examines these two philosophical perspectives of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. In each of the previous parts of this dissertation, Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem’s ethical discourse has been similar to that of Ghomsheī’s understanding of *payām* and *jāvdānagī* in music-making. The three



master musicians convey an ethical discourse about *zibā'ī* (Farsi, beauty)—rooted in Islamic revelations, *'irfān* and *sonnat*—in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* that is about the purification of the soul and union with the Beloved. Ultimately, human happiness, according to Sūfī traditions, is about the return of the human soul to its rightful place, the Divine. The three master musicians' public discourse also addresses a logical and rational understanding of the importance of music by educating and informing the public—referring to it as the *resālat-e mūsīqī* (righteousness or honorableness of music)—based on today's socio-political and religious environment of Iran.

Chapter Nine, “Logic and Poetics of Music-making,” examines how Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem construct an understanding about beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* that is logical and political, aimed at informing Iranians about the truth in music-making. The purpose of educating the students in private settings and their public discourse has three functions for the three master musicians: a) it combats the religious and political discourse that opposes music in Iran; b) it creates an awareness amongst the Iranians (particularly the youth) about the status of music-making, who in today's Iran have a strong desire for innovation and a “modern” lifestyle; and c) it keeps the “authenticity” and *resālat-e mūsīqī* intact. In this chapter, the three master musicians' perspectives are examined in tandem with those of two accomplished young musicians who regularly attended Lotfī's music classes in Tehran. I draw on Al-Fārābī's logic and criteria for the validity of discourse, to analyze his treatment of poetry based on “the nature of language, its sources and social role, the status of religion and the balances of a political community, the nature of political [and] religious leadership” (Kemal 1991:87). Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem's ethical discourse utilizes logic and rational thinking rooted in their socio-political, religious and historical understanding of Iran to inform the public about what is deemed good. The three

master musicians become agents who assert their views publically by speaking about their vision of a good life.

Chapter Ten, “Music-making and the Union with the Beloved,” examines how Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem construct a perception of *zibā’i* informed indirectly by Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Ghazālī’s treatment of the soul. The three eastern Islamic philosophers are part of the *mashshā’ī* school, a branch of Islamic philosophy that critically studied Aristotelian thinking. In addition to the metaphysical understanding of the soul, this chapter focuses on how Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem judgment of beauty is motivated by the Sūfī *ishrāqī* (Illuminationist) school. The three master musicians are joined by a number of Islamic thinkers in this chapter in discussing how music-making becomes a way to open the heart towards the Beloved. In fact, music-making is seen as a way to purify the soul, paving the way to attain Divine love. During my music classes with Lotfī, I often noticed him to say: “*mūsīqī vaseli-e barāy-e rasīdan be māqsad hast* [music is an instrument to arrive at the goal].” He would continue: “the aim was to ultimately become immersed in the Divine love much like Rūmī was, as our soul craves to seek *al-haqīqa* [the truth].” The quest for the truth validates music-making as a moral and earnest activity.

The receptivity of the human soul to the truth—essentially the same phenomena as the soul seeking the Divine beauty—is explained by Ibn Sīnā as the fulfilment of *‘ilm* (knowledge) that offers individuals the rational mind to logically investigate “the states of particular existent things” (*Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 2, 14, 18-15, 7). *‘Ilm* is achieved only by becoming aware of the reality (the human existence), where existence unequivocally rests in the control and the will of the Beloved. This perception of existence centers on the dual nature of theological and ontological understanding of the soul, and its purpose, union with the Beloved, as the ultimate source of *sa’āda*. Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem perceive music-making as a vital part of the human

experience; the purpose of human existence is to search for beauty, and music facilitates this quest. Music-making becomes part of the human experience that enables one to attain salvation. Music is an instrument that makes possible an individual's connection with something that is beyond everyday experience. Since most Sūfīs believe that Allāh manifests Himself in each person, then music-making can be an instrument that paves the way towards the union of the Beloved. In *Ilāhiyyāt*, Ibn Sīnā states that “the existence of God is *part* of existence” (I, 2, 14, 4-10). Thus, music-making becomes part of that human existence and *the* existence of Allāh.

The metaphysical discussion of beauty is echoed by Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem as an unintelligible and incomprehensible mystic experience of music-making to the Divine, a way to connect the individual with the Ultimate Being. This connection to the supernatural is a journey that embarks on the quest for *al-haqq*. The journey provides the path for the traveler to become one with Divine love—to merge into Beauty. Becoming one with Beauty is *fanā'*, annihilation is the recognition and submission to be united with the Divine through the guidance of a master teacher. To merge into Beauty is to become aware of the Divine, to come face-to-face with an image of Allāh. The experience of becoming one with the Divine is modeled after the Prophet's *mi'rāj* (ascension) to the Heavens to speak with Allāh. *Mi'rāj* can be fulfilled by every devotee; Sūfīs believe that coming face-to-face with Allāh is possible for every mystic. Annemarie Schimmel elaborates on *mi'rāj* as an attainable human experience:

The connection of the *mi'rāj* with daily prayer—which was experienced by Muhammad as a repetition of the joy of ascension (H 302 [al-Hujwīrī 1959:302])—made such an ascension into the divine presence possible for every sincere Muslim. The mystics applied the ascension terminology to their own experience in the rapture of ecstasy. (1975:218-219; Schimmel quotes al-Hujwīrī 1959:302)

It is the human experience of love that allows the believer to attain ascension. According to Sūfī traditions, *mi'rāj*—coming face-to-face with an image of Allāh—is not exclusively reserved for

the Prophet. He might have attained the highest form of ascension towards the Beloved, but it is an ability that exists within the heart and mind of each believer. As Rūmī explains, “it is the experience of love that manifests itself in the ascension of God’s specially elected friend Muhammad Mustafa” (Schimmel 1975:219). Rūmī states in his *Dīwān-i kabīr yā Kulliyāt-i Shams*: “Love is ascension toward the roof of the Prince of Beauty, Read the story of the ascension from the cheek of the beloved” (trans. Schimmel 1975:219). Therefore, coming face-to-face with an image of Allāh is based on personal experience and one’s belief in Him. More importantly, Divine Beauty is attainable for every individual who upholds the proper ideals and values.

During a summer evening, after Jankouk finished his music lessons, he began to play his *setār*. Two middle-aged men had also stayed to listen to the master play. At first, I had no idea who the two men were, but their physical appearance and clothing made me guess they were from a Sūfī order. When they introduced themselves, I found out they were part of *tariqa* (the way, or Sūfī order) *Ni ‘matullāhī*. A little while after, Jankouk asked one of the men to accompany his *setār* by reciting a Rūmī poem. The man’s singing was not equal to the master musician, but that was not the goal. Once the music was over, the man said:

it is the love I have for him [Rūmī] that makes me lose sight of time and place when I sing his poems. I feel like I am not in this world anymore. After I ask myself: “where was I?” My answer has always been that I become closer with him [Rūmī], in him I find peace and tranquility. The *setār* today took me to a place where I can sing freely, without a judgment...to a place where I am loved and I could love unconditionally. Only then have I had the good fortune, the pleasure to experience—the smallest and the minutest—light of Divine.

Jankouk continued the conversation:

the main purpose of music—as I have said many times—is not only to master or memorize the melodies in the *radīf*, it is the preparation of the soul, the allowing of the body to become free, to become one with the universe. The liberation from this world is

the main task. These ideals in our music cannot be neglected. Music is not only to master its techniques, but to master its meaning and purpose. Without its meaning, melodies are meaningless, they lack importance and significance.

The understanding of beauty, then, is rooted in the ontological and phenomenological principles of existence. In a way, it is “this ontological nexus that remains hidden from the eyes of those who are blind to beauty” (Nasr 1997:454). Beauty is the belief in *al-haqīqa*, as one comes face-to-face with the Beloved. Moreover, it is the individual’s account, a phenomenological experience of love that allows one to ascend towards the Beloved. Nasr’s analogy of “face-to-face” implies the human capability to attain the Divine Beauty; the manifestation of the “face of Allāh” is a symbolic awareness for an individual, a realization of what ultimate Beauty entails.

Ahmad Ghazālī, a Persian mystic and writer, elaborates on this point in *al-Sawānih*

*fī’l-‘ishq:*

The secret face of everything is the point of its connection [with the Creator]. Moreover, there is a sign [of the Creator] concealed in the creation, and loveliness (*husn*) is that sign. The secret face [of anything] is that which faces Him [the Creator]. Now, unless one sees that secret face [of a created thing], he will observe neither that sign in the creation, nor loveliness. That face is the beauty (*jamāl*) of the Lord’s Face, reflected in the face of the created being, as it is expressed in the Quran, “and what remains is the Face of thy Lord” (Quran 50, 27). The other face [of a created being, that is the side which does not face the Creator] is not really a face, as it is said” “Everyone upon the earth perishes” (Quran 50, 26). Furthermore, you may know that the other face is ugliness. (*Sawānih*, p.23)

Jankouk would often say that “*fadīlat* (goodness) of music is that which makes us feel the *mahbūb wa ma’shūq* (lover and beloved) for *zibā’i*; beauty is beyond the earthy material or earthy feelings...it is founded in the *jamāl-e yār* [Beloved or lover’s beauty].” Jankouk’s statement unveils one’s *bātin* (innermost self) to orient towards Allāh by becoming attuned to Him. This connection is explained by Nasr as “beauty [being] nothing other than the effulgence

of the face” (1997:455). Music-making precisely functions as an instrument that orients the soul towards its calling, the mystical journey to become united with the Beloved.

Before discussing the two forms of beauty in the following chapters, it is vital to examine Al-Fārābī’s “earthly” and “ultimate felicity” understanding of *sa’āda* (happiness) in relation to *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. For Al-Fārābī, *sa’āda* is the highest form of human perfection, the achievement of ultimate felicity. It is by achieving this form of felicity that ascendance towards the Beloved is possible. Much like Al-Fārābī, Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem make a separation between the body and the soul, as *sa’āda* is an attempt for the soul to achieve the eventual form of purity. In addition, ultimate felicity relates to the afterlife, where the human soul separates from the body. The earthly happiness becomes the precondition to achieve *sa’āda*. Al-Fārābī states that human intellect

gives the human being a faculty and a principle by which to strive, or by which the human being is able to strive on his own for the rest of the perfections that remain for him. That principle is the primary sciences and the primary intelligibles attained in the rational part of the soul. (*Political Regime B*, 1, 68: 62)

Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem hold a similar position, where the human intellect is part of the rational thinking enabling the soul to attain *sa’āda*. In contrast to the Islamic tradition, Al-Fārābī “is convinced that the afterlife is exclusively psychic or rather intellectual.... Instead, the felicity of the hereafter...means purely intellectual pleasures, a state, however, which requires preparation during one’s lifetime” (Germann 2018). This thinking opens a space for ideals and values prevalent in a community to play a large part in the attainment of happiness. It is precisely the significance of observing those values that the three master musicians stress as they discuss their understanding of beauty.

Al-Fārābī believes that individuals are endowed with free will. Much like Aristotle, he views rationality as the main human attribute; therefore, the *telos* of individuals is to perfect the rational faculty. In *Perfect State*, al-Fārābī lists preconditions of *sa'āda*,

The things in common which all the people of the excellent city ought to know are: (1) In the first place to know the First Cause and all its qualities; (2) then the immaterial existents [including the above mentioned active intellect] ...; (3) the celestial substances ...; [(4) without number in Walzer's translation] then the natural bodies which are beneath them, and how they come to be and pass away ...; (5) then the generation of man; (6) then the first ruler ...; (7) then the rulers who have to take his place ...; (8) then the excellent city and its people and the felicity which their souls ultimately reach .... (*Perfect State V*, 17, 1: 277–9)

Al-Fārābī believes there are two ways for action to be accomplished. An individual who “lacks reflection” can be led to action by the arousal of *takhyīl* (imaginative creation). A person who lacks a rational mind would act “before he can grasp, through reflection, all that is involved in that action” (Mahdi 1990:703). A sensible individual refrains from such actions (or defers the action), as he/she realizes the need to renounce such acts.

Meanwhile, an individual who is able to reflect would see happiness as the perfect end, the most desirable condition to attain. In *Opinions* (Ch. 2, §4 and §5), Al-Fārābī states,

Happiness is an end that everyone desires, and everyone who strives to direct himself toward it does so precisely because it is a known perfection. This requires no explanation since it is so completely well known. Man desires every perfection and every end precisely because it is a certain good, which is unquestionably something preferred. Now, while there are many ends that are desired because they are preferred goods, happiness is the most advantageous of the preferred goods. It is thus clear that of all goods, happiness is the greatest, and of all preferred things, happiness is the most perfect end that man has ever desired. (trans. McGinnis and Reisman 2007:104)

He states that good for its own sake is always preferred over a good for the sake of something else. Happiness is the attainment of the good for its own sake. Al-Fārābī maintains that “once we

obtain happiness, we have absolutely no need thereafter to strive to obtain some other end” (*Opinions* [Ch. 2, §4 and §5]; trans. McGinnis and Reisman 2007:105).

Al-Fārābī argues that happiness of “the philosopher is practical and theoretical perfection in one. Both are interdependent. The latter is attained through knowledge of ‘existing things,’ the former through ethical perfection” (Rosenthal 1962:14). His core reasoning is that awareness of Allāh is the fulfilment of the rational individual’s quest for *sa’āda*. The rational individual possesses two forms of happiness reflected in the following two chapters: a) the happiness of the body which is related to this world (Chapter Nine); and b) the happiness of the individual soul belonging to the eternal world that is trapped in the physical body (Chapter Ten). Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem use the ethics of music-making to speak about the beauty that is conveyed based on the perfection of the soul as an intellectual perfection for individuals. The three master musicians assert that happiness is not attainable only by a few philosophers, religious or mystic leaders, but contrary to the traditional thinking, *sa’āda* is achievable by Iranians. Moreover, music-making is a tool that enables human happiness. They provide a logical and rational discourse to create awareness in the public, redrawing the perception that only religious leaders or intellectuals are able to instruct the public with their views on salvation and happiness. Their message is that music is an instrument that aids in the development of moral and intellectual perfection. Thus, the three master musicians’ ethical discourse is conveyed in private, but over the past three decades it has become public to make the community aware of the meanings and ideals in music-making.

As the Islamic Republic continues to exert its force on intellectuals, artists and mystics, Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem demonstrate that musicians hold the appropriate knowledge and the means to interpret Islamic revelation, mystical ideals and traditional values. The three master



musicians have developed a complicated discourse based on demonstrative proof, “syllogism of certainty,” to assertively speak about ethics, their perception of beauty and the achievement of happiness. They understand that mystical philosophy (*ishrāq*) does not fall outside of political, social and cultural thoughts of Iranians, but rather—as stated by Al-Fārābī, the soul is the “stranger” that is “exiled from [its] true source, to which [it] must return” (Rosenthal 1962:147).

## CHAPTER NINE: LOGIC AND POETICS OF MUSIC-MAKING

For eastern Islamic philosophers, the judgment of beauty is not based on the subjective state of the mind. The core of their argument on beauty follows the Platonic dictum that claims “Beauty is the splendor of the truth.” According to this form of thinking, *al-haqiqah* (the truth) has two meanings associated with beauty: the reality and the Divine. Beauty, then, is shaped by the ideals of the reality and the belief in the Supreme rule of the Divine. The “Divine Name *al-Haqq* indicates the union of the two in God who is both the Truth in its absolute sense and making us free in its absolute Reality” (Philips 2013:256). The reality component of beauty is presented through the logical and political considerations conveyed based on a set of linguistic means in a community. On a supernatural level, beauty is revealed through the Supreme essence of the universe based on the metaphysical and mystic ideals about the infinite love for the Beloved (Chapter Ten). This chapter examines how the reality of beauty is shaped by a language informed by logic and reasoning that aims to educate the public about the values and ideals of music-making. I explore how Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem’s statements are based on reason and rationality informed by political and cultural practices of Iran to educate the public about the status of music-making.

The three master musicians utilize a language that is informed by logical justification to validate music-making; their rational statements confirm music as a legitimate part of Iran’s socio-cultural and historical realities. As Jankouk stated, “music is the reflection of our society with a reach and inspiring history. Speaking about this music requires a rational mind who holds the appropriate cultural and historical knowledge.”

The use of logical validation in the statements of the three master musicians steps away from the subjective realm, where subjectivity or personal experience is not the determining factor

in the judgment of beauty. A logical argument stands apart from individual experiences that have no rationality and justification; subjective accounts are not rational, therefore not open to argumentation, demonstration and verification. Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā believed if poetry cannot be justified logically, then the “entire process of appreciating poems, or sharing them with a community of listeners and writers, will become vacuous” (Kemal 199143). They exert that poems are based on certain principles that provide meaningful messages, otherwise they become arbitrary and invalid.

Drawing back on Part I, it becomes clear that Lotfī and Jankouk’s teaching of the *radīf* entails precise and careful deliberations based on the history and tradition of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. Thus, the three master musicians’ logical statements are implicated with ethical values founded in the *radīf*. What provides meaning to *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is a language informed by rationality to convey the proper practices and ideals in music-making. For Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem, the use of logic provides an insight into how beauty is perceived, bringing into public light the core principles of the *radīf* and its relation to beauty in a rational and calculated manner. To convey the ideals of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, the three master musicians rely on specific linguistic expressions and concepts to articulate and convince others about their judgment of beauty. The ideals of music-making have a specific form of deliberation to highlight the values and benefits this art offers to the community. The aim of music is to provide an educational standard to enrich the community’s collective knowledge and social consciousness. In doing so, raising the community’s moral conviction would strengthen the virtuous city.

According to Al-Fārābī, logic provides tangible meanings, while grammar forms the linguistic expressions of those meanings. As I reviewed my interviews with Lotfī, it became evident that he often used a series of logical statements to ensure the validity of his argument:

The historical-religious dispute about how music *rūh rā āludeh mīsāzad* [taints the soul] goes back years...[claims] that it makes us lose insights of reality...that music would make us stop acting properly, are not true. To start, let's look at all the scientific facts—what do they all say? Unequivocally, they say that music helps develop infants' brains, helps many adults deal with their stress, and much more. There is a scientific explanation in front of us that cannot be neglected. Science steps away from religion, politics and cultural cliques...knowledge has no biases, not to us, not to religious people... We cannot argue with the facts, they are clear, scientifically proven. We have the knowledge now to know, to know what is good and what is not.

It is important for our policy makers, and even the public to look at these facts. Our judgment about music cannot be tainted with past attitudes based on misleading or superstitious beliefs. Today...we need an answer, we go to our computers to find reliable sources. If we are sick, what do we do? Obviously, We go to a doctor, we do not really use old remedies—at least not as the main cure anymore.

My music has a mission—music needs to have a purpose...two objectives: one is to reason to the public and authorities why and how music is important and needed in our society. And, for the public and policy-makers to realize that without music, individual as well as cultural development and prosperity is unthinkable. (Interview conducted on July 12, 2012)

Lotfi's statement above provides demonstrable meanings to validate the status of music; it provides rational argument in support of an art form that has historically been opposed by many Shī'a religious leaders. His logical argument also provides a justified standpoint about reform and implementation of music in the educational curriculums. In a way, his statement connects a justification of the need to have music, to a change of policy on music for youth.

Lotfi has developed an effective linguistic means to convey the purpose of music to the public. It could be argued that not every master musician possesses the language to develop a rational argument to convince the public. Logical deliberation naturally follows a coherent language form, as long as the community's linguistic mechanisms are properly utilized. Language is a vehicle to convey meanings, hence, a coherent language follows logic. The development of a logical discourse by the three master musicians illustrates their awareness of

the current political and cultural norms in Iran. It also demonstrates their historical knowledge of Iran. Al-Fārābī argues that

communication is essentially a logical activity, or a linguistic one...[Thus] as long as [language] is capable of performing this function [of being the vehicle of communicating intelligibles] it is kept in use. When it fails, the necessary adjustment must be made. The need for adjustment and the kind of adjustment to be affected are to be determined by logic. (Haddad 1989:203)

Lotfī's language use requires rational legitimacy for his message to resonate in the community. The basis of his statement lies in his evaluation according to strict principles of validity, where his linguistic expressions enable the legitimacy of his discourse. His logical statement is a dialogue with the public that above all provides a rational claim for the other.

#### 9.1. POETICS DISCOURSE OF MUSIC-MAKING

In *Risālah*, Al-Fārābī asserts that poetry uses syllogisms in “discoursing with another” (trans. Kemal 1991:107). Poetry is a communicative tool “rather than a matter of ‘a man’s bringing out something in his own mind’” (Kemal 1991:107). Sālem also believes music to be a “*gof-e mān* [dialogue], a conversation for everyone to actively engage with and participate in.” According to Al-Fārābī, poetry uses syllogisms to provide it with imaginative (*takhyīl*) components in the discourse with another. Therefore, poetry comprises explicit and implicit syllogisms to justify the validity of its meanings. Ibn Sīnā believes that the understanding of poetry carries more than mere subjective experiences since its logical forms are syllogistic. What is significant is the way that the logical form of poetic discourse is related to political and social roles (even if for al-Fārābī it lacks philosophical maturity). Moreover, what makes the use of logical discourse essential is its educational objective. Poetry has a message that implicates ideals and ethical values of a community.

Much like poetry, music-making also has a day-to-day purpose or a function for the listener. Sālem explains that

our educational system has taken away creativity from our youth. Look at our television channels...when was the last time we could see an image of a music instrument. It is so peculiar, we hear the music but we are not allowed to see the musicians or the instruments. I would like to know what explanation they [the authorities] have? Where do they really stand when it comes to music?

I have seen many children and youth come to my institute...many who had never known they could be creative, or have never thought they could explore their imaginative side. In our educational system, we learn to do mathematics or physics, but we neglect creativity. What aim does music have other than nurturing creativity, and developing the capacity to rationalize and solve problems?

Music also provides hope, confidence and optimism for our youth. These factors are missing in our society today. The youth have no hope, they feel despair. The government constantly talks about drug addiction and other issues that cause youth distress or mortality...not everything needs to be fixed by force or discipline. Some countries now are even using music in their prison systems...why? To nurture the human's creative and kind side even for those who have committed crimes and wrong doings. I have witnessed how music empowers individuals, especially children to be creative, to respect their culture and history...the very music helps children appreciate some parts of their tradition. (Interview conducted on May 2016)

For Sālem, *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* has a social and educational role, a purpose often undermined in this art form due to its close connection with supernatural and spiritual beliefs. For many, *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is closely connected to a mystic pursuit that disengages this art from its day-to-day activity. What is unique about the three master musicians is their stress on the earthly as well as the Divine significance of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*. The judgment of beauty is in fact illustrated by Sālem to develop the social well-being of the society, before *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is utilized as a vehicle to attain *sa'āda*.

In addition, the public perception often is that music-making generates pleasure, therefore it must be closed to any logical and rational thinking. This belief is not the religious viewpoint

that is antagonistic to music-making, but rather emotion as the central force beyond music's beauty. Jankouk elaborates,

Sometimes people come to me and say that music should not have a *mantiq* [logic], then, why do I rationalize or explain my music instead of just performing. They say that performing is all a master musician needs to do. They say that music is about *hāl* [disposition; a more common translation in this context is pleasure], therefore no need to be logical about it. Their view is that music is about emotion and not *mantiq*—it comes from the heart and not the mind. And only when it comes from the heart is the music genuine. My answer to them is simple: the heart and the mind are one. The essence of beauty is the connection between the heart and the mind—it is the coming together of the two that provides us with the ability to see love and to seek what is beautiful. (Interview conducted on July 12, 2009)

The use of logic provides figurative meanings, to convey a message that is clarified by rational statements. “The rules of logic are universal in the sense that they hold true regardless of a particular language and because of the order and nature of objects and events” (Kemal 1991:250). For Jankouk, the rationality is situated in the repudiation of the idea that the mind and the heart function separately. He reasons that in order for humans to exhibit their emotions they must have the intellect and *mantiq* to understand what is beautiful and good. Thus, validity of the meanings in a statement is first and foremost logical, but that does not mean that it cannot be emotional.

To explain poetic validity (justify the certainty about meaning), Ibn Sīnā favors meaning over the rhythm or meter of the verse. Poetry has been “part of the logic that validated all our reasoning, including thought about the truths revealed in the Quran” (Kemal 1991:254). The main criterion is for the listener to think rationally based on how the demonstrative syllogism shares a logical formation. In short, the concern is about subjective interpretations of the moral character of poetic discourse, rather than rational engagement with the verse. Ibn Sīnā explains that “figurative or poetic language is comparable to discursive language and informal reasoning

in that both are valid and meaningful because they depend on a syllogistic structure” (Kemal 1991:177). The nature and validity of demonstrative syllogism explains and rationalizes the poetic syllogism.

The validation of the statements by Sālem must also be responsive to feelings; her use of logic evokes an appropriate response that validates certain meanings. In doing so, her audience needs to be capable of having the appropriate feeling and the logical capacity to understand. This interaction between Sālem and others is necessary to validate the meanings, and to illustrate that the subject also has a responsibility for responding appropriately. Having the appropriate response is based on the subject having the ethical capability to engage with Sālem’s statement. The ethical categories that are constructed through a logical discourse avoid subjective and arbitrary understanding of music-making, but also clarify moral norms of the community. The subjective perception is unable to unite the community. During my visits to Sālem’s music institute, I became familiar with some of her music teachers (she would refer to them as music coaches for the children). Sabā, a twenty-six-year-old female *tār* player, had just graduated with a masters of music education from Tehran University and had been working at the institute for about six months. During an afternoon break she spoke about the importance of developing a rational discourse on music:

One of the reasons that our music has had such an ambivalent place for us is that we have not had master musicians, those with the appropriate knowledge to talk about this art. Today, not everything that is discussed by the authorities is believed and acted on, in fact there is little evidence of that. It is true that many of our religious leaders have pushed music away from our people, but I also believe that voices of our masters have been silent or at least not in the public for people to hear, to rationalize and to reason. Much like anything else, music needs to be explained, its usefulness and benefits need to be discussed to the people. What can we expect if all we hear are negative and derogatory views towards our music? I believe we constantly need people who know this art well to speak about it. But speaking about it is not enough, they need to know what it is that we need, what it is that we need to hear. What is significant about music and why does it need to be validated. To counter the religious views there are two options—as our politics



have shown—to use religion to fight religion or to create a logical viewpoint, where the benefits and importance of music could be realized by others. (Interview conducted on May 11, 2016)

Sabā's statement follows a judgment that master musicians' logical deliberations are useful because they provide an awakening or an awareness for a community whose structure and constitution are based on reason.

An accomplished thirty-two-year-old *setar* player in Lotfī's class had a different perspective. He believed that logic and a rational perspective are needed but not for everyday use in public. Sālār believes that

To speak about music by a way of reason is only good for policy-making and when it comes to dealing with politics or organizers. For the public, the music needs to just be performed. I come from a small city, travel to Tehran each week to learn music. There are many in my small city that have never seen music instruments or even heard our music. How would developing a rational argument help them? What good would it do for music to grow? I think our politics or strategy should be about being present, about being active. I think it is useful for our master musicians to support us so we can perform and hold classes. After all, without music being heard, all the discussion and reflection on it would be pointless. I think the experience of music—that is playing and hearing it—would have the most powerful effect on people, especially the youth. Particularly today where so many of our past practices and beliefs are changing. We must make sure to present music the way it should be played...the proper form to the public, so this tradition continues. (Interview conducted on July 26, 2012)

Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem have also seen the importance of developing a rational language on music-making, and of transmitting their message by traveling throughout Iran or using new avenues possible through technology. Having said that, Sālem speaks about the richness of the education process in *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, and how over time many of its most important components have been fading away:

Back when I was young, I remember that going to my music classes was an elaborate ritual for me and many of my friends. We were excited to be going to our master's houses or classrooms because we knew it would be an educational experience—not like today, you go in the class for twenty minutes or thirty minutes and quickly you are done and the next

students comes in the small suffocating rooms. The elaborate ritual was a form of being ethical, being responsible towards our tradition, our history...all of that has been disappearing, It took a long time to learn the *radīf*...we knew the real purpose of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*; it was to learn from our teachers for as long as we could. They also saw that in us, they saw the excitement...teaching was not mechanical like today, it was a process, a growth, a coming together. (Interview conducted on May 11, 2016)

Sālem's statement illustrates the value in the "elaborate ritual" of learning from a master musician. It is through this relationship that a student begins to understand how beauty is perceived. For a student, the in-depth understanding of beauty can only be appreciated and recognized through the education gained from a master musician. Education is the etiquette, the *adab* in learning a tradition of the *radīf*. Music-making educates the public about the assets that music has to offer, but it first develops and nurtures individuals who pursue this art. Education is giving oneself to knowledge, *fanā'* (annihilation) in God, "a hidden treasure that longed to be known" (Schimmel 1975:139).

One of the main concerns of the three master musicians is how the education process is being neglected by younger music teachers. The teaching of the *radīf* has become, in the words of Lotfī and Jankouk, "mechanical and superficial." Lotfī even once compared the new educational methods used by younger musicians to teach the *radīf* to "as an artificial flower instead of being in the middle of a garden to feel the beauty of a flower." Lotfī continued,

The reason I like to follow what I see as the proper ideals and principles between a teacher and student is that it keeps educating us about our ethical obligations. Without an understanding of ethics, what we are responsible for, and what we need to be cautious of, we lose what is beautiful about our music. Beauty is taught...of course, we can naturally see it, feel it or even create it...but without the guidelines, without the proper *adab*, attitude and trust in our tradition it all goes away. My role is to help keep the trust, to help keep what is ethical about our music alive, so what is beautiful and good about our music keeps leading us to a place where we could experience true happiness. (Interview conducted on May 26, 2012)

Lotfī's statement illustrates the importance he places on stressing the ethics of music-making. He along with Jankouk and Sālem have developed a discourse that above all creates public awareness. Over the past three decades the three master musicians have found themselves in a shifting and intense political and culture war in Iran. For them, social awareness can only be achieved through education both in their private classes and through the public platforms. Education for Jankouk is a "cultivation of human habits and reason." *Aql* (reason) is defined as the practice of piety and virtue, and refraining from immorality.

Reason and intellectual freedom to think rationally is the basis of an Islamic view on education: a) *tarbiyah* (to cause to grow); b) *ta'dib* (to refine, to discipline); and c) *ta'lim* (to instruct) (see Chapter Three). This form of education is to foster individual, social and moral acquisition of knowledge. *Tarbiyah* refers to individual growth, while *ta'dib* is the social and moral education, and *ta'lim* is the acquisition of knowledge. Education also centers on three important factors, knowledge, choice and action. Jankouk's concern about the direction of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* is based on these three factors:

To be able to educate, a musician needs to have adequate knowledge of the *radīf*. Nowadays, that is hardly the case, young musicians with few years of experience begin to teach the *radīf*, using notation, where they have not even memorized the basics of each *gūsheh*. The choices they made are also very questionable...from the *gūsheh-ha* that they teach to the tuning of their instrument; a sound choice is made when one is fully informed of a subject. The wrong choices lead to actions that are unthinkable and inappropriate. This is a reason proper education is important; it teaches us the ideals and principles that are important in our music. (Interview conducted on August 12, 2008)

Education needs to be considered as the adhesive force that spreads the ideals of the *radīf*, creating a form of self-awareness and social consciousness about the judgment of beauty in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. Since beauty is a search for the truth, the logical deliberations of the three master musicians are a search to get closer to the truth. The truth can be seen in the goodness and

beauty; it is a way to create social cohesion and unity. Ultimately this search for the truth in music is found in Allāh, giving music a commensurable value. In fact, *mantiq* (logic) denotes “language and meaning including the categories of logic.... which are far from being opposed to the spiritual since they derive ultimately from the Divine Word as the source of all certitude and meaning, The Logos is the ultimate source of logic” (Nasr 1987:99). In short, the three master musicians’ viewpoints are implicated in a language and meaning that are symbolic of *ma’rifah* (gnosis), that through knowledge and reason seeks *wahdat al-wujūd* (transcendent unity of Being).

## CHAPTER TEN: MUSIC-MAKING AND THE UNION WITH THE BELOVED

*“The beauty [jamāl], splendor, and adornment of every being is to exist as perfect and to reach its final perfection. Now, since the existence of the First is the most perfect existence, Its beauty surpasses that of every beautiful being, as does the adornment and splendor. It has in Its substance and being. [All of] that It has in Itself and by virtue of intellecting Itself. (Al-Fārābī Risāla fi l-‘aql Ch. I, §13; trans. McGinnis and Reisman 2007)*

This chapter examines Lotfī, Jangouk and Sālem’s perception of beauty based on a metaphysical understanding that considers music-making to ultimately serve as an instrument for individuals’ soul to attain the necessary moral qualities in the quest for the Divine love. This insight of beauty is based on an Islamic and mystical thinking that above all is in search for *al-haqq* (the Truth)—a journey towards the Beloved, what Ibn Sīnā calls the ‘*āshiq*’s (lover’s) yearning to move towards the *murād* (desire). I begin by investigating how Lotfī, Jangouk and Sālem’s reflections of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* and *zībā’ī* (Farsi, beauty) are rooted in the philosophical thinking of Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī. The three master musicians’ perceptions of ethics and *zībā’ī* are primary based on their experience and readings of Persian literature and poetry. Classical poetry is a pertinent part of the *radīf*, whereby learning the musical repertoire blends into discovering the worldviews of prominent poets, such as Sa‘dī, Rūmī, and Hāfez (see Introduction). The eminent Iranian poets and writers are known to have read and contemplated Islamic philosophical thoughts, particularly the ideas of Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī. For the three master musicians, Persian literature and poetry become an indirect, yet effective mode of conceptualizing Islamic philosophical thinking about *zībā’ī* and music-making.

In addition to the three *ustādān*, this chapter focus on the views of contemporary Iranian thinkers, Hossein Nasr, Hossein Mohyeddīn Ghomsheī and Abdolkarim Soroush about ethics and beauty. Ibn Sīnā’s metaphysical thinking is central in constructing a perception of beauty, where he focusses on two subjects: *fi’l* (action) and *hastī* (being). *Fi’l* forms the basis of ‘*ilm-i*

*'amalī* (practical science), the human *kunish* (the condition of actions) which informs us “of what we should do in order to organize our affairs in this world properly and to insure that our affairs in the other world will be according to our hopes” (trans. Morewedge 1973:11). Ibn Sīnā also asserts that *hastī-i chīzhā* (the nature of being) aims to understand the human *nafs* (soul or essence) so it “may find its own proper form (*sūrat*) and may be fortunate in the other world” (trans. Morewedge 1973:11). Both *fi'l* and *hastī* ultimately aim for the human soul to unite with the Beloved. This metaphysical understanding of beauty for the three master musicians is also complemented by Suhrawardī’s mystical perception of illumination of the soul.

The eastern Islamic thinkers hold a foundational assertion that beauty above all relates to the most brilliant and exceptional state of being. Based on this thinking, beauty is the most excellent form of being, the perfection of existence only found in Allāh. The beauty of being in union with Allāh is the most excellent state of existence and suppresses any other beautiful existence.<sup>17</sup> Ibn Sīnā expands on Al-Fārābī’s concept of ultimate perfection by stating that “there cannot exist beauty (*jamāl*) or splendor beyond that [being whose] quiddity is purely intelligible, purely good, free from any deficiency, and unique in all respects. The Necessary Being has pure beauty and splendor” (Murata 2017:14). Since ultimate beauty is found in the purely intelligible realm of understanding, any entity in the sensible world cannot fully hold such splendor. Al-Ghazālī also presents a similar ontological assertion concerning *jamāl*, yet for him everything holds a unique form of beauty. In short, *jamāl* is the representation of Allāh and His Glory. Once an individual is born, he/she parts from the Beloved and His Beauty, the mission of life becomes a quest (a union) with the Creator and His Beauty.<sup>18</sup> Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī’s

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<sup>18</sup> In *Opinions in Rasā'il al Fārābī* explains that “beauty, splendor, and adornment of every being is to exist as perfect and to reach its final perfection. Now, since the existence of the First is the most perfect existence, Its beauty

philosophical writings of *jamāl* discuss a range of ideas, such as poetics, rhetoric, logic and politics based on Islamic and mystic values in this quest for union with the Beloved. For them, *jamāl* encompasses metaphysical, psychological and ethical areas of inquiry that define the aesthetic judgment of an artwork, where art evokes the awareness and understanding for individuals to partake in the journey to ascend towards Allāh.

Ibn Sīnā's metaphysical writings best describe the three master musicians' perception of beauty in music-making. During my studies with Lotfī, he would often use *kamāl* (perfection) to speak about *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*:

*zībā'ī* needs to be understood in terms of *kamāl*. By *kamāl* I just do not mean the perfection or excellence in playing the music, but how we let ourselves be transformed through music. *Kamāl* is the movement by which one relinquishes this phase of life [the earthly and material world] to gain something else. *Kamāl* is beyond the music, it is transformation of individuals through music. It is the movement one allows the soul to be free—to fly towards its rightful place. I envision that place to be flawless and refined. There is a deeper meaning to *kamāl* than playing a piece of music beautifully—it is the moment that music commands us to let go, and not us commanding music to do what we want. Music becomes like a stream that takes us away, and until we do not let go we would not be able flow with the music. (Interview conducted on May 21 2012)

Lotfī would say that *kamāl*, the freeing of the soul to “flow with the music” is a natural human motion called *‘ishq* (love). It is the human soul's desire to move towards a higher realm, where every living entity is inspired to ultimately reach *kamāl* (perfection). Lotfī referred to this human act as the “*bīqarārī-e rūh*” (the restlessness of the soul):

The soul is never in peace until it is reunited with the Divine. The beauty of music is the realization that music offers the chance to take on this holy and spiritual journey. The human soul is restless, impatient to break away from our physical being. The poorer our soul is the more easily it can break away from this world. As Mawlānā [Rūmī] states: “*in jahān zandān mā zandānian; hofrah kon zandānk khod rā vā rahā*” [this world is a prison and we are the prisoners; tunnel through the prison and liberate yourself!]. Mawlānā is telling us that our soul, our true essence is imprisoned by our physical being

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surpasses that of every beautiful being, as does the adornment and splendor.... [All of] that It has in Itself and by virtue of intellecting Itself.” (trans. McGinnis and Reisman 1926: Chapter 1, 13)

by the materiality of this world. We need to break thought it and become free. Music is a divine gift that allows us to do exactly that. It allows us to become one with the universe and move towards our true being, true love. (Interview conducted on May 21, 2012)

Lotfī's discussion about the freeing of the soul is similar to Ibn Sīnā's statement that the quest to attain *kamāl* is possible through *'ishq*, "a force which causes motion" (Morewedge 1973:261).

Lotfī similarly maintained that music-making is a process—a motion in the universe—that

"facilitates individuals' souls to move towards the *ma'shūq*... as it becomes one with the

Beloved. This connection, this union is only realized through *'ishq*." He often recited Rūmī's

famous poem:

*har cheh goyam 'ishq rā sharh-o bayān; chon be 'ishq āyam khajel gārdam az ān* [as I continually try to explain and define the meaning of love; once I confront love, I become humble and humiliated in front of its splendor]...Mawlānā teaches us that *'ishq* means *zībā'ī*. *'Ishq* is the first step to letting go, to freeing the soul to be *āzādah* [free or uninhibited] in the universe so it can fly to be reunited with its true essence...so the soul needs to become pure and untainted so it can move freely towards its origin, to its Creator. *'Ishq* has no language to describe it adequately, as Mawlānā explains, yet it profoundly affects the heart and the soul. One has to remember that *'ishq* should not be for an object or for a purpose; it should be desirable for itself, that is when an individual is truly worthy of praise. (Interview conducted on July 2012)

Lotfī illustrates the close connection he has with Persian classical poets, like Rūmī. More

importantly, Lotfī's discussion of *'ishq* centers on a union with the divine, resembling Ibn Sīnā's

understanding of *paiwand* (mystical union), a concept regarded as the ultimate source of

happiness. Soroush also discusses *'ishq*, *paiwand* and music-making in one of his Rūmī lectures

in the Islamic Center of Northern California:

Mawlānā states that when one hears music, the truth about this world is realized. One could see the image of the truth. Shams-i-Tabrīzī encouraged Mawlānā to *samā'* [listening] and *mūsīqī* as an *'ibādat* (servitude or worship). Fasting was the only other form of *'ibādat* that Mawlānā would practice, but Shams-i-Tabrīzī had encouraged him to music as a pious way of worshiping Allāh. In reality Mawlānā was introduced to a new *'ibādat*. No one before that—no religious leader had ever said—that music is an *'ibādat*; this a unique practice... Why should music be forbidden to those who benefit from



music? Those whose soul would be purified [*pālāyesh-e rūh*] from it. And, the *rūh*—through music—can become ready to fly towards the Beloved. This is the reason that Mawlānā would say that when music is played: “I hear the doors of the Heavens opening.” This is the reason why music was so important to Mawlānā, and he spent most of life practicing *samā*. He would dance with others, and at the same time some people would recite poetry, and some with beautiful voices would sing—Qawwālan (singers)—would have what is known as *mehfil-e samā*. This practice to Mawlānā was *ibādat*.

Music had a purpose for Mawlānā, it had a meaning. It was not just for someone to come and play just for momentary enjoyment. It was not at all like that, for him music was the main reason for their gatherings. For some music is a *tafrih* [leisure or hobby], for others it is like medicine—meaning that for them music is played to feel better and to reduce feelings of depression, and there is nothing wrong with that. But for Mawlānā, it was *ghazā bod* [food for the soul]. That is why he says: *pas ghazā-e ‘ashaqān āmad samā*; *ka dar-o bāshad kheyāl ejtamāh* [hence music the food for the soul of lovers is here; where all lovers could come together]...Notice, he does not say *davā* [medicine] but says *ghazā*. Why? For him, it was a coming together with other friends of Allāh, and music makes that happen. It makes one become closer to Allāh. Therefore, it is the food of a lover—*ghazā-e shakh-e ‘arīf hast* [the food of a gnostic person]. A person who imagines and is eager to be united with the Beloved. It reminds me of Shakespeare who said “music is food of life.” Music is a spiritual and holy food of the lovers. Mawlānā used music constantly for the *parvāz-e rouhani* [spiritual flight or journey].<sup>19</sup>

Ibn Sīnā stresses that the highest form of *jamāl* is beyond the intelligible world. He refers to the ultimate form of beauty as the *wājib al-wujūd* (“Necessary Existent”), or the *‘illat-i ghā’i* (ultimate cause), which is rooted in the ontological understanding of beauty as a perfection of being. The attaining of such beauty necessitates what Soroush calls the *parvāz-e rouhāni*. Human existence is based on the soul’s forward motion towards absolute perfection. Ibn Sīnā believes that the Necessary Existent consists of the *khair-i mutlaq* (absolute good) and *kamāl-i mahd* (absolute perfection) based on the greatest form of *jamāl*. He asserts that the Necessary Existent is not something that needs an external cause for it to exist (it is not contingent on other factors), rather the ultimate form of *jamāl* exists based on its intrinsic nature. The intrinsic nature of *jamāl* indicates its existence without any external causation; no other factor is needed for ultimate

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<sup>19</sup> This passage by Soroush is my transcription and translation from a video recording of his lectures in Persian.

beauty of the Divine to exist. Earthly beauty is contingent upon other factors and causes. For instance, a *tār* needs to be made of adequate material by an instrument maker, and needs proper tuning by a musician for it to sound beautiful. *Jamāl*, as a perfection of being, is not made beautiful because of external factors. This is precisely what Lotfī meant about *kamāl* and the freeing of the soul to “flow with the music.” Beauty is a state of perfection that is only seen in the oneness with the Beloved, since He alone is the ultimate form of beauty. In this process music-making becomes the vehicle, or as Soroush states *ghazā-e shakhs-e ‘ārif*.

Ibn Sīnā discusses the Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd* (oneness of Allāh) in relation to the Necessary Existent, where he explains oneness of the Beloved as the attributes and the beauty of God manifested as three human attributes: *irāda* (will), *ghānī* (sufficient) and *qayyum* (self-subsistent). This thinking is similar to Soroush’s analogy of *parvāz-e rouhani*. Music-making is a medium for individuals to move towards the *ma’shūq* (Beloved), only possible as the primordial body exists in tandem with what Ibn Sīnā calls the *harakat-i dā’im* (eternal motion), as the goal of existence becomes *fi’l-I da’im* (eternal act). Thus, *jamāl* entails the realization of knowledge and awareness as a never-ending forward motion of the soul towards the *ma’shūq*. The metaphor of journey used by many eastern Islamic philosophers, Sūfīs and Lotfī is based on the never-ending quest for the *jamāl*, a desire to be reunited with the Beloved (see Chapter Three).

Ibn Sīnā speaks of three essential components for *paiwand* to take place: the *mādda* (body), the *nafs* (soul or essence) and the *‘aql* (intelligence, as an aspect of the soul). He asserts that after death, as a physical entity the *mādda* vanishes, but the *nafs* and the *‘aql* are immortal. Ibn Sīnā believes that “the mystical union.... takes place when the intelligence receives the Necessary Existent. The entire person, having lost its former physical constituents, can then be said to be *united* (*paiwand*) and not just *connected* with the Necessary Existent” (Morewedge

1973:268; emphasis in the original). Ibn Sīnā diverges from the Aristotelian position, which holds an individual's primary mover is the identification with the ultimate being. If *jamāl* is the presentation of the Divine, then *paiwand* facilitates this union. The quest for *jamāl*, according to Ibn Sīnā, requires three essential components: *al-nazm* (order), *al-ta'līf* (composition) and *al-i'tidāl* (symmetry). Human beings originate from the Necessary Existent and return to it. This is the reason why Ibn Sīnā identifies Allāh as *al-manba'* (the source) of *fayadān al-nūr* (illuminating light).

Ibn Sīnā draws a clear connection between humans and the Beloved: humans come from Him and carry with them the essence of His beauty, and their souls are destined to return to Him. Nasr explains this doctrine:

The creation is about God's *ta'aqqul* [the process of understanding] of His essence and His *'ilm* (knowledge) of all things that forms the existence of all things. This act is eternal, what is known as *lā yatanāhā*; it speaks to the manifestation of his uncanny knowledge about the universe. Therefore, we are all connected to God based on the intellection and knowledge he has bestowed on us. The intellection and knowledge in us are the manifestation of His beauty. How we utilize that beauty is based on the awareness we develop from our world, from our teachers...from the values and principles we have been handed down. (Interview conducted on May 3, 2017)

The connection between being and the Beloved, Ibn Sīnā explains, is based on idea that human essence is the same as Allāh; that is the reason why he believes that *al-manba'* and *fayadān al-nūr* are one and the same. Nasr explains that Ibn Sīnā's reflection of oneness is based on the fact "that Creation is the realization of the intelligible essence and existence the theophany (*tajallī*) of these essences, so that being and light are ultimately the same. To give existence to creatures is to illuminate them with the Divine Light which is the ray emanating from His Being" (Nasr 1993:213). For Ibn Sīnā, *jamāl* represents the ability for humans to hold some degree of Allāh's *ta'aqqul* and *'ilm*. It also illustrates the universe's *al-nazm*, *al-ta'līf* and *al-i'tidāl*, where the

unity is based upon “the fact that the Necessary Existent is the ultimate cause of every entity” (Morewedge 1973:276).

Jankouk views the *radīf* and the performance practice of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* based on similar principles as *al-nazm*, *al-ta’līf* and *al-i’tidāl*:

Often the discussion is where did the *radīf* come from; what necessitated the transformation from *maqāmāt* [singular; *maqām*, the system of melodic modes] to the *dastgāh* and *āvāz* system? Yet, what is often ignored is the order this music system exhibits. Obviously without order there would be ambivalence and uncertainty. If we were to look at Islamic art, we realize that they represent *yak nazm-e khāsi* [a certain or particular order] that is undeniably complex and beautiful. When we look at a mosque’s minaret or calligraphy, we realize that the mosaics or the *nasta’līq* [a predominant style of Persian calligraphy] consist of proper ordering that makes senses and is logical. The beauty of the mosaics or each letter is seen in its individuality but also as a whole. Each mosaic comes together to produce the majesty and beauty of a minaret. Similarly, with *nasta’līq*, it is important to learn how to write each letter exquisitely but the connection, the coming together of the letters makes it beautiful. Therefore, order is both individual and coming together as a whole.

Looking at the *radīf* similar ordering applies. There is a reason that each *dastgāh*, *āvāz*, and *gūsheh* have a particular place within the *radīf*. Even each *gūsheh* has a specific ordering within itself. When I play a *gūsheh*, I am not able to play the concluding melody first and then play the beginning. This ordering has been thought about for years so every melody belongs to the order. Otherwise, without this framing we would have scattered melodies with no aim and purpose. If we were to look at the universe we would see the same ordering. For example, the sun comes up from the east every day, the seasons follow each other, and so on. There is an order in the universe, order within us humans. And, if art is a product of humans then it needs to follow and be unison—be one—with the universe. (Interview conducted on May 7, 2008)

The ordering of the *radīf*, according to Jankouk, shapes a judgment about beauty. This form of order can be observed within the shortest *gūsheh*, as well as the *radīf*. This form of ordering also necessitates a particular form of performance practice of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*; there is a sequence and order for each part of the performance that a musician needs to follow. This judgment of beauty is what Ibn Sīnā calls the necessary order of nature. Necessary Existent is based on the assumption of *nizām-i khair* (universal order). Jankouk believed that the performance practice of

*mūsīqī-e sonnatī* needs to be based on a *tartīb* (sequence or order) and *nāzm* (harmony). In *The Philosophy of Illumination*, Suhrawardī states that “in every series there is an order, whatever the order might be” (trans. McGinnis and Reisman 2007:371).

As demonstrated in Part I, *tartīb* and *nāzm* of the *radīf* shape the values and ideas that are understood by the three master musicians to be good and beautiful in *mūsīqī-e sonnatī*. *Tartīb* and *nāzm* are implicated with ethical components that are taught to the students. What provides meaning to *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* is the way in which *gūsheh-ha* are played and improvised to compose transcendent, mystical or inspiring feelings for the listener. The order in the *radīf* provides the master musician with the ability to transform melodies into *al-ta’līf* (composition). It is through knowledge of the *tartīb* and *nāzm* that the composition of the beautiful and the sublime is possible. *Al-ta’līf* is not only the proper and orderly playing of the *radīf*, but conveys the meanings and purpose of music-making. Jankouk explained,

*tartīb* and *nāzm* teach the proper way to play; it tells us what needs to come where and how to play each music sequence. But the order still needs to be executed by a musician. The musician—at the spot, without any proper knowledge—creates a beautiful music that takes one to another universe—*az khod be khod mīshavad* [losing insights to one’s being]. The order needs to be carried out to perfection, and that is the work of a master musician who has the knowledge and the belief. If we look at the universe we see how the order does not fall behind even one second—everything happens when and the way it should. *Nāzm* has an exact and precise ordering. (Interview conducted on May 7, 2008)

Carrying out the order with precision, as Jankouk states, is only gained through the knowledge of the *sonnat* (tradition) of music-making. During my meeting with Nasr in Washington D.C. he elaborated on *al-ta’līf* “as giving life to something. A creation within the universe that has an order and is in unison with itself.” Creation of an artwork is based on a set of ideas, an important reason why a listener relates to the art form. *Al-ta’līf* becomes the coming together of all parts of

the artwork, where the individual pieces come to present the whole through the work of a master musician.

The third aspect of Ibn Sīnā's form of beauty is *al-i'tidāl* (symmetry). *Al-i'tidāl* symbolizes the balance and equal creation of the Beloved—it is a form of absoluteness and perfection. Symmetry means “the visible commensurability of all the parts of a work to one another and to the whole” (Osborne 1986:77). This would mean that each part of the artwork is an exact multiple (or in some close relation) to the whole. This idea of beauty also applies to the universe, where “every species or natural kind has an ideal set of proportions, an ideal symmetry, from which all individuals deviate in a greater or lesser degree but by their approximation to which their beauty can be assessed” (Osborne 1986:77). Beauty, then, is perceived based on proper proportion based on order and ideals. Symmetry seeks out beauty as the principle of perfection, as exemplified in the universe. It is also complementary, where one side is inspired to create a oneness. The oneness symbolizes the union with the Beloved; the motion of the universe towards Him. It is to create a balance as imbalance is perceived to be imperfection. Through imperfection “ideals” are never attained.

Based on my discussion with the music scholar Stephen Blum, I realized that *al-i'tidāl* is a common performance practice of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī. Javāb-e āvāz* (literally meaning “answer or response to the vocalizing”) is a complicated form of call and respond between an instrumentalist and a vocalist. The vocalist would often sing a small part of a verse, as the instrumentalist is expected to play a response based on the melodies the vocalist recites. This practiced is carried out to the conclusion of a poem, as the call and respond includes both the words in the poem as well as the vocal ornamentations. Vocalists and instrumentalists who can carry out this practice are highly thought of and praised. *Javāb-e āvāz* has been an important part of my learning

experience with Lotfī and Jangouk. They dedicated a lot of time in reciting a poem to make certain that I played each verse accurately.

*Al-i'tidāl* can be viewed as a concept that opposes a dichotomous relation. It speaks to the union of the soul with the Beloved—the universe works in an orderly and symmetrical way towards the Divine. There is a union and harmony in *al-i'tidāl* that is also internal, it deals with the dichotomous relationship between the body and the soul. In *Mishkāt al-anwār (The Niche of Lights)*, Suhrawardī, based on a Neoplatonic scheme of emanation, writes about the human soul's ascent or descent to or from the Divine. He believes that the human soul does not stand in a dualistic relationship to the body, but the soul as a light that illuminates the path towards the Beloved. In symmetry one would find the possibility of being in the modes of *tamāmī* (perfection). Symmetry is a realization of the universe, as Ibn Sīnā states, in its *fauq al-tamām* (the supreme perfection). He asserts that “we call deficient (*nāqis*) a totality which lacks something not yet realized” (trans. Morewedge 1973:80). Symmetry is reaching a state of *kamāl*. Ibn Sīnā explains, “one cannot imagine the fusion of two directions, whereas one can imagine the fusion of two bodies. Thus, being two bodies is not the same as being two directions” (Morewedge 1973:83).

In applying these principles, Ibn Sīnā argues that individuals have an innate sense of beauty based on their intellectual being. The universe itself forms order and symmetry, thus it comes natural to human beings. This innate sense kindles a desire for individuals to imagine what is beautiful (*al-manzar al-husn*). His perception of beauty is based purely on the intelligible Beauty of Allāh. Jankouk has a similar understanding,

even though there are earthly sensations, things that one perceives to be beautiful. The *fetrat-e ādamī* [human essence] needs to be worked on so it does not deceive us. Therefore, I emphasize that music has a purpose that is beyond its every day pleasure. There is nothing wrong with enjoying the moment, enjoyment is not sinful. What is

wrong, in my eyes is when the real purpose of music is forgotten. (Interview conducted on May 9, 2008)

The three master musicians do not deny the earthly desire that music inspires, but for them music-making is implicated in ethical values that shape their understanding of beauty. Above all, music facilitates a union with the Beloved; it is to attain Divine love. In the current geopolitics and cultural environment of Iran, many of their ideals have come under question, or at least have become less influential. Their task has been to reconcile *sonnat* with the new forces that are rapidly changing the ethical norms, and as a result the practices of music-making in Iran. Similar concerns are seen in various art forms in Iran. As Lotfī would say, “art represents and reflects the desire of its people.” Through these uncertain times, Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem have become the ethical teachers whose knowledge of this oral tradition provides guidance to the public.



## EPILOGUE: LEARNING TO DEFINE BEAUTY

I frequently find myself reflecting on one of the first things Lotfī told me: “the *radīf* is the Qur’ān of musicians.” Over the years, I have become increasingly aware of his correlation between music-making and the Qur’ān, realizing that *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* has specific principles that shape the judgment of beauty. To grasp the beauty of *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* is to *become* mindful and sensible to its ethical values. Lotfī and Jankouk taught me that the *radīf* provides a guideline for musicians to become conscious and thoughtful of the ideals that shape the judgment of beauty. The *radīf*, as Jankouk would say: “is a treasure box, within it, each jewel represents what is beautiful about Iranian art and culture. Each jewel has a purpose, that is to achieve something beyond our everyday. This treasure box holds in it our *sa’ādat mandī* [happiness or fulfillment].” For my master teachers, music-making is a means to an end, the objective is to achieve *sa’āda* through music’s mundane pleasure. Music-making’s pleasure should not be discarded, as it is the first step towards attaining *sa’āda*. If music’s aim is to unite one with the Beloved, then the debate about it being *harām* (forbidden) is unfitting and erroneous.

The position of music-making for Iranians has been perplexing. There is no doubt that the current geopolitics of Iran’s theocratic state has shaped an antagonist outlook on music. However, a deeply-rooted history of animosity towards music has profoundly affected the collective consciousness of Iranians. Besides the Islamic Republic’s viewpoints on music, there are deeper socio-cultural narratives about the status of music-making that needs the attention of master musicians and the intellectual community. My experience as a performer illustrates that a larger number of Iranians are becoming less aware of the cultural, intellectual and historical significance of Iranian art. I seem to encounter three groups when I perform: a) those with strong Islamic beliefs, who often avoid music due to its “sinfulness”; b) those who find *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*

to be “old fashioned,” “melancholic” and “slow tempo” for today’s fast-paced modern world; and c) those who are aware of the historical and cultural significance of music-making. What should be worrisome for the master musicians and the intellectual community is that the last group is the smallest.

My objective in conducting this research has been to comprehend what it is that gives *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* its meaning and value. More than ever, I feel the urge that young musicians need to understand what constitutes the judgment of beauty in music-making. My goal in writing this dissertation is not to oppose those who do not favor *mūsīqī-e sonnātī*, but to recognize the chronic issues that divorce many Iranians from thorough engagement with this art form. As explained in Part II, one reason has been the religious authorities, the presence of three hundred years of an antagonistic narrative on music-making. Many in Iran still believe that music is not a worthy profession, convinced that *tarab* (ecstasy) forms the bases of illicit activity for individuals. Since this Shī’a narrative (at least for the time being) remains a strong presence, it is the responsibility of musicians and the intellectual community to enlighten the public about beauty and the ideals of music-making.

Many master musicians, including Lotfī, have pondered the reasons why *mūsīqī-e sonnātī* does not have a strong recognition globally. I believe that the first step is to rehabilitate the status of music-making by discovering how beauty and ethics are fundamental to the practice of this art. The process of rehabilitation is challenging, since “modern” tendencies are increasingly becoming the way of life in Iran. Over the past hundred years, Iranian intellectuals have pondered the lack of “progress” in Iran compared to what has taken place in the “First World.” The lack of individual freedom and democratic institutions in Iran has created a sense of melancholia—to use a Freudian term—within the social psyche of the Iranians. Additionally,

forty years of the Islamic Republic has meant a legacy of youth disengagement from its history and cultural values. I believe that the lack of dedication or sensitivity to the ideals of *mūsīqī-e sonnatī* is a microcosm of today's Iran. As a nation, Iran is experiencing a transition into an ambivalent space of moral and cultural uncertainty. On occasion this form of uncertainty produces original works of art rather than vague and disparate musical practices, which are more common.

Ethics define the boundaries of what is judged to be beautiful. Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem's emphasis on Islamic metaphysics and spirituality should not be taken to mean that their music was bound to religion. To think of music-making based on a dichotomous relationship between secular and sacred is misleading. Judging beauty based on Islamic revelations, *'irfān* and *sonnat* does not make one become a "believer" or secular, but makes one appreciate Iranian art. Being a "believer" has little to do with the judgment of beauty rooted in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century *mashshā'ī* branch of Islamic philosophy, and mystic perceptions of the soul developed by Suhrawardī.

One issue that needs to be considered is not that there is no room for a musician who is a "non-believer," but advocating for a deeper understanding—or becoming a believer—in the cultural, historical and philosophical aspects of Iranian art. Can Iranian miniature, calligraphy or poetry exist without a relationship to Islamic revelations, *'irfān* and *sonnat*? Can it be said that miniaturists, calligraphers or poets are not inspired by their readings Sa'dī, Rūmī and Hāfez? Being a "believer" or "non-believer" in Islam (particularly today's form of political Shī'a doctrine prevalent in Iran) has little to do with being inspired by the geometric patterns of a mosque, hearing beautiful poetry or being awed by calligraphy.

My goal, ever since becoming Lotfī's student, has been to understand what inspires me about his *tār* or *setār* playing. Meanwhile, his main objective had been to teach me that music aims to bring out what is beautiful and good. He inspired me to play “music that has a purpose.” It was this purpose that motivated me to write about beauty and ethics: al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī reflected and wrote about beauty, Sa'dī, Rūmī and Hāfez became the messengers of beauty, and Lotfī, Jankouk and Sālem conveys beauty through their music-making. I believe—much like Nasr and Kadivar—that an effort is needed by the intellectual community to better understand the socio-cultural and historical ideals of Iranian art. *Mūsīqī-e sonnātī* cannot be studied apart from Iranian poetry, and the poems cannot be understood without having a good knowledge of Islamic values, mysticism and tradition. Of course, artistic freedom allows each musician to engage with beauty differently and subjectively. However, the values and ideals of music-making cannot be ignored.

Moreover, the first misleading step is to separate religion (specifically today's Shī'a ideologies) from Islamic philosophy. I have noticed that many Iranians have a difficult time differentiating the two. There seems to be a division between what took place before Islam in Iran (often viewed as good) and after the invasion of Islam (deemed as destructive and uncivilized). One of my objectives in this dissertation has been to show that these dichotomies are counterproductive. Another step is for the public to become more aware of the eastern Islamic philosophers in the context of *mashshā'ī* philosophy and mystic beliefs. The intellectual community needs to encourage the public to read more about al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī's ideas. At the same time, serious scholarly work needs to be conducted on how the eastern Islamic philosophers perceived beauty, and how their understandings have historically been reflected on and discussed. Philosophical concerns with beauty step beyond the realm of the

“conventional” understanding of today’s Islam. As the familiar *hadīth*: *Inna Allāh jamīl yuhibb al-jamāl* (Arabic; Indeed, Allāh is beautiful and He loves beauty) states, beauty is a historical, social and cultural understanding of Islamic tradition in Iran. Without an awareness of these issues, a constructive debate on the status of music-making in Iran would not be possible.

## GLOSSARY

<i>ab ‘ād-e akhlāqī</i>	(Persian from Arabic), ethical dimensions
<i>adab</i>	(Arabic and Persian), etiquette, virtues, civility; (plural, <i>ādāb</i> )
<i>akhlāq</i>	(Arabic and Persian), ethics, morals or manners
<i>‘aiyāsh</i>	(Arabic and Persian), pleasure-seeker, libidinous, sensualist
<i>al-baha’</i>	(Arabic), brilliance
<i>al-haqīqa</i>	(Arabic), the truth
<i>al-i’tidāl</i>	(Arabic), symmetry
<i>al-nazm</i>	(Arabic), order
<i>al-ta’līf</i>	(Arabic), composition
<i>al-zina</i>	(Arabic), splendor
<i>‘aql</i>	(Arabic and Persian), intellect
<i>‘amal</i>	(Arabic and Persian), action
<i>anjoman</i>	(Persian), <i>organization</i>
<i>asālat</i>	(Arabic and Persian), authenticity
<i>asīl</i>	(Arabic and Persian), authentic
<i>‘āshiq</i>	(Arabic and Persian), lover
<i>‘ārīf</i>	(Arabic and Persian), gnostic
<i>‘arūz</i>	(Arabic and Persian), the system of poetic meters in Persian poetry
<i>atānān</i>	(Persian), a unit of rhythmic cycle that utilizes the conventional syllables <i>ta, na</i> (each considered one unit) and <i>tan, nan</i> (each equivalent to two units)
<i>āvāz</i>	(Persian, literally “sing”), complex subsets of melodic and rhythmic patterns of <i>dastgāh</i>

<i>bātil</i>	(Arabic and Persian), falsehood
<i>bātin</i>	(Arabic and Persian), inner self
<i>dastgāh</i>	(Persian), a complex subsets of melodic and rhythmic patterns of the <i>radīf</i>
<i>dīdār</i>	(Persian), encounter, meeting
<i>fadīla</i>	(Arabic and Persian), virtue
<i>fanā'</i>	(Arabic and Persian), annihilation)
<i>fasād</i>	(Arabic and Persian), perverseness, wickedness, mischief, sedition
<i>fatwā</i>	(Arabic and Persian), interpretations of Islamic law given by a qualified jurist
<i>fi'l</i>	(Arabic and Persian), action
<i>ghazal</i>	(Arabic and Persian), love poems
<i>gūsheh</i>	(Persian, literally “corner”), complex subsets of melodic and rhythmic patterns of <i>dastgāh</i> and <i>āvāz</i>
<i>hadīth</i>	(Arabic and Persian), reports that describe the words, actions, or habits of Prophet Muhammad (plural, ' <i>ahādīth</i> )
<i>hāl</i>	(Arabic and Persian), disposition
<i>halāl</i>	(Arabic and Persian), permissible
<i>haqīqat</i>	(Arabic and Persian), truth
<i>haram</i>	(Arabic and Persian), forbidden
<i>hasan</i>	(Arabic and Persian), good)
<i>hasī</i>	(Persian), being
<i>'ibādat</i>	(Arabic and Persian), service, worship
<i>ikhlas</i>	(Arabic and Persian), sincerity
<i>'ilm</i>	(Arabic and Persian), knowledge
<i>ihsān</i>	(Arabic and Persian), acting according to what is beautiful

<i>‘ishq</i>	(Arabic and Persian), love
<i>ishrāqī</i>	(Arabic), Illuminationist, identified with Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī
<i>īmān</i>	(Arabic and Persian), faith
<i>islām</i>	(Arabic and Persian), submission)
<i>‘irfān</i>	(Arabic and Persian), mysticism
<i>jalāl</i>	(Arabic and Persian), majesty, the severity of God
<i>jamāl</i>	(Arabic), beauty
<i>jamīl</i>	(Arabic), beautiful
<i>khalīq</i>	(Arabic and Persian), Creator, Allāh
<i>khayāl</i>	(Arabic and Persian), imagination
<i>khāles</i>	(Arabic and Persian), pure
<i>khulq</i>	(Arabic and Persian), character or traits
<i>ladhdha</i>	(Arabic), pleasure
<i>latā ‘īf</i>	(Arabic and Persian), touches of grace
<i>lutf</i>	(Arabic and Persian), kindness
<i>malaka</i>	(Arabic and Persian), inner disposition
<i>mahbūb</i>	(Arabic and Persian), lover
<i>makhlūq</i>	(Arabic and Persian), creature
<i>mandūb ilayh</i>	(Arabic), deserving of praise)
<i>manesh</i>	(Persian), manners
<i>ma ‘rifa</i>	(Arabic and Persian), knowledge, awareness
<i>mashshā ‘ī</i>	(Arabic), a branch of philosophical school of thought of eastern Islamic scholars, (Peripatetic)



<i>ma 'shūq</i>	(Arabic and Persian), beloved
<i>mi 'rāj</i>	(Arabic and Persian), ascension
<i>mizrāb</i>	(Arabic and Persian), plucking
<i>moqaddās</i>	(Arabic and Persian), pious
<i>mubāh</i>	(Arabic and Persian), permissible
<i>mujāhida</i>	(Arabic), earnest effort
<i>mu 'jiza</i>	(Arabic and Persian), miracle
<i>murād</i>	(Arabic and Persian), desire, beloved
<i>murīd</i>	(Arabic and Persian), lover, disciple or novice
<i>mūsīqī-e sonnātī</i>	(Persian), traditional music
<i>nafs</i>	(Arabic and Persian), the human essence
<i>najat</i>	(Arabic and Persian), salvation
<i>niyya</i>	(Arabic and Persian), intention
<i>no-āvarī</i>	(Persian), innovation
<i>paiwand</i>	(Persian), mystical union
<i>pīr</i>	(Persian), religious scholar, a master with an extraordinary role
<i>qalb</i>	(Arabic and Persian), heart
<i>qabīh</i>	(Arabic and Persian), bad, uncertain.
<i>qasīda</i>	(Arabic and Persian), praise poems
<i>qudāsāt</i>	(Arabic and Persian), sanctity, holiness, paradise
<i>quds</i>	(Arabic and Persian), sanctity
<i>radīf</i>	(Arabic and Persian, literally “corner”) the collection of melodic figures preserved through oral tradition that provides the basis of improvisation in <i>mūsīqī-e sonnātī</i>

<i>ranj</i>	(Persian), hardship
<i>rastagārī</i>	(Persian), deliverance
<i>resālat</i>	(Arabic and Persian), intuition or insight
<i>riyāda</i>	(Arabic and Persian), discipline
<i>rūh</i>	(Persian), soul
<i>sa'āda</i>	(Arabic and Persian), happiness
<i>sabr</i>	(Arabic and Persian), patience
<i>safā'</i>	(Arabic and Persian), purity, joyfulness
<i>sair va sulūk</i>	(Persian from Arabic), journey and seeking the path
<i>samā'</i>	(Arabic and Persian), listening
<i>setār</i>	(Persian), is a four-string instrument played with the index finger
<i>sidq</i>	(Arabic and Persian), truthfulness
<i>sinah-ba-sinah</i>	(Persian), from one-to-the-other by breath
<i>shāgird</i>	(Persian), disciple
<i>sharāf</i>	(Arabic and Persian), dignify
<i>sharī'a</i>	(Arabic and Persian), Islamic legal path
<i>sonnat</i>	(Arabic and Persian), tradition
<i>sunna</i>	(Arabic), accounts based on the Prophet's daily practice
<i>ta'ajjub</i>	(Arabic), wonder
<i>tajaddod</i>	(Arabic and Persian), modernization
<i>takhyīl</i>	(Arabic), imaginative creation
<i>ta'līm va ta'allum</i>	(Persian from Arabic), teaching and learning
<i>tār</i>	(Persian), is a double-bowl shaped instrument with a fingerboard of twenty-five adjustable frets.

<i>tarāb</i>	(Arabic and Persian), ecstasy
<i>tarbiyat kardan</i>	(Persian), education, tutoring
<i>tarīqa</i>	(Arabic and Persian), esoteric path
<i>tawhīd</i>	(Arabic and Persian), unity, oneness
<i>'ulamā'</i>	(Arabic and Persian), Shī'a religious scholars
<i>ustādān</i>	(Persian), master musicians (plural of <i>ustād</i> )
<i>wājib</i>	(Arabic and Persian), obligatory
<i>wājib al-wujūd</i>	(Arabic), Necessary Existent
<i>zāhir</i>	(Arabic and Persian), external, physical
<i>zībā'ī</i>	(Persian), beauty
<i>zībā shenāsī</i>	(Persian), knowledge of the beautiful

## TRANSLITERATION

Transliteration of Arabic and Persian follows the ALA-LC Romanization Tables (2012 edition) for consonants, except that I have omitted diacritical marks. Long vowels in both languages are marked with macrons (e.g., *akhlāq*); short vowels in Persian are indicated as:

( a), ( u) and ( i)

Plural forms of Arabic and Persian nouns are not indicated by English-s but are fully transliterated (e.g., *dastgāh* and *dastgāh-hā*).

Names of Iranian cities and provinces generally appear in their common English spellings. Long vowels in some Arabic words that are commonly used in English are marked with macrons (e.g., Allāh).

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Instrument maker, “Amir”	(Tehran)
Kadivar, M.	(Durham, NC)
Jankouk, A.	(Tehran)
Lotfī, M.R.	(Berkeley, Seattle and Tehran)
Nasr, S.	(Washington D.C.)
Sabā	(Tehran)
Sālār	(Tehran)
Sālem, S.	(Tehran and via Skype)

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