

A Review of Morteza Avini's Islamic Art (Part I)



TEHRAN -- Seyyed Morteza Avini was a documentary filmmaker, photographer, journalist, writer, and theorist of Iranian "Islamic Cinema", whose life and thoughts are discussed in this article.

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, he left architecture in the university and turned to filmmaking as per the necessities of the revolution. He started his media activities in late 1983, simultaneously with participating in the war fronts – Iraq's imposed war against Iran - and producing documentary films about the war.

During this period, he thought about cinema, art, global culture, and its confrontation with various issues. Avini's research collection and discussions were published in the monthly artistic magazine "Soureh" and later collected in the book "Magic Mirror," which is the first volume of his articles and film critiques.

Avini, was martyred on April 9, 1993, in Fakkeh, southwestern Iran, while making a documentary and television series "Chronicles of Victory", due to explosion of a landmine, remaining from the time of war.

He critically analyzed famous works in philosophy, art, cinema, etc., producing three famous books among his works:

- "The Victory of Blood" analyzes the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) the freedom and justice seeker grandson of the Prophet of Islam.

- "Development and Foundations of Western Civilization" analyzes fundamental challenges of the West.

- "Magic Mirror" analyzes media.

Here we take a look at some of his analyses on art and the West, all of which belong to years before 1990.

-Art in Martyr Avini's Thought -The Language of Art

Avini about the language of art writes: "The artist is a keeper of hidden treasures and his language is the language of symbolism. Therefore, he must recognize the secret and mystery of the emergence of sublime truths and the quality of the emergence of divine command in the world. This discovery is not necessarily with self-awareness; rather, the artist's soul must become a place for the descent of hidden symbols and truths."

Art, Thought, and Mysticism

In explaining the relationship between art, mysticism, and thought, Avini writes:

"In terms of content and substance, art is like thinking, wisdom, and mysticism and is only different in how it is expressed and manifested. The main source of art is also love and mysticism."

Artist

Avini says: "The artist is someone who, in addition to being a lover of the truth, has also received the power of expression it from the Almighty."

Western Art

Avini, about the characteristics of contemporary Western art writes: "Western art is self-indulgent; and it's not about truth and divinity. Western art is the expression of modern human narcissism."

He writes elsewhere: "Western civilization is in search of earthly paradise. The historical journey of art in the West has been traversed with such an extreme goal."

Iran Marks Day of Attar of Nishabur

TEHRAN -- Faridoddin Abu Hamid Muhammad (1110-1221) better known as Attar is a prominent Persian poet and the creator of *Mantiq al-Tayr* (the conference of the birds) whom is annually commemorated across Iran on April 13.

The commemoration day of Attar of Nishabur in northeast of Iran is an opportunity to take a new look at his life and status in the Iranian literature.

Born in a village named Kadkan in the vicinity of Nishabur, the mystic poet was called Attar as he was working at herbal and clinic store. Attar in Persian means the one does activities related to herbs and herbal medicine.

Attar was a forerunner of science of Tariqat or Sufi's path, who was acknowledged by mystic 13th century Persian poet Mowlana known also as Rumi.

Some say that Attar was killed during the Mongol invasion of Nishabur, but others tell believe he died of natural causes.

Mantiq al-Tayr is Attar's masterpiece which has 7,000 couplets narrated symbolically by birds which are on the path to God.

The hagiographer Attar has written many other



Attar's mausoleum in Nishabur

precious works, including *Tazkirat-ul Auliya*.

Attar has affected the history of spiritual ideology in Iran and the Iranian culture.

According to provincial officials, about 700,000 domestic and foreign tourists travel to Nishabur annually to visit the tomb of Attar.

'Hanging Gardens': An Iranian's Story of Siege in Syria



TEHRAN -- "Hanging Gardens" is the latest book of Iranian writer Somayyeh Alami which relates the lives of seven Syrian women under four years of siege by terrorists in the Shia town of Nubl and al-Zahra.

One of the prolific Iranian story writers during the recent years and an outstanding figure of Resistance literature, Alami was born in 1979. She studied herbal medicine, but gave up post-graduate studies in biotechnology in 2009 and started writing stories.

The shift landed her in writing, authoring and publication of several novels, a book of stories and narrations.

The writer, who stayed in Syria for nearly a year, taught narration to Syrian women, which provided her with the material to use in authoring "Hanging Gardens".

"The idea of a woman's relation with war and her role in peace has always been with me. I used to look for the status of a woman in an ideal society. In the supposed Western utopia, I only found feminist ideas embedded in the capitalist culture which have nothing to do with human values," she told ABNA news agency.

Alami recounts her formative years which shaped "Hanging Gardens".

Her childhood passed during the Iraqi war on Iran under the former Ba'athist dictatorship of Saddam Hussein.

"I was constantly subjected to my parents' trips and war conditions. My mother was working at the war logistics headquarters and I had seen her different roles in management which helped some patterns of female management take shape in my mind.

"I was convinced that there is always a close link between women and the fall of a country even if nobody talks about it. When I entered Damascus, it passed my mind to search for female voices

of the Syrian war and have them recorded."

As for the title of the book, she said, "A garden is said to a place where there are trees. Trees often have more and bigger roots than other plants. It is these roots which keep the trunk in the soil and seeds together under the ground. Trees of this garden- I mean women- who are the symbols of germination and growth themselves, have to administer the home. Of course, this title is somehow related to the stories of the region and strongly linked to the book's narrative."

Alami touched on the Syrian women whose stories are told in the book.

"These were women who had

lived under nearly ten years of a brutal multi-pronged war, and for four of these ten years, they had been completely surrounded and cut off by terrorists in a terrifying isolation, enormously concerned about the safety and well-being of their children, with their only means of sustenance being the occasional aid package which were parachuted down from the sky."

The Syrian women, she said, live in a land which was a French colony for many years, and today it shares a border with the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

"Syria's Golan Heights has been occupied by the Zionists for a long time. Palestinian refugees and immigrants have sought shelter and refuge in Syria for many years, and the two peoples have co-existed side by side peacefully. Apart from this, the two peoples have much in common culturally, and they also have a common history, since both peoples live in the land of Sham, the ancient term for Levant or Syria. Thus the two peoples are closely linked and both are part of the Resistance Front. Naturally, Syrian women and Syrian people in general have a lot to say about resisting colonialism in all its forms, and the Zionist regime in particular."

Alami underlined the vital importance of conveying the story of the resistance.

"Telling the story of the resistance of nations after they have been through wars and periods of reconstruction, has reached a climax. In the Islamic Republic of Iran this important task has been achieved, thanks to the security, power and authority of the Iranian government. But Iranian writers can take the lead when it comes to relaying the story of resistance to the world audience until local writers reach maturity and are able to accomplish this task themselves."

When writing the story of resistance, she said, a collective sense of belonging to various peoples who live in the same geography is quite palpable, and this sense of belonging helps them fight off both old and new colonialists.

"But if these stories go untold, or are not recorded, nations continually fall into traps set for them by outside colonial powers and by domestic dictators, and thus get stuck in a vicious circle and fail to make any progress.

"A nation which fails to record its own fight against colonialism will soon be brought to its knees, will quickly wither away, and be forgotten," she says.

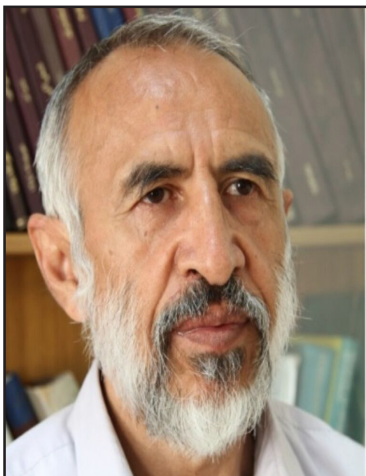
Picture of the Day



Ba-chukhe wrestling competition was held at Zeynal-Khan pitch in Esfarayen on Friday with the participation of 152 wrestlers from all over Iran.

Photo by IRNA

Prominent Professor of Shiraz University Passes Away



TEHRAN -- Professor Hashem Sharqi, one of the founders of the Ph.D. course in chemistry at Shiraz University and the perpetual face of

Fars Province, has passed away at 75.

The prominent professor has won number titles to his name such as the best scientist of the Islamic world, outstanding chemist of the country, top professor, perpetual face of Fars province, winner of the Allameh Tabatabai elite award, and the prestigious researcher and professor of Shiraz University.

Since 2002, Professor Sharqi's name has been included in the list of world scientists in the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) and is a member of the New York Academy of Sciences, the American Chemical Society, and the Iranian Chemical Society.