

# Miniatures of Iran

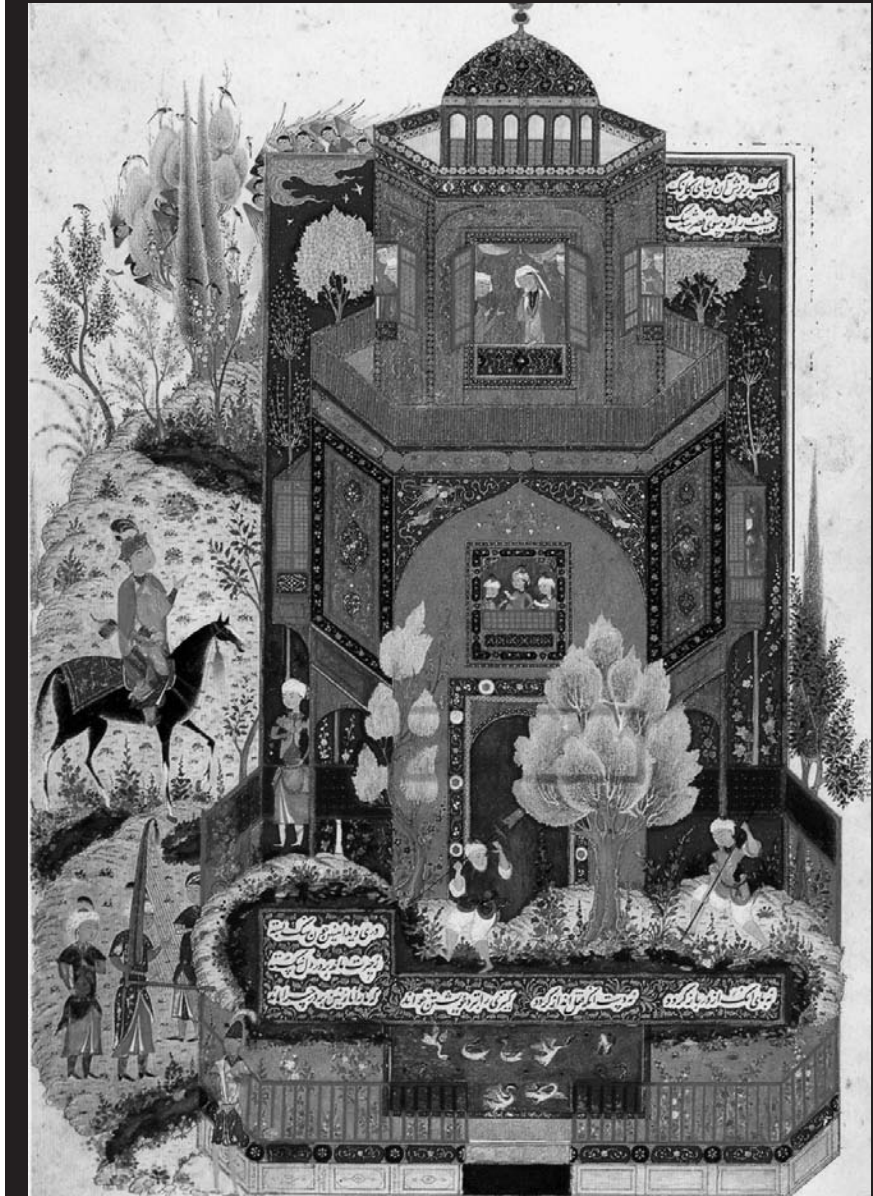
By Rahman Mehraby

Based on the figures and motifs Mani, the Iranian prophet, Painter and Calligrapher, has painted in his book in the 3rd century, he can be considered the pioneer of painting miniature. Mani introduced himself a prophet during Sassanians and presented a pictorial book called Arzhang. He had his particular style in painting characterized by detailed small figures and motifs. After Mani, there had not been found any trace of this art in any forms of art. Early Centuries of Miniature Painting in Iran

During the early post-Islam period and after the collapse of Sassanians, according to written evidences, Sassanians influences could have been observed on the paintings of 7th to 12th centuries. Of course, the influences of the Middle Asian themes and meanings were observable although biased Caliphs had prohibited human figures to be painted.

## *Seljuk Miniature Painting*

Seljuk paintings are indicative of some unified style and perception. The pictorial presentation was so strong then that started to extend beyond the geographical borders to the other nations under Seljuks'



domination. This style had two major characteristics:

1. Round full faces with tight mouths and diagonal eyes.
2. A completely contoured style in representing bodies, plants, animals and natural landscapes.

## *Ilkhanid Miniature Painting*

After the devastating invasion by Mongols, little by little, at the northwest of Iran, the Ilkhanid court promoted traditional, artistic and cultural issues. During that period

many pictorial manuscripts were created in the fields of zoology, botany and history. Various styles were created at Baghdad, Tabriz, etc which had nothing to do with the Seljuk styles.

### ***Jalayerian Miniature Painting***

Jalayerian dynasty, after Ilkhanids, promoted miniature not only in Tabriz and Baghdad (their two capitals), but also in Shiraz and other cities of Iran. The style of painting in each city was different from the other cities.

### ***Mozaffarian Miniature Paintings***

Mozaffarin dynasty was also ruling in parts of the present day Iraq and Fars province of Iran and came up with their own styles.

Therefore, after the collapse of the Seljuks, within a span of time extended to the period before Timur's invasion, miniature was flourished and many independent schools were created like Tabriz school, Baghdad school, Shiraz school and Mozaffarian School. Lots of ancient Iranian stories and poems of Ferdosy, Nezamy, Hafez, Sa'ady, Jami, etc were depicted in pictorial manuscripts in addition to the artistic books created.

### ***Timurid Miniature Painting***

The political as well as artistic center of Iran moved to the northeast as a result of Timur's invasion. Samarqand and Khorasan attracted many artists. One of the most distinguished styles triggered during that period was a combination of Jalayerian and Mozaffarian schools together with elements and details supposedly portraying traditions of the Middle Asia. So, the first

classical or official style was formed in Iranian miniature. During three and half centuries after that period, there were only some individual styles added to/combined with them.

Herat was another capital for half a century from which Herat school in miniature emerged. All calligraphers, goldsmiths, miniaturists and bookmakers of Baisongor's court were moved to Herat. They created some of the most appreciable pictorial manuscripts in the history of eastern paintings. Those miniatures were created in absolute balance of scale, composition and color selection.

Baisongory Shahnameh is a unique unparalleled masterpiece created during the same period. Thanks to Shahrokh, Timurid king, and his sons being the patrons of miniature, this art flourished in Herat, Shiraz, Baghdad, Tabriz, Samarqand and many other regions. The style of Timurid court laid a solid foundation for the next 150 years not only for Turkmen

artists of Iran, but also for Safavid and Ottoman artists.

Toward the end of Timurid period, when Sultan Hossein seized Herat, he ordered a new pictorial copy of "Zafar nameh" to be written and painted. The majority of the miniatures of that manuscript were painted by the famous Iranian miniaturist of all ages, Kamal-ed-Din Behzad. He and his contemporary artists managed to refine and perfect the classical style of Timurids. Behzad followed Herat classical school to create his best works of art.

Later, Bukhara took Herat as its first example and made copies of previous pictorial manuscripts. Bukhara school did not flourish as a new innovative school, but there were professional miniaturists creating beautiful world of colors and depicting marvelous scenes. During that period Qazvin, Esfahan, Shiraz and Tabriz were still active centers for miniaturists.

Some of the Highlights of Miniature





Painting in Iran

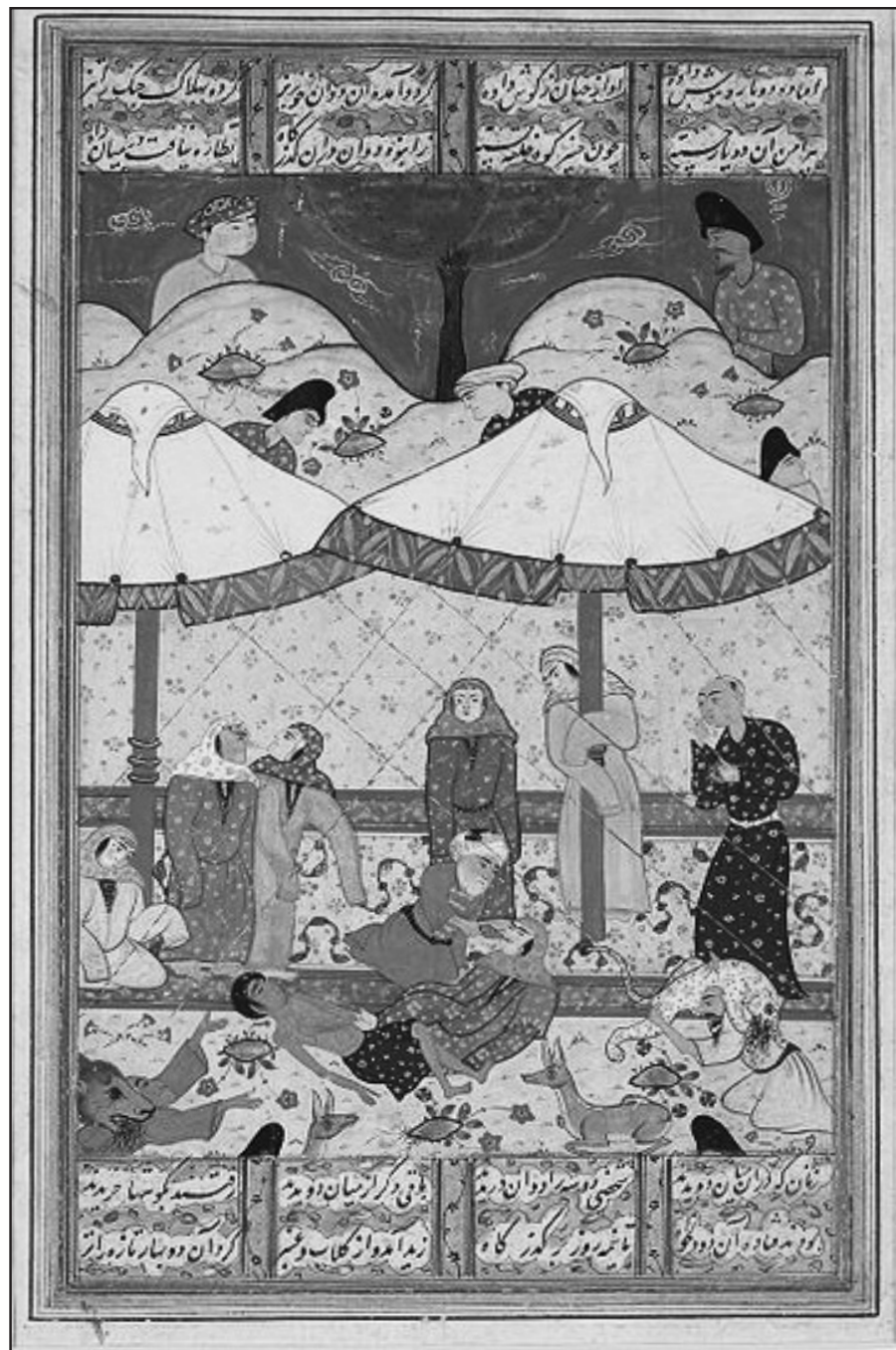
### Safavid Miniature Painting

Shah Ismail, the founder of Safavid dynasty, assigned Behzad as the head of the royal library in Tabriz. During the next king's reign, many works of art were created. A breathtaking copy of Shahnameh was painted with 250 large miniatures, Tahmasb shahnameh. Later Tahmasb stopped patronizing arts by starting to live a pious life.

Many miniaturists migrated to other countries, especially to India. Mashad and Qazvin became new center for supporting miniature. King Ismail II supported miniaturists a little more than Tahmasb. A copy of Shahnameh was created during his reign having 50 miniatures following his court's style.

Miniature remained at the same status until shah Abbas I took power and ordered many miniatures, mural paintings, etc and a lot of previous works to be restored. Miniatures also decorated a number of Safavid palaces in the capital, Esfahan. People were generally spending more money to buy works of art although they had not probably been richer than before. It, finally, resulted in the first well-established relationship between the text and pictures in classical Iranian painting. Khorasan was the second important arts center where good quality miniatures were painted in manuscripts pages.

The miniatures of Safavid palaces in Qazvin and Esfahan were generally inspired by the personal style of the most famous artist of that era, Reza Abbasy.



During the time when he was working, signing the works of art became customary.

Indian and European influences in art were welcome by the king and caused his taste to be gradually different in ordering new works. There is a great debate as to the success of Iranian artists to evolve their arts under such influence.

The opinions are quite contradictory.

Safavid period ended and the evolution of Iranian miniature failed to continue. Westernized styles started to flourish and Iranian painting entered a new era. Iranian miniature is still being painted but has lost its popularity as the only Iranian style of painting.

# Love Song

By: Forugh Farrokhzad

**T**he night is painted by your  
dream  
Your perfume fills my lungs to  
extreme

You are a feast for my eyes!  
All shapes of woe you belie

As the body of earth is washed by rain  
From my soul you cleanse all stain!

In my burning body you are a turning  
gyre  
In the shade of my eyelashes you are a  
blazing fire.

You are more verdant than a wheat field!  
More fruit than golden boughs you yield!

To the suns you open the gate  
To counteract dark doubt's spate

With you there is nothing to fear  
But the pain of joyful tear

This sad heart of mine and profuse light?  
This din of life in the abyss of blight?

The glance in your eyes is my field  
And with it my eyes are sealed

Before this I had no other image  
Or I would not but you envisage

The pain of love is a dark pain  
Going and demeaning oneself in vain

Learning against people with black sight  
Defiling oneself with the filth of spite

Finding in caresses venom of wile  
Finding villainy in friend's smile

Handing gold coins to the marauding  
band  
Getting lost in the midst of the bazaar  
land

With my soul united you will be  
From grave you will raise me

Like a star on wings decked with  
gold  
You come from a land untold.

You alleviate sorrow's pang  
Flooding my body with  
embrace's tang

You are a stream flowing onto  
my dry breast  
My bed of my veins with your  
water is blest

Within a world which on  
darkness does feed  
With every step you take I  
proceed

Underneath my skin you go!  
There like blood you flow

Burning my tresses with a fondling  
hand  
Flushing my cheeks with an urging  
demand

You are a stranger to my gown  
An acquaintance with my body's lawn

You are a shining sun that never dies  
A sun that rises in Southern skies

You are fresher than first light  
Fresher than spring, a luster sight

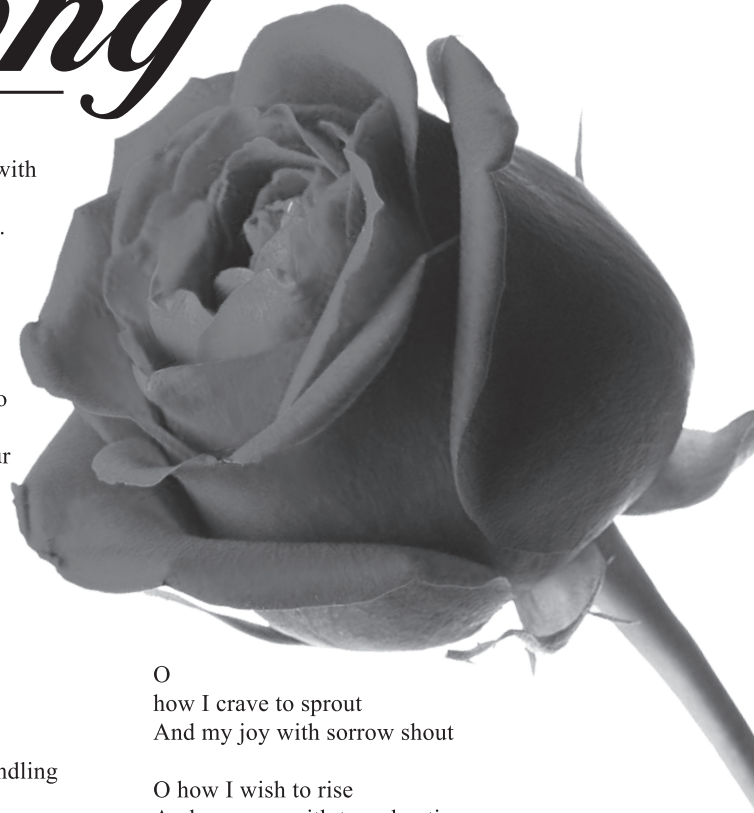
This is no longer love: this is pride  
A chandelier that in silence and  
darkness died

When love did my heart entice  
I was filled with a sense of sacrifice

This is no longer me, this is no longer  
me  
My life with my ego amounted to a null  
degree

My lips your kisses prize  
Your lips are the temple of my eyes

In me your stir a great rhapsody  
Your curves are an attire on my body



O  
how I crave to sprout  
And my joy with sorrow shout

O how I wish to rise  
And my eyes with tears baptize

This forlorn heart of mine and incense  
perfume?  
The music of harp and lyre in a prayer  
room?

This void and these flights?  
These songs and these silent nights?

Your glance is a wondrous lullaby  
Cradling restless babes thereby

Your breath is a transcendental breeze  
Washing off me tremors of unease

Finding in my morrows a place to sleep  
Permeating my world deep and deep

In me the passion for poetry you inspire  
Over my lays you cast instant fire

You kindled my passionate desire  
Thus setting my poems afire.

*Forugh Farrokhzad, Another Birth,  
Selected Poems Translated by Ismaili Salami  
Zanbankadeh Publication Modern Persian  
Poetry Page 20 ISBN: 964-6117-36-8*