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I ask the man who has almost singlehandedly re-awakened Western interest in the ancient tradition of Sufism whether Sufis follow a special diet.

Three hours of talking with Shah and a generous sample of his writing should have taught me that Sufis concern themselves with internal matters, not external ones, and that a prime Sufi objective is to rid people of just the kind of preconceived notions and limited thinking I had just displayed. I should also know that ill-informed questions make Shah's beard bristle.

"A Sufi lifestyle, is it?" he asks, spacing the words out evenly for emphasis. "No, my friend, not a bit of it. That's what people crave. That's what they demand. Recently another man came to interview me, and his first question was, 'What do Sufis eat? You're vegetarians, of course.' 'No,' I said. 'You amaze me!' he said.

"I said to him, 'Now if I can be of any use to you, write that down and see what it means. What it means is that you have been able to elicit from me a reaction which helps you to describe yourself. 'You amaze me.' Why do I amaze you? I amaze because you think that all metaphysicians must be vegetarians. Does that tell you anything about me? No. It tells you things about yourself! Now when are you going to get out of that, and learn things about yourself, and not think that you're learning things about other people?'"

Shah leans forward, gesturing with the knife and fork.

"We are not totemists who eat brown rice and consult the *I Ching*. That is not the Sufi at all, my friend. We have other things to do than have a lifestyle. We are getting on with our thing. And our thing does not impose on us the sort of restrictions which other people use as a substitute for getting on with their

Photographs by Jean-Claude Lejeune

## Grand Sheikh of the Sufis

by EDWIN KIESTER, JR.

thing. You can either do something, or you can pretend to be doing something.

"Western society seems to have exhausted all its investigative potential. It is largely composed of cul-de-sacs. One cul-de-sac is marked Lifestyle; one is marked Vegetarianism, and so on. People want to know about the Sufis in terms of what limitations they observe. 'What do you eat for breakfast?' 'How many pairs of socks do you wear?'"

"What is the relevance of such questions? Why don't they ask something about what I am doing? One of our traditional functions has been to point out the limitations other people have been putting on themselves, not to impose limitations on other people. That's what the gurus do. We seek to expand, increase vision, deepen perception. You don't live by decreasing these qualities.

"That's why you don't find any lifestyle with us, brother. There's no eating of brown rice, and no muttering of Sanskrit mantras in our way."

Over the past 15 years, Sayyed Idries Shah, 53, the grand sheikh of the Sufis and a lineal descendant of the prophet Mohammed, has had myriad opportunities to learn how little the West knows about Sufism—and how much it yearns to know. Since his book *The Sufis* was published in 1963, the lean, intense, Afghan-born prince has been propelled into international celebrity, sought on lecture platforms all over the world. Twenty more books have followed the first, and all have been bought up eagerly; Sufi "study circles" have proliferated (often without Shah's blessing) across the United States and Europe; courses in Sufism are the "in" thing at colleges and universities; Sufi theories

of learning have influenced educational institutions everywhere. Shah himself has won a host of literary prizes and recently was the subject of a *festschrift*, a collection of published commentaries by 24 renowned scholars discussing his work—an honor usually reserved for a professor emeritus of 70 who has been tending his scholarly vineyard for 50 years. One small sample of Shah's impact can be seen in his recent appearance at a U.S. seminar sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Human Knowledge. Twelve hundred persons turned out to hear him, at \$65 a pop.

Ironically, the "product" Shah is "peddling"—to use his term—is anything but new. The Sufis are often called "Muslim mystics," but their roots go much deeper than Islam. In that cradle of the world's great religions, the Middle East, Sufi influence has been traced back to the second century A.C. and is said to have crossfertilized Hinduism, Christianity and Judaism along with the followers of Mohammed. In the golden days of the caliphs, from A.D. 800 to 1800, many of the world's great writers and thinkers were Sufis. They included Omar Khayyam and Jala ed-Din Rumi, considered one of the titans of world literature; long before Einstein and Darwin, Sufis theorized that time and space were identical and that humans had ascended from lower animals. One of the West's own great minds was a Sufi. The Franciscan Roger Bacon, considered the originator of modern scientific thought, studied with the Sufis in Saracen Spain. It was for learning their "black arts" that he ran afoul of ecclesiastical authority.

Explaining Sufism to a word-oriented, linear-thinking Westerner is difficult even for an articulate and insightful man such as Shah. "He who tastes not, knows not," he says, quoting Jala ed-Din Rumi. Although there are said to be five million Sufis, mostly affiliated with established sects, Shah says that Sufism is "not a religion but a body of knowledge"; the sects represent a "deterioration" or "cultural elaboration of the original internal teaching." Sufism has no rituals, no holy city and no ecclesiastical hierarchy. Although Shah carries the title grand sheikh, all Sufis are considered equal. Poet Robert Graves, a Shah admirer, compares him to a "fugleman," which Graves defines as an old army term for the soldier who stood before a company on the parade ground and served as the exemplar in arms drill. Sufis do not even call themselves Sufis, which is a nickname akin to Quakers. They use the terms *We friends* or *Our people*.

Genuine Sufism is inward, concern-

### PROFILE

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24 Grand Sheikh of the Sufis by Edwin Kiester, Jr. Idries Shah, mystic, metaphysician and lineal descendant of the prophet Mohammed, turns his eyes to the West.

**"If you really want to see Shah's beard bristle, suggest that Sufism is part of the yoga-and-transcendental-meditation craze."**

ing itself with "true reality—what exists beyond what is observed." Like peeling an onion, Sufism tries to strip away the outer layers of limited thinking, misconception and social conditioning to disclose the kernel that lies beneath—that unity of existence that Shah calls "the essence of all religion." Sufism's goal is to reorganize human mentation so that it is more sensitive to things that are there anyway—"We say in Sufism that exclusion is just as important as inclusion," Shah says. You can gain Sufi truths from other people and by intuition, insight, folk wisdom and experience. Long before the work on brain hemispheres of Dr. Robert E. Ornstein, the Sufis knew that part of the brain learned through words arranged in sequence and the other part by hunches and seeing the whole situation at once.

Of course, over the past two decades, literally dozens of mystical, quasi-mystical and semimystical Eastern sects have invaded the West. If you really want to see Shah's beard bristle, suggest that Sufism is part of the yoga-and-transcendental-meditation craze. "That gray area of mumbo jumbo and gurus and mantras," he says, bitingly. "It has little connection with any tradition except the circus. In Eastern countries like India that is fairly well understood. Only the 'new boys' profess to see anything significant in the phenomenon. But here the carnival has taken over. We have a grotesque of the true Indian guru." He also has a few disparaging words for Zen. "No Sufi would ever think it important to think of a phrase like, 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?' He would regard it as training for automatism. You would obsess people with one hand." The Sufi has nothing in common, either, with groups that seek to withdraw from the world, "Be in the world, but not of it," is the Sufi watchword.

When I first met Shah, he struck me as anything but the stereotype of the Eastern holy man. He greeted me in a red turtleneck sweater, glen-plaid slacks, magenta socks and calfskin sandals. He speaks Oxford-accented English with a rich vocabulary and a range of expression that is stunning in its scope; he is the only man I ever

heard use the word *phantasmagoria* in casual conversation. As his books show, he is a gifted storyteller; but in person, his tales are even more compelling, because he acts out all the parts and mimics all the voices. Once, telling of an encounter with a Nubian student from the Sudan during a lecture, he leaped to his feet, put his hand on top of his head to represent a Nubian topknot and dropped his voice a full octave to impersonate the man's basso.

He also leads the life of a country squire. The Shah home, Langton House at Langton Green, a tiny hamlet nestled into the Kentish countryside southeast of Tunbridge Wells, once belonged to Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement. A rambling, whitewashed, green-shuttered mansion, it is surrounded by 50 acres of gardens and pastureland and by the village green. Inside, like Shah himself, it is a subtle blend of East and West. Oriental carpets, hammered brass trays and a children's peacock swing designed by Shah's wife contrast with a massive desk Shah picked up in a junk shop and an IBM Selectric typewriter.

When asked how long he had kept a foot in both Eastern and Western worlds, he said, "All my life." Although a resident of Britain for many years and a British subject, he was born in the East and groomed from boyhood for his eventual role of building bridges between cultures. The eldest son of the late Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah, one of the legendary figures of contemporary Middle Eastern history, he was born near Simla in the Himalayas and was raised in Afghanistan, India and Saudi Arabia, "thus being exposed to three of the five main cultural traditions of the Middle East." (The other two are Persian and Turkish.) He never attended school in the formal sense. "I was educated by the old oriental tradition that if I needed to learn something, someone was procured to teach it to me," he recalls. However, his father insisted that he learn firsthand about the world. The young prince worked a year as a laborer on a farm and served a hitch in the Afghan army.

As descendants of Mohammed through the prophet's eldest son, the family carries considerable prestige through

the Middle East. Their influence transcends national boundaries and mere sectarian lines. Shah's father served as an unofficial adviser to several Middle Eastern countries, and often carried out diplomatic missions between East and West. Often the young Shah accompanied him, gaining access to the highest ruling and spiritual levels in his part of the world. The experience stood him in good stead. Today, one of the little-known and little-discussed aspects of his life is to serve as adviser to several African and Asian governments.

As Shah was growing up, he also adhered to the Sufi stricture that every Sufi must earn his own way. "We have a sense of priorities," Shah says. "To belong to the human community is essential. We say, 'If you cannot earn your livelihood, go out and learn how and then become a Sufi.'" Shah's education had given him a thorough grounding in literature, history and economics but no profession; he chose to enter the world of business and finance. He established three successful electronics firms, a carpet factory and a publishing house and still serves as chairperson of each. This record also gave him entree to London financial and social circles. "Many of my sober business acquaintances would never believe I am to be bracketed with what they consider the guru phenomenon," he says, laughing. "They know me too well to believe that."

As Shah poured a cup of tea from a glittering heirloom tea service, I asked him how the campaign to familiarize the West with Sufi principles was faring. He lit one of his favorite small cigars before responding.

"The people of the West are starving in the midst of plenty," he began. "They have made all these discoveries about human behavior but they have not related them to their own behavior. And until they integrate this knowledge, I don't know if we can help them. It may be 300 years before they have properly absorbed this knowledge."

"People can learn from one another which attitudes aren't scientific, which attitudes don't work. It's just a question of absorption. It's no use just reading about behavior in a paperback and then throwing it away and reaching

for the next paperback, or reading to answer questions in an examination, or to torture your friends with a few gimmicks, like 'You have an Oedipus complex' or 'That's a defense mechanism.'

"The potential is there," he continued. "There's an old Sufi story that's relevant to that. An old traditional Sufi used to dress his disciples in patchwork cloaks and have them carry a beggar's bowl and repeat certain formulae in order to concentrate their minds. He recommended that they eat mulberries off a certain tree.

"One day somebody said to him, 'Suppose you went to a country where they didn't have patchwork, and you couldn't dress your disciples in cloaks. Suppose the seed coconut from which beggars' bowls are traditionally made was not available. Suppose mulberries were considered unlucky and suppose these repetitions which you require were considered socially undesirable. What would you do under those circumstances?' And he said, 'Ah, well, if

sions in order to do anything at all. For example, say that you—or the community at large, or Western society—concludes that contemporary physics shows that it is unlikely or impossible that one will be able to exceed a certain velocity of travel in space, so that our galaxy is closed to us. And as we want to go farther there must be some other way discovered in order to slip through the imprisonment of these dimensions of time and space.

routes, but you would be able to address the same sort of problem.

"That's what I'm interested in doing in the West," he concluded. "Or rather, in the modern Western culture that now covers so much of the world that people of my generation in the Middle East are in fact often indistinguishable from Europeans."

According to Shah, he had dabbled in writing ever since his youth and, in fact, had produced a widely acclaimed



At right, Shah and one of his daughters on the grounds of Langton House. Below, Shah surrounded by marionettes of the prominent characters in Sufi tales.



I were under those circumstances, I would have to get myself a totally different kind of disciple.'

"The challenge now is embodied in the Sufi tradition that you must teach people in the way that they can learn. The West has the requirements to learn, but nontraditional approaches—that is, nonoriental approaches—must be made.

"You have to come to certain conclu-

"You, or your society, would have arrived at that conclusion through your investigations into the physical sciences. An Oriental might have arrived at an identical conclusion by some other route. But you two would be in precisely the same posture if you decided to start your further investigation by some metaphysical method or non-material method. You'd have arrived at the same jumpoff point by different

book, *Destination Mecca*, in 1957; but the idea of a book on the Sufis did not take flower until he was past 40. Graves was one of those who encouraged him to "write for the natural Sufis everywhere," but, Shah says modestly, "I did not yet feel I had the proper literary skills." In addition, several other developments were necessary before the West was ready for a book on Eastern mysticism. The East had to live down the Rudyard Kipling view of mystics as freaky savages who slept on nails and charmed cobras; and the West had to accept that human beings were conditioned into limited ways of thinking that obscured their humanity within, rather than creatures of free will. Shah places the Korean War as a landmark. Discovering that American fliers could be "conditioned in reverse" by their captors, American social scientists were forced to acknowledge and to study the whole conditioning process. This development, Shah believes, not only explains B.F. Skinner but the revival of Pavlov. "If I had discussed how man has been conditioned away from his origins before 1950," Shah says, "I would simply have been put into the same box with Pavlov."

A more recent impetus was given Sufism by Ornstein's work into the bilateral specialization of the brain. For

the first time, science supported the Sufi view that learning could be achieved both sequentially and holistically.

"After Ornstein's work, we were able to introduce what we were saying in a framework not available before, because there was no scientific word for it," Shah says. "Previously we had to say that our way was not scientific, but artistic—and those words were much too loaded. Now we can talk about the left brain and the right brain and it is respectable, in the sense that people will listen to it.

"It also helps us to explain by analogies derived from Ornstein's work what happens to human thinking systems once rooted in human beings and the human community and how our way differs from—and resembles—other ways of thinking. It can be put down almost diagrammatically, and it does help a person looking into it to understand: whatever is this man talking about? Where does he place himself or what he is saying in the pattern of human thought?"

When Shah began to write, he reached back into his childhood and brought

*At right, Shah and his daughter studying Persian books. Below, performing the duties of country squire, Shah oversees the gardener's work in the hot house.*

pointed, the now-famous tales are interspersed in Shah's books with his own reflections and gathered into anthologies of their own. Many of them concern Mulla (Master) Nasrudin, a kind of Middle Eastern Everyman who is sometimes court jester, sometimes cracker-barrel philosopher, sometimes village sage and sometimes buffoon. He combines native shrewdness and insight in a way that helps him see to the heart of a situation that his more analytical "betters" cannot. He also illustrates,

Another tale recalls the time Nasrudin went into the shop of a man who sold all kinds of miscellaneous things.

"Have you leather?" Nasrudin asked.

"Yes."

"And nails?"

"Yes."

"And dye?"

"Yes."

"Then why don't you make yourself a pair of boots?"

Once Nasrudin was called upon to preach a sermon. From the pulpit, he



forth literally hundreds of simple folktales he had learned from servants, from village storytellers, from Persian literature and "just out of the air." (In fact, they are so commonplace that one Turkish publisher refused to publish one of Shah's collections, declaring, "It is unbelievable to me that anyone could make a book of nothing more than he could collect from the lips of peasants while touring the villages of Anatolia.") Some witty, some epigrammatic, some

in exaggerated form, the kind of fallacious thinking that hobbles the more sophisticated.

When asked to tell some of his favorite Nasrudin stories and to explain their role in Sufism, he offered several:

"Nasrudin was throwing handfuls of bread all round his house. 'What are you doing?' someone asked.

"'Keeping the tigers away.'

"'But there are no tigers around here.'

"'Exactly. Effective, isn't it?'"

asked the congregation: "Do you know what I am going to preach about?"

"No," they replied.

"In that case," he said, "it would take too long to explain." And he went home.

Next day he ascended the pulpit and asked the same question.

"Yes," the people said this time, determined to put him on the spot.

"In that case," said Nasrudin, "there is no need for me to say more." And he went home.

Yet again the following day he put the same question. "Do you know what I am going to preach about?"

But now the congregation was ready to corner him. "Some of us do and some of us don't," they answered.

"In that case," said Nasrudin, "let those who know tell those who don't."

Although each of these tales has a punchline, Shah explained, it also contains a teaching moral and can be examined on many levels for illumination of human behavior. Nasrudin's sermon, for example, depicts the Sufi belief that there can be no teaching to those completely ignorant, none to those who profess to know all the answers and that the best teaching method is when one who has learned by experience teaches another.

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books with his own reflections.”**

Shah considers the tales an ideal way to communicate with the West. “One way we use them is as a sort of a test,” he said. “For instance, we often use the old Sufi tale of the sands. A little river has to cross a desert, you see, and it runs into the sand. It finds it’s becoming a marsh. So the wind says to it, ‘Come with me and I will carry you over the desert.’ But the little river says, ‘No, no, I can’t! I’ll lose my identity! I refuse to be turned into water vapor!’ So the wind says, ‘Well, all right. But look at you. You’re becoming a marsh. You have to decide whether you wish to become a marsh or become water vapor.’ So after a great deal of consideration the river finally yields up to the wind, which carries it into the high mountains and drops it in the form of rain, whereafter it continues as a river.

“Now when you tell this tale, some people—crude, barbaric types—see it as a sort of commercial. The guru is asking his disciples to surrender themselves to him and he will carry them safely over the marsh, which is death or some other condition in which they are going to stagnate or putrefy. Other people react in a quite different way. They say, ‘Oh, isn’t that a beautiful story!’ And they talk about nature and the transposition of substances and ecology and so on.

“People who don’t react in either of these ways can then use the story for further training of their hemispheres, as it were. They don’t have the hangup that they think you are trying to convince them of something, or that they desperately want to be convinced.

“What makes it very difficult in dealing with these stories is that people want to know, ‘Is it a test or is it a teaching?’ and ‘How am I supposed to react to it?’ ‘At what point does it become perceptible to me what it really means?’ Which is rather like saying, ‘Is a house for eating in or sleeping in or blowing up?’ It’s all those things. But the so-called linear mind always wants you to ‘get to the point.’ A great deal of Sufism involves learning not in the sequence the Western mind expects to learn it. That is not acceptable to the sequential thinker who is incapable of thinking in any other way.”

The value of these tales is often mis-

understood, Shah said. Like Christ’s parables, they are designed to enable the listener to hold in his mind a kind of structure to which he can relate philosophical or other considerations. “That’s why there are two men and a dancing bear, or two mysterious dervishes,” Shah says. Because the stories are often funny, they are regarded as slight or insignificant by scholars—“It is not my discovery alone that academics do not encourage humor in what they take to be serious areas.” In fact, they are the very core of Sufi teaching.

“The Sufi people,” Shah explains, “have been held in very great esteem while armed with these stories and using them all the time for nearly a thousand years. They have built them into some of the great classics of the East. They are universally revered as classics. Some of these people have been people of great gravity, great mystical attainments and great discoverers of scientific things—the very flower of various civilizations. It hardly seems likely when you approach it rationally that such people would have gone to such lengths to prepare and maintain these stories, even building them into major facets of their thought, if they were a sideline, something old men in their dotage mumbled to each other. The stories are an integral part of Sufi teaching. If the Sufis are to be respected—as they enormously are—then surely one of their major teaching instruments must be given some consideration in the light of their status and achievements.”

The role of the teacher in Sufism is also often misinterpreted. “There is no Sufism without a teacher,” Shah has written. But the teaching role is quite different from that of the gurus in other sects, whose antics Shah dismisses as filled with “chanting, ritual and phantasmagoria.” “A teacher is someone who is able to connect instructionally with you,” Shah says. “He need not be physically present. You don’t even have to know him. He doesn’t have to have a white beard and sandals. In a sense, a teacher need not even be a person.

“I was once walking with a group of people including a spiritual teacher, and someone asked him, ‘What is a

guru?’ And he pointed to a stone in the road and said, ‘Look. If I fall over that stone and I learn from that event to look where I’m going, that stone is my guru.’ A guru is an instrument. The teaching role should be an instrument, not an opportunity for theater, not a source of self-gratification. A Sufi teacher does what he can to produce what he has to. He teaches what he can in a way students can learn it.

“We see teaching as a system of interaction. In the ordinary course of events, people persist in certain courses to achieve something. Sometimes they learn by experience that they can’t do it. Say, climbing a wall. They find they can’t climb the wall, so they have to adjust. Should I get a ladder? Is it worth climbing? Are there other ways to get over it? By the interplay of themselves and the wall and their knowledge and experience, they learn.

“A lot of people in esoteric circles, that is, philosophical and psychological circles, ignore this fact. They tend to look for a sort of Eureka! system, a golden key. They look at our stories, for example, for what mysterious depths and teachings are in them, or for what golden key they might be able to worry out of them, in spite of the fact that the stories themselves often illustrate the interplay between the people and their experience and the teacher or the circumstances, which is very similar to the person trying to climb the wall.

“There’s an old Sufi story about a young man who set off to receive illumination from an old teacher who lived in a remote cave on the top of a mountain. He was an old man with a long white beard dressed in a white shroud, a sort of hermit. When the young man, after great privation and enormous difficulties, reached that cave and almost collapsed in front of him, he said, ‘I have come all this way, and had all this trouble, and I want you to teach me illumination.’ But the old man said, ‘Certainly not.’ The young fellow begged and begged, but the old man simply said, ‘No, I can’t teach you that.’ Finally the old man said, ‘Go.’

“So the young man went back down the mountain track. Almost at the bottom, he looked back and saw a white figure and he realized that the old man

**"If there were one goal Shah could wish for the West, it would be education for its children on the Eastern model."**

was beckoning to him! So he made his way back up, thinking, 'Ah, he's going to teach me, after all,' and so he went up and up until he arrived back outside the cave. The old man was sitting there and he pointed his finger at the young man, and said, 'And another thing, Don't you ever come back, bothering me like that again!'

"Now that's a joke, a sort of shaggy-dog story, but the teaching moral is that the young man was treating the old man like an employee. He had gone all that way, but he was acting like the old man was a machine—you put something in, and got something out. He said, 'Teach me to be illuminated.' He did not say, 'I want to learn whatever you have to teach me.' Teaching, you see, is a matter of interchange between a willing learner and a willing teacher.

"There is another story which illustrates how one must learn by indirect methods. There was a merchant in Persia who was to travel to India. Before he left, he said to his pet parrot, 'I am going to India and I may see some of your relatives there. Is there any message which you wish me to convey to them?' The parrot thought and then he said, 'Tell them that I am well, but that I live in a cage in a house.'

"When the merchant returned, the parrot said, 'Did you see my relatives?' And the merchant replied, 'I did, but I am afraid they are not well. When I gave one of them your message, he collapsed and fell to the ground.' When the merchant said this, the parrot also collapsed and fell to the floor of the cage. Whereupon the merchant in great alarm picked up the bird and carried him to the window to get air. The parrot immediately recovered, flew out the window and escaped.

"You see, it is a model of indirect learning. The message that was communicated to the parrot was, 'Collapse and pretend to be dead, and you can escape.' There are other messages within it. I was told this story recently by a person who was studying with a professed Sufi teacher. He asked me the meaning of the story. I usually dislike to discuss such meanings, preferring that each person discover them for himself. In that case, it seemed to me the meaning was clear. 'Your teacher may

have to do something to you to release you from bondage to him.'

As in yoga, the Sufis believe there are internal "centers of perception" that can be utilized to help heighten the powers of the mind. There are five such "purity spots" that do not have a physical location in the sense of acupuncture points but that can be visualized for the purpose of transcending normal receptivity. Through a series of concentration exercises, a Sufi may be able to fix his attention on these spots as a means of enabling the mind to move to a higher plane. "But these cannot be attempted by anybody," Shah says. "This is the method of which there is 1 percent operation, and 99 percent preparation. It is one of the most advanced of all techniques. It could take you 30 years to get to the point where you could do it and it might be over in 30 minutes.

"It's like the simple dervish dance. It's an incredibly sophisticated instrument which can only happen at certain times and under certain circumstances. To try to make it theater, as it is sometimes done, is itself diagnostic of the inability of the person to understand its role. It disables him completely from what is happening."

For Shah, the task of bringing the Sufi message to the West remains formidable. All too many presumably intelligent persons remain defensive about their thought processes, unwilling to reexamine themselves to see if a situation might be viewed in a different way. "All we really ask is that they detach themselves from their sophisticated analytical minds for just a second," Shah says. "We're not going to cripple them, we're not going to harm them, we just ask them to let go. After all, if you're listening to music, you're not constantly tearing it apart in your mind. It's a protected situation. The same with our materials. If you don't try to be too clever and think about what they might mean, instead of what they must mean, you can gain something from them. It's not necessary to be perfectly secure in order to learn. In fact, the 'secure' people seemed to be the most nervous."

Shah also sees a tendency for would-be Sufis in the United States and Britain to flock to the organized sects that he

classifies as "deteriorations." "There seems to be such a craving for order, discipline, totalitarianism," he says. "It's the product of a tragic weakness. People don't have any sense of personal integrity, in the sense that they don't feel like they're people except by allegiance to some structure." He also deplores the fact that many new Sufis have become fanatic about their discovery. "They turn up on my doorstep at 3 A.M.," he says. "The other day a woman came here and said she had been reading Jala ed-Din Rumi. 'He has led me to your door. Give me a task. Order me what you will,' she said. I said, 'I order you to stop reading Jala ed-Din Rumi at all costs.' She said, 'How can I throw away the very thing that brought me to you?' And I said, 'If you came on a donkey, you would leave it at the door. You wouldn't ride it into the living room.' She had missed the central point of Sufism, which is to learn to tell one thing from another."

If there were a single goal that Shah could wish for the West, it would be better education for its children, on the Eastern model. Western education, he says, is negative in that it teaches children to follow models rather than develop themselves. "Western culture is pessimistic," he said, "but it should leave the door open for possible positive action by the child. It should give him sufficient nutrition that he might develop a positive attitude toward life." In Central Asia, children are given stories that illustrate behavior that they are to emulate.

"I would never bring my children up in the Western way," says Shah, the island of the East in the world of the West. "Luckily I can insulate my children from that world. By a mixture of luck and thought, I have been able to bring their environment here. We put into their lives the intake of Central Asian stories and things derived from the Central Asian culture, they speak oriental languages, and they have grown up with every indication that they are like their cousins.

"Children—and adults—must have something to reach back into. They must have a cultural endowment. That's what we give our children and that's what our way gives to humanity." ■