CULTURAL CONFLICT BETWEEN

THE WEST AND IRAN

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1. INTRODUCTION

Differences between cultures exist, and these differences can cause conflict(s). Current events in Iran bring about many questions that why the Iranian people who benefited from Western technology and science, showed great hostility and resistance towards the West.

This hostility and resistance was seen by the majority of the Western people and the media as a result of "rapid modernization". It was seen as the people's rejection of modern science and technology, as a proof of their backwardness. But if we look at literature written about the history of Iranian relations with some Western countries, the Iranian cultural values, and the Iranian views about Western culture, we realize that the resistance is a reaction towards the Western cultural domination upon the Iranian society. It also shows the powerful desire to eliminate the long standing sense of humiliation, and the need for independence and ideological support of Islam in order to clarify their own identity.

To understand the reasons for the reaction, here, the underlying base of Iranian values, the relationship with the West, and some relevant Iranian views will be examined.

2. UNDERLYING BASE OF IRANIAN VALUES

People are the offspring of their history, and their identity is a collection of characteristics and qualities which are taken from their past. Any present nation was formed from the many upward and downward swing of faith in time and from the many changes that took place, either by force or by an ultimate acceptance, over the years. To understand any society at

the present time and to know its people's mentality, their states of mind and cultural values, one needs to know some historical trend of that society. Knowing some facts about Iranian past history and the religions that were dominant, helps one to understand their actions and reactions towards events and other people at present time.

2.1 Some historical background

Iran has a national roots going back over 2500 years to when the Persian empire, under kings Cyrus, Darius and Xerxès, extended from the Nile to the Indus river.

Iran's geographical position as a crossroad for trades and cultures between Europe and the Far East has had a direct bearing on her history. Although its location made the country a bridge for communication between West and East and promoted cultural interaction, it also made the country the scene of many invasions. For over 25 centuries the country was subject to more than 35 invasions which resulted each time in its downfall. These invasions are the cause of the unique blend of peoples, cultures, langua-ges and religions in Iran today. Arasteh (1970, p. 2) states that : "the various groups inha-biting Iran today are in many cases the descen-dants of the invaders who came to conquer, but who remained and became assimilated in part or in whole".

In all, over these 25 centuries, Iran was ruled by one dynasty after another. A small segment of the upper class of society, composed of nobles, land owners and later on the clergy which, headed by a despot divine king, had absolute control over the people. They had all the wealth and all the privileges. The social structure and social relations could only be

inherited within the rich families. The majority of the people were deprived of all rights and privileges and had a subservient position in the society. Injustice and oppression of the common people were practiced throughout history. This situation created a sense of helplessness among the common people and resulted in their resorting to the supernatural for help, or in their submission to fate.

The invasion of the country by many forces and the different hardship that people had to deal with as a result of these invasions also brought a sense of instability and insecurity. This resulted in a conservative attitude towards newcomers and their cultures, and people became more attached to their traditions and retained them throughout history.

It is believed that Iranians were able to keep their own culture and language alive and managed to assimilate the cultures of foreign invaders. However, Tabari (1969) and Wilber (1975) state that the invasion of the country by Arabs in the 7th century, who introduced the religion of Islam into the country, was a turning point in Iranian history. It transformed the quality of social order, moral and spiritual structure and the foundation of the Iranian society.

2.2 Major religions

Throughout Iran's long history and up to the present day, the lives of people have been directed by the religions which where dominant at the time. These religions and their ethics and morals were the base of the social life and behaviour of the people. They affected all aspects of their lives. In some periods, the state was dominant by the religion, as in time of the Sassanid (3rd century), the Safavid

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- (15th century), and at present time since 1978 Islamic Revolution.

- The major religions appearing in Iran were Zoroastrianism and Islam.

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is the ancient religion of Iran. It was founded around 600 B.C. by Zoroaster the prophet. Fashahi (1975) states, the religion was concerned with the social welfare of the community and stressed individual responsibi- lity towards the welfare of the community. In order to unite the people, the prophet introdu- ced monotheism in place of polytheism and nature worshipping.

The religion was based on a highly abstract theology concerning a dualistic concept of the universe. The prophet claimed that the universe is based upon the two forces : Good and Evil or light and darkness. These two forces are cons- tantly in struggle. The "goods" are directed by Ahura Mazda and the "evils" by Ahriman. He proclaimed that Ahura Mazda was the paramount deity and the creator of man. The qualities of wisdom, goodness, purity and light were attri- buted by him to Ahura Mazda. The archangels, named for the virtues of righteousness, good mind, dominion, integrity, immortality and devotion were also on the side of Ahura Mazda, while falsehood, wrath, greed and impurity were on the side of Ahriman (Smith 1971).

According to Zoroaster, the struggle between the two forces, one for truth and righteous- ness, and the other falsehood and wickedness, had for battleground the inner world of man. In this constant mortal conflict, man has to choose to resist or yield to the temptations of Ahriman and make his moral choices between the

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spirits of good and evil. It was only by choosing the spirit then, which is righteousness, that man can secure his mortal life.

Zoroaster preached that if man flees to Ahura Mazda and seeks his protection, Ahura will strengthen him to fight against evil and guide him towards righteousness. To do good, and to resist and fight against evil is an ethical necessity, and man's first task is to fight temptation and conquer it. In this religion the constant ideal is good human conduct based on the principle of "good thoughts, good words and good deeds". Zoroaster preached a practical morality which expected each individual to fight for truth against darkness and lies. According to Zoroaster the struggle between good and evil forces will continue until at last mankind will crush and defeat the evil. Evil and wickedness will vanish and the world will be morally perfect (Dahalla 1922).

Zoroastrian view of life.
Zoroaster has an optimistic view of life and to him life was worth living. Long and happy life was one of the major theme of his prayers. The world is seen as full of imperfection, but it is man who through his struggles, makes the world perfect. Every victory over physical forces, every single reform in social life and every step in the moral advancement of man, weakens these imperfections. Since the struggle between good and evil forces is the basic principle, to live, therefore, is to struggle. The heavenly and earthy life is a result of the ongoing warfare between good and evil. Life persists only because of the constant activity of these two opposing forces. This combative view of life led to a specific way of thinking and directed the behaviour of the people towards specific virtues. Dahalla (1922) states that in such a system of thought which the

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basic principle is struggle, courage, manliness, self-improvement, diligence, justice and truthfulness would naturally become primary virtues.

The religion highly valued agriculture and considered it as a holy work. Water, air, fire and earth were the sacred elements and polluting these elements was prohibited. Although the religion was based on the concept of dual forces, it was basically monotheistic, because of the belief in the superiority of the Ahura Mazda. It had a Semitic idea of some kind of survival after death, which developed into a belief in immortality (Zaryab 1972).

The teaching of Zoroaster, which he claimed to have received from Ahura Mazda by divine inspiration, were collected in the sacred book of Avesta, which has survived to our times in part only. The religion which was the official religion of the Sassanid dynasty, was replaced by Islam during the 7th century. The Zoroastrian religion, during the Sassanid dynasty, was faced with two strong religions which were drived from its own doctrines. These two were Manicheism and Mazdakism.

Manicheism

Mani, the founder of Manicheism in the 3rd century A.D., attempted to reform Zoroastrianism. The religion he introduced was based on the belief in two primeval and eternal principles, light and darkness - which are sometimes expressed as spirit and matter. It retained the principle of opposing forces of good and evil, of light and dark, and it taught that man must free his own soul by asceticism and denial of appetites of the flesh (Wilber 1975).

According to the religion, the spirit of man is light and his body darkness. The emancipation

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of the soul from the body was the whole center
of the religion. In the fight between light and
darkness, Mani believed that the darkness
dominates the light and he saw man as the
creator of the power of darkness. This pessi-
mism led to the development of the gnostic
cult. He preached that man is born of God, but,
because of his ignorance, a layer of dust
covers his true personality. Man has the abi-
lity to remove the dust and recover his authen-
tic being. However, since man is ignorant, and
the creator of darkness, he needs a guide to
help him to find his true being and free him-
self from the evil and the corruption which
belong to darkness. In order to free himself
from darkness, man must reject worldly mate-
rials, he preached. The religion basically
consisted of a gnostic doctrine which was
deeply and inherently pessimistic. It is
believed that the religion was a way of pro-
testing and expressing the privations and
suffering of the masses under the Sassanid
dynasty. It certainly has a social and econo-
mical basis, and since its ideas were against
the rulers of the country, Mani was executed by
one of the Sassanid king.

Mazdakism
Mazdak, a priest, proclaimed himself a prophet
in the late 5th century. Although the religion
was drived from manicheism, the principle of
good and evil was seen in a more materialistic
manner. While the religion retained the concept
of the conflict between light and darkness, it
saw the light as a base, which is aware and has
voluntary and determined movement. Mazdak
propounded an egalitarian view of society,
which called for equality in the distribution
of goods, and required that the possessions and
property of the rich should be given to the
poor. He preached that all wealth and goods
were given by Ahura Mazda to all people and

that they must use it equally. Since some
people took over most of these riches and goods
by force, the injustice in the world started
(Girshman 1954). In order to end the evils such
as greed, discord, hatred, and war, it was
taught that their natural courses, the desire
for woman and wealth, must be neutralized.
Although Mazdak believed that the light is
superior and could dominate darkness, he taught
that, until the moment of victory of the light,
man must reject worldly pleasures. The religion
promoted mortification and prohibited war,
killing and disputes (Parviz 1976). The reli-
gion had a social base, and was a movement
against the tyranny of its time. Mazdak also
was executed by the Sassanid tyrants.

Islam
The religion of Islam, was introduced by
Mohammed the prophet, in 610 A.D., in Western
Arabia. According to Islam, Mohammed was the
last and greatest prophet, and the Holy Koran,
his book, is the God's final message to man.
The fundamental base of the faith is that there
is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his pro-
phet, and there will be a general resurrection
and a Last Day of Judgement of all mankind
(Smith 1971).

Islam teaches that only one force, the force of
God exists in the nature. However, within man,
Satan wages war against God, and man is the
battleground. The two deities are inside man
and not in nature. According to Islam, man is a
two dimensional creature. God made him from
clay and breathed his spirit into him; he is
composed of two contradictory elements. At the
same   time, man has a free will and his free
will enables him to decide either to go towards
his mud nature or towards the spirit of God.
This constant striving and struggle takes place
in man's inner being and he has to choose one

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of the sides as determinant for his destiny
(Shariati 1979). Since man has a free will, he
is a responsible being. He is responsible
towards God, society and himself. Therefore, he
is expected to avoid injustice and corruption,
promote brotherhood and be concerned about the
welfare of the community he is living in. He
should also work towards his own transcendence
(Paidar 1975). According to the believer, God
created man with moral responsibility, there-
fore there is a necessity for a day of judge-
ment with reward and punishment, according to
man's conduct in the world.

General ethical principles and moral values

The general principles of Islam which govern
the conduct of the believers are based on the
belief that God, who created men and women, is
aware of everything they do and sees and hears
all of their conduct. Therefore, the believers
must be good and just and fear God. They should
be moderate in conduct and command, and keep a
limit in everything they do (Donaldson 1963).

For a just society, Islam teaches that good
personal conduct is necessary. Dealing justly
with people, especially orphans and the poor,
is right. Honesty, justice and charity towards
the needy and the poor, are urged. There are
also some conducts which are prohibited by the
religion : talking behind someone's back, anger
that allows people to do evil things, listening
to music which arouses emotions, and free sex
which destroys both love and marriage as a
family bond. There are other conducts which are
severely condemned : homicide, perjury, slan-
der, adultery, theft, fraud and also gambling,
drinking intoxicating beverages, eating pork
and engaging in usury (Smith 1971). In a just
society, women must be modest and dress in a
proper fashion without being exhibitionist,
weiling is thus seen as a natural device of the

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female. Since women are different biologically
and emotionally, therefore, they should leave
matters of justice, government and war to men
(Fischer 1980).

According to the Islamic scholars, since man is
composed of clay and the breath of God, he has
needed both elements and must fulfill the needs
of both. He is encouraged to live and use God's
riches and affluences, be active and struggle
in life, and spend his wealth; but he must do
this for God and for truth and have God in his
mind at all times (Shariati 1979). However,
Islam does not give priority to any kind of
material affluences or hedonistic comforts as
basic to happiness, as Rukni (1974) states,
since the only path to happiness comes from
spiritual life, framed by moral standards.
There are some obligations that the believers,
must obey and perform in order to fulfill the
spiritual life. These are : the five daily
ritual prayers, the fast from sunrise to sunset
during the month of Ramedan, the giving of
required and voluntary alms and the pilgrimage
to Mecca, once in a life time.

In governing the people, Islamic society goes
by the law of the Koran and on the basis of
God-given norms and patterns. These laws can be
improved, but cannot be changed. Islam basical-
ly advocates on egalitarian society where all
men, despite their race or language, should
live in brotherhood. The religion advocates
moral and social ethics and is concerned with
the community rather than the individual
(Ficher 1980).

Islam, which was brought by Arabs to Iran in
the 7th century, is the dominant religion in
Iran today. 98% of the people are maslim, and
93% of the maslims are of the Shi'a faith
(there are two maslim sects : Sunni and Shi'a).

For the majority of Iranians, Islamic laws and the moral values govern their lives and the Islamic morals are the base for their thoughts and behaviour. In this respect (Frye 1953 p.14) comments that : " Religion for the Persian means much more than theology; it is traditionally their society, their law and culture, as well as their system of ethics and behaviour...the Koran, the holy word of God revealed to the prophet Mahommed, is more than an ethical guide and the road to slvation for a maslim; it shows him how he should live and organize his state or society. More significant than personal ethics are the social ethics contained in it".

The major Iranian religions taught people to direct their lives along moral and spiritual life, to seek the truth and fight for truth against evil, to purify the soul by ignoring the worldy materials, and to try to get close to God through spiritual learning. The religions preached that there is another world, and that people would be rewarded or punished in the other world according to their closeness to God. Therefore, the material life in this world, preached to be unimportant, and people had to concentrate on leading a spiritual life and search for spiritual enrichment. The welfare of the community were taught to be more important than the individual's, and individuals have moral responsibilities towards the community.

While the thaught and behaviour of the common people was greatly directed by religion, the intellectuals and educated people were affected by the philosophical thoughts. Most Iranian philosophers were also the advocates of metaphysics. They believed in fatalism and held the view that people return to God and that the people's souls were trying to return to their

origin. The view comes from the mystic part of Islam, and advocates that the material life is not important and that the spirituality must be transcended to help people to free their soul. The common source that nourished the thoughts of the philosophers and thinkers was mysticism in its various forms. Poetry also played an important part in the life of the people, and is the symbol of the Iranian language.

Considering these factors, the Iranian culture is a mixture of the religions, philosophical and poetic elements, and the society can be considered as emotional, ideal, and spiritual which the moral and ethical values are important. Due to the past experiences that the people had by many invasions, they also developed a conservative attitude towards foreign people and distrusted the newcomers.

3. Contact with the West

Iran has a long history of contact with the Western countries. It begins with the appearance of Persians on the Eastern coast of Aegean Sea and in the neighbourhood of hellenic world by 546 B.C. During the Persian and sassanian periods (250 B.C. -625 A.D.), there was a mutual exchange of ideas between Iran and the West. After the Maslims conquered Iran in the 7th century, Iran lost its contact with the West for sometimes. By the 16th century, during the Safavid dynasty, the direct contact renewed and ambassadors from European countries arrived at the court in Isfahan, the capital city. The Western countries also established firms in Iran, and there was a general arrival of merchants, missionaries and diplomats.

For a long period, this contact was a mutually beneficial relationship. The West and Iran,

both gained and learned from one another and
the flow of ideas and benefits was two-sided.
The relationship was based on competition and
partnership. But, during the last two centuries
the relationship became more and more one-sided
in favour of Western countries and on the basis
of superiority-inferiority.

The West became dominant and beneficial, and
during the Qajar Dynasty in 1794 the Western
influence went beyond amassadorial and court
circles and was felt in the life of the Iranian
people. The discovery of oil in Iran at the
beginning of the 20th century, increased the
Western interests and rivalry in Iran and
resulted in the Western political and commer-
cial expansion. The direct relationship conti-
nued during the Pahlavi dynasty (1925) up to
the 1978 Revolution. During this period the
country underwent a phase of intense "moderni-
zation", which introduced Western technology to
Iran. This brought thousands of Western techni-
cians and experts, mostly American, into Iran
to work and apply the technology. Therefore,
the involvement and influence became more
intense.

Modern Iranian history became closely tied to
the history of Western technolgy and modern
industry. Due to their need for oil and other
raw materials and to their need to find a new
market for their consumer goods, the Western
countries tried to get control of Iranian
politics and economy. For a long period, the
country was the scene of international rival-
ries, and the Western interests, especially the
American's were so important that every possi-
ble effort was made to keep the country under
control (more detail in Khatami Dodge 1983).
The people suffered because of these condi-
tions, and this gave rise to anti-Western
feelings in Iran, and have done much to form

their opinion and attitudes about the West. The Iranian people expressed their oppositions to the Western expansion and exploitation, in the Tobacco movement in 1890, the Constitution Revolution in 1906, the Oil Industry Nationalization in 1951 and the Islamic Revolution in 1978.

The Western rivalries and their influence and domination over the country, not only affected the political and economic affairs of Iran, but also affected Irian culture. Frye (1953, p.63) states : "with the impact of the West, the traditional patterns of life and thought established by Islam were callenged by a secularism and an unbounded faith in the progress of man and science. It seemed and still seems to many Persians that the Europeans were arrogant in asserting that the human mind had no bounds and that human reason was a source of truth rather than merely an instrument to prove to doubters the eternal truths of Allah. The conflict of rationalism with authoritarian prophecy is still potent among the intelligentsia in Iran today".

Cultural Impact

As a result of Western influences in Iran, the ideological and intellectual aspects of the West also flooded the country and Westernization affected all important institutions of the society. This began by translation of several European books into Persian and sending some Iranian students to Europe to study, by the Iranian government. By these channels the Western philosophical, literary work, social ideas and life style, were introduced to Iran. By the turn of this century, the educated and the intellectuals of Iran were familiar with Western way of life, and all advocated change

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and progress on the Western lines. However, the
process of Westernization intensified in
following decades, by the Iranian government
and ruling class, and by presence of thousands
of Western people in Iran. Smith (1971)
comments that, the Westernization process
created a demand for Western goods and a
growing desire awoke especially in Uhran areas,
to gain wealth and acquire material posses-
sions. The process, as Forbis (1980) states,
also introduced co-education in universities,
public drinking and gambling, and also illegi-
timate sex. He adds that, all this resulted in
producing alienating people who were torn
between East-West values. Those who got through
high school did not trust their parents or
their teachers. Those who had experienced the
social and sexual freedom of the West, were
faced with the Islamic law that collide head on
with what they experienced abroad.

It seems that all the ideas and activities in
this direction, circumscribed and undercut the
cultural values and thinking of the people. As
Shivers (1980) comments, the intense program of
Westernization in Iran, in fact, was in favour
of those who were already privileged, while it
deeply alienated people - at large - whose
traditions, culture and religious values were
being attacked. Against this trend, he said,
there was strong resistance by the people and
as a sign of this resistance, people began to
learn more about the Islamic culture and values
and at the same time they attempted to reduce
their dependance on the West and the Western
values.

The advocation of women emancipation, said
Ficher (1980), was attacked by the religious
leaders saying that the demand in Iran for
working women was not the same as in Western
countries. Encouraging woman to work outside

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- the home and giving them emancipation, they said, is only a way to make women consumers for Western products. They also attacked the West-
- ernization process since they argued that, in the West, family life was not respected any-more, sexual relationships were free and true love hardly exist. Therefore, they said, it was not wise to follow the Western way of life.

The trend not only was attacked by conservative Maslem population, but also by educated and intellectuals. Forbis (1980) states, while the educated of 1930's and 1940's, advocated West-ernization, the Iranian educated and intellect-uals of the 1960's and 1970's, became worried or angry about the overwhelming impact of the West. They felt that the modernization of the country should not mean its Westernization, since the latter is percieved as cultural domination.

4. Relevant views

What specific aspects of the Westernization process the Iranian people disliked and were against ? What is the differences between Iranian culture and the West's that produced the conflict ? A brief review of the opinions of some Iranian writers, educators and scholars with different ideology, helps to see the specific aspects of the Westernization process that concerned Iranian people. It shows what cultural domination means, what was the source of anger and worriness among Iranians and what was the consequences of this cultural domina-tion.

In arguing against the Westernization of the country, Shariati (1978) comments, that we must accept that the Iranian society is a religious one. While the Western insight is materialistic

and its cultural structure is rational, profit-
eering and pragmatic, the Eastern insight is
emotional and its cultural structure is spirit-
ual, moral and idealistic. The society's heart
is alive because of religion in the East, he
said, and its body is warm because of its
faith. The only thing which moves the people
and brings them hope, gathers them together and
gives them strength, is their religion. In
Iran, he said, this element of the culture must
be kept alive, to enable the people to stand
for themselves and to preserve their identity.

Sharifi (1978), takes the argument further,
saying that in the past, people in Iran were
trained to acquire such virtues as patience,
generosity, devotion, self-sacrifice, toleran-
ce, purity and morality, and the accomplishment
of honours. But with the influence of the
Western ideas and thoughts, the condition is in
disorder and the direction of training is based
on attempting to achieve a comfortable material
life. In order to have this kind of life, it is
necessary to consume as much as possible.
Therefore, Physical welfare replaces the mora-
lity and spirituality which used to give
strength in life, he said.

Naraghi (1977) shares the same view, saying
that stress in Western training is put on
teaching people to acquire more material bene-
fits from learning while in the East and Iran,
learning has always been valued for its aspect
of morality. In the East, he said, the ethical
attributes and the moral virtues have always
dominated the scientific life, but the acquir-
ing of material benefits through the use of
science is the goal in the West. He adds, one
must realize that the Western societies spread
the idea that the developing countries which
wanted to use the new technology and science,
and wanted to become modernized must copy the

Western social structure, including its educational and economic life. The Western societies believed that their culture was universal and that all other cultures were secondary, he said. For them, in order to make any progress, all people must be Westernized. He concludes that this is the result of two things : the Westerner's goal of exploitation and their sense of pride and self-conceit.

Naraghi (in Forbis 1980) takes the argument further saying that, the Westernization does not go with the Iranian personality and the Iranian character is shaped into a collective Psyche that cannot be Westernized. The Westernization, he said, is too rational and objective to deal with the human condition, and the greatest merit among Iranian is their humanity. IN our culture, he says, man is considered in all his aspects. Why should he be deprived of all his substance by following a so-called rational course which at the end faces the impossibility at receiving an answer to his questions. He comments that, Iran needs science in order to make the best possible use of its resources and enable people to accede to material well being in conditions of dignity and equity. However, this material well-being is not the sole objective, as it is in the Western societies, he says.

Rukni Musavi (1974) argues more seriously saying that the moral and ethical values in the West are weak and introducing the Western way of life is a threat to morality of Maslems. Islam, he says, stresses morality and believes that true excellence lies, not in the intellectual or manual achievement, but in the moral attainment of a pure heart. On the other hand, in the West, the materialistic spirit has infiltrated the civilized people, and the only aim in life is to earn more and spend it on the

material goods. He adds, that in sexual con-
duct, the West stepped outsides of all moral
bounds. Purity is no longer esteemed and has
been discorded by the Western societies. All
sanction for controlling morals have been
abandoned. Love affairs are unlimited, prema-
rital cohabitation is the rule rather than the
exception, and the number of illegitimate birth
is increasing. Family life and the marriage
bond are weakening and the divorce rate is
increasing. As a result, he says, many children
are deprived of their parent's love, live in
broken homes and end up in juvenile courts.
Rukni adds that the consumption of alcohol
beverages is wide-spread and it leads to many
cases of death, mental illness, criminal acts
and car accidents. The Western permissiveness,
he comments, has resulted in increasing cases
of crime, rape, riot and consumption of hard
drog. He concludes that modern Western civili-
zation's productivity, affluence, comfort and
leisure cannot be denied but it must be regret-
tably acknowledged that Western civilization's
shortcoming and weaknesses are no fewer than
its advantages. Despite the leisure and ease
which knowledge and culture provide for the
Western societies, human happiness has not
increased nor have social ills diminished.
Therefore, this way of life must be resisted at
all cost, he said.

Other concern was the overwhelming impact of
Western influence over educational institutions
in particular. With introduction of secular
education as a result of modernization, the
trend of education which in the past was asso-
ciated with religion, completely changed. The
rational aspect of learning became important
and this was seen by some Iranian educators as
one-sided education which ignored the spiritual
part of learning. In this regard Sadat (1981)
states that education is expected to perform

two function : to help in intellectual training and learning science and to purify the soul and aid in the moral attainment of a pure heart. He argued that the only goal of Western education which became dominant in Iran, is to learn a limited amount of information and to train the mind. This results in the training of many scholars and scientists who are rough, strict and non-spiritual. He comments that this line of education which thoughts and emotions are on different sides, must not be followed in Iran. To him, learning and education must be based on faith and virtues, and training of thought and intellect should take place through moral and spiritual learning. Otherwise, he said, the rough knowledge and science that one learns can be used in unappropriate way which harms the person and the society he lives in. Moreover, he says, the goal of education in extreme, is to help people grow, to be close to God and to reach God. This can only happen when one puri-fies one's soul and heart and this can only be acquired through Islamic teaching, he con-cludes.

Al-e-Ahmad (1977) also argued against the trend saying that since the beginning of this cent-ury, and as a result of Westernization process, the goal of education in Iran became to train people as Westerner or in better terms "West-toxicated". The school curriculum put less emphasis on Iranian traditions and Iranian past culture. The school program did not connect the past to the present, and there were no common relations between home and school. While most people in the country are religious, he says, the school programs advocated the Western way of life. In the colleges of art and architect-ure all the works were imitation of Western works. Foreign languages became so important in universities to the extent that they replaced the Iranian mother tongue. The technical and

scientific fields became so important in higher
education that they replaced the literature and
language fields. Moreover, he said, the Iranian
and Islamic literature, ethics and learning
were losing ground and became less and less
important. He adds that this is the reason that
in recent years the religious school were being
revised and the religious propaganda was ris-
ing. Al-e-Ahmad concludes that since the West
and its technology were pushing and attacking
the Iranian way of life and replaced whatever
they had of themselves, the people were react-
ing to the process of Westernization.

Besides schools and universities, films, tele-
vision and all mass media were influenced by
Westernization process. Before the Western
influence, most films had a traditional theme,
but as a result of Western influence, the local
films also changed its themes. New themes such
as free choice of one's marriage partner and
premarital sexual relationship evolved. Naficy
(1981) states that more local films were pro-
duced about dancing and singing in nightclubs,
leaving one's family and getting involved in
gambling, drinking and even crime. Films with
themes involving female seduction, sex and
violence were produced more and more. And by
1978, out of 120 cinemas in Tehran, 67 were
showing "sexy" films he said. Western films
comprised the bulk of the movies that were
shown in the country and what people saw and
learned from them was far removed from their
real lives. There was much criticism and oppo-
sition concerning the pornographic films.
Naficy comments that the role that cinema
played in cultural dissolution was the reason
that at the time of the 1978 revolution, cine-
mas were chosen as one of the principal targets
of destruction by the people.

Most of the television program also came from
Western countries, showing Western values,
while the majority of the television audiance
held to traditional values. The problem with
the films and television programs, were that
not only they showed or talked about Western
values and life - style, but they also intro-
duced Western influenced advertisements.

Tonkaboni (1977) comments that in all the
advertisements, money was the most important
thing that one had to consider in life. The
only theme of these Western imitated advertise-
ments was the value of money and the reliance
on money as the essential elements of life. The
money, of course, was to be earned to spend on
buying goods of all kinds, he says. This kind
of propaganda was a way to push the people to
become more and more consumer of Western pro-
ducts. It stressed only the physical needs and
taught the people that the goal of life is to
satisfy the material needs without considering
any need for morality. It also taught people
that they can have knowledge, status, prestige,
honour, and even love only if they had money.
Moreover, he said, in any advertisement without
relevance, women were used to introduced the
products, dressed in a "sexy" manner. It relied
heavily on sexual instinct, to the extent that
it ignored the ethics, traditions and common
law of the society. These trend that was con-
trary to all common values and norms of the
society, started to weaken the people's moral
values and ethics, he concludes.

5. Concluding remarks

To conclude, we briefly summarize the main points that seems to be important :

- The Iranian who were invaded by many forces in the past, developed a sense of instability and insecurity which resulted in a conservative attitudes towards the foreign people and their culture.

- The life of Iranian people, always and up to the present time, mostly have been directed by the religions and their ethics and morals.

- The Iranian religions in one way or another rejected the wordly materials and did not give priority to the material pleasures. They preached people to fight for truth, purify their soul and heart through spiritual learning, and try to get close to God by spiritual enrichment.

- The Western countries due to their interest in Iran, started a direct and mutual relationship with the country. The relationship later on changed in honour of the West. This and the rivalry and exploitation by some Western countries, rose a sense of hostility and anger towards the West. Due to their experiences in the past, the Iranian distrusted the West, resisted its influence, and saw the act as another invasion.

- The contact with the West, also had a great impact on the Iranian culture and their way of life. The Western thoughts, ideas, and the way of life were introduced to Iran. This Westernization process came to Iran in the form of books, consumer products, movies and fashions. But mostly it came in the technology and in the presence of thousands of

Westerners living in Iran to apply the tech-
nology.

- The process of Westernization which was
  intensified by the Iranian ruling class, were
  seen by the people as a threat to their
  cultural values and resisted by the people.

- The Western cultural influence was not only
  resisted because it was a threat to Iranian
  culture, but because the Western way of life
  and values were disapproved by the majority
  of the Iranian. The Western permissiveness in
  social life and sexual and moral conducts and
  manners and its emphasis on material plea-
  sures, were against the believe of the peo-
  ple.

- Science and technology, the strong agents of
  Western influence over the developing coun-
  tries, although beneficial to these coun-
  tries, are also seen as a mean of exploita-
  tion and cultural domination. It is seen as a
  force used to distort and destroy the struc-
  tural elements of their society, which means
  their traditions, cultural values, educa-
  tional system and their religion.

- As one can see, the rapid erosion of tradi-
  tional way of life and believe, provoked a
  response from the people. They resisted the
  Western cultural domination and the policy of
  their own government in promoting Westerniza-
  tion, in extend that it became one of the
  reason (besides the political, social and
  economical reasons) for the collapse of the
  whole system in 1978.

- The growth of science and technology through-
  out the world is inevitable and cannot be
  denied. It also brings with it some social
  changes. What is most important to the people

of the Third World in general and Iran in
particular, is finding a manner to encounter
and deal with these phenomena; a way to pre-
serve their own identity, despite the use of
Western science, ideas and technology.

- We must realize that every culture has some
  elements in common with other cultures and
  cultures can make contributions to one
  another and benefit from one another. In the
  world today, countries and cultures are
  becoming more interdependent and one action
  or idea by a nation can affect people in
  other culture. What is important is that
  cultures should contribute to one another,
  but not to dominate other cultures.

- The essential core of a culture consists of
  traditional ideas and their attached values.
  Introducing any new ideas and promoting any
  changes in a society must take into conside-
  ration the traditional values and the needs
  of the people. Making any changes does not
  necessarily mean the destruction of the core
  of a culture.

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7. Annex

Definition of terms

In order to attain precision and clarity of meaning in this paper, some terms are defined here.

Value

Many definitions were given by the social scientists to this term. Among those definitions the most comprehensive one is probably given by Milton Rokeach (1968, 1973). He defines a value as a single strong belief that transcendentally guides action and judgements across specific objects and situations and beyond immediate goals to ultimate end-states of existence. According to Rokeach a value is an enduring belief which is a determinant of attitude and behaviour. Once a value is internalized, it becomes consciously or unconsciously a standard or criterion for guiding action, for developing and maintaining attitudes towards relevant objects and situations, for justifying one's own and other's actions and attitudes, for morally judging oneself and other and for comparing oneself with others.

In this paper the values referred to are those strong internalized beliefs that are determined by society and culture, which become principles and standards that guide one's action.

Culture

The term "culture" was defined by Stone (1971) as a man's entire social heritage. It means all the knowledge, beliefs, customs and skills that he acquires as a member of a society. According

to Collins (1975) culture is the learned, transmitted and integrated ideas, activities and artifacts that are adoptive and that depend upon human interaction for their existence.

Here, the term culture refers to a collection of intellectual, ideal, literary religious and emotional expressions in forms of symbols, signs, traditions, customs and morals which have accumulated in the course of history in a unique form.

West

Here the word West refers to the European countries and the United States of America.

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