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## Background

I am a third generation Shamanic Healer, born in 1969 to a Jewish family in Tehran, Iran. I lived there with my family until early 1979 when the Islamic Revolution began. Overnight we packed our bags and fled to London to avoid possible imprisonment and persecution of religious minorities. We lived there for four years until 1983, when we immigrated to and settled in the United States. My story is much like the one million other Iranians who ultimately immigrated to the United States.

My own initiation into Sufism came at age six on a school outing to a local museum in Tehran. Upon our entrance into a local museum, I was immediately drawn to a dimly lit room in the corner of the vast building. Leaving behind my class, I set off alone toward that room. As soon as I entered, I was overtaken by a profound state of awe. The room was dedicated to artifacts, clothes, and paraphernalia of ancient Dervishes (spiritual wayfarers) of Iran. Presumed lost by my teachers, I remained in that room for what seemed like hours, taking in as much as I could until I was found.

After school, I rushed home and began asking my father as many questions as I could about the Sufis and the Dervishes of Iran. Under my father's tutelage, I began learning about Sufism and the alchemical journey of the soul toward Love.

I was awed by this new spiritual learning and sought to know more. Moreover, increasing levels of danger in my childhood world only pushed me further toward gaining spiritual insights, culminating in an opening and engaging with the spirit world.

My first encounter with the unseen world came at age eight at the onset of the Iranian revolution. Social unrest had become ubiquitous and angry mobs were forming everywhere. One particular day, they were roaming and looting the street right outside our second-story apartment. Terror struck my parents. They feared that as Jews, we would become scapegoats

and targets for revenge killings. As the mob grew in numbers, my parents ordered us all to turn off the lights and hide under our beds.

However, I did not follow those instructions. Instead, I felt drawn to a window that oversaw the mob forming below. Standing there in that dimly lit room watching the crowd heralded the same feelings of profound awe that I felt that day in the museum. There and then, a clear, deep, and penetrating knowing arose in me echoing these words: “You and your family will go unharmed. But you must witness this for yourself.” From that day on, I developed my second passion in life: To understand the nature of conflict, war, and destruction.

These various experiences instilled in me a deep calling to practice Shamanism as it was taught and passed down through my culture and upbringing. However, immigration to the United States set me on a different course. Like many other Iranian American young adults, I soon ignored my traditional roots (along with my unique calling) and decided to pursue Western professions—in my case, Western psychology.

Over twenty years, I pursued graduate studies in psychology with an emphasis in transpersonal studies and earned a certificate in Therapeutic Massage. I worked on healing my own mind and body and later on, developed my craft as a healer to heal others. I became a drug and alcohol counselor and, eventually, took a faculty member post in the Department of Psychology at Santa Monica College. All the while, I continued my own studies in Sufism under the guidance of teachers in both the physical and ethereal plane. In time, eventually I more formally honored my Sufi roots by blending psychology with shamanism.

My knowledge and practice of shamanism came easily because I was born into a culture where it was practiced for centuries. My grandmother had healing skills which she passed on to me as did my father who, although he did not practice shamanism, was well-read in Sufism. Over the years I was able to blend the healing work from my grandmother with the knowledge passed down from my father, and then with continued study and practice with teachers, body work, therapeutic touch, and psychology, I created a craft which is now a form of contemporary shamanic healing. This is how Centerpeace Foundation came to be. My vision and the mission of Centerpeace is simple; To help people live a better and more peaceful life by resolving conflict that begins within the self and extends out into the world.

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