CHAPTER 5
APPENDIX

Importance of rug is due to its authenticity and design. It is claimed that the Ardebil carpet dated 1539 A.D. should properly be classified as a Kashan, since, according to the inscription, it has woven by Maqhsoud from Kashan. The first organised production of carpets in Kashan was started in the late 19th century by the famous weavers such as Mouhtashami and Mulla Ismael, whose carpets attract higher price in Persia itself. Since this time, Kashan has held a distinguished position in the world market. Apart from soft-wool that they use in the work and also skilful weavers as Nicolas Fokker says, the success of Kashan rug has been due to its richly design.

The most important variations in design of Kashan are as follows 1. The classical design, with a long medallion and corner decoration. The field is rich in flowers, vines, arabesques and palmettes of the Shah Abbas type, but never symbols of any kind. 2. The prayer carpets with the mihrab or prayer niche, with Persian, Assyrian or Corinthian pillars supporting the arch, and a hanging lamp over the monochrome field. 3. A livelier version of the ancient vase pattern. The bouquets resemble a display of peacock features. 4. The illustrative carpets, the usual composition of which comprises a mass of small birds among flowers and branches.

Engineer Saleh Alavi who is teaching designs course in the carpet
faculty of Kashan University suggests that there are two kinds of designs in the area of Kashan which designers draw patterns based on these two shapes. They are as follows: 1. Medallion and Corner design in which there is a medallion in the middle and in either sides there is a lamp. Moreover, in each corner 1/4 of the central medallion repeats. Around the rug there is border in which floral designs display and they should be in proportionate with overall rug design. 2. Scattered design. In this pattern flowers and other small designs are dispersed all over the carpet ground. Different elements that are used in the two designs are Shah Abbasi flower, Arabesque, and Khataee motifs. However, each of these elements has various kinds. To understand the main purpose of current discussion we may first briefly define Shah Abbasi flowers and Khataee motifs, then we proceed to discuss more about Arabesque as a part of Islamic art that has entered into the Iranian artistic work and has influenced different aspects of Iranian art and society as well. Medallion and Altar is the last issue to be discussed here. Since it is both main and classic design that embraces flower and motifs altogether.

Shah Abbasi flower - This flower derives its name from Shah Abbas, who stimulated the revival of Persian textile art in the 16th and 17th centuries. Shah Abbasi flowers consist of a series of slightly different palmattes and floral forms (Lee Allane, Oriental Rugs, p.85). Shah Abbasi flowers are flowers of Pomagranate, leaf, bindweed, etc. These flowers are used in carpet designs from the Safavid Period onwards. Clear attention is to be paid
in order to understand the abstractness found in the *Shah Abbasi* flowers. In
fact, someone may attribute these Pomegranate flowers to continuation of its
sanctification following *Zoroastrian* in ancient Persia (Iran). But, more
important aspect on these flowers is their nomination that in most cases is
called *Shah Abbasi* flowers and rarely they are entitled as *Sheikh Safi*
flowers, perhaps because of the honour that Safavids having had paid to their
high ancestor - *Sheikh Safi*. Apart from these differences of ideas, it is
however, indisputable that the term of this nomination is not going beyond
the Safavid Period.

**Khataee motif** - *Khataee* is a motif of flower stem and also it is an
apparent of tree stem or bush with floral and blossom. It is an abstract tree
and a sort of design which has stylized and it is not the same as nature. In
fact, *Khataee* is a sort of motif that should embrace flowers, blossoms,
leaves and joints and establishes unity among them. Straight stems are very
less in *Khataee* and basically, in Iranian experienced art direct lines are very
less visible. Stems in this motif are in a rhythmical curve and they are a form
of charming and coquetry move of curved lines and in rare cases in direct
lines. Sometimes, spiral circles connect flowers, leaves and joints to each
other. These circles continue and draw the viewer's imagination. Sometimes,
broken and sometimes a whole curve becomes field for displaying flowers
and leaves.

In *Khataee* motif some principle points are set forth: first, it is
generally in a style of fast and slow, that is, parts of stem is thick and the other parts are thinner and it is like nature form of flower stem. In the initial stages usually Khataee stem is vigorous and once the stem slowly comes to the end, the motif becomes elegant and thinner. Second, generally, Khataee is for the manifestation of a main flower and this flower should be placed in a part of the motif which could be the main focus and basis of the motif and draw the whole attention of the viewer. Third, leaves, flowers and other blossoms that are used to fill (load) the stem, should be proportionate to main flower or so to speak they should be of same source. These motifs spin (round) in proportion to the space over the surface of artistic work. To make full the design of a rug, Iranian artist is of necessity to use Khataee motifs in the work, since these motifs are means to create discipline and unity between components of his artistic work, between flowers, leaves and blossoms, that are of more interest than any other design to him.

**Arabesque:** The development of the arabesque can be best studied in the decorative arts, especially in the illuminated decoration of manuscripts. To trace the origin of *arabesque* in Islamic world, the help of the manuscript of *Quran* is of necessity. The *Quran* is regarded not as the written account of the prophet's teachings, but as a very word of *Allah*. Thus, the writing used to record the words of the Divinity, but its very use assumes a position of great importance in the religion. Therefore, the finest calligraphy came to existence for the purpose of maintaining the divine words. To understand *arabesque* and in broader sense *Islamic* art, one should understand the
importance of calligraphy in Islam. Philip Bamborough in his book, *Treasures of Islam*, expresses the view that in addition to its use in books and in the decoration of same objects, calligraphy was used both religiously and artistically on the interiors and exteriors of buildings, especially mosques to the total exclusion of pictorial representation. Bamborough articulates a number of forms of Kufic manuscript, such as florated and foliated Kufic. Then he talks about a popular adaptation of Kufic for decorative purpose which was plaited Kufic. In this form, the vertical letters were plaited into intricate knots. Bamborough, says that plaited Kufic was extensively used in architectural decoration, as well as for textiles, carpets, etc., and sometimes for the frontispieces of Qurans. Since Quran itself is of the most importance, the decorator tries to bring his extreme artistic ability in his work. During the Islamic history, various artistic works have accomplished on this divine text. In Iran the Safavid period is very considerable in attention to Islamic art especially in book production. However, this art has started from Timurid Period but Safavid gave to the whole craft a strongly national bais. Ernest Kuhnel, one of the famous authors in the area of Islamic art says that

The new capital of Tabriz became a centre for the production of Quranic manuscripts, since this city has been harboured famous masters in Naskh and Thuluth (two kinds of manuscript) and the most prominent illuminators and gilders for ornamenting the text. The composition of the title pages into fields with star or medallion compartment and frames with cartouches and similar ornament was their invention, and their skill in illumination was a considerable influence on other arts, particularly rug making.
On the Islamic art Kuhnel says: for a long time and in some cases even until today, the sort of thought which justifies behind the word *Arabesque* applies to all varied limitations of decorative arts that have formed and matured in the Islamic East. This concept generalised all different forms of Islamic art. To define *arabesque*, Kuhnel quotes definition of Alois Riegel who is a well-known scholar on the subject. To define *arabesque* Riegel attempted to limit the concept of *arabesque* to that series of forms used and created in Near East art. He named *arabesque* to those groups, that their main form is bifurcate form comprising a soft and curved nature and it is the normal element and expressive characteristic of Islamic art, which explicitly expresses itself only in this artistic culture. According to Ernest Kuhnel these flowers which have signs from their past on the feature, find their specific formulation and independent illustrative goals and specific expression only in Muslim territory. However, in Iran question was different. Kuhnel says that in the east of Iran, Arab civilization with its specific decoration principles in the beginning of advent of Islam passed a very difficult period.

For Iranian, permanent revival of national tradition had an everlasting attraction. These national traditions, in most cases, were observing doubtfully to the demands of the art which have been imported by Arabs and also to the demands that were expressing in the direction of Arabization of the attitudes and traditions and opposed to becoming merely Arabized which
was achieving through calm composition of its own tradition with Arab world-view. These circumstances were the products of inner-directed decorative art which has been in existence since Sassanide period that could provide those designs, with little toleration and neglect of its own specific symbols. They constitute essential points of view of Islamic art. Moreover, this combination of the two cultures shows Sassanide abstraction and specific method in art which could be embraced in a calm and deliberate manner. This composition led to the result that in conflict between visual elements of two arts plant designs and branching forms and also herbaceous designs including flower bowls and engravings similar to rose flower and palms with leaves and other similar shapes could dominate itself to other figures and finally these forms established.

The point we must take into account is that the *arabesque* view the world from not-this-worldly dimension and it has an abstract aspect. The elements that are using in the *arabesque* have adopted from nature. But they go beyond the nature, they are neither showing nature nor its characteristics, rather, they are to be planning to show ephemerality of nature and wants to turn man's concentration to the other world. In this art everything is in its ideal shape.

**Medallion and Altar**

To record precisely the divine revelation, attention of the *Islamic* world drew to the art of writing and producing manuscript. Hence
reproduction of the *Quran* as a sacred book became an important work for Muslims. Relevant arts such as calligraphy, illumination, binding, etc. also expanded in due course. One of such arts was book illuminate which improved. *Safavid Quran* is a perfect example of this improvement, since its use of gold and colours is properly illustrated.

The famous design that artists were using in book illumination and book binding was Medallion in which curvilinear *arabesque* was to be used, especially in cover page of the sacred text. Today, we can see the same design on either side of the cover pages of *Quran*. The point which we want to mention in relation to rug design is that the pattern of rug design is closely connected to the pattern used in the *Quran*. To support the existence of this relation a quotation from Ernest Kuhnel is given below. Ernest Kuhnel says:

*The centre of the rug was generally emphasised by a round or oval central medallion on a contrasting ground, and it was often given smaller additions above and below; when corner sections were added in the corresponding colour the connection with book illustration becomes particularly plain; another favourite was an alternation of elongated cartouches and Rosettes, which seem entirely derived from book bindings. Lee Allane another scholar on the subject believes that the dome of the mosque has been inspiring revelatory in both of the *Quran* and carpet design. He suggests that medallion and corner sometimes referred to as the 'book-cover' or *Quran* design, because it was evolved during the 15th and 16th centuries from the magnificent tolled leather covers used to bind the *Quran*; these had*
themselves been inspired by the inside of a mosque dome, with its central boss and intricately decorated surround. This scheme was first transposed into carpets in the 16th century, and has remained the dominant feature of Persian compositions ever since. Therefore, Islamic architectures have had a predominant role to inspire Iranian art. As a result we come to this notion that Islamic Art has entered into the many facets of Islamic society and the appearance of the society is under influence of this beautiful as well as sacred art.

As Scholars of this subject say, carpet making is one of the most important crafts which has obtained religious art.