



Women Poets Iranica
A Research Compendium

Zhālah Isfahānī, Iranian Poet, Scholar, and Activist

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Figure 1. Portrait of Zhālah Isfahānī. Image source: Jaleh Esfahani Cultural Foundation.

The poet known throughout her career as Zhālah Isfahānī (1300–1386/1921–2007) was born in Isfahan and officially registered as Itil Sultānī. In her autobiography *Sāyah-yi sāl'hā* (The shadow of the years, 1379/2000), in which she refers to herself in the third person as Mastānah, she provides detailed reflections on her given name and the pen name she later adopted.¹ The English name Itil (or Ethel) had been chosen by her father, who had known an English nurse in Isfahan by that name, but she was commonly called Zhālah. Despite her father's disapproval, her strong-willed mother ensured that Zhālah attended school and supported her when she rejected an early arranged marriage to continue her education.

The girls' school she attended in Isfahan, Bihisht'ā'in, did not offer the final year required for graduation, so she later com-

pleted her studies at Nūrbakhsh High School in Tehran. Again, against her father’s wishes, Zhālah applied for a position at the bank and began working, becoming one of only a few young women in Isfahan employed outside the home. Another such figure was Shahnāz A‘lāmī, also a poet, whose life and career bore similarities to Zhālah’s.

Although Zhālah may have shown some promise in composing poems from the age of seven, she usually identified a ghazal written in the sixth grade (at age thirteen) as her first poem.² During her final years of high school, her teachers and classmates knew that she wrote poems, and she was frequently invited to read her poems at school events. Around this time her poems and literary sketches also appeared in local newspapers.



Figure 2: Young Zhālah (1323/1944?). Photograph from her first book of poems, *Gul’hā-yi Khud’rū*. Image source: Jaleh Esfahani Cultural Foundation.

After Parvīn I’tisāmī, whose *Book of Poems (Dīvān)* was published in 1315/1935 (when she was aged thirty, and only after her short-lived marriage and divorce), Zhālah was the first Iranian woman to publish a book of poems (1323/1944). She was nearly twenty-three years old and unmarried, which made this even more unusual and revolutionary. The book *Gul’hā-yi khud’rū (Wildflowers)* was published with the assistance of *Bānk-i Millī-i Īrān (National Bank of Iran)*, where she was employed, and the poet was simply identified as “Zhālah.” This was one year after she had met *Shams al-Dīn Badī’-Tabrīzī*, a

¹Zhālah Isfahānī, *Sāyah-yi sāl’hā: Sar’guzasht-i Zhālah Isfahānī* [The shadow of years: Autobiography of Zhālah Isfahānī] (Essen, Germany: Nima Verlag, 1379/2000), 58–59.

²Zhālah Isfahānī, *Sāyah-yi sāl’hā: Sar’guzasht-i Zhālah Isfahānī* [The shadow of years: Autobiography of Zhālah Isfahānī] (Essen, Germany: Nima Verlag, 1379/2000), 89.

³Zhālah Isfahānī, *Sāyah-yi sāl'hā: Sar'guzasht-i Zhālah Isfahānī* [The shadow of years: Autobiography of Zhālah Isfahānī] (Essen, Germany: Nima Verlag, 1379/2000), 139.

⁴Zhālah Isfahānī, *Sāyah-yi sāl'hā: Sar'guzasht-i Zhālah Isfahānī* [The shadow of years: Autobiography of Zhālah Isfahānī] (Essen, Germany: Nima Verlag, 1379/2000), 31.

young air force officer and pro-Soviet Tūdah Party affiliate, whom she married.³

Gul'hā-yi khud'rū, a book of about sixty pages, contains ninety-eight poems, most of them ghazals, preceded by a short introduction and followed by a one-page prose note, apparently in memory of her mother. The dedication page describes the book as “a bouquet of flowers to her mother’s tomb.” A footnote to a poem reveals that her mother died in Khurdād 1320/June 1941.⁴

Except for a few undated poems, the remainder are dated, most of them composed in the years immediately preceding the book’s publication. At least one short ghazal of five couplets, however, is dated 1316/1937, when she was barely sixteen years old, and a few others were composed in 1317–1319/1938–1940.

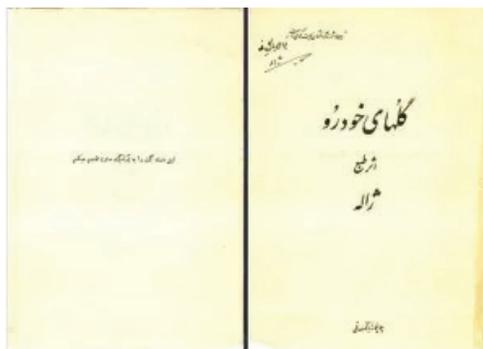


Figure 3: Title page from the book *Gul'hā-yi Khud'rū*, Tehran, 1324/1945.

Even in her first Book of Poems, Zhālah displays gradual artistic development, with the later works in the volume revealing a marked maturity in both poetic technique and the cultivation of her character and self-confidence. Several poems engage with themes of God, faith, and praise of chastity, as in the final couplet of a ghazal where she, following the convention of traditional ghazal, employs her *takhallus*, or pen name, “Zhālah”:

دل من «ژاله» تابناک بود/ کاندردان غیر نور یزدان نیست



My heart, Zhālah, is filled with light
For it contains nothing but the light of God (Yazdān).⁵

⁵Zhālah Isfahānī, Gul'hā-yi khud'rū (Tehran, 1324/1945), 3.

In this ghazal, she expresses pride and joy that her heart “does not go after desire and lust and does not follow the biddings of the devil.”⁶

⁶Zhālah Isfahānī, Gul'hā-yi khud'rū (Tehran, 1324/1945), 3.

نرود در پی هوی و هوس / پیرو امر و نهی شیطان نیست

⁷Zhālah Isfahānī, Gul'hā-yi khud'rū (Tehran, 1324/1945), 24.

It does not pursue desire and lust,
Nor does it obey the commands and prohibitions of the devil.

Ironically, and in compliance with cultural norms that regarded the use of make-up inappropriate for unmarried girls, she writes in an undated ghazal that “beauty is not in adorning and pluming oneself” (zībā'ī bih khud'ārā'ī nīst):

گرد الوان چه زنی بر رخ پاکیزه خویش
روغن و رنگ ترا مظهر زیبائی نیست

روی گلگون تو گر ساده نباشد ای مه
عاشق نرگس مستت دل سودائی نیست

Why do you put these colourful powders on your clean face?
It is not colour and oil that are considered as signs of your beauty.

If your rosy face is not simple [i.e., free of make-up], O Moon,
No heart will madly fall for your drunken, narcissus-like eyes.⁷

In another poem dated 1322/1943, Zhālah takes a critical stance against women's hijab. She demonstrates an increasing awareness of social issues and women's rights in later poems in this book. On the whole, the poet aligns herself increasingly with the “social/political ghazal” of the time, a mode that had emerged with the poets of the Constitutional Revolution (Ārif, Ishqī, Bahār) and remained popular during those turbulent years in

⁸Shadab Vajdi, "ESFAHANI, Jaleh," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2009, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/esfahani-jaleh/>.

⁹Zhālah Isfahānī, *Gul'hā-yi khud'rū* (Tehran, 1324/1945), 184.

Iran's history. The influence of these poets, especially 'Ishqī, can be discerned both in nationalist sentiments of her poetry, which in subsequent decades would be blended with or replaced by internationalist concerns, and in her diction and style. The last piece in the volume (preceding the concluding prose note) is a longer poem, dated 1322/1943, composed as an opera for performance at school, undoubtedly influenced by similar works by 'Ishqī.

Some of Zhālah's poems lamenting social injustice, like the 1320/1941 poem, "Kūdak-i yatīm" (Orphaned child), which uses a moderately new stanzaic form (ab ab cc), are reminiscent of poems by Lāhūtī, Parvīn, and Afrāshṭah, as well as of the early poems of the younger Sīmīn Bihbahānī in the 1320s/1940s to 1330s/1950s.

In Khurdād 1325/June 1946, the Perso-Soviet Society of Cultural Relations (Anjuman-i ravābit-i farhangī-i Īrān va Ittihād-i Jamāhīr-i Shawravī) convened a gathering that came to be known as the first "congress" of Iranian writers (Tīr 4/June 25 to Tīr 12/July 3). The event was chaired by Muhammad-Taqī Bahār (1265-1330/1880-1951), then the undisputed Malik al-Shu'arā' (poet laureate or "King of the poets") of Iran. Zhālah's participation, indeed as the youngest of the seventy-eight participants, many of whom were already established poets, writers, and scholars, demonstrates that she had begun to secure recognition as a promising young poet following the publication of her first book.⁸ She does not indicate in her autobiography whether Badī'-Tabrīzī's political affiliations, or her own nascent leftist sympathies, influenced her selection. She later writes that she, "like so many others of her fellow countrymen, without full awareness of what was going on in those years in Soviet society, was fascinated by socialist ideals."⁹

Zhālah early recognition and relative fame in Iran proved short lived. Her husband, Badī'-Tabrīzī, was imprisoned for a year and subsequently dispatched to Tabriz in Azerbaijan, then un-



der the administration of the pro-Soviet *Firqah-yi dimukrāt-i Āzarbāyjān* (Azerbaijan Democratic Party). Zhālah had scarcely joined him there when the central army intervened, reoccupied Azerbaijan, and initiated a violent purge of the leftist opposition. This forced Zhālah and her husband to flee Iran, seeking refuge in the Soviet Union (Baku).

¹⁰Zhālah Isfahānī, *Gul'hā-yi khud'rū* (Tehran, 1324/1945), 212–13.

In her autobiography, *Sāyah-yi sāl'hā*, Zhālah recounts her years of exile in the Soviet Union and later in London, as well as her various occupations and activities. This forced emigration nearly erased her presence from the landscape of contemporary Persian poetry in Iran for decades, preventing her from achieving the stature later attained by her peers who remained in Iran, or the next generation of poets.

Cold War politics in the region, the role assigned to Iran (especially after the 1332/1953 coup against the nationalist Premier Muhammad Musaddiq) by the West, and the sweeping censorship of works deemed sympathetic to leftist ideas, or the Soviet Union erected an iron wall between Zhālah and Iran. She suffered a fate similar to that of the great Constitutional era poet, Abulqāsim Lāhūtī, who left Iran in 1301/1922. For Zhālah, exile did not merely mean being unpublished in Iran or deprived of a direct Iranian readership; it also severed her from the dynamic life of Persian literature, its flourishing creativity, and the vibrant exchanges in the literary journals and periodicals. Despite her efforts to maintain sporadic contact with fellow poets in Iran, this separation inevitably left its mark on the development of her poetry.

Although not cited with bibliographical detail in other sources (neither in *Iranica* or on her website), Zhālah mentions in her autobiography a collection of poems published in Tajikistan, titled *Mādarān sulh mī'khāhand* (Mothers want peace), as well as another volume published in Baku, Azerbaijan (in Azeri translation) or in Russian.¹⁰ While continuing her studies (she earned a PhD in literature), raising children, and attending writers'

¹¹Shadab Vajdi, "ESFAHANI, Jaleh," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2009, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/esfahani-jaleh/>.

¹²Zhālah Isfahānī, *Zindah'rūd* (Moscow: Idārah-yi intishārāt-i dānish, 1965).

conferences, she may have enjoyed a measure of recognition in the Soviet Union as "the sole female face of Persian poetry."¹¹ Nevertheless, as noted above, she was already a forgotten name in Iran.

Translations of the works of the nineteenth-century Russian realist authors enjoyed popularity in Iran during the 1330s-1340s/1950s-1960s. They were permitted largely because they belonged to the pre-Bolshevik period. This situation also enabled Soviet publishers such as Progress, supported by exiled Iranians, to produce and distribute Persian translations of Russian literature in Iran. In 1965, however, a book of poems in original Persian appeared in a few Tehran bookstores. Published by Idārah-yi intishārāt-i dānish and titled *Zindah'rūd* (Living river), a shortened form of *Zāyandah'rūd* ("life-giving river," always associated with the city of Isfahan),¹² the volume featured on its dedication page Rūdakī's famous line *yād-i yār-i mihrabān āyad hamī* ("Memories of the kind beloved are coming"), a verse resonant with connotations of homesickness and remembrance of Iran's past. The poet was identified simply as "Zhālah." No biographical note accompanied the book, nor was there any mention of the earlier collection (*Gul'hā-yi khud'rū*). Even the photograph bore little resemblance to the free-spirited young woman; appearing instead as the formal portrait of a Soviet female cadre (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Photograph of Zhālah from the book *Zindah'rūd*.



The publication of limited distribution of Zindah'rūd cannot be regarded as a revival of Zhālah's reputation, for few remembered the brief career of the young poet. The book, Zindah'rūd, was markedly different from her first collection: not only in appearance and typesetting (typical of Soviet-published Persian books) but also in content. Its 130 pages comprises fifty-two poems, of which only one poem is a ghazal;¹³ the rest are Nimaic (free verse) or stanzaic experiments. In the mid-1350s/1960s, when Zindah'rūd reached Iran, major poets such as Ahmad Shāmlū, Mihdī Akhavān Sālis, and Furūgh Farrukhzād had already moved beyond the “romantic” stage of early modern Persian poetry. Zhālah's turn from ghazal to a romantic, sentimental, and only moderately “modern” style, though a step forward, came too late to be taken seriously by the literary mainstream. Some poems reveal the influence of poets like Nādir Nādirpūr,¹⁴ while her ventures into free verse remained tentative and not yet fully realized. Often homesick (recalling Isfahan's Zāyandah'rūd when watching a river in Prague),¹⁵ she also wrote poems celebrating her adopted homeland, including verses in praise of Soviet astronauts.

¹³Zhālah Isfahānī, Zindah'rūd (Moscow: Idārah-yi intishārāt-i dānish, 1965), 41.

¹⁴Zhālah Isfahānī, Zindah'rūd (Moscow: Idārah-yi intishārāt-i dānish, 1965), 42.

¹⁵Zhālah Isfahānī, Zindah'rūd (Moscow: Idārah-yi intishārāt-i dānish, 1965), 23–24.



Figure 5: Cover of the book Zindah'rūd, Moscow, 1344/1965.

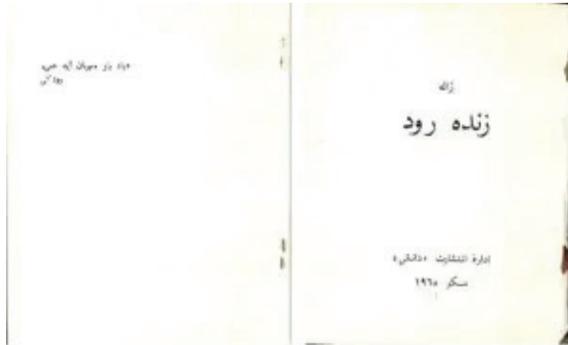


Figure 6: Title page from the book Zindah'rūd, Moscow, 1344/1965.

The most memorable poem in this collection, combining artistic craft with sincerity, is the opening piece, “Sītārah-yi qutb” (Polar star), dated 1338/1959. It reflects how, in those years, Russia’s space achievements inspired even poetry with celestial imagery during those years:

بخند بر من پرسوز ای ستاره قطبی
تو التهاب چه دانی؟ که روشنائی سردی

من آن شراره سوزان قلب گرم زمینم
تو آن ستاره آسوده سپهرنوردی.

چه سود آن همه زیبایی خموش فسونگر
اگر نداری سوزی و گر نداری دردی؟

چه ارزشی بود آن زندگانی ابدی را
اگر که نیست امیددی و گر که نیست نبردی؟

نمی دهم به تو یک لحظه عمر کوتاه خود را
هزار قرن اگر زندگی کنی و بگردی.

متاب بر من بی تاب ای ستاره قطبی
که من شراره گرم تو روشنائی سردی.

Laugh at me, who am aflame, O Polar Star!



What do you know of passion, you cold light?

I am that burning sparkle of the warm heart of the Earth;
You are that tranquil star roaming the galaxy.

What benefit is all that bewitching, silent beauty
If you do not burn and if you do not feel pain?

What value has that eternal life
If there is no hope and no challenge and fight?

I would not exchange even a moment of my brief life
For yours, even if you live and turn for millennia.

Do not shed your light on me, who am impatient and lightless,
O Polar Star! For I am a warm spark and you are a cold light.

Left-leaning intellectuals in Iran, who read eagerly, or at least curiously, anything published in the Soviet Union, found these poems by an exiled Iranian called “Zhālah” noteworthy. An emotional socio-critical poem like “Kūdak-i qalamzan” (Child engraver), dated 1327/1948 and published with several typographical errors, critiqued child labour in Isfahan’s craft industries and may have influenced writers such as Samad Bihrangī. The poem, which may have been known in Iran even before the publication of the book, ends with the following stanza:

امروز نقش می بندد با چکش ظریف
فردا شوی چو مردی نام آور و توانا
با چکش بزرگت بر فرق دشمنان کوب.
روز تو است فردا.

Today, engrave designs with your tiny hammer.
Tomorrow, when you are a strong man known to all,
Strike with your heavy hammer on the head of the enemy.
Tomorrow will be your day.

¹⁶Zhālah Isfahānī, *Kishtī-i kabūd* [Blue ship] (Dushanbe: 'Irfān, 1978).

¹⁷Zhālah Isfahānī, *Majmū'ah-i ash'ār* [Collection of poems] (Tehran: Nigāh, 1384/2005).

¹⁸Zhālah Isfahānī, *Kishtī-i kabūd* [Blue ship] (Dushanbe: 'Irfān, 1978), 7.

¹⁹Zhālah Isfahānī, *Kishtī-i kabūd* [Blue ship] (Dushanbe: 'Irfān, 1978), 21.

²⁰Zhālah Isfahānī, *Sāyah-yi sāl'hā: Sar'guzasht-i Zhālah Isfahānī* [The shadow of years: Autobiography of Zhālah Isfahānī] (Essen, Germany: Nima Verlag, 1379/2000), 263–64.

²¹Zhālah Isfahānī, *Sāyah-yi sāl'hā: Sar'guzasht-i Zhālah Isfahānī* [The shadow of years: Autobiography of Zhālah Isfahānī] (Essen, Germany: Nima Verlag, 1379/2000), 263.

Among literary critics and in literary circles, however, the book did not mark a breakthrough for Zhālah. She remained absent from major anthologies of contemporary Persian poetry and from critical studies of modern literature in Iran.

In 1357/1978, as Iran approached revolution, Zhālah published *Kishtī-i kabūd* (Blue ship) in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.¹⁶ This slim volume of thirty-four pages contained sixteen poems, though it was likely a selection from a larger number of poems intended for the book. Zhālah's *Majmū'ah-yi Ash'ār* (Collection of Poems) lists thirty-three poems under the same title, suggesting an original total of thirty-six.¹⁷ One of her most popular poems, "Shād būdan hunar ast" (Being happy is an art) first appeared here,¹⁸ its title added in her own handwriting, perhaps at the last minute. In "Man qanārī nīstam" (I am not a canary),¹⁹ she asserts that the reader should not expect delicate love lyrics; her poems are the angry songs of a people weary of waiting. Though far away, she insists she has never been oblivious to her country's fate, presenting herself as a poet of the "era of passage" (*dawrān-i 'ubūr*).



Figure 7: Cover of the book *Kishtī-i Kabūd* (Blue Ship), Dushanbe, 1357/1978.

Zhālah recounts in *Sāyah-yi sāl'hā* the delays in publishing her next book of poems, *Naqsh-i jahān* (Image of the world, named after the historic square in Isfahan).²⁰ It was eventually published in 1981²¹ by *Bungāh-i Nashriyāt-i Prugris* (Progress



Publishers(in the Soviet Union (she mistakenly records 1980 in her memoir), while in Tehran that same year Agar hizār qalam dāshtam... (If I had a thousand pens...) appeared.²² The poet's name was given simply as "Zhālah" in the book published in Russia, as in the earlier Zindah'rūd, whereas in Tehran it appeared as "Zhālah Isfahānī (Sultānī)." Both books were published as "selected poems," and many of the same poems appear in both. Naqsh-i jahān contained ninety-eight poems and included no introduction or biographical note. Agar hizār qalam dāshtam... contained 145 poems and featured a preface by Ihsān Tabarī, then a member of the Central Committee of the Tūdah Party of Iran. Tabarī's foreword, in line with the positions of the party, expressed some praise for the Islamic post-revolutionary government, perhaps to facilitate publication. While praising Zhālah's poems, he also did not fail to add some mild criticism, finding her poetry lacking in depth of imagination compared with what her peers in Iran had achieved in their more successful works.²³

²²Zhālah Isfahānī, Naqsh-i jahān [Image of the world] (Moscow: Bungāh-i Nashriyāt-i Prugris, 1359/1981); Zhālah Isfahānī, Agar hizār qalam dāshtam... [If I had a thousand pens...] (Tehran: Haydar Bābā, 1360/1981).

²³Ihsān Tabarī, "Foreword to Agar hizār qalam dāshtam..." by Zhālah Isfahānī (Tehran: Haydar Bābā, 1360/1981), 6.



Figure 8 (left): Cover of the book Naqsh-i jahān, Moscow, 1359/1981.

Figure 9 (right): Cover of the book Agar hizār qalam dāshtam, Tehran, 1360/1981.

The publication of this volume coincided with Zhālah's brief return to Iran following the Islamic Revolution of 1357/1979. Zhālah had returned to Iran full of hope and enthusiasm, probably expecting greater recognition and appreciation. However, she was soon disillusioned by the trajectory of the new religious autocracy. Although she refrained from writing openly about

²⁴Bīzhan, in an interview with Samuel Hodgkin.

²⁵The original meaning of the Persian title is all a person's belongings, especially when they do not amount to much.

these experiences for obvious reasons, her son Bīzhan later recounted that she had been arrested at some point during her stay in post-revolutionary Iran and spent a short time in jail.²⁴ After two years, Zhālah left Iran once again, this time to settling permanently in London, where she had earlier sent her son to study. She remained there until her death in 1386/2007.

Zhālah never ceased writing poetry. In London, which had become home to a substantial Iranian community, she was able to find companionship among Iranian poets and writers living there as well as among politically like-minded opposition activists. Yet it was mostly the company of younger poets that provided her with hope, energy, and satisfaction. She increasingly turned to Nimaic and free verse forms, and at times experimented with poetry entirely free of traditional meters. In some poems, she moved stylistically closer to the next generation of poets, such as Ismā'īl Khu'ī (1317–1400/1938–2021), who also lived in London, and with whom she frequently met at cultural gatherings. Although many might remember Zhālah for her more politically engaged poems, she was equally capable of composing moving, personal or contemplative poems even in her later years. One such example is the following short poem, written in 1377/1998, which reveals a markedly different voice from the conventional image of Zhālah:

دار و ندار
از دار و ندار
حافظه دارم و همت و
آبرو
و آنچه ندارم
یا کم دارم:
دارائی،
نیرو
و
رق....
یا این دار و ندار
کودک وار
دست در دست مادرم - زمین -
دور خوشبید می‌گردم
همین....

Haves and have-nots²⁵



Of haves and have-nots
I have memory and aspiration and
honor.

What I have not
or have not enough:
wealth
strength
and confidence.

With these haves and have-nots
Much like a child
Holding the hand of my mother – the earth –
I turn around the sun.
That's all.²⁶

The books that Zhālah published after her immigration to London include:

Khār'pusht (The hedgehog), London, 1983.²⁷ A slim volume of just over thirty pages, it contains ten poems. The last poem, "Guzārish-i manzūm" (A report in verse), is composed of ten monologues by ten characters representing different social types disillusioned with the revolution. The book shows little editorial care and was issued without basic publication details—no date, publisher, or even the poet's name. These appear to be Zhālah's poems critical of the new regime in Iran, published immediately after her departure in order to distance herself from the laudatory sentiments expressed in some poems in her earlier collection (*Agar hizār qalam dāshtam...*) and to situate herself more firmly within the milieu of exiled Iranians in the Western diaspora.

Alburz-i bī'shikast (The invincible Alborz), London, 1362/1983.²⁸ No publisher is listed, but Zhālah thanks her son Mīhrdād for overseeing its publication. The book contains forty-five poems across ninety-one pages, including both previously published and new works. Most are in the Nimaic style,

²⁶Zhālah Isfahānī, *Shukūh-i shikufan* (Essen: Nima Verlag, 1381/2003), 38.

²⁷Zhālah Isfahānī, *Khār'pusht* [The hedgehog] (self-pub., London, 1983).

²⁸Zhālah Isfahānī, *Alburz-i bī'shikast* [The invincible Alborz] (self-pub., London, 1362/1983).

²⁹Zhālah Isfahānī, *Alburz-i bī'shikast* [The invincible Alborz] (self-pub., London, 1362/1983), 25.

²⁹Zhālah Isfahānī, *Alburz-i bī'shikast* [The invincible Alborz] (self-pub., London, 1362/1983), 25.

³⁰Zhālah Isfahānī, *Har gulī bū 'ī dārad* [Each flower has a different scent] (London: Dawrān, 1364/1985).

³¹Zhālah Isfahānī, *Ay bād-i shurtah* [O! Fair wind] (self-pub., London, 1365/1986).

³²Zhālah Isfahānī, *Khurūsh-i khāmūshī* [The roaring of silence] (Stockholm: Bārān, 1371/1992).

some stanzaic (quatrains); no ghazals are included in this volume. Most convey nationalist or anti-war sentiments, such as the poem written from the perspective of children, “Biguzārīd buzurḡ shavīm” (Let us grow up!).²⁹

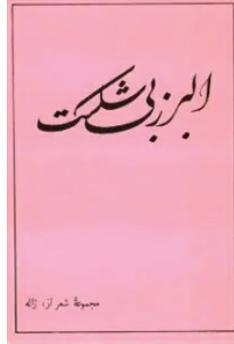


Figure 10: Cover of the book *Alburz-i bī'shikast* (The invincible Alborz), London, 1362/1983.

- *Har gulī bū 'ī dārad* (Each flower has a different scent), London: Dawrān, 1364/1985.³⁰ The book contains verse translations of twelve poems by Russian and Azeri poets, translated during 1346–1356/1967–1977. The translator’s name appears as Sāmān.
- *Ay bād-i shurtah* (O! Fair wind), London, 1365/1986.³¹ Zhālah thanks her sons for collecting and publishing these poems. The volume includes forty-two poems.
- *Khurūsh-i khāmūshī* (The roaring of silence), Stockholm, Bārān, 1371/1992.³² The book is a collection of 284 poems spanning 426 pages (including a preface and index). Zhālah seems to have intended this to be a collection of all the poems she considered worthy of preserving, with examples of poems from different periods and styles, with greater emphasis on later poems in free verse. In her preface, shifting between first- and third-person narration, she adopts a modest, and at times apologetic tone regarding her overtly political poems, which she acknowledges may alienate some readers, yet insists they must be included since they speak to their own audience. In the poem “Bā javānān” (To the young, 1365/1986), she admits fatigue



with the coarse nature of her own poems, which, bear the taste of the bitter life of her generation (man az khushūnat-i shi'ram bih tang āmadah'am / ... / kih ta'm-i zindigī-i talkh-i nasl-i man dārad).³³

• Surūd-i jangal (The hymn of the forest), London, 1373/1994.³⁴ Subtitled “Poems of today and yesterday” (Surūdah'hā-yi imrūz va dīrūz), the volume contains 154 poems in about 300 pages, including a preface and the text of Zhālah's 1382/1993 speech on poetry. In her preface, she presents this book as a continuation of—or complement to—Khurūsh-i khāmūshī. She acknowledges that some poems may no longer align with her current tastes, but she seeks to familiarize readers with the breadth of experiences and struggles she endured throughout her life. She also encourages readers to consult the concluding article about poetry to better understand her present view on poetry.

³³Zhālah Isfahānī, Khurūsh-i khāmūshī [The roaring of silence] (Stockholm: Bārān, 1371/1992), 83.

³⁴Zhālah Isfahānī, Surūd-i jangal: Surūdah'hā-yi imrūz va dīrūz [The hymn of the forest: Poems of today and yesterday] (self-pub., London, 1373/1994).

³⁵Zhālah Isfahānī, Tarannum-i parvāz: Shi'r'hā va namāyish'nāmāh-yi manzūm-i Tīmūr Gūrkan [The trilling of flight: Poems and the verse play of Tīmūr Gūrkan] (self-pub., London, 1375/1996).



Figure 11 (left): Cover of the book *Surūd-i jangal*, London, 1373/1994.

Figure 12 (right): Title page of *Surūd-i jangal*, featuring Zhālah's handwriting and signature.

Tarannum-i parvāz (The trilling of flight), London, 1375/1996.³⁵ This is a short volume of fifty-four pages and subtitled *Shi'r'hā va namāyish'nāmāh-yi manzūm-i Tīmūr Gūrkan* (Poems and the verse play of Tīmūr Gūrkan). In addition to the play, it contains twenty-one poems and eleven brief, haiku-like poems (numbered but not dated), presented under the title *Ishārah'hā* (Allusions). These suggest Zhālah's willingness to experiment with different forms, perhaps under the influence of other Iranian poets she met in London.

³⁶Zhālah Isfahānī, *Mawj dar mawj: Guzīnah-i shī'r'hā* [Wave upon wave: Selected poems] (Tehran: Alburz, 1376/1997).

³⁷Zhālah Isfahānī, *Migrating Birds: A selection of poems* (London: Shiraz, 2006).

³⁸Zhālah Isfahānī, *Shukū-fah'hā-yi zimistānī* [Winter blossoms] (self-pub., London, 2007).

³⁹Zhālah Isfahānī, *Az gulistān-i shī'r-i āzarī* [From the rose garden of Azerbaijani poetry] (London: Nīkān, 2022).

⁴⁰Bunyād-i Farhang-i Zhālah Isfahānī (Jaleh Esfahani Cultural Foundation, JECF), 2007, <https://www.jalehesfahani.com/>.

Mawj dar mawj (Wave upon wave), Tehran: Alburz, 1376/1997.³⁶ Subtitled *Selected Poems (Guzīnah-i shī'r'hā)*, this collection of about 170 poems was carefully curated to meet the standards of censorship in Iran.

Sāyah-yi sāl'hā (The shadow of years), Essen: Nima Verlag, 1379/2000. This is Zhālah's autobiography, written in the third person, in which she refers to herself as Mastānah.

Shukūh-i shikuftan (The majesty of blossoming), Essen: Nima Verlag, 1381/ This is a collection of ninety-nine poems, comprising both new works and selections from earlier publications. *Majmū'ah-yi ash'ār* (Collection of poems), Tehran: Nigāh, 1384/2005. Though presented as a collection of poems (with the designation "Volume 1" [Daftar-i avval]), it is a selective compilation of nearly 700 pages. It appears to include all the poems that could be published in Iran under censorship, in some cases with minor alterations.

Migrating Birds (Parandagān-i muhājir), London: Shiraz, 2006.³⁷ A bilingual volume of fifty poems by Zhālah translated into English by Rūhī Shafī'ī, who also provides an introduction. *Shukūfah'hā-yi zimistānī* (Winter blossoms), London, 2007.³⁸ These are Zhālah's last poems, some unfinished, published posthumously.

Az gulistān-i shī'r-i āzarī, ed. Āygūn 'Alīzādah, London: Nīkān, 2022.³⁹ This is a collection of Zhālah's works in Azeri translation.

Zhālah passed away on Āzar 7, 1386/November 29, 2007, less than three years after the death of her husband, Badī'-Tabrīzī, who had died on Day 18, 1383/January 7, 2005). She was eighty-six years old. She left behind her two sons, Bīzhan and Mihrdād, a substantial body of published and unpublished poetry, a foundation,⁴⁰ an award established in her name,⁴¹ and her legacy of being a relentless pursuer of all people's aspirations for freedom and equality.

In 2021, on the occasion of her centennial, a new selection of her poems (including some previously unpublished pieces) was



published in Iran by Nigāh under the title Khurram ān naghmah (Merry be that song).⁴²

⁴²Zhālah Isfahānī, Khurram ān naghmah [Merry be that song] (Tehran: Nigāh, 1400/2021).

Zhālah Esfahani Cultural Foundation has established a dedicated website (www.esfahani.com), which serves a valuable resource on Zhālah's life and works. It includes a list of awards, photo galleries, audio recordings of her readings, interviews, videos, documentaries, letters, articles, and additional archival material.