

*Celebrating*  
**A SUFI MASTER**



A Collection of Works  
on the Occasion of the  
Second International Symposium on  
**Shah Nematollah Vali**

Sponsored by: University of Leiden, The Netherlands  
October-2003

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*Also Published by Simorgh Sufi Society*

## **The Teachings of A Sufi Master**

By Dr. Seyed Mostafa Azmayesh

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On the Occasion of the  
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## Preface

The Second International Symposium, on the doctrine, writings, and the life of the great Iranian Sufi master Shah Nematollah Vali (d. 834/1431) was held in October 2003 at the University of Leiden, The Netherlands.

The first Symposium took place in 2002 at San Jose State University, California; despite many difficulties, such as obtaining entry visas for the scholars traveling to the US to participate in the event. However the second Symposium hosted a greater number of world scholars with various areas of expertise who presented their valuable research on the subject. Once again, the name of the great master was revived in the West and different aspects of his spiritual teachings and his collection of works were reintroduced.

Researchers, who study the development of the Islamic school of thoughts in Iran, often agree that Sufism signifies the essence and heart of Islam. It has always been a part of the Iranian way of life and has influenced the philosophy, arts, cultural events, and specially, the Persian language (Farsi). Sufism represents not only a theoretical school of thought, but also a way of life immersed in love of God as the originator of all things. For this reason, in Iran, Shah Nematollah Vali, is not only known as a gnostic or a poet, but also a Sufi master.

Today's Nematollahi Order is the continuation of the Ma'rufi Order, dating back to the founder of the order Shah Nematollah Vali, who holds prominence in the history of Sufism. The Ma'rufiyya Silsileh (Ma'rufiyya Order) came to be known as Silsileh Nematollahi (Nematollahi Order), towards the end of the thirteenth century (AH) [approximately early twentieth century]. Along the same line, the late Hajj Sultan Ali Shah Gonabadi held a special social, spiritual, and scholarly position among his followers. Thus, the silsileh (order) after him was named "Nematollahi Gonabadi" and the Center of the order was relocated from Mahan, Kerman

to Gonabad, Khorasan. At present, Silsileh Nematollahi Gonabadi is the most widely recognized order in Iran.

However, it must be noted that the esoteric teachings and mystical doctrine of Shah Nematollah Vali is not limited to Islam and Iran. Anyone who seeks spiritual growth can use his wisdom and teachings to illuminate a path towards enlightenment. In an age of great spiritual deficiency, I hope the following collection of works, which is the result of the Second Symposium, can bring about more positive attention to Shah Nematollah's school of thought and his vast spiritual knowledge.

The effort to revive Shah Nematollah's teachings in the West was led by Dr. Azmayesh who organized and arranged the Symposiums. The events were made possible by the cooperation and assistance of the following individuals and organizations; Quintessence Sufi, Paris; Stichting Simoerg Netherland; Bonyad Erfan Nematollahi, Canada; Inter Cultural Center, USA; ICC, UK; and Simorgh Sufi Society, USA. Other distinguished scholars and organizations participated and cooperated in many aspects. We offer our gratitude to many people who contributed to this effort. Foremost among them is Dr. Legenhausen for his invaluable scholarly contributions to make this publication possible.

***Shahram Pazouki***

## Another Remembrance of Shah Nematollah Vali

*Hajj Dr. Nour 'Ali Tabandeh'*

I am indeed very grateful for another opportunity to speak about Shah Nematollah Vali, and as a result I am thankful to all those who made efforts towards this end and have made this seminar possible. I am sure that none of those in attendance will be disappointed. Of course, with the presence of the many esteemed professors who will be speaking, you will be privy to much interesting information, and therefore I will not take up too much of your time.

The luminosity of this glowing star of Iranian Sufism has shone throughout the world and he is among the important figures who have attracted the attention of poets, philosophers, Sufis and social thinkers. Mention will definitely be made of Shah Nematollah's biography, of which you are aware and have studied, although his early life, and in other words his normal life, is not what we want to focus on because everyday occurrences happen to everyone and influence the lives of all in the same way.

As the place of his birth, Kooh-banân is where this great personality embarked upon his travels in search of the Truth, such as is mentioned in the *Divân-e Shams*: "Those in search of Allah, find yourselves!" He found himself and he undertook journeys and travels towards reaching his goal until he eventually reached the presence of Shaykh 'Abdullah Yâfi'î in Mecca and surrendered himself to his guidance and training. After that Hazrat Shah made many journeys to all corners of the Islamic world of that time until he arrived at Kooh-banân and there at the city of Mahan, he built a *zawiyyah*<sup>2</sup> for his spiritual wayfaring and for the training of his novices, remaining there until the end of his days.

On the path of his spiritual journey, he himself is an example of what he has mentioned in his epistles about the priority of knowledge (*ma'rifat*)

over mystical states (*Hâl*). He says that this issue is dependent on the source of the knowledge. Whenever the knowledge is from the source of knowledge, it is more honorable than a mystical state. He adds that acquired knowledge is of a lower rank than mystical states and in this case states are more definite. But if the knowledge, that is, the relation that is called knowledge, becomes manifest in the world of unveiling, this knowledge is more important than mystical states. This is what is meant by knowledge obtained through unveiling.

He himself was in search of Allah, and as was usual, he began his pursuit of it in the exoteric sciences. After this search and realizing that this knowledge alone could not guide man, he turned to spiritual states and armed with the weapon of the acquired sciences, discovered many sciences. He wrote many epistles, some sixty odd of which are available, and it is said that there were about three hundred of them. At any rate of these sixty odd epistles, his acquired and revealed knowledge through mystical states is shown.

In order that we can understand a small example of his knowledge through unveiling, we will refer to an interesting story mentioned by the mystic Dârâshukêh in his book *Sakînat al-Awliyâ'* concerning the biography of his shaykh.<sup>3</sup> He says every morning he went to be at the service of his guide, and others who were devoted to him would also attend to benefit from what he might happen to say. One morning he noticed that his shaykh was feeling physically unwell, as if he had a fever. He asked the shaykh about his health. He replied that the previous night he had not slept, ran a fever, and had a pimple on his eyelid that bothered him much. In short, there was some such discussion as this. One of those devoted to him became very upset, and because of being so upset he became withdrawn and cut off from this world. After a period when the novice had returned to his normal state, he asked his shaykh to order a cucumber and to put the seeds on his eye. The shaykh accepted his prescription and carried it out. Fortunately, his illness was alleviated. Afterward, someone asked the shaykh, "How is it that you are the shaykh and he is the novice, yet you did not understand the matter, but he did?" The shaykh replied, "I consider illness and good health to be guests from God. So, although I was about to seek a cure in the usual way, I was not upset. But this Sufi became so upset because of my illness that he was taken to a world where he saw the realities of things, the very world where the Prophet asked

God, ‘O my God! Show me things as they are!’<sup>4</sup> In that world, where one can see the realities of all creatures of God, he also found that attribute of the cucumber. After he returned from that spiritual journey, he brought back that souvenir.”<sup>5</sup>

This is knowledge through unveiling, in which there is no doubt and it is more elevated than the mystical state. Shah Nematollah himself also had passed through all of the stages of which he makes mention.

Aside from this, Hazrat Shah Nematollah also held spiritual influence within the society and he trained and spread his benevolence to people of all social levels, and many of the rulers benefited from him. It is even well known that Tamerlane<sup>6</sup> held him in great respect. The point must be made here that unfortunately we have the habit of seeing things only in black and white, and since we know Tamerlane to have been a blood-thirsty man, some of us do not consider anything he may have done to be good. This is the fault of past historians, but all of the details about a person or a society need to be explained. The good must be seen as good and the bad seen as bad. The prophet Lot did not curse the people in his society, but says: (*Verily, I am one who abhors your deeds*),<sup>7</sup> meaning that he was averse to their deeds, not to them as persons. It was not by carnage alone that Tamerlane took over the world. He showed great respect and courtesy toward religious leaders and those in whom the people placed their trust and to whom they were devoted. He was also a friend of the Islamic sciences. It is well known that he donated the proceeds from six hundred villages in trust to Shaykh Safiuddin Ardibili. Likewise, he also held Shah Nematollah Vali in great esteem. Once because of some occasion, Shah Nematollah Vali said to him:

*My kingdom is a world without end.  
Your kingdom is from Khata to Shiraz.*

Also Shahrukh, the son of Tamerlane, who after his father became the ruler of Khorasan, witnessed his father's respect for Hazrat Shah Nematollah and he himself followed this pattern. It is obvious that this respect provided a reason for jealousy and even at one of the gatherings where Hazrat Shah Burhanuddin Khalilullah, the eldest son and successor of Shah Nematollah Vali paid the same Shahrukh a visit, he rode right up to the building door and, as was his custom, sat right next to the Amir.

One of those present at the gathering, out of his own jealousy said: "How much better it would have been if Hazrat Burhànuddín had observed the necessary etiquette toward the ruler and because the king is the leader, he should not have ridden right up to the door of the building, nor sat next to the king, because all pay their respects standing," also adding other things of this sort. In reply, Burhànuddín said: "My father visited the king's father in the very same manner and also it is not proper in my rank that I should stand. I heard my father say, 'If someone expects that I stand in his or her presence that person is illegitimate.'" This in actuality was also a metaphor. The king said to the courtier: "Do not interfere. This does not concern you." This shows what great respect was paid to Hazrat Shah Nematollah Vali.

As a result of the great respect and interest that the Indian Kings had for Shi'ism, Hazrat Shah Nematollah Vali was repeatedly invited to that country. He sent Shah Burhànuddín Khalilullāh there, where he stayed for some time, and because his brothers and other members of his family married Indian princesses and formed relationships, they practically became residents of that land. Even after Hazrat Shah, they remained there and for some time the Nematollahi Order spread throughout India.

In many writings and books it has been mentioned that the founder and originator of the Nematollahi Order is Shah Nematollah Vali. This statement might be somewhat dubious to those not acquainted with matters of mysticism. This is because the words 'founder' and 'originator' are usually used for founders or originators of new schools of thought, sects or religions. A principle tenet of Sufism and *'irfān* is that the permission for training must be received from an authorized religious leader and it is not sufficient if attained only from books, otherwise if it was sufficient to attain this from books, the Qur'an which is the most sublime of books, would have been able to guide all people. In that case, all those who read the Qur'an, including the Khawārij, whose foreheads bore the marks of prolonged prostrations in prayer, should have been reformed. Therefore, one must be trained by a guide and a leader. Who is this leader? According to Mowlana [Rumi]:

*Since many a devil has the face of a man,  
One must not give one's hand to just anyone.*<sup>8</sup>

Towards the end of the Prophet's ( $\alpha$ ) era and after him at the time of Abu Bakr, Musailimàh Kadhdhàb had created a religion, and Aswad 'Ansí also did the same, but these soon disappeared because there was no spiritual, social or scientific base behind it. Our Wali 'Ali ('*a*) is known as the leader of the Sufis and leader of the Shi'ia because he received direct training from the Prophet ( $\alpha$ ), and 'Ali ('*a*) is called Imam because the Prophet ( $\alpha$ ) specified this. In the same way, after 'Ali ('*a*) we know his son Hasan to be Imam, because he was explicitly appointed by Imam 'Ali. From this it can be reasoned that every leader must be chosen by the previous one. In the same way that the Prophet and Imams were not chosen by the people, rather by Allah, the leaders that follow must indirectly be chosen through divine inspiration, meaning that every leader must choose his successor after him, and this is the very situation that occurred in the period of the twelve Shi'ite Imams.

After the occultation of the twelfth Imam, the issues of education and training in Islamic law (*shari'ah*) and the spiritual path (*tariqah*) became separated. The Imam dispatched the work of *shari'ah* to the jurists, such as is narrated from Imam Sàdiq ('*a*): "It is a responsibility of the people to follow any jurist who has self-control, protects his religion, opposes his carnal desires and follows the orders of his Mowla (Master)." Therefore, it is obligatory on every religiously duty-bound person to search for and follow any of the jurists who possess these characteristics. This of course concerns action and not belief. But in the period of occultation of the Imam the permission for spiritual initiation (*bay'ah*) and guidance was given to Junayd Baghdadi and he was given the permission to choose his successor and that successor to do the same and so on until the day of Resurrection. This connection of the continuous presence of the spiritual leader is called '*silsilah*' (chain or order) in Sufism. Therefore when *silsilah* Nematollahi is mentioned it refers to the chain or permission, which Shah Seyed Nematollah Vali had at the time, him being part of a chain. Other than this, Shah Nematollah Vali was no different as concerns religious leadership to his shaykh, Hazrat Shaykh Abdullah Yàfi'í or his successor Hazrat Shah Burhànuddín Khalilullàh, and they were all equal. According to various circumstances and situations, the great mystics and religious leaders, excelled over others, e.g. socially, or when the period called for specific changes in the order or in rulings given. Because of this, the order was thereafter named



after that particular leader, e.g. Suhrawardiyyah order, meaning the order after Shaykh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi or Nematollahi which means the same order where Shah Nematollah was one of the shaykhs and then became the spiritual pillar (*qutb*) and after Hazrat Shah Nematollah Vali became famous under the name of this great personality.

Now the reasons for the uniqueness of Hazrat Shah, which led to the order being named after him, are most present in the outstanding characteristics of the order and for further information we must refer to the relevant detailed books, but here I will mention some of the important issues. One is the matter of being occupied with work, while being idle is unacceptable in this order. Another matter is observing a balance between spiritual states of sobriety (*æahw*) and intoxication (*sukr*), and yet another being the elimination of *samà'*. Of course there are other issues, but for now they are not part of the present discussion.

The matter which we will discuss here, is that of *samà'* and music. Music comes from the order and harmony of sounds and voices, e.g. when you sit down next to a mountain river, the sounds of the small waterfalls, of the river and the leaves of the trees as they make contact with one another, together form a special music which moves the mystic, an inner movement, meaning attention to Allah and His remembrance. Therefore, it can be said that music itself cannot be generally prohibited. In one of his poems, Sa'di tells the following story:

*Last night a fowl cried at the morning,  
Reason and patience were carried away with tolerance and consciousness.  
One of my sincere friends,  
When my voice reached his ears,  
Said, "I did not believe that you  
Could be so confused at the noise of a fowl!"  
I said, "This is not a condition for humanity:  
That the fowl sings praise, and I be silent."<sup>9</sup>*

This itself is a type of music or in other words *samà'*. Following this, Sa'di says:

*The camel, by the song of its driver, reaches a state and dances.*

In this line there is an allusion to *Hudà*. *Hudà* was a specific music sung by the camel herdsman which excited the camels and they in turn would be stirred to movement. It has been narrated that there once was a caravan that was destined to leave Baghdad and travel to Isfahan. The camel herdsman sang a very attractive song, (*Hudà*). They moved forward all night and he sang all night. The camels ran the whole way such that they arrived in Isfahan in the morning, but all of the camels died from exhaustion and increased heartbeats.

The principle effect of music is undeniable. The obvious effect that music has on man may be used in the path of drawing man near to Allah and to the remembrance of human and spiritual responsibilities; but it may also lead to the path away from God and to surrender to carnal desires.

Thus, music can be considered in two ways: firstly, music which draws man towards God, e.g. the reading of Sufi books in a melodious voice which is now the practice in Sufi gatherings, or what Sa'di expresses about the cock's crow which is at the time of the morning prayer. This is music, which draws man close to God; and, of course, this type of music cannot be prohibited. In contrast to this, there is music which pulls man away from God. Much of the music of today is of this latter type, meaning that a necessary consequence of this music is that it causes the incitement of feelings, instincts and lusts. In such a case it is obvious that music is prohibited and this is the very music which is referred to in Islam as *ghinà*. In actuality, *ghinà* is music which draws man away from God.

With such a distinction, how is it that some would place a universal prohibition on music? This is because there is an ambiguous distinction between divine music and *ghinà*, and it is impossible to formulate a criterion by which to specify the boundary between them. In reality, those who view themselves as responsible for protecting man's morality generally prohibit music so that these deviations do not occur. However, if the music is of divine type, it is acceptable; but this also depends on the person involved. Because of this, many past Sufis, such as Ghazali, have at times allowed and at other times banned music and the *samà'*.

What has been left behind for us from those gone by is that today, at the gatherings of the sincere followers of Shah Nematollah Vali, poems of the great Sufi poets are read in melodious voices so that the attention of those listening is drawn both to the music created and to the meaning

of the poems, resulting in their spiritual elevation. Thus, the music of *samā`*, which in addition to music also involves certain movements, is prohibited by the Nematollahi Order. The good of this prohibition can probably be seen and understood more clearly today. But Shah Nematollah Vali never himself prohibited music.

In the biography of Hazrat Sultan `Alishah, one of Hazrat Shah Nematollah Vali's successors who was martyred in A.H. 1327, it is written that one of his followers asked of him: "Do you give me permission to play an instrument?" He was answered in the negative. In explanation of his request, the pupil said that the late Hazrat Mushtàq (referring to the famous Sufi master of the Qàjâr period Mushtàq `Alishah) played the *târ* (an eastern string instrument). He was told: "You become (like) Mushtàq and then do as you like." The famous statement "Do whatever you like," of the Sufi masters is interpreted as "Gain faith, and then you may do as you like." This means that if you gain faith and, for example, become like Mushtàq, then you will not want anything other than Allah, and so, then you can do what you like; not that you can do any improper act that you may like.

In conclusion, I would again like to thank all those involved in this Seminar, and Dr. Seyed Mostafa Azmayesh in particular, who initiated it; and I hope that experts in the field benefit from this seminar and that such seminars are held for other great scholars and mystics of Iran, so that people in general and those of our country can be proud of their society and religion.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Hajj Dr. Nour `Alī Tabandeh is the current *Qutb* of the Nematollahi Sultan `Alishahi(Gonabadi) Order.

<sup>2</sup> This is a place for the gathering of Sufis, also serving as a place of retreat.

<sup>3</sup> *Sakinat al-Awliyā`*, ed. Tarachand and Jalālī Na`īnī (Tehran: Elmi, 1965).

<sup>4</sup> A similar hadīth is narrated in *Awāli al-Li`ālī*, ed. Ibn Abu Jumhur al-Ahsā`ī, Vol. 4, p. 132.

<sup>5</sup> This story is a summary---rather than a direct quotation---from the one told in *Sakinat al-Awliyā`*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>6</sup> Tartar conqueror in southern and western Asia: ruler of Samarqand 1369 -1405. [Tr.]

<sup>7</sup> Qur`an (26:168).

<sup>8</sup> *Mathnavi*, Bk. I. 316.

<sup>9</sup> Sa`di, *Golistān*, ed. Gholam Husayn Yusufi (Tehran: 1368/1989), 97.

## A Quatrain Attributed to Abu Sa'íd Abu al-Khayr Interpreted by Shah Nematollah

*Dr. Seyed Mostafa Azmayesh<sup>1</sup>*

حورا به نظاره نگارم صف زد  
رضوان ز تعجب کف خود بر کف زد  
یک خال سیه بر آن رخان مطرف زد  
ابدال ز بیم چنگ در مصحف زد

*The hura has queued up to visit my Beloved  
Rezwan tapped on his hand in astonishment  
A black beauty spot put up a tent around his cheeks  
Abdal—in fear—has taken the mushaf between his hands.*

This quatrain is attributed to Shaykh Abu Sa'íd Abu al-Khayr, a great Sufi master of the fourth century of the hegira (between A.H. 357 and 440), of Khorasan in the north region of Iran. It is not to be found in the two books about this famous mystic written by his followers some time after his death.<sup>2</sup>

We take notice of this quatrain in an independent book under the name of *Kalamát-e Mani'um-e Shaykh Abu Sa'íd*, copied by a calligrapher about A.H. 950, existing today in the library of the museum of Kabul.

One of the more fantastic features of this book is that each quatrain has come to have a specific practical use as an invocation, if one complies with the necessary conditions for its recitation. For example, the purpose of the twentieth quatrain is to bring rain, the sixtieth serves to cure illnesses, and so on. In this way, these poems are invocations, used

by healers and seers for a positive and white magic.

In this book however, one cannot find any indication that the Shaykh himself used his poetry for this sort of purpose. Consequently, one can conclude that the Shaykh's followers and adepts discovered this usage of their master's poems in the course of time, through personal and collective experience.

On the other hand, researchers have had the opposing opinions about the attribution of the quatrains to Shaykh Abu Sa'id. However, even if the Shaykh was not the real author of all of these quatrains, his disciples heard some of them recited by their master in the Sufi reunions.

Now, we are interested in only one of these quatrains, which, because of its mystical character and hermeneutic language, was interpreted by some Sufi masters. There are at least six of these commentaries. The author of one of them is unknown. Another commentary was by Shaykh 'Ubayd Allah Ahrar, a Naqshbandi master of the ninth century (from 806- to 895).<sup>3</sup> Another commentary was written by Shaykh Muhammad Maghribi another Naqshbandi master of the ninth century. Three other commentaries were written by Shah Nematollah Vali, (from 731 to 834), two belonging to the library of the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul, and a third one to a private library in Iran.<sup>4</sup>

According to Sa'id Nafisi, one of the two manuscripts of Kabul's museum is named *Risalah Hurà'iyah*; and the name of another one is *Risalah*.

Now we will have a look at the third commentary, edited by Nafisi.

### ***The hura has queued up to visit my Beloved***

*Hura* means the souls that have the ability to contemplate the beauty of God. Beauty is the epiphany or divine appearance of the divine essence to the divine essence. At this stage the blackness of the ink of being had not yet been written on the page of the book of the worlds, and the name of existence was still denied to beings. The sultan of the curtain of the tent of "Allah was, and there was nothing with Him"—about which some verifiers said, "Now it is the same as then"—wanted to bring His perfections before His gaze [according to the *Hadith*], "I was a hidden treasure and I wanted to be known, so I created the creation to be known".

He saw Himself by Himself. Everything in the worlds that exists now in a developed way, appeared during this manifestation by a way of contraction. So, all of the entities of contingent things that in this time are witnessed by God in the aspect of their realization, in that time were witnessed in the aspect of divine knowledge. The advanced Sufis call the one who sees “existence,” His seeing, “light,” what is seen, “the witnessed,” the perception of what is witnessed, “knowledge,” and the appearance of the Truth in His beauty, “Beauty”. But that is the magnificence of the beauty; and beauty has its rank near the Light. This refers to the appearance to the worlds of the Light of the Truth through all the particles, as the Qur’an states: (*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is a niche wherein is a lamp*) (24:35). For this reason the perception of the prophets and of the awliyà is not able to perceive the magnificence of the Beauty, as the Prophet of Allah said in answer to a question of Abu Zar Ghafàri, “I saw a light.” In the same way, Allah says: (*the eyes cannot see Him, and He sees the eyes*) (6:103). However, the Light of Beauty, being the manifestation of God through everything, might be visible after long periods of solitude for the companions of the Unity, by following the Prophet. As the Prophet said: “I have seen my Lord in the guise of a young man dressed in green.” So, all these souls who reached the state of the God’s Beauty by following the Prophet, are named *Hura*. May God allow this to us as well as to our companions.

### ***Rezwan tapped on his hand in astonishment***

*Rezwan* signifies the intellects supported by the Holy Spirit. The intellect has two divisions.

[First,] the intellect is used in the jargon of the mystics and the learned for a lucid substance that God created in the brains and that shines its light in the heart. By this light the heart sees the invisible world. The invisible worlds are composed of six layers. First, the invisible of the soul; second, the invisible of the heart; third, the invisible of the spirit; fourth, the invisible of the secret; fifth, the invisible of the hidden; and sixth, the invisible of the invisibles. But the invisible of the invisibles is hidden from all creatures. The other invisibles are revealed to the perfect verifiers and mature precise ones by way of insight. Insight is a faculty of

the heart; in the same way as the eye perceives objects, insight perceives the interiors of things. Insight cannot be acquired except by illumination of that substance in the brain, which was said to be the intellect.

[The second division of intellect is] the intellect in the language of the sages (philosophers) is the soul's knowledge of its essence, that is, the soul perceives things, but it falls short of the perception of its own essence. Whenever, by divine grace and by following the *shari'ah* of Muhammad, constant obedience and much spiritual discipline, the soul knows its own essence. From that moment onward, the sages call it "intellect". Where the Lord God, may His magnificence be magnified, said, (*O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing!*) (89:27-28), by soul He means this kind of intellect. So, pleasing (*Rezwan*) signifies the intellects that have been mentioned.

### ***A black beauty spot put up a tent around his cheeks***

The beauty spot signifies the existence of the traveller who acquired the state of unity (*farq*) following the state of distinction (*jam*'), that is, when the traveller becomes cut off from all carnal pleasures and material desires in order to attain real desires. He closes first his eyes from the multiplicity of the worlds with the hope of the unity of the Essence and applies the kohl of being nothing (*sawàd al-wahj*, lit. black face) to his eyes. The real applier of kohl illuminates his eyes by his own lights, and his eyes witness the lights of unity. In his view no more than one light appears, and at last he sees himself and all things as one light. The interpretation of his state is this:

*O You by whom the universe and the soul are illuminated!  
In the eyes of all it is You Who is figured.  
Beside the sun of Your face  
The horizons are like base particles.*

When at last he sees himself and all things as one light, he imagines that the one who illuminates and the one illuminated are both missing, and the worshipper and the object of worship are annulled. The magnificence of unity dominates his heart, and he imagines that aside from him, there is nothing else. He begins to boast of his being and claims to adore

himself. The black beauty spot is this being.

***Abdal—in fear—has taken the mushaf between his hands.***

*Abdal* is said of the essence of the traveller and *mushaf* is said of the religion of Muhammad. The traveller is a person who has abandoned himself and mixed with nothingness. When the traveller is overwhelmed by the being of unity, as was said with regard to the first line of the poem, so that he saw himself, and took regard of nothing else, and when he is brought back from drunkenness to sobriety, from dreaming to wakefulness, he sees his own past being and unreal self-adoration. He finds his own way, and takes hold of the skirt of the religion of Muhammad, and occupies himself at the station of servitude. The end of the epistle.

**Remarks of the Translator**

Shah Nematollah explained in some of his treatises, such as *Lawà'ah*, *Nukàt and Jàmi' al-Latà'if* that everything can be seen by light, and light is perceivable by light. But, objects become invisible due to proximity and distance to light. Allah is light, light on light, and the light of the heavens and the earth. He is present everywhere, and is nearer to us than our jugular veins. So, it is due to proximity that one cannot see God. Shah explains that a human being is either perfect or imperfect. The imperfection is described in the following phrase of the Qur'an: (*Their eyes are not blind, but their hearts lack insight.*) (24:46). To the contrary, the perfect man is one whose inner eyes in his heart are open.

It is necessary to develop inner vision to understand the reality of unity. Inner vision is a heart's faculty for perceiving the esoteric aspect of things.

Shah explains that if one perceives the hidden dimensions by ones inner vision during his dreams, this case is named *ruyà*, and if the heart's energy reaches the brain, one can see the divine light and the invisible worlds even by the ordinary eyes, and this case is named *ruyat*.

According to Shah, what leads the seeker to achieve this kind of vision—to find the Divine manifestation and the face of God—is the kohl of wisdom. Thus, the Sufi teacher instructs the students to the path of developing inner vision, and to discover unity. The beautician (*kahhàl*)



applies kohl to the seekers eyes to open them. The student is then able to behold the face of God in all things, including himself. He who sees says:

*In our eyes the seer sees the Truth  
In each atom, the sun appears.*

In this state, the kohl applier or the Sufi teacher develops the hidden capacities of the student, gives him wisdom and humbleness, protects him from the dangers of self-adoration, and invites him to hold on to servitude. In that moment the student has a place between richness and poorness and while amidst the plurality of creatures, he is at each moment in contact with unity.

Shah said that a person asked ‘Alí if he could see God. He replied that he would never pray to a Lord that he could not see. He said, “I have never seen a thing without seeing Allah before it, after it, with it and in it.”

In conclusion, according to Shah’s explanation, unity is the basic secret of creation, and discovering this secret depends on the development of the inner senses and hidden faculties. The spiritual lessons of a Sufi teacher are like alchemic kohl, which permits to the students to observe God’s presence everywhere in the mirror of everything, and consequently to learn to love all things. The principle message of Sufism is this Love.

This message is celebrated by mystics such as Shah Nematollah and Mowlana Jalal al-Din Rumi when the latter says:

*O Muslims, what could I do  
I am neither a Muslim, nor a Hindu  
Neither a Christian, nor a Jew,  
Nor a Zoroastrian,  
Neither from the East, nor from the West.  
I eliminated duality  
I discovered Unity  
Unity is what I see  
Unity is what I seek  
Unity is what I speak  
Unity is what I sing.*

The Sufism is the application of kohl. A Sufi teacher is one who applies kohl (*kahhâl*), capable of curing the blind. Shah Nematollah introduces himself with this characterization:

*O seeker; O seeker!  
I have the Coal of Wisdom for your ill eyes  
I give sight to the born blind.*

### Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Dr. Seyed Mostafa Azmayesh has a doctorate in Islamic Law from Sorbonne, Paris and "Comparative Religious Studies" from the University of Lyon. He is a scholar, researcher and lecturer.
- <sup>2</sup> Jamâl al-Dîn Abu Ruh, *Hâlât va Sukhanân-e Shaykh Abu Sa'id Abu al-Khayr*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran: 1341); Muhammad Munavar, *Asrâr al-Tawhid fî Maqâmât-e Shaykh Abi Sa'id*, ed. Shafî'i Kadkani (Tehran: 1375).
- <sup>3</sup> First edited by Valentin Jokofsky under the name *Risâlah Hurâ'iyah* (St. Petersburg: 1899); later edited by Ahmad Bahmanyar (Tehran: 1313).
- <sup>4</sup> The first commentary of Shâh Nematollah can be found in the fourth volume of *Rasâ'il-e Shâh Nematollah Vali* (Tehran: Khaniqah, 1348), 9-15. His third commentary with the interpretations of Ahrâr and Maghribi are quoted in the volume of Abu Sa'id's poetry by Sa'id Nafisi, (Tehran: Sanâ'i, 1323). As far as I know, the second interpretation by Shâh Nematollah Vali has not yet been edited.

## Shah Nematollah Vali on *Rind* and *Rindi*

*Dr. Janis Eshots'*

It is no secret to the people of tasting that the term *rind*, like most other key terms of Persian mysticism, does not translate satisfactorily into any modern Western language, and I shall make no effort to translate it. Instead, in order to give some initial notion of the *rind* and *rindi* (the state of being a *rind*), I shall quote here the definition given by Muhammad Lâhiji, the commentator of M. Shabistari's *Rose Garden of Mystery*: "The *rind* is one who has got rid of [all] descriptions (*awsâf*), attributes (*nu'êt*) and properties (*ahkâm*) of multiplicity of entifications (*ta'ayyunât*) and has shaven off everything (i.e., all particular characteristics) by the plane (*randah*) of annihilation, wherefore he is not delimited by any limitation".<sup>2</sup>

As we see, the term *rind* generally means mystic who has freed himself from all bounds. Etymologically, the word is supposedly related to *randah*—a carpenter's plane (a tool used for smoothing the surface of wood): the idea is that, like a carpenter shaves an uneven piece of wood, the *rind* shaves off from his self all particular characteristics (limitations), thus becoming the "shaven one."

*Rind* (along with love, wine, *kharabat* and *saqi*) is one of the key terms of Shah Nematollah's mystical lexicon. The word appears in at least one quarter of his poems. Besides, Shah has a special treatise on the rinds and their states and stations, entitled *Maratib-e Rindan* (The levels of *rinds*). However, throughout the treatise *martabah* is used in the sense of "section" or "division" rather than in the meaning of [spiritual] level". The treatise (which is probably a concise version of Shah's oral discourses) contains a brief exposition of the key mystical ideas of Ibn al-'Arabi or

what is commonly known as the principles of the school of *wahdat al-wujud* (e.g., particular existents as entifications (*ta'ayyunat*) of the Absolute Being; five levels of the entification of Being; the most holy and the holy effusions; the fixed entities, etc.). It appears that Shah regards Ibn al-'Arabi's teachings to be the most adequate theoretical explanation of the practical mystical experience of an accomplished gnostic ('*arif*). (Hence, if we want to understand Ibn al-'Arabi properly, some kind of mystical experience on our own part is a must.<sup>3</sup>) However, apparently not all of Shah's disciples knew Arabic well enough to read Ibn al-'Arabi's own works. Besides, since they were Persians, their native language and its poetry with its elaborated mystical symbolism was, in all likelihood, much more appealing to them than highly sophisticated theoretical discourses in Arabic. (I would venture to say that this has something to do with the Persian national character and its predominantly aesthetic (*zawqi*)—may be even sybaritic—attitude to life, due to which the images of wine, *saqi* and *kharabat* appeal to it much more than those of the “greater rising” (*al-qiyamah al-kubra*) or the “self-disclosure of the Essence” (*tajalli-ye zati*) of the Real.)

I shall now quote the *ghazal* with the *radif* “*rind*” from the fifth chapter of the treatise *Maratib-e Rindan*, which contains a sketchy portrait of the rind, and then examine every *bayt* in detail.

*The rind is always in the company of a cup of wine.  
 The rind is permanently in love, drunk and devastated.  
 The veil of the wretched renouncer is his [acts of] obedience,  
 But, in our path, the rind has no veil.  
 Since the rind drinks countless cups of wine,  
 How can the intellect count him [for anything].  
 His lips are full of the water of life, and yet he has brought water to his lips—  
 Isn't the rind is like a cup of foam full of water.  
 On whichever path the rind finds a companion, he goes that way,  
 He does not remain at a water source, nor stays with a mirage.  
 This unbound one is not bound by anything.  
 How can he be bound by knowledge and a book?!  
 Seek the Seyed's path of rindi from Nematollah,  
 Because the rind makes no mistakes and is [always] right.<sup>4</sup>*

The meaning of the first *bayt* is outwardly quite plain: the sole business of the *rind* is drinking wine, wherefore he is always drunk and intoxicated to the degree that he is unable to account for his actions—in one word, he is a hopeless drunkard. On the other hand, since he says that he is permanently in love, we can suppose that probably his “wine” might be understood as the witnessing of the beauty of his beloved. Let us, however, check the mystical meaning of the key words—“wine” (*sharab*), “a cup of wine” (*jam-e sharab*), “drunkenness and devastation” (*masti yu kharabi*).

One glossary of mystical terms tells us that *sharab* is generally an allusion to the drunkenness of love and the attraction of the Real (*jazbāye haqq*). Besides, the glossary says, passionate love (*ishq*) and the taste of intoxication (*zawq-e sukr*) are also likened to wine.<sup>5</sup> Another glossary gives a more specific definition: “*Sharab* is the tumult of love (*shur-e ishq*), accompanied by actions which cause people’s reproach; it is peculiar to the folk of perfection (*ahl-e kamal*).”<sup>6</sup> The “cup” (*jam*), in turn, is a receptacle of this spiritual wine, i.e., the heart of the mystic.

However, I think that another interpretation is also possible. To Shah Nematollah, every witnessed form is a cup of wine, since it is the locus of manifestation of one of God’s names. What makes the *rind*’s intoxication permanent is exactly his ability to witness a single meaning in an infinite multitude of forms.

*Because of the jealousy of this drunken peerless witness  
No-one [else] fits in the abode of kharabat.*<sup>7</sup>

In turn, “drunk and devastated” (*mast o kharab*) alludes to submersion in the intoxication (*istighraq dar sukr*),<sup>8</sup> i.e., to reaching the utmost degree of the latter. This intoxication, again, indicates “leaving the outer and inner bounds and turning the face with undivided attention towards the Real”<sup>9</sup> and, hence, taking no heed of what is other than the Real.

The second *bayt* is based on a contrast between the renouncer (*zahid*) and the *rind*. The first is veiled from the Real by his witnessing of his own pious deeds. He takes pride in them and hopes to receive a reward for them in the hereafter. He has renounced (*zahada*) this world (*al-dunya*) for the sake of the other one (*al-akhirah*). In turn, the *rind* has no business with this world and the other one: he is so absorbed by witnessing

the Real in every form and image that he does not care for anything else—or rather, since he knows for sure that there is nothing but the Real, he has lifted the veils of the two worlds. This takes us to the problem of *himmat* (aspiration). A Sufi axiom says: “you are worth what you aspire to [therefore do not spend your *himmat* on trifles].” Let us remember that the Prophet could approach his Lord “at a distance of two bows’ length or closer (53:9)<sup>10</sup> only because “his sight never swerved nor went wrong” (53:17).<sup>11</sup>

The third *bayt* is based on a wordplay, which is elegant and witty by its form, but perhaps not exceptionally deep in its meaning. We are told that, since being a *rind* presupposes permanent intoxication, *rindi* is incompatible with the intellect (*‘aql*). None of the counterparts (the *‘aql* and the *rind*) take the other seriously. By doing so, the *rind* shows his perspicacity (*ziraki*), but the intellect—its arrogance and wilfulness.<sup>12</sup>

In the fourth *bayt* Shah plays with his favorite images of foam and water, indicating that they represent a single reality of water, though the difference in the intensity of these two particular levels of existence creates an illusion of duality (imagine that you are drinking water from a cup that is made of ice!).

It may be worth mentioning that in Shah’s *Divan* the images of water and foam and wine and cup appear more than a hundred times and that Shah is always keen to point to their oneness and the illusory character of the difference and otherness.

*Fill with water the cup [that is made] of foam,  
Find the cup and the wine by means of each other.  
In reality they are one, [but] the names are two.  
If you like, call it “cup”; if you like, call it “wine”.*<sup>13</sup>

The actual message, hidden in the imagery of foam and water, is grave and tremendous and difficult to bear for our vanity:

*We are the foam that has built a tent of wind on the water.*<sup>14</sup>

*In this sea, we are waves, and we are our own veil.  
When the wave falls, our egos go.*<sup>15</sup>

The “wind” is apparently our caprice (*hawa*): the “wave” is our soul or self (*nafs*), the “foam” might be the soul as well as the body. Both the foam and the wave are illusory and do not possess a real existence. The secret of *rindi*, hence, is removing the illusion of I-ness and otherness. Beyond this illusion (“wave” or “foam”) lies the ocean of non-entification. When the Real lifts the veil of illusion, the mystic sees everything as Him and Him as everything.

In the fifth *bayt*, Shah tells us that the *rind* is not at all particular as regards the itinerary of his travels and traveling companions. Besides, he is a restless creature who never remains at one place for a considerable period of time. This laxity and restlessness reminds us of the qalandars. I think the followers of such qalandari shaykhs as Jamal al-Din Savaji and Quib al-Din Haydar tried to imitate outwardly the inner states of the *rinds*: shaving the hair and beards and wandering from place to place symbolized separation and breaking attachments. They believed that imitation (*taqlid*) gradually changes into realization (*tahqiq*) and that frequently repeated actions form acquired qualities (*malakat*). But the “traveling companion” also can be understood as anything that belongs to any of the three domains—sensory, psychic or spiritual: whatever form the *rind* encounters, it instantly takes him to the Real. However, he never becomes a captive of any particular manifestation of the Real (“water source”)—much less of an illusion of “what is other than He” (i.e., a form or an image witnessed as possessing some sort of being of its own, different from the being of the Real).

In the sixth *bayt*, Shah explicitly confirms the implicit message of the first five *bayts*:

*This unbound (mutlaq) one is not bound (muqayyad) by anything.*

Thus, the deeper meaning of “breaking attachments” and “removing illusory images” is the lifting of all sorts of limitations. Having lifted them, the *rind* sees that:

*A neighbor; an intimate friend and a traveling companion, all is He.  
In pauper's rags and in king's satin, all is He.  
In the assembly of separation and in the closet of gathering, all is He.  
By God, all is He, then [again], by God, all is He!*<sup>16</sup>

In fact, this experience can be expressed in one word “*hē*”, i.e., “He”.

Knowledge mentioned in the second hemistich, is definitely the discursive (*bahthi*) or formal (*rasmi*) one, not God’s knowledge or that of a perfect mystic. Likewise, the book is the book of formal knowledge, i.e., the book of ‘*ulama*’ and ‘*foqaha*’, not the book of God—or perhaps Shah wants to say that, due to the unboundedness of the *rind’s mashrab* (“drinking place”), the very notions of “knowledge” and “book” are too narrow to convey his experience.

Turning to the final *bayt* of the ghazal, I assume that, in the first line, we should understand “Seyed” as the Prophet, i.e., that Shah regards the Prophet as an exemplary *rind* and views his path as the most perfect path of *rindi* ever traveled, while claiming himself to be an inheritor of this path. Another way to interpret the hemistich is to suppose that “Seyed” is Shah himself and to read “Nematollah” literally as “God’s blessing”. In this case, the message is that, in order to find the path of *rindi*, traveled by Shah, one needs to obtain God’s blessing (which, however, can only be given by God himself, not obtained by one’s own efforts). The second hemistich explains why it is necessary to (try to) find this path: “the *rind* makes no mistakes and is [always] right”, i.e., he is the “preserved one” (*ma ‘sum*)—preserved exactly by his unboundedness and knowledge that “all is He”.

In brief, one comes to the conclusion that, according to Shah Nematollah, the key characteristics of the *rind* are his lofty aspiration (*himmat*), separation (*tajrid*) from the illusory existence of “what is other than God” and ability (i.e., perspicacity (*ziraki*)) to see the true state of the things, that is, to see the Real in all things, or rather, to see the Real with the light of the Real. The spiritual station possessed by the *rind* is that of essential oneness, also known as *kharabat*. *Kharabat* literally means the lawless part of town, where all sorts of illegal businesses (in particular wine selling, gambling and prostitution) prosper and where the *rinds* (read: the lawless people and vagabonds) dwell. In the mystical sense, to become a *kharabati* (a habitu  of the *kharabat*) means to become free from the bounds of the illusory self, thus reaching the station of oneness—the process, succinctly characterized as “dropping ascriptions”.<sup>17</sup>

Shah is careful to underline that the station of a perfect *rind* is above the station of the *badal* (“the changed one, the substitute”, pl. *abdal*). The



latter means a mystic who has experienced the “change of being” or the “change of character”, i.e., God has replaced his evil traits with good and beautiful ones.

Thus in a poem devoted to Shaykh Ahmad Jam, he says:

*The Shaykh of Islam Ahmad Jam,  
Whose breath made a dead heart alive—  
It is said that “his wine became honey”,  
Don’t be a denier; don’t say: “When did this happen?”  
However, [know that there is] another rind, whose barrel became  
Completely empty of wine through a single attraction.  
Neither wine, nor honey is left in his barrel;  
His sugar has gone and he has gotten rid of the cane.  
Although the change of character is good,  
It is better to become nothing (la shay’).  
Nematollah who is the commander of the drunk,  
Has passed away from himself and gained subsistence through Him.<sup>18</sup>*

Hence, to become a perfect rind means to become nothing (and, therefore, everything). Thus, it is not quite proper to speak of the “new creation” or “substantial motion” in case of the *rind*, though these concepts are most helpful in explaining the change of being and character. I would propose two clues that might be of some use in order to explain the difference between the *rind* and the *badal* (both taken from the *Maratib-e Rindan*). First, I think that the rind can be described as one who has reached nearness to God by obligatory works (*qurb al-fara’id*) and the *badal* as one who has reached nearness to God by supererogatory works (*qurb al-nawafil*). In the first case, the servant becomes the hearing and the sight of God. God is hidden and the servant is manifest. In the second case, it is God who becomes the hearing and the sight of his servant. God is manifest and the servant is hidden.<sup>19</sup> The second clue is based on the gradation of manifestations (self-disclosures) of the Real. Shah admits that some *rinds* are only able to witness the manifestation of His acts (*af’al*), some experience the manifestation of His attributes (*sifat*). The perfect *rinds*, however, know that the acts are concomitants of the attributes and the attributes are companions of the Essence. It might not be improper to describe the *abdals* as the mystics who have experienced the manifesta-

tion of attributes and the perfect *rinds* as those who have experienced the manifestation of the Essence—the manifestation which is said to destroy its locus of manifestation:<sup>20</sup>

*There is neither a level, nor a locus of manifestation, nor [are there] mirrors.  
There is no name. What are the attributes?*<sup>21</sup>

“The essential manifestation is received by a realizer who is completely void of the necessary and contingent descriptions, states and properties of names. This emptiness is not totally different from the emptiness of the Real, but it is [like a] flash of lightning, which appears, but does not last, as our Prophet said: ‘I have a time with God, when no prophet sent out or angel brought near embraces me’,<sup>22</sup> and the reason why this manifestation does not last is the property of all-comprehensiveness of the reality of human being.”<sup>23</sup>

In other words, the reality of a human being is like a mirror which reflects God’s names in their totality. By virtue of being a mirror, it cannot be void of images save for a moment. Hence, what distinguishes a perfect *rind* from other mystics is his ability to recognize the Real in every image and to know Him by every name. In this sense, he is the possessor of the station of Adam, to whom God (*taught ... the names, all of them*) (2:31).<sup>24</sup>

That said, I would like to conclude with the assertion that, like *qalandar*, ‘*ashiq* (lover) and *mast* (drunk), *rind* is a symbol by means of which we attempt to qualify what is above qualities and to name what has no name. In practical terms, to be a *rind* means, first of all, to preserve the loftiness of one’s *himmat*.

*The drunk lover does not seek anyone except the Friend.  
Nematollah does not seek anyone except Him.*<sup>25</sup>

## Notes

1 University of Latvia. Latvia

2 M.Lahij, *Mafath al-i'jaz f sharh golshane raz*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Tehran, 1992, p. 636.

3 One should mind the words of Aqa Sayyid Raè Larjan (d.1853 or 1854): “The teaching of the “Fuææ” is the work of a *qalandar*” (M. Sadughi Soha, “A Bio-Bibliography of Post

- Sadr-ul-Muta'allihn Mystics and Philosophers". Tehran: Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1980, p. 47).
- <sup>4</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Rasa'il*, v.1, Tehran, 1978, p. 232.
- <sup>5</sup> "Sharh-e mokhtasar-e estelihat" in: R. M. Khomeini, *Divan-e Imam*, 35<sup>th</sup> ed., Tehran, 2002, p. 331.
- <sup>6</sup> "Mostalihat wa ta'birat-e Divan-e Shah Ni'matullah Wali", in: Shah Nematollah, *Divan*, with the introduction of S. Nafisi, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Tehran, 1999, p. 726.
- <sup>7</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Divan*, p. 37.
- <sup>7</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Divan*, p. 732.
- <sup>9</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Divan*, p. 726.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Holy Qur'an*, translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. London: Wordsworth Editions 2000, p. 455.
- <sup>11</sup> *The Holy Qur'an*, p. 455.
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. the *bayt* (which is sometimes wrongly attributed to Hafiz):  
*If you see the intellect, take him and bring him quickly to us,  
 Because he has deserted the service to the king of rinds.*  
 (Shah Nematollah, *Divan*, p. 105).
- <sup>13</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Divan*, p. 542.
- <sup>14</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Divan*, p. 174.
- <sup>15</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Divan*, p. 51.
- <sup>16</sup> 'Abd al-Rahman Jam, "Lawah", in: M. M. T. Majlis, *Risale-ye tashwq al-salikh*, with the attachment of A. Jam's *Lawayih* and F. 'Iraq's *Lawami*', Tehran: Nr-e Fatima Publishers 1996, p. 62. We have consulted W. Chittick's translation, (W. Chittick, *Sufism: A Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oneworld 2000, p. 75) as well.
- <sup>17</sup> M. Shabistar, *Golshan-e Raz*, in: M. Lahij, "Mafath al-'jaz", p. 763.
- <sup>18</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Divan*, p. 608.
- <sup>19</sup> See: Shah Nematollah, *Rasa'il*, v.1, pp. 242-243.
- <sup>20</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Rasa'il*, v.1, p. 231.
- <sup>21</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Rasa'il*, v.1, p. 254.
- <sup>22</sup> The English translation of the Hadith is from: W. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosures of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology*, New York: SUNY Press 1998, p. 437.
- <sup>23</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Rasa'il*, v. 1, p. 254.
- <sup>24</sup> The English translation is from W. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure*, p. 421.
- <sup>25</sup> Shah Nematollah, *Divan*, p. 442.

## Shah Nematollah Vali in Turkish Literature and the Appearance of Nematollahis among Ottoman Qalandaris

*Dr. Mahmud Erol Kiliç<sup>1</sup>*

*Wherever there is a city, that is my dominion.  
Sometimes I go to Iran sometimes to Turan.  
I have a hundred thousand Turks within me.  
Wherever I want to go, I go like a king.<sup>2</sup>*

### **Introduction**

The aim of this research is to look for the footprints of Sufi master Shah Nematollah Vali (730/1330 / 834/1431) from classical Turkish sources in general, and the re-appearance of the Nematollahi Order (*Tariq-i Nematollahi*) among the Ottoman dervish groups such as *Qalandaris* in particular. I will be very happy if I am able to contribute anything to the world-wide “Nematollahi Studies”.

I have divided my research into three chronological periods. In the first period, I will investigate the place of “Turk” or “Turkish” in Shah Nematollah’s life and the name of Shah Nematollah in “Turkish” literature in return. Since the figure of “Nematollah Vali” was seen among those who played a role in transferring so-called *Qalandari*, *Haydari* and *Batini* thoughts into Anatolian Sufi groups, the second period of my research is somehow provocative. In the last part I will distinguish the true “Shah Nematollah” from other “Shaykh Nematollahs” who are always confused in Turkish historical studies.

## **I. Shah Nematollah Vali's Turkish Friends and Followers**

Of course being a "Seyed", a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, there can be no discussion about Shah Nematollah's ethnic origin. Apart from that point, let me remind you once more about the meaning of the term *al-Insàn al-Kàmil* in Islamic theosophy which is being translated into Western languages as "Universal Man". As Rumi clearly pointed out, "The Universal Man" is a man who sits with seventy two nations and who sees every creation of God as a particular manifestation of His attributes. Because of being such a Universal Man, I believe that in the mantle of the mercy of Shah Nematollah many different characters, races and colours must have been gathered, too. And I am sure that many people, Arabs, Persians, Indians, Turks etc., knocked at the door of his *khaniqah* in order to ask him to show them how to forget their accidental and dividing bodily selves and find their immortal and unifying inner selves. This metaphorical saying explains exactly what I want to mention here: when the Kurdish Sufi Abu'l-Wafà al-Kurdi (d. 501/1108), after spending a long time seeking a spiritual master, met Shaykh Majid al-Din al-Baghdadi, an Arab, he said:

*"I was a Kurd till last night but became an Arab this morning"*. So in his life Shah Nematollah Vali was a unifying figure among people, and for centuries after his death his tomb, like Rumi's tomb in Konya, has been a centre of pilgrimage for divine lovers. These verses, engraved on the portal of Rumi's tomb, in fact might have been envisaged in the portal of all the tombs of the *qutbs* (literally, *poles*, masters) whether in Konya or in Mahan: *"This place became a ka'ba for divine lovers – So the imperfect man come here to become perfect"*.

We will investigate his relationship with this ethno-cultural group called "Turk" from an anthropological point of view. When Shah Nematollah Vali was born in Aleppo, Syria, in 730 (1330) the city was politically under the control of the Mamluks of Egypt, who were fundamentally of Turkish Kölemen tribes. At that time we know that a very large population of Turkomans called "Türkman-i Sham" were living in Aleppo's territory, who were basically of the Shamlu, Afshar, Begdilu, Inallu, Khüdabendelu and Navekiyya tribes.<sup>4</sup> Among those tribes we see especially that some time later the "Shamlu" tribe would play a very important role in the formation of the Safavid state in Iran, as well. It has

been said that most of the Aleppo's Turkomans were followers of Shaykh usayn al-Akhlati, with whom we will deal later.<sup>5</sup> Also many Iranian Sufis, specifically from Khorasan and Transoxiana, had already immigrated to this land, mainly during the Fatimid period.<sup>6</sup> In the same year as Shah Nematollah's birth, further north, on the way to establishing a new world order, we see Ottomans under Sultan Orhan Ghazi (d.759/1357) defeated the Byzantines at Philokrene, a hundred kilometres away from Istanbul. His father, the founder of the Ottoman Empire, Othman Ghazi and his Sufi master Shaykh Edebali both had died just four years ago in 726/1326. And five years after Shah Nematollah's birth, a Khorasani Sufi called Hajji Baktash Vali died two hundred kilometres to the north, in Central Anatolia. Neither saw each other but some time later their *tariqas* met and mixed with each other in Anatolia and shared a common destiny in the history of Sufism which we will see in more detail in the second part of our research. In the same year as Nematollah's birth (730/1330) another famous Anatolian Sufi and the *khalifahh* of Shaykh Alauddin 'Ali who was the *khalifahh* of Shaykh Sadraddin al-Ardabili, Shaykh Hamiduddin al-Aqsarayi [Somuncu Baba] was born in Qaysari. His famous *khalifah* was Shaykh Hajji Bayram Vali (d.833/1430) who might have met with Nematollah in Azerbaijan.

Around the age of twenty the young Nematollah was in a cave for three years on retreat in a mountain called *Jabal al-Muqattam* in Qasr al-'Ayn which was near to Cairo.<sup>7</sup> This cave actually was a *Jalali-Qalandari Khaniqah* (later Baktashi Tekia) where Shah Nematollah Vali entered several times of forty days retreat. According to historians such as al-Maqrizi, al-Safadi, al-Hatib and Ibn Battuta there were some Qalandari khaniqahs in Aleppo, Damascus, Cairo and Fustat area since 600/1200.<sup>8</sup> A famous Nematollahi author Ma'sum 'Ali Shirazi says this in *Îrâ'iyiq al-Haqâ'iyiq* and adds that his retreat experience was written in Arabic calligraphy and fixed on the portal of this cave-tekia.

According to same source Shah Nematollah also met there Hajji 'Ali Baba and Hajji Lotfullah Baba who were the guardians of this cave at that time and upon witnessing some miracles of him they both become his *murids*. Either Ma'sum 'Ali Shirazi or some Turkish historians shared the same idea that Kayghusuz Baba's tomb was in that cave. But some other historians believed that Kayghusuz Abdal was alive in Cairo most

probably around same years of Shah Nematollah was there.<sup>9</sup> Who was Kayghusuz Baba then? This Turkish Sufi who was known among Egyptian people as ‘Abdullāh al-Maghāravi or Shaykh al-Maghāravi was born in the town called Teke in Antalya, a sea side town of today’s southern Turkey. It has been said that he was a son of the governor of this province. When he initiated into to *tariqa* he gave up all worldly things and went to Cairo then Mecca, Aleppo, Damascus and Cairo again. He was a *khalifah* of Abdal Musa who was a famous *Qalandari* from Antalya. Kayghusuz Abdal has written some small treatises on Sufism which even their names were in same style of Shah Nematollah Vali’s works, such as *Jawharnama*, *Manbarnama*, *Budalanama*, *Vujudnama*, *Saraynama*, etc... We do not have any historical proof whether Shah Nematollah Vali and ‘Abdullāh al-Magharavi or Kayghusuz Abdal met each other either in this cave-*khaniqah* or somewhere else. But the fact that Shah Nematollah Vali’s residing at least three years in this *Haydari-Jalali-Qalandari khaniqah* would be very important point of his further re-appearance in Anatolian Sufi circles as a Qalandari/Haydari Shaykh. We may think that before “*al-Tariqa al-Yāfi’iyya*,” Shah Nematollah might have been initiated into this *tariqa* and preserved some of their moods even when he later became al-Yāfi’i’s disciple. I believe that at that time the relationships among dervish orders—even among far ends—were not as strict as modern categorizing historians thought. In many cases it is not so easy to distinguish some orders from others. Otherwise the question of why Shah Nematollah chose this Qalandari place for his retreat could not be answered so easily.

We saw, at the age of twenty four, Seyed Nematollah was taking *bay’a* from the hand of Shaykh ‘Abdullah Yāfi’i (d.768/1367) and spending nearly seven years with him in Mecca, training in spiritual sciences under his guidance. An Ottoman historian of Sufism, Haririzadha Kemaluddin (d.1299/1882), who wrote a huge encyclopaedic work on all *turuq al-Sufiyya* called *Tibyānu Vesail al-Haqaiq fi Bayani Salasil al-Taraiq* considered “*al-Tariqa al-Yāfi’iyya*” to be an offshoot of the Akbariyya branch of the Qadiriyya (*Yāfi’iyya-i Akbariyya-i Qadiriyya*) and meeting point of “Qadiriyya”, “Akbariyya”, “Sohrawardiyya”, “Rifai’iyya”, “Shazliyya” and “Madyaniyya” orders.<sup>10</sup> After spending some time with his Shaykh al-Yāfi’i he went to Cairo again. We don’t know exactly whether he met Kayghusuz Abdal this time in Cairo or not.

Some Nematollahi sources show Shah Nematollah Vali as a follower of Seyed Muhammad Afitabi in Cairo, too, without giving any information about him.<sup>11</sup> We don't know whether this man was the same man that Kâtib Chelebi names as Afitabi-i Marzifuni from Merzifon in Northern Anatolia or not.<sup>12</sup> What we definitely know is that at this time he met another Anatolian Sufi; Seyed Husayn al-Akhlati. It has been said that Seyed Nematollah studied occultism (*'ulum al-ghariba*) and numerology (*'ilm al-huruf*) under the guidance of this master.<sup>13</sup> Who was this Seyed Husayn al-Akhlati then? According to some written Sufi chains (*silsilename*) he was the *khalifah* of Seyed Abu'l-Fath al-Saidi, the *khalifah* of Abu Madyan al-Magribi,<sup>14</sup> which was from the same chain as Shaykh 'Abdullah Yâfi'i. He was born in Ahklat, Bitlis in Eastern Anatolia and had many disciples all over the Middle East, mainly in Aleppo, Damascus and Cairo. According to the book, *Sharafnama*, he foresaw the Timur's occupation of Iran and Anatolia and left his homeland with 12,000 *murids* and went to Cairo via Damascus.<sup>15</sup> Among his disciples we see also another famous Anatolian Sufi and contemporary of Shah Nematollah, Shaykh Badraddin Mahmud al-Simavnavi (760/1359 - 820/1417) who would later on be executed by Ottoman Grand-Mufti because of his heretical ideas. Badraddin too, after he studied the science of logic in Cairo with Seyed Sharif al-Jurjani (d.816) he came to Aleppo. According to some legendary narratives in a *Manaqibnama* on him, on that occasion "a thousand of Turkoman welcomed him in Aleppo" and what is more, the jurist of Aleppo who previously had announced the death sentence of Seyed Nasimi became his *murid* too. What is interesting is that some sources consider the above mentioned famous Turkish *hurufi* poet Seyed Nasimi—who was killed in a very tragic way in Aleppo in 807/1404—as Nematollah's *murids* rather than Fadzlullah's.<sup>16</sup> Hüsayn al-Akhlati sent Shaykh Badraddin to Tabriz as his *khalifah* where he met Timur and he wanted to take him to Samarqand as his *mufti*, as well as to marry him with his daughter. According to his *Manaqibnama* he refused it and escaped in dervish clothes from Tabriz to Egypt via Ahklat. What is interesting is that some scholars points the simultaneity and similarity between the lives of Shah Nematollah and Shaykh Badraddin.<sup>17</sup> In Anatolia *tariq-i Badraddiniyya*<sup>18</sup> and *tariq-i Nematollahi* didn't continue under their names but were assimilated to the Baktashiyya, Futuwwatiyya and Golshaniyya orders.<sup>19</sup>

We saw that Shah Nematollah came East around 763/1362 to Ardabil



meeting with Shaykh Sadr al-Din Musa (d.794/1392), the son of the progenitor of the Sarāvids, Shaykh Safiyyuddin al-Ardabili, and Qasim-i Anwar. He said that during his short stay in Ardabil he tasted the stage of “love for the sake of God” (*al-hubb fi'llah*) from the Sufi masters of Ardabil. He praises Shaykh Ibrahim Zahid-i Gilani who was in the position of founder of Safawiyya and Khalvatiyya orders in his poetry (*Divan*, p.75). And after a short stay in Azerbaijan we saw him in Central Asia, first in Samarqand where he spent his time mostly in retreat (*khalva*) in the caves of Samarqand. This intensive spiritual life caused such extraordinary things (*karamat*) from him that although he was in a state of isolation from people, day by day some Turkish nomads started to gather around him. He gained a large number of *murids* from among them. I think that in order to gain the sympathy of nomadic people speaking their language might be an important instrument. So we can think that Shah Nematollah Vali was speaking the Turkish language or dialect as well. In his poetry we witnessed his using some Turkish words like “Yasak”, “Yarlig”, “Toy”, and “Encu” etc. But we are not sure whether he learned it when he was a child in Aleppo, or among the Kōlemens in Cairo or later in Azerbaijan or Turkistan. For example he says in his poem;

*Whole being is your grace  
 From your grace is our existence  
 Don't tell me any more Turkish words  
 Till you know yourself by knowing who "I" and "Thou".*  
 (*Divan*, p. 604).

We see that besides the implication of a very high meaning of unity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*) he also makes some stylistic art in this macaronic poem (*mulamma*) using three languages (Arabic, Persian, Turkish), and at the same time includes a riddle (*muamma*). The first line is in Arabic, then the second line starts with Persian but ends in Turkish. But in Turkish he quotes a part of a famous cant phrase “*Sen seni bil sen seni*” which means “Know yourself”. In other poem he says that;

*“If you want to taste our taste take the way of the Wine-bearer  
 Drunken Turk's love despoils the souls”*  
 (*Divan*, p. 172)

Mowlana Sedidüddin Nasrollah reported very important news from his Turkistan life. He said that only in a day nearly 900 Turkic nomads had taken from him a *bay'a* hand in hand on an open plain (*sahra*) and initiated into his *tariqa* in a single ceremony. But according to Nematollahi sources Shaykh Amir Kulal (d.772/1370)—who was either the master of Bahauddin Naqshband or Amir Timur—jealously informed Timur of this ceremony and warned him that those Turks were all fully armed at that ceremony. It has been said that he told Timur that if he would claim the kingdom, nobody could stop him.<sup>20</sup> But it is very strange that neither in *Manaqib al-Amir Kūlal* nor in other Naqshbandi sources we could not find any proof for this claim, there is no mention of it.<sup>21</sup> What is more, it has been reported that Shah Nematollah recited the verses below after this ceremonial gathering with local Turks;

*Wherever there is a city, that is my dominion  
Sometimes I go to Iran sometimes to Turan  
I have a hundred thousand Turks within me  
Wherever I want to go, I go like a king.  
(Divan, p. 579).*

So, these metaphorical verses were being interpreted by Timur's servants as Shah Nematollah Vali's challenging him and claiming a worldly sultanate, so that Timur began suspecting him. And unfortunately, at the end this kind of counter-propaganda resulted Shah Nematollah Vali's expulsion from Transoxiana. But it seems that his Turkistan life left an unforgettable effect on him. He never forgot this land and its people even when he was far away from them in Kerman. He sent many letters to his adherents there. Once he sadly said:

*O gentle east wind, if you go towards Turkistan  
Send our greetings to friends  
In spirit we are in with our dear fellows  
However much our body is in Kerman.  
(Divan, p. 601.)*

At around the year 775 he went to Herat where he married the daughter of Amir Hüseyin al-Harawi. We know that for some reasons

Abdurrahman Jami (d.898/1493) who was famous Naqshbandi didn't include his name in his famous Persian Sufi hagiography *Nafahat al-Uns* completed at around year of 883/1478 (ed. by Abidi, Tehran 1996). In that book he sometimes accuses some Sufis of "having fallen into the valley of disbelief (*ibaha*) and of neglecting the shari'a and the sunna of the Prophet" (p. 10). But his Turkish student 'Alī Shir Nawai (d.907/1501) translated this book into Chaghatayi Turkish in 901 with some corrections and additions under the title of *Nasayim al-mahabba min shamayim al-futuwwa*. Nawai says that because Jami neglected some Turkish and Indian Sufis in his book, he added nearly 170 Sufis to his translation mainly from those lands. What is interesting is that he includes the name of "Seyed Nematollah" among them too. Seventy years after Nematollah's death Nawai says about him: "Seyed Nematollah—may God sanctify his soul—was residing in the city of Mahan in Kerman province. He was perfect in the exoteric (*zahiri*) and in the esoteric (*batini*) sciences and dressed with piety and ascetism. The emperors of his time, especially the kings of India were his *murids* and believers. And many gifts and endless vows had being sent to his service from this land. Seyed was interested in poetry too and had a *Divan*. For example this was his couplet; "We came into the world so – we could show God His creatures." His tomb is in that city."<sup>22</sup> A few years later after Nawai, an Ottoman Naqshbandi, Lami'i Chelebi (d.939/1532) translated *Nafahat* into Anatolian Turkish which is the Ottoman language under the name of *Futuh al-Mujahidin* (ed. by S. Uluda - M. Kara, Istanbul 1995) but he also omitted the name of Nematollah because he translated it directly from Jami's Persian work without consulting Nawai's work.

In his later life, Shah Nematollah Vali settled down in Mahan near Kerman where he spent the rest of his life for almost 25 years until he passed away in 834/1431.<sup>23</sup> After his death his *tariqa*, at the hand of his son and his successor Shan Khalil Allah, spread first towards to the East, up to India. For many generations this order was controlled by the members of the family in Deccan. But after Mir Shah Shams al-Din Muhammad III the leadership of the Nematollahi Order passed out of the family to Mir Mahmud Dakkani. In that period the very nature of the Nematollahi Order started to change towards Qutb-Shahis, which we will focus on later.

On the other hand, the Nematollahis who decided not to go to India and preferred to stay in Persia first had good relations with Turkish origin Safavids. Shah Ismail Hatayi—who was the semi-mythic Sufi master according to Anatolian Qizilbashs—appointed Mir Nizameddin Abdulbaqi, a son of Seyed Nematollah Thani, as *sadr* (prime minister) first and then *wakil-i nafs-i humayun* (vice president) who was killed by the Ottomans at the battle of Chaldiran in 920.<sup>24</sup> In the years around 960/1555 there were even some marriages between Nematollah's descendants and the Safavid house. By the middle of the eleventh/seventeenth century the members of the family held the posts of *naqib* and *kalantari* in Yazd. Furthermore we see even some Nematollahis were trying to interpret some of the verses from the *Divan* of Shah Nematollah Vali as foreseeing Shah Ismail's government. In the book of *Mahdaviyya* (which was attributed to him) it has been reported that he said that before the appearance of Imam Mahdi the city of Constantinople will be conquered by Muslims with the Mahdi's single shouting of *Allaho Akbar*.<sup>25</sup> And then we see the changing Sufi character of Iranian Nematollahis gradually towards a social fraternity (*jiwanmardi*) and sometimes even to a gang group.<sup>26</sup> For example by the age of Shah Abbas I (1587-1629) the spontaneous sports performances like wrestling “were transformed into ritualized fights between two *futuwwat* factions: Nematollahis and Haydaris”. The Venetian traveller Vincentio d'Allessandri “who visited Tabriz and Qazvin during Shah Tahmasb's reign, says that the city of Qazvin was divided into two factions: five wards were Nematollahi and four were Haydari... Neither the King nor any one else could put a stop to it”.<sup>27</sup> Some historians said that the Nematollahi Order became Shi'ite in those days in the fifteenth century and then gradually died out in Iran.<sup>28</sup> But at the hand of Ma'sum 'Alí Shah Deccani (d.1211/1796) we saw the revival of the Nematollahi Order, who brought this order back again to its homeland in Iran. After that we witness the division of the Nematollahi Order into different subdivisions, such as Kawsariyya, Safi 'Alí-Shahiyya, Gonabadiyya, Shamsiyya, Munis 'Alí-Shahiyya.<sup>29</sup>

From this brief history of the Nematollahis we understood that there are different intellectual and spiritual periods of this order, too. As a matter of fact, this is a common fact of all Sufi orders. There is a proverb among Turkish Sufis summarizing this fact very well: “*The colour of the tariqa is determined by the taste of the present master*”.

At the end of our first historical period which starts with Shah Nematollah Vali's born in Aleppo and ends with his passing away in Mahan we can say as a summary that in his youth in Syria and in Egypt we saw him in close contact with some Turkish Sufis. And in his Central Asian days he had many Turkish followers with whom it seems that he continued to correspond while he was in Kerman. We must keep in mind those historical anecdotes from his personal life hoping that they might help us in the understanding of Shah Nematollah's re-appearance in Anatolian Sufi literature which we will deal with in the second period of our research.

## **II. The Nematollahi Order and Anatolian Qalandaris:**

In this second part of my research I will analyse the further impact of the *Nematollahi* order on Anatolian Sufi groups. It seems to me that this problematic issue is somehow a separate case from that of Shah Nematollah himself.

According to some historical documents in the early days of the Ottomans there were some Sufi figures in Anatolia who in some degrees were in close contact with the ruling class. In some sources extraordinary stories have been attributed to them as helping the rulers. The rulers believed in their spiritual help and *hinma*. According to those legendary sources all the sultans were *murids* of certain Sufi masters. So who were they? In general, we can categorise them into two basic groups: first were Sufis who were so observant of religious duties that they were very welcomed by the majority of the religious community including the rulers. And second were Sufis who were marginal dervishes who mostly escaped from eastern lands where it was unsuitable for them to live.<sup>30</sup> Some of them came from Baghdad, some from Central Asia, some from Khorasan and some from Azerbaijan to Asia Minor and some of them were dervish-soldiers, some of them Seyeds and even some semi-mythical un-known personalities like "Yedi Emirler" (Like *Haftanan* in Shiraz). In written sources their common name was "*Abdalan-i Rum*" which can be translated as "Abdals of the Land of Anatolia or Dervishes of Anatolia". Actually, in the historical sources we come across some names of dervish groups from this period like *Haydaris*, *Wafais*, *Yasavis*, *Ahis*. And some time later we see some other names also such as *Ahmed's (Rifais)*, *Mawlavis*, *Qalandaris*, *Jawlakis*, *Baktashis*, *Hurufis* etc...<sup>31</sup> Some of the historians called some of those groups heterodox. As a matter of fact, the

real differences among those Sufi groups of the formative period of the Ottomans are still an enigma. Most of them are so interconnected with each other that it is very difficult to make an easy differentiation among them. A Qalandari at the same time could be a Hurufi or a Baktashi. Or a Wafai could appear under the cloak of a Haydari. Some modern historians classify Ottoman Qalandari groups as “marginal” and divided into *Haydari*, *Qalanderi*, *Torlak*, *Ishik*, *Jami*, *Shamsi* and *Nematollahi* subdivisions.<sup>32</sup> The common philosophical aspects of those groups were the idea of the unity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*), explanation of created things and many other subjects in accordance with the science of letters (*ilm al-huruf*), disinterest in peoples opinion towards them (*malamat*), preferring to travel rather than to settle down (*sayyaha*) and believing in twelve infallible Imams as their spiritual chain<sup>33</sup> and the appearance of Imam Mahdi at the end of time (*Mahdism*) etc. That is why especially among Qalandari groups and in their sources we see some Nematollahi motifs with which we want to deal more here.

As far as we know, the earliest Ottoman source that mentioned Shah Nematollahi's name was Nav'izade 'Atai's (d.1045/1635) *Hadaïq al-Haqaiq*. He says: “The Nematollahi Order comes from Seyed Khalil from Nematollah Vali from 'Abdullah Yâfi'î from Ahmad Ghazali. Seyed [Nematollah] died in 867 and was buried at Mahan, one of the towns of Kerman. He has a khaniqah and a ziyaratqah. Fuqara [of his khaniqah] are mostly traveller-dervishes. Shaykhs [of this khaniqah] are descendants of the Prophet's household.”<sup>34</sup> The famous sixteenth century Ottoman traveller, Awliya Chelebi (d.1095/1684), in his *Sayhatnama* mentions the Nematollahi Order three times. In the first place he counts the Nematollahi Order by name among famous Sufi orders. In the second place he quotes a “*Futuwwatnama*” including a Persian poem of Shah Nematollah on the symbolism of the dervish headdress (*Taj*). It has been reported that Shah Nematollah was wearing a green dervish hat of twelve parts (*on iki terkli*). In the third place he reports the meeting of a Golshani Shaykh ('Ashik Vali) with a Nematollahi Shaykh called Shaykh Saib in Cairo.<sup>35</sup> Then historian Jalalzada Mustafa reports in his *Tabaqat al-mamalik* that in 1542 when Sultan Kanuni Sülaiman returned from his Budin battle a big crowd were meeting in Edirne to greet him. Among them there were groups of dervishes such as Haydariyan, Cavlakiyan,

Qalanderan, Jamiyan and Nematollahiyan.<sup>36</sup> Who were those “Nematollahiyan”? Paul Ricaut, a European traveller in Ottoman lands in the seventeenth century says that the Nematollahi Order came to the land of the Ottomans at the time of Chelebi Mehmed I (d.1421) and he gives some details of their *zikh* ceremony.<sup>37</sup> Von Hammer said that those names of *ituruq* were the dervish groups of Anatolia in the early days of the Ottoman Empire: *Nematollahis*, *Hayderis*, *Bektashis*, *Babayis*, *Wefayis*. *Hindilar Tekkesi* in Istanbul was the place of refuge for all those wandering dervishes from India who visited Istanbul. A friend of secretary and dragoman of the legation of the United States of America at Istanbul, John P. Brown, had said to him (at around 1867) that the greater part of that *tekiya* belong to the order of *Naqhbendis*, *Qadiris*, *Chistis*, *Kubrawis*, *Nematollahis* and *Qalandaris*.<sup>38</sup> In modern times Professor Fuad Köprülü (d.1966) mentions Shah Nematollah’s name among the constructive figures of the Safavid religious understanding in Anatolia.<sup>39</sup> And most recently Professor A. Y. Ocak of Ankara University considers the Nematollahi as an offshoot of the *Haydari-Qalandari* Order in his book on Ottoman *Qalandariyya*.<sup>40</sup>

In the first part of our research we saw already that in his youth Shah Nematollah Vali was among the so-called *Qalandari-Haydari* groups in Cairo, studied the science of letters from Husayn al-Akhlati and ideas of Ibn al-Arabi from Yâfi‘i. As E. G. Browne pointed out clearly that he has a tendency towards “*hurufiyya*” and “*nuqtaviyya*” in his poetry: “Most of *Nematollahis* verses illustrate the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* while a certain proportion use the favourite illustration of the ‘point’ (*nuqta*) of which the circle is only a manifestation..”<sup>41</sup> In his *Divan* we see that Shah Nematollah Vali praises Shaykh Qutbuddin Haydar who was the founder of the *Haydari-Qalandari* sect and his followers with these initial words: “I love that Qutbuddin Haydar ... and those friends of Qutbuddin Haydar.” (*Divan*, p. 326)

Qutbuddin Haydar died in 1201 which is almost two centuries before Shah Nematollah’s birth. So Shah Nematollah must have known him through his followers of that time whether in Cairo or in Iran. In that poem he also uses some *Haydari* symbols such as: *taj*, *halqa-gush*, *namad*, etc. So, it is clear that he must have been in close contact with *Haydari* groups after Shaykh Qutbuddin Haydar. Like Hafiz, his poetry also has many “*rendi*”, “*laubali*”, “*kharabati*” metaphoric meanings.<sup>42</sup> But at

the beginning of two pages of a Persian treatise called *Risale-i Qalandariyya* which was found in Cairo National Library, (Tal'at, Persian, nu: 1174),<sup>43</sup> this treatise was attributed to Shah Nematollah Vali. Now if this small treatise is really a work of Shah Nematollah, he might have written it while he was in Cairo among those kinds of dervishes. He starts with the interpretation of the word *qalandar* in five different qualities which were equivalent to the number of the letters of *qalandar* in the Arabic alphabet. What is important in that treatise is that the author's criticism of so-called *Qalandars* of that time who were wandering around as beggars. He says that they were infidels who destroyed the very pillars of the religion of Islam. This point, it seems to me, is very important for differentiating his understanding of *qalandar* from *malahida*.

Four Qalandari treatises were written in 1079 at the time of Shah Süleyman Safawi (published in the book of *Ayin-i Qalandari*, ed. by Mir Abidini - Mehran Afshari, Tehran 1376). We see many inter-diffusions of *Nematollahi*, *Haydari* and *Safawi* motifs again.<sup>44</sup> The first treatise was on the manners of the Order (*khurde-i tariq*) where Shah Nematollah's name is counted among the names of Sultan Qutbuddin Haydar, Ahmad-i Jam, Mir Ghiyasuddin, Seyed Jamal etc. It is very interesting that also in the genealogical trees of Shah Nematollah Vali (*nasabnama*), Seyed Jalaluddin Haydar and Shah Abbas were included (p. 183-184). In the second treatise, there is another *silsila* composed by a poet called Husami where the names of Shah Nematollah Vali, Haydar Tuni, Hajji Baktash Vali and Shah Ismail Safawi were placed on the same line (p. 223-230). In another place Qutbuddin Haydar became Shah Nematollah's *khalifah* (p. 239). In the third treatise we saw the same *silsila* (p. 279) and poems of Shah Nematollah on "seven valleys" (*heft vadi*) (p. 306). And I saw the same Futuwvati / Qalandari / Nematollahi synthesis in a fifty page Persian manuscript titled *Kitabu tariqati fi adab al-suluk al-fuqara wa arkanuha min al-ibtida' ila al-intiha* on the credo and manners of Nematollahi dervishes written in 1033/1624 by someone called al-Faqîr 'Abdullah al-Husayni.<sup>45</sup>

### III. Others called "Shaykh Nematollah Vali" in Turkish Sufi Literature:

On the other hand we saw that in Turkish Sufi literature there are some others called "Nematollah Vali" who have been confused with each



other for some time. The first was the founder of the *fiṭuwwa* order in Anatolia, Ahi Evren Nematollah Mahmud.<sup>46</sup> The second “Nematollah Vali” was the khalifah of the famous Ottoman Kubravi Shaykh Amir Sultan al-Bukhari who died at 833/1429 in Bursa.<sup>47</sup> And the third one’s name and works were even more confused with Shah Nematollah’s. His name was Baba Nematollah b. Shaykh Mahmud al-Nakhjivani. He was born in Nakhchivan, studied in Tabriz and died in Aqshelur near Konya in 920/1514. He was a Naqshbandi and wrote two volumes of Sufi *tafsīr* in Arabic and a Persian commentary on *Gulshan-i Raz*. But in some library catalogues as well as in some contemporary studies nearly ten treatises were being mistakenly attributed to him which were in fact Shah Nematollah Vali’s works.<sup>48</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion:

I would like to share with you those findings based on my brief research on the subject:

— As common practice at that time, Shah Nematollah Vali might have been initiated into and experienced more than one *tariqa* in his life. So, the *shari’a* oriented approach of al-Yāfi’i, the occultist talents of al-Akhlai and the *qalandari* moods of Haydaris were combined in him, yet it seems that he managed to keep them under a kind of orthodoxy in his life.

— In the second period of Nematollahi history, which I thought is fairly independent from Shah Nematollah Vali’s personality, this previous structure started to change, transferring superiority from the *religious* approach to the relatively indifferent behaviours. Different subdivisions were born from the main body. And in the due course of time this tendency, structured by the political and ideological marriages with Safavid power, gave birth to so-called new dervish groups under Shah Nematollah’s name.

— Further structure of the Nematollahi was an amalgamation of *Batini*, *Malamati*, *Qalandari*, *Haydari*, *Jalali*, *Hurufi*, *Nuqtawi*, and *Wujudi* doctrines with the Shi’ism of the Safavids, or even with the *ghulat* of Shi’ism.

— Because poverty (*faqr*), travelling and preaching were their basic social characteristics, among the many westward dervish campaigns, some of the members of this order must have travelled to the Anatolian land also.

— With those emigrations we witness the re-birth of Shah Nematollah Vali among Anatolian dervish groups under the Qalandari/Haydari cloak

and his name starts to be seen in Ahi, Fütüwwati and Baktashi liturgical treatises (*gülbank*).

— Because those above mentioned different heterodox orders have faded away today, we can assert that some Nematollahi motifs—I mean the further Kawsari, Safi ‘Alī-Shahi, Gonabadi, Shamsi or Munis ‘Alī-Shahi versions—could have remains of “Baktashism” in them, as well as in “Alawism” in modern Turkey today.<sup>49</sup>

— So, in the study of the Sufism of Anatolia in general and in the study of heterodox movements of Anatolia in particular, historians must not neglect the position of Shah Nematollah Vali and the Nematollahi Order, too. I believe that this can shed upon a light on some obscure points of the studies of the area.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Professor of Islamic Mysticism at Marmara University in Istanbul.
- <sup>2</sup> Shah Nematollah Vali, *Divan*, p. 579.
- <sup>3</sup> *Tâcu'l-ârifîn Menkibeleri (Manâqib taj al-arifîn Seyyed Abu'l-Wafa)*, translated into Turkish by Eyüp Asik, Istanbul 2000, p. 10.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibn al-Adîm, *Zübde al-haleb fi tarih al-Halab*, ed. by S. Dehhan, Damascus 1954, Vol. II, p. 31.
- <sup>5</sup> See Michel Balivet, *Islam Mystique et Révolution Armée Dans Les Balkans Ottomans: Vie du Cheikh Bedreddin le "Hallaj des Turcs" (1358-1416)*, Istanbul 1995, p. 53.
- <sup>6</sup> R. Stephen Humphreys, *Towards A History of Aleppo and Damascus In the Early Middle Ages, 635-1260 C.E.*, Islamic Area Studies Working Paper Series No. 2, Tokyo 1998, p. 13-14.
- <sup>7</sup> Ma'suim ‘Alī Shirazi notes this mountain as “*Jabal-i Cuyush*”. *Taraiq al-Haqiq*, Tehran 1901, Vol. III, p. 3.
- <sup>8</sup> al-Makrizi, *el-Hitat*, Vol. 2, Bulak 1270, p. 433; al-Safadi, *al-Vafi bi al-wafayat*, Vol. 2, p. 443; M. al-Hatib, *Fustat al-Adale*, ed. by O. Turan, Istanbul 1953, p. 559; Ibn Battuta, *al-Rihla*, vol. 1, p. 63.
- <sup>9</sup> Ahmad Sirri Baba, *al-Risalatü'l-ahmadiyya fi tarihi'l-tarikati'l-âliyyeti'l-baktashiyya bi-Misri'l-mahrusa*, Cairo 1934, p. 13; Fuad Köprülü, *Misir'da Bektasilik*, Istanbul 1931, p. 12; Hamid Algar, “Nematullahiyya”, *Encyclopedia of Islam*2, Vol. VIII, pp. 44-48.
- <sup>10</sup> Süleymaniya Lib. Ibrahim Ef., nu. 430-432, Vol. III, fol. 263b-265a. Although Haririzadhe listed aproximatly 193 Sufi order in this work including “*al-Yüfi'îyya*” it seems that he forgot “Nematollahiyya”. But Sadik Vijdani(d.1938) who made a complement on it called *Tomar-i turuq-i 'aliyyah* (Istanbul, 1341/1922) include “Nematollahiyya” as a branch of *Yafi'îyya-i Madyaniyya*. Then he gaves ‘Abdullah Yâfi’î’s *silsila* like this: *Seyed Abdülqadir al-Jilani, Shaykh Jamaluddin Yunus el-Qassar, Shaykh al-Akbar Muhyiddin al-Arabi, Shaykh 'Izuddin Ahmad al-Vasiti, Shaykh Najmuddin al-Isfahani, Shaykh Radhiyyüddin Ibrahim*

*al-Makki, Shaykh Imam Abdullah al-Yâfi'i.*

- <sup>11</sup> Hamid Farzam, *ibid*, p. 45.
- <sup>12</sup> Kâtib Chelebi, *Kashfû'z-zunun*, ed. by G. Fluegel, Vol. 3, p. 262
- <sup>13</sup> Hamid Farzam, *Shah Nematollah Vali*, pp. 67-68, Tehran 1995.
- <sup>14</sup> Seyyed Abu'l-Fath al-Saidi > Kamaluddin al-Kufî > Saleh Berberi > Shaykh 'Abdullâh Yafî'î. See Hamid Farzam, *ibid*, p.56.
- <sup>15</sup> For the Sufi groups in Syria and Egypt at the time of Shah Nematollah Vali see Éric Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie: Sous les Derniers Mamelouks et les Premiers Ottomans*, Damas 1995.
- <sup>16</sup> Latîfî (d.990/1582) quotes this information from Manaqib al-Wasilin which was attributed to Shah Nematollah. Latîfî says; "*Amma erbab-I tarikatten ba'zilar didi ki Nesimi Fazlullahi degüldür helki Nematollahidür. Gerçi Fazl'a irismis ve ilm-i hurufi andan görnüs idi. İlla Nematollah Vali şikkesin çekerdi ve ilm ü süddeyle cemâat-kes-i abdal u ebrar olup yürirdi*". Latîfî, *Tezkiretü's-su'ara*, ed. by Ridvan Canim, Ankara 2000, p. 524. It seems that some other sources in order to solve this problem they combined those two figures in one personality with giving his name as "*Fazlullah Nemati*". For example see Shehbenderzâde Ahmad Hilmi, *İslam Tarihi*, ed.by Rıza Nur, İstanbul 1974, p. 335.
- <sup>17</sup> Michel Balivet, *ibid*, p. 53.
- <sup>18</sup> With the only exception of one or two families from Badraddinî/Golshani order in Tekirdag.
- <sup>19</sup> For Shaykh Badraddin see Michel Balivet, *ibid*; Müfid Yüksel, *Seçih Bedreddin*, İstanbul 2002, pp. 18-61.
- <sup>20</sup> Abdurrazâk al-Kermanî, *al-Risâla*, ed.by Jean Aubin, Tehran 1983, pp. 37-38; Hamid Farzam, *ibid*, p. 76.
- <sup>21</sup> Necdet Tosun, *Bahâeddîn Nakşebend*, İstanbul 2002, pp. 65-66.
- <sup>22</sup> Nawai's words in original Chaghatayi Turkish like this: "*Seyed Nematoliah kaddesa 'İlâhu rûhahu Kirmân vilâyetinin Mâhân digen kintide sâkin irkendürler. Zâhiri vü bâtinî 'ulûmida kâmil ve zühd ü takvâ bile ârâste. Zamânin selâtini husûsâ Hindustân mülkinin melikleri ana mürîd ü muhlis irnisler. Ve tuhfe ve nezr bî-nihâyet ol mülkdin Kirmânga Mîr hidmetiga yiberürler irnis. Mîr nazmga dagi mesgûl bolur irnisler. Ve divânları dagi bar. Ve bu ebyât alarnindur. Beyt:*
- ما بدان آمدیم در عالم      تا خدا را به خلق بنماییم
- Kabri hemânâ ki hem-ol kintdedür*". 'Alî Shir Nawai, *Nasayim al-mahabba min shamayim al-futuwwa*, ed. by Kemal Eraslan, İstanbul 1979, p. 393. But Nawai omitted the name of Shah Nematollah from his other books on the biographies of poets called *Majalis al-Nafais* (ed. by 'Alî Asghar Hikmat, Tehran, 1944). On the other hand his friend Dawlatshah al-Samarqandi (d.900/1495) who dedicated his work to Nawai in his *al-Taazkira al-Shu'ara* includes Shah Nematollah Vali's name with great respects.
- <sup>23</sup> Actually there are two place in the world called as same as Mahan. The first Mahan was a town in Khorasan belonged to city of Marw and presently belonged to Bayram 'Alî district in Turkmanistan. Some historians claimed that the father of Saljûqi Turks were Oghuz Turks and before coming to Anatolia they were living in Mahan under the leadership of Sulayman Shah. Sulayman Shah emigrated to Aleppo and died there. This city also was known as the city of uprising of Abu Muslim Khorasani against Beni Umayya. See Oruç Bey, *Tevârih-i Al-i Osman*, ed. by Fr. Babinger, Hannover 1925, pp. 5-12; *Türk Ansiklopedisi* (Encyclopedia of Turk), Ankara 1976, Vol. 23, pp. 152-153.
- <sup>24</sup> Idris-i Bidlisî, *Selîm fiah-Nâme*, trans. by Hicabi K›rlang›c, Ankara 2001, p. 172,

- <sup>25</sup> Hamid Farzam, *ibid.*, pp. 378-380.
- <sup>26</sup> Hamid Algar, *ibid.*, Ahmad Tamimdari, *İrfan u adab dar asri safawi*, Vol. 1, pp. 64-67.
- <sup>27</sup> Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarch and Messiahs; Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran*, Boston 2002, pp. 224-5.
- <sup>28</sup> Alan A. Godlas, "Ni'matullahiyah", *The Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, New York 1995, Vol. 3, p. 252.
- <sup>29</sup> Massoud Homayouni, *Tarikhî silsilahayî tariqî Ni'matullahiyya dar Iran*, Tehran 1979.
- <sup>30</sup> For those kind of dervishes see, Colin Imber, "The Wandering Dervishes", *Mashriq*, University of Manchester, 1980, pp. 36-50.
- <sup>31</sup> See Ahmet T. Karamustafa, "Early Sufism in Eastern Anatolia", in *Classical Persian Sufism: From It's Origins to Rumi*, ed. by Leonard Lewisohn, London 1993, pp. 175-198; Same author, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200-1550*, Utah 1994; Ahmet Yaflar Ocak, *Les Milieux Soufis Dans Les Territoires Du Beylicat Ottoman et Le Probleme Des Abdalan-i Rum (1300-1389)*, in *The Emirate*, ed. by Elizabeth Zacharidou, Crete University Press, 1993.
- <sup>32</sup> Ahmet Yasar Ocak, *Osmanli İmparatorlugunda Marjinal Sufilik: Kalenderiler*, Ankara 1992, p. 251.
- <sup>33</sup> Together with the Prophet, fourteen innocents imams (chardah Ma'sum) was being considered as epiphanies of God in common by Nematollahis, Shabak, Hurufis and Baktashis. See Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites*, New York 1987, p. 108.
- <sup>34</sup> "Tariq-i Ni'matullahi; Ahmad Ghazzali, 'Abdullah Yafi'i, Nematollah Vali, Seyed Khalil. Seyed mate sene 867. Kirman e'malinden Mâhan nam karyede medfundur. Khaniqah ve ziyaretgah sahibidir. Fukarasi ekser seyyahtir. Seccadenisini Seyedzadelerdir". Nev'izade 'Atai, *Hadaiq al-Haqaiq*, ed. by Abdülkadir Özcan, Istanbul 1985, p. 64.
- <sup>35</sup> Evliya Celebi, *Seyahatname*, ed. by: Orhan saik Gökyay, Istanbul 1996, Vol. 1, pp. 165, 217; Vol. 2, p. 268.
- <sup>36</sup> "Sadat ve ahfiyası, ulema ve küberası, ubbad ve sulhası, ebrar ve ahyarı, sigar ve kibari, aamme-i enam ve berayası, kaffe-i ahali ve ealisi ve Bektasileri, Firka-i Baba YiSufileri ve Haydariyan ve Cevlakileri. Zümre-i Edhemileri ve reyyası dervişler, müttek-ler ve taife-i kalenderiyan, Hacı Bayramiler, Gürüh-i Nemetollahiler ve Camiler tuglar ve alemeler kaldirip...", Celalzade Mustafa, *Tabakatü'l-Memalik*, publ. by P. Kappert, Wiesbaden 1981, p. 348b; A. Yaflar Ocak, *ibid.*, p. 104.
- <sup>37</sup> Paul Ricaut, *Histoire de l'Etat Présent de l'Empire Ottoman*, Paris 1670, p. 455
- <sup>38</sup> John P. Brown, *The Dervishes or Oriental Spiritualism*, ed. by with notes H. A. Rose, London 1927, p. 371.
- <sup>39</sup> Fuad Köprülü, *Anadolu'da İslamiyet*, ed. by Mehmet Kanar, Istanbul 2003, p. 77.
- <sup>40</sup> Ahmet Yasar Ocak, *ibid.* Ankara 1992.
- <sup>41</sup> E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, London 1905, Vol. 3, p. 470.
- <sup>42</sup> Of course we must not forget the possibility of adding some new poems to the *Divan* of Shah Nematollah Vali due to course of time. Also see, Janis Esots, "Shah Nematollah Vali Kermani as a Mystical Poet: Three Trends of Islamic Mysticism and Three Bases of His Poetry", *Celebrating A Sufi Master: A Collection of Works on the Occasion of the First International Symposium on Shah Nematollah Vali*, San Jose, 2002, p.58-75.
- <sup>43</sup> Sadettin Kocatürk, "Kalenderiyye Tarikati İle İlgili Bir Risâle Üzerine", *AÜDTCFDogu Dilleri*, Ankara 1985, Vol. IV, pp. 37-47.

- <sup>44</sup> For Turkish perspective on the consequences of Safawi and Sufi marriage specially in Anatolia see Mazlum Uyar, "Safeviler Öncesi İran'da Tasavvuf ve Safevî Devletinin Ortaya Çıkışı", *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, No: 3 (1999), pp. 121-137, No: 7-8 (2000-2001), pp. 85-98.
- <sup>45</sup> İstanbul Süleymaniye Library, Hacı Mahmud, No: 3144.
- <sup>46</sup> Mikail Bayram, *Ahi Evren ve Ahi Teskilatinin Kuruluşu*, Konya 1991.
- <sup>47</sup> Baldirzade, *Ravza-i Avliya*, ed. by Mefail Hizli – Murat Yurtsever, Bursa 2000, p. 265.
- <sup>48</sup> See Yasar Kurt, *Nehcuvâni ve Tasavvufî Tefsîri*, (OMÜSBE, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis), Samsun-1998.
- <sup>49</sup> See, Baha Said, "Bektâsiler", *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 19/5, pp. 187/26, 188/27, İstanbul 1927; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, "Kalenders, Abdâls, Hayderîs: The Formation of the Bektâsiyye in the Sixteenth Century", in *Süleyman The Second And His Time*, ed. by H. Inalcik, İstanbul 1993, pp. 121-129.

## Principles: An Epistle by Shah Nematollah Vali<sup>1</sup>

*Translation and comments<sup>2</sup> by  
Hajj Dr. Muhammad Legenhausen<sup>3</sup>*

According to the Sufis and the masters of theology, existence as it is in itself, that is, not conditioned,<sup>4</sup> is more general than universal and particular, singular and general,<sup>5</sup> absolute and restricted and mental and external.

### **Couplet:**

*Absolute<sup>6</sup> over both absoluteness and non-absoluteness<sup>7</sup>  
Without need of being described as even or odd.<sup>8</sup>*

### **Principle 1.**

Considering the reality<sup>9</sup> of existence under the condition that there is nothing with it, it is said to be the level of oneness,<sup>10</sup> the station of the all-comprehensive,<sup>11</sup> and the reality of realities.<sup>12</sup>

### **Couplet:**

*It is absolute over the restrictions<sup>13</sup> of name and attributes.<sup>14</sup>  
Essence<sup>15</sup> is not its name, though you might say essence.<sup>16</sup>*

Rather essence is said of it for understanding, and absolute for incomparability.<sup>17</sup>

### **Principle 2.**

Existence is neither called an existent nor a non-existent.<sup>18</sup> However, necessary existence<sup>19</sup> is known as an existent. Understand this.

**Couplet:**

This is a precise distinction, well said  
*A subtle pearl, well pierced.*<sup>20</sup>

**Principle 3.**

*Haqq*<sup>21</sup> is pure existence,<sup>22</sup> and is one<sup>23</sup> by the unity<sup>24</sup> of reality, that is, its realization in the correct knowledge of the verifier does not depend on the conceptualization of unity or on the conceptualization of the opposite of unity, or on intellection about unity as opposed to multiplicity. Rather unity is an establishing established reality, not [merely] established.<sup>25</sup>

**Line of verse:**

*We said unity, however it is understood,*

Not in order to refer to the idea<sup>26</sup> of unity, as is imagined by veiled minds.<sup>27</sup>

**Principle 4.**

The existence of necessary existence is the same as its essence; and the existence of contingent existence is additional to contingent whatnesses.<sup>28</sup> Rather the existence of contingent existence is from the treasury of the generosity<sup>29</sup> of necessary existence.

**Couplet:**

*Whatever we have is all His generosity.*  
*His generosity for us is His existence.*

**Principle 5.**

The first level associated with entification<sup>30</sup> is inclusive of all entifications, a comprehensive oneness, which is specific to the real human, whose form is Adam.<sup>31</sup>

**Couplet:**

*Know the face and meaning of Adam.*  
*Know yourself and know the cosmos.*

### **Principle 6.**

The first intellect,<sup>32</sup> that is, the tablet of the decree, the highest pen and the Adam of meaning is the simplest of existents; but it is not void of intellectual composition because the first intellect is itself a whatness to which existence is attributed. And of the properties<sup>33</sup> of contingent multiplicity, there is one for it.<sup>34</sup>

### **Principle 7.**

The fixed entities<sup>35</sup> are forms of the divine names in the [divine] cognitive presence<sup>36</sup> and are realities of the world. Insofar as they are fixed in knowledge but are non-existent in the external world, they have not smelled the scent of existence. Allah, the Exalted, says, (*All things are perishing but His face*) (28:88).

#### **Couplet:**

*From pre-eternity to post-eternity it is like this.  
The speech of the mystics is also like this.*

### **Principle 8.**

The reality of no existent is blameworthy, although some are blameworthy because of base attributes. You know that an existent without existence cannot be an existent, and existence is pure goodness.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, an existent, with regard to its existence, is not void of goodness.

#### **Couplet:**

*Although Iblis is supremely an evil doer,  
Look at his existence, for it is not bad.<sup>38</sup>*

### **Principle 9.**

The nobility of the indicator<sup>39</sup> is because of the nobility of what it indicates.<sup>40</sup> The cosmos is an indicator of the existence of necessary existence.

#### **Couplet:**

*Whatever is, whether good or bad,  
All can have this nobility.*



Perfection characterizes one to the extent of one's divine characteristics,<sup>41</sup> and imperfection is according to weakness in this. Nobility is by the fewness of intermediaries [to Him], and baseness is by the abundance of them.<sup>42</sup>

### Principle 10.

The vastest and greatest of things are mercy, the heart of man and knowledge. Regarding the vastness of mercy, *Haqq*, the exalted, said: (*My mercy embraces all things*) (7:156). On the vastness of mercy and knowledge, by the tongue of the prophets He said: (*O our Lord! You comprehend all things in mercy and knowledge*) (40:7). On the vastness of the heart of the 'arif of Allah, He said: "Neither My earth nor My heaven comprehends me, but the heart of My pure and pious believer servant."<sup>43</sup>

#### Stanza:

*The treasure that was hidden from the eyes of all the world,<sup>44</sup>  
Became manifest to me; I am the familiar of that treasure.  
The treasure that does not fit in any treasury exists,  
But it fits in a corner of my heart. Where do I fit in being?*

### Principle 11.

Contingent entified existents constantly request the assistance of the presence of necessary existence, and absolute generosity, that is, *Haqq*, the exalted and holy, assists them from the treasury of generosity with existence.

#### Couplet:

*A deserving drunken rogue,<sup>45</sup> such as I,  
Would see that the cup bearer gave some of that wine to me.<sup>46</sup>*

### Principle 12.

The single entity, externally, shows itself as a multiplicity of entities; and the numerous entities, internally, are a single entity.<sup>47</sup>

#### Quatrain:

*An entity appears externally as entities.  
In every entity, an entity is shown to us.*

*In the world showing goblet it is perfectly shown.  
Look at it, so that it shows you!*

### **Principle 13.**

#### **Couplet:**

*The most holy effusion<sup>48</sup> gives existence and capacity  
to the capacitated by the name "Interior".*

The existence of the fixed entities in the presence of knowledge is by the most holy effusion, that is, more holy than the mixture of multiplicity of names and the imperfections of contingent realities. This is the disclosure of essential love, which is what brings about the existence and capacities of entities.

Sacred effusion is the disclosure of the names by the love of the appearance of what is required by the entities in the external world. Sacred effusion succeeds the most holy effusion. Understand this.

### **Principle 14.**

*Haqq*, the exalted, at every moment, discloses Himself to every entity, through the one of the names, according to, (*Every day He is in a state*) (55:29). One of the divine affairs is sent down from the presence of oneness<sup>49</sup> to unity,<sup>50</sup> and from unity to the level of intellect, and from the intellectual to that of the tablet, and from that of the tablet to universal nature, and from the universal nature to corporeal matter.

#### **Line of verse:**

*After this, the throne, then its footstool.<sup>51</sup>*

When one of the divine affairs is sent down from the seven heavens, and passes through the levels of universal and particular until it reaches man, it takes on the coloring of all of these levels. The coming down of a divine affair through all these mentioned levels occurs at a single moment.<sup>52</sup>

#### **Couplet:**

*In its coming down, no time passes,  
Rather, not even a moment passes.*

After this, the states that have dominated it are peeled off with a spiritual peeling, and it returns to the divine presence.<sup>53</sup> Then from Him it originates, and to Him it returns.

**Couplet:**

*The guest is dear. Hold him as dear.  
Do not debase that dear friend.*

**Principle 15.**

The existence of multiplicity in names<sup>54</sup> is the same as the divine essence, in one aspect. They<sup>55</sup> are manifested by the forms of the fixed entities according to different states.

**Couplet:**

*Know unity and plurality in this way.  
Call forth the inclusive unity.*

A name is the essence with a determinate attribute.<sup>56</sup> An attribute is an intellectual relation, not an entified affair, and in relation to the external world they are nothing. Therefore, the multiplicity of the names is with regard to attributes, and the unity of the names is by the essence. Whenever a perspectival<sup>57</sup> letter is combined with a real letter, it has meaning.<sup>58</sup> Understand this.

**Principle 16.**

By correct knowledge and explicit unveiling, it is verified for the verifier that the existence of the world is by the disclosure of real<sup>59</sup> existence. It is manifest in the mirrors of the fixed entities. The existence of the entities is impossible without real existential disclosure.<sup>60</sup>

**Couplet:**

*An existent, whatever it is, has its existence from His generosity.  
The generosity of His existence to others is His existence.<sup>61</sup>*

**Principle 17.**

In the first disclosure *Haqq* appears<sup>62</sup> in the mirrors of creation, and creation is hidden.<sup>63</sup>

**Couplet:**

*First, our state was this way.  
Whoever reaches here says this.*

In the second disclosure *Haqq* appears in the mirrors of the existence of *Haqq*, and *Haqq* is hidden.

However, in the comprehensive disclosure, which is the station of MuHammadan perfection, *Haqq* is witnessed in creation itself, and creation is witnessed in *Haqq* Himself.

**Couplet:**

*Look at the light of the sun in the moon.  
Look at creation and Haqq [reflected] in each other.*

**Principle 18.**

Existence, universal and particular, specific and general, mental and external, and absolute and restricted, from the aspect of existence<sup>64</sup> is one, and by restrictions and respects<sup>65</sup> is numerous. The divine names are many according to concepts,<sup>66</sup> but in view of what they are true of, they are one.

**Couplet:**

*An essence has a hundred thousand names by appearance,<sup>67</sup>  
Find that as one until you know,<sup>68</sup> and peace be unto you.*

**Principle 19.**

Representations<sup>69</sup> in numerous mirrors are shown variously, while the thing represented is one and the mirrors, on account of entification and restriction, are unlimited,<sup>70</sup> but the utmost<sup>71</sup> is one.

**Couplet:**

*Zayd, 'Amr, Bakr and Khàlid, all four  
Are man itself, be well aware of this!*

**Principle 20.**

The exterior of every locus of manifestation is from the divine name, *the Exterior*,<sup>72</sup> and its interior is from the name, *the Interior*.<sup>73</sup> The locus

of manifestation, with respect to oneness is the same as the one who manifests. The collection of all individuals of the world, are loci of manifestation of the names of *Haqq*, individually, while the perfect man is the locus of manifestation of the comprehensive name, generally. The reality of the locus of manifestation, in reality, returns to the one who manifests, and the reality of *Haqq*, the exalted and sacred, is unknown. Therefore, the reality of nothing is known.

**Poetry:**

*I have not understood the reality of anything.  
How can I understand, while you are in it?*

**Principle 21.**

Stopping at oneness is the level of a unitarian who is veiled from creation in the joining with *Haqq*. Stopping at the plurality of the world is the job of one covered who is in the desert of separation, covered from *Haqq* by creation.

But the verifier is the one who witnesses *Haqq* by *Haqq* in intellectual, entified, spiritual, imaginal and sensory forms. This is the meaning of, "I did not see anything without seeing Allah in it."<sup>74</sup>

**Couplet:**

*Since the light of my eyes is from the light of His beauty,  
I look at the light of His face by His light.*

**Principle 22.**

Every individual in the world is the locus of manifestation of one of the divine names with specific particularities.

**Couplet:**

*The rogue and the ascetic, however they are viewed  
In form and meaning, look at God.*

The existence of bubbles is by water, and the appearance of water is by bubbles.

**Couplet:**

*From the cup of bubbles, drink water;  
Find that water in these bubbles.<sup>75</sup>*

**Principle 23.**

The existence of a number is by repetition of the unit. The elaboration of the levels of unity are by number. A number is half the sum of its predecessor and successor.<sup>76</sup> The least sum is the double, and two is one and one, which are summed in a single form so that two is obtained. The principles of any number do not appear except by finitude (numerosity), and the levels of unity are not explained except by number. Therefore, there must be number and finitude.

In every level of the levels of unities, tens, hundreds and thousands, unity has come repeatedly. With the repetition of one more, the odd becomes even, but without it, it is odd.

The Apostle of Allah said, "Verily Allah is odd; He loves the odd."

**Couplet:**

*The odd such that other than Him there is no one,  
is the root of number, but is not a number.*

**Principle 24.**

If it were not for the generosity of the existence of necessary existence, which granted existence to existents, the world of being would not be. Likewise, if there were no intellectual universal realities, there would appear no principles of the divine names and attributes in the entified loci of manifestation.

**Couplet:**

*There must be a bright mirror  
For the light of His beauty to be shown.*

**Principle 25.**

The first entity to be made determinate (as an entified thing) is the reality of man, and the obtaining of entities is by the elaboration of him, and the numerosity of the names is by determinations (entifications).

**Couplet:**

*It is entified by the entifications of things.  
The wave and bubbles are both from water.*

**Principle 26.**

The divine identity, by the manifestation of royal sovereignty, is disclosed in the mirrors of the loci of manifestation of the infinite names, and according to the principle, (*and He is with you, wherever you are*) (57:4), He is with all. Rather, the reality of Him is all, and He with all the names and attributes appears in some of the loci of manifestation, as in the perfect one and the *quibs*; and with some appears in some. Therefore, the single identity, according to the manifestation of the names and attributes, appears more excellently in some loci of manifestation and in others [merely] excellently.

**Couplet:**

*That one is more excellent; this one is excellent;  
By identity they are one, O intelligent one!*

**Principle 27.**

Whoever is annihilated in things, sees that the mover and the stopper of things is *Haqq*. If one is annihilated from oneself and from all things:

**Couplet:**

*Haqq remains, and other than Haqq is nothing.  
Other than Haqq, the self is nothing; nothing is in view.*

Annihilation is a relation we have to ourselves, but subsistence is a relation we have to *Haqq*. You are free, so take whatever relation you consider to be more appropriate for yourself.

**Principle 28.**

Lightning-like essential disclosures are obtained by those who are empty of all attributes and states and from the principles of necessity, names and contingency. This complete and absolute emptiness<sup>77</sup> is not opposed to the absoluteness of *Haqq*.

**Couplet:**

*I constantly see this emptiness,  
Even though it does not last for more than a moment.*

**Principle 29.**

Existence is absolutely permitted. Knowledge of its depth is absolutely forbidden.

**Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> This treatise has been translated from "Usul", in *Risāleh-hā-ye Hazrat-e Seyed Nour al-Din Shah Nematollah Vali*, Vol. 2, ed. Dr. Javād Nourbakhsh (Tehran: Khaniqah Nematollah, dated according to the Iranian royalist calendar 2536, corresponding to 1977), 359-369. The author, Shah Nematollah Vali was born in Aleppo circa 730/1330 and lived for a hundred years. He died in Mahan near Kerman, where his shrine is still maintained. Although he is remembered more for his revival of Sufism in Iran and for his poetry than for his work on the philosophical theology of Sufism, or theoretical 'irfān, his essays include a number of works on this subject which display his familiarity with the works of Qunawī and Qaysari in the school of ibn 'Arabi.
- <sup>2</sup> I would not have understood the text and the translation could not have been accomplished without the assistance of Dr. Amir Divani. Infelicities in the translation and misunderstandings found in the comments are entirely my own responsibility.
- <sup>3</sup> Hajj Dr. Muhammad Legenhausen is associate professor at the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute. Qom.
- <sup>4</sup> Existence (*wujud*) is the main topic of theoretical mysticism or 'irfān, which is a sort of philosophical theology of the Sufis, who identify God with existence, that is with *absolute* existence, in the sense of existence without any conditions such as those indicated by the adjectives in the terms *mental existence*, *external existence*, *particular existence*, *necessary existence*, *non-necessary existence*, etc. To speak of existence in this perfectly general way without any stipulations, i.e. not conditioned (*lā bi shari shay'*), about its instantiation, is to speak of existence as it is in itself (*min haytha h uwa h uwa*), from the aspect of it being it, that is, as it is in itself. This sort of view is often confused with pantheism, or worse yet, with panentheism. Pantheism involves some sort of identification of God with the world. According to 'irfān, God is not identified with each thing in the world, nor with the mereological sum of things that is the world, as in some forms of pantheism. God is not taken to be a substance as in Spinozistic philosophy, which is also labeled pantheistic. *Panentheism* is the view that the world is in God as the finite is within the infinite or as cells are in an organism, but there is no possibility of any such relation of inclusion to be found in theoretical Sufism.
- <sup>5</sup> Here we find a typical paradox. Absolute existence is "more general than... general". The paradox may be resolved in several ways. By *singular existence* is meant the existence of a single thing, e.g., this man or that flower. By *general existence* is meant the existence of various kinds of things, such as human existence, the existence of man in general or the existence of flowers. Absolute existence is not restricted to either of these but extends to



both and in this sense is more “general”, i.e., more extensive, than singular and “general”, i.e. existence of pluralities of things or types of things.

- <sup>6</sup> What is absolute, *mullaq* is what is free or released from ties or restrictions. In English we use *absolute over* in the sense of transcending, but it would be closer to Arabic and Farsi if we were to say *absolute from*, meaning *unfettered by*. So, the line also could be translated as: “*Unbounded by unboundedness and boundedness.*”
- <sup>7</sup> The paradox again appears in the couplet. Existence in itself is existence as it is without regard to its being one way or another. This is not to deny its being one way or another. Likewise we can speak of Socrates in himself, without regard to the fact that he was Greek or a philosopher. This is not to deny that he was a Greek philosopher. To consider existence absolutely is to consider it without regard to the fact that it is in any sense absolute. This is not to deny this fact, only to consider existence aside from it, without regard to it. Qaysari explains in his introduction to the *Fus us* that existence becomes qualified as absolute or conditioned, general or particular, etc., because of the levels of its self-disclosure or manifestation.
- <sup>8</sup> The suggestion is that just as number itself is neither even nor odd, but only particular manifestations of number are even or odd, likewise existence in itself is beyond being *absolute existence* or *conditioned existence*, which are merely two levels of the manifestation of existence. The analogy has its limitations, however, for number, in itself, could be described as being neither even nor odd because of its universality, while absolute existence should not be described as being non-absolute, for this would be yet another negative condition. It would be better to say that existence in itself is indeterminate with regard to the pairs of opposites that can be ascribed to the various levels of existence, except that one should not in so doing imagine this indeterminacy to be a particular restriction or condition in which existence becomes manifest.
- <sup>9</sup> *haqiqat*
- <sup>10</sup> *a hadiyyah*
- <sup>11</sup> *jam' al-jam'*
- <sup>12</sup> *haqiqah al- haqà'iq*
- <sup>13</sup> *Restrictions* translates *quyud* (sing. *qayd*), which term is also used for *adverbs* and signifies any sort of qualification.
- <sup>14</sup> The words for name (*ism*) and attributes (*sifât*) are also used for noun and adjectives, making the line into a pun on the grammatical terms. Theological discussions of God include discussions of the divine names and attributes. The divine names are generally nominalized verb forms prefixed with the definite article. Without the article they can be used as adjectives, and are said to refer to the divine attributes.
- <sup>15</sup> *dhât*
- <sup>16</sup> It is sometimes said that out of piety, one should only refer to God by the names and attributes He has used to describe Himself in the Qur'an. *Essence* (*al-dhât*) is not among the divine names.
- <sup>17</sup> To assert incomparability (*tanzih*) is the opposite of asserting similarity (*tashbih*). Although God is not an essence, the term is used to aid in our understanding by way of comparison or asserting similarity, and this is balanced by the assertion of incomparability by using the term *absolute* (*mullaq*).
- <sup>18</sup> A non-existent is a *ma'd um*, from 'adam, nought, parallel to the construction of *existent*, *mawjud*, from *existence*, *wuj ud*.
- <sup>19</sup> The standard proofs for the existence of God found in Islamic philosophy are proofs of

necessary existence, *wājib al-wujūd*.

- <sup>20</sup> The fine piercing of beads for necklaces and rosaries was considered a craft requiring the utmost precision.
- <sup>21</sup> *Haqq* is God, as the Truth or Reality. Aside from its religious use, the term *haqq* is used for reality, right, one's due, truth, and what is authentic. In the plural, *huq uq* is used for rights. The fact of a matter is a *haqiqah* (pl. *haqā'iq*), although the term is also used for the core truth about something. A researcher is a *mu haqiq*, one who engages in research *ta hqiq*, which is the pursuit of truth. Sometimes the term *mu haqiq* (verifier) is used for an *'arif*, one who knows the truths that are found on the path of spiritual wayfaring. Finally, *ta haquq* is realization in the sense in which a thing occurs or becomes real.
- <sup>22</sup> Pure existence is *wujūd-e mahè*, existence unmixed or unadulterated.
- <sup>23</sup> *wāhid*
- <sup>24</sup> *wahdat*
- <sup>25</sup> The unity of reality is a fixed, unshakeable truth, independent of whether it is proven to be so by anyone.
- <sup>26</sup> *mashum*
- <sup>27</sup> I.e., those who are veiled from the direct knowledge of reality.
- <sup>28</sup> There are two Arabic terms used in Islamic theology and philosophy that could be translated as essence. Aristotle's *ti esti*, was translated rather literally into Arabic as *mā hiyyah*, i.e., what is that, which became the technical term, *māhiyyah*, for which Chittick appropriately suggests using the term *whatness*. Other translators use *quiddity*, but *whatness* serves as a convenient reminder of the Arabic-Greek etymology. The other Aristotelian term translated into English as essence, and more appropriately so, is *ousia*, which in Arabic is the owner or possessor of attributes, the *dhāt*. Sometimes *haqiqat* is used as a synonym for *dhāt*.
- <sup>29</sup> There is a play on word sounds here, also used in the following couplet, for generosity is *jud* and existence is *wujūd*.
- <sup>30</sup> Entification is a major theme of Sufi metaphysics. It is the process by which the divine grace creatively emanates determinate entities as distinct loci of divine manifestation.
- <sup>31</sup> Adam is not only the first human being, and as such the paradigm human, but is also the first prophet and perfect man. In Farsi the word is also used for man generally, in the sense of human being.
- <sup>32</sup> The *'uraqā*, like the Muslim philosophers, took over much of the neo-Platonist accounts of emanation, and describe the process of emanation as having the first intellect (*'aql awwal*) as the first created thing. For Qaysari, there are a series of conditions that can be placed on existence that result in viewing it at the levels of oneness, unity, the pervasive ipseity, the absolute interior, and only after these do we arrive at the first intellect, when existence is taken as conditioned only on universals being in it, which is the level of the name of the Merciful (*al-Ra hmān*), lord of the first intellect, called the tablet of the decree (*law h al-qaqà*), the mother of the book and the highest pen (*al-qalam al-a'là*).
- <sup>33</sup> The word translated as *properties* here is a *hkām* (sing. *hukm*), literally meaning *judgments*.
- <sup>34</sup> In other words, it is a contingent existence and part of a multitude.
- <sup>35</sup> The fixed entities (*'ayān thābit*) are explicitly stated by ibn 'Arabi to correspond to the whatnesses of the philosophers, although he credits the Mu'tazilites for the term. (See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 83-88, 204; and *The Self-Disclosure of God*, xxxviii, 389 n. 9.) Qaysari explains the idea in his introduction to his commentary on the *Fus us* as follows: "Know that the divine names have cognitive forms in the knowledge of the Ex-

alted, for He is the essential knower of His essence, His names and His attributes. In the terminology of the folk of Allah, these cognitive forms, regardless of whether they are general or particular, are called *fixed entities*, insofar as they are the same as the essence, which is disclosed in particular entifications and in determinate relations. In the terminology of the folk of theory (the philosophers), the generalities among these cognitive forms are called whatnesses and realities, and their particularities are called ipseities (*huwīyyāt*). Whatnesses are general forms of the names that are entified in the cognitive presence (*ha'erah 'ilmīyyah*) by the first entification. These forms are effused from the divine essence by the most holy effusion and the first self-disclosure because of essential love and the seeking of the keys of the occult that are unknown except to Him for their manifestation and their perfections.”

<sup>36</sup> For an explanation of the *presences*, see William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 4f. Ibn 'Arabi and his followers use the term *presence* (*ha'erah*) as if it were an honorary title, like *His Honor* or *His Eminence*, but for realms rather than people, such as the sensory world, the realm of divine knowledge, the realm of divine lordship, etc. The term *presence* is also used by Qaysari to designate five levels of divine manifestation, called the *Five Divine Presences*. The five Presences are: (1) the Presence of absolute absence, which is the same as the Presence of divine knowledge, whose world is the world of the fixed entities; (4) the Presence of absolute witnessing, whose world is sensible world. Then come two Presences between these with a common name: the Presence of relative absence which is divided into two Presences, (2) one for what is closer to absence and (3) one closer to witnessing. The fifth Presence is (5) the perfect man. The *Five Presences* were introduced by Q unawī. See William C. Chittick, “The Five Divine Presences: From al-Q unawī to al-Qaysari” *The Muslim World* 72 (1982), pp. 107-128.

<sup>37</sup> *khayr ma hē*

<sup>38</sup> *Iblis* is the devil who tempted Adam and Eve. Evil is ascribed to his deeds, but not to his existence. This is a standard theme in Sufi writings. For a brief review, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994, pp. 232-233.

<sup>39</sup> *dāl*

<sup>40</sup> *madlul*

<sup>41</sup> Or morals, virtues, *akhlāq*.

<sup>42</sup> In Principle 8, a distinction is made between moral judgment and ontological status, in the sense that a negative evaluation does not carry over to reflect poorly on existence. In Principle 9, the connection between the ontological and the moral is affirmed: greater nobility accrues to what is nearer to pure existence. Existence itself always has positive value, even if it appears very faintly.

<sup>43</sup> This *hadith* is frequently cited in Sufi texts, but is not in the standard collections. It is in Ghazālī's *Ihyā* (III, 1.5.; III, 12) and Fayē Kāshānī's *Ma hjat al-Bay'è* (V, 26).

<sup>44</sup> This is an allusion to the famous *hadith qudsī*, not found in the standard collections, but often narrated in Sufi texts: “I was a treasure but was not known, so I loved to be known; I created the creatures and made Myself known to them, so they came to know Me.” See Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, pp. 21, 22, 70, 211, 329.

<sup>45</sup> The *rend* is a character developed in the poetry of Hafiz, a clever person who seems to disregard the outward aspects of religion while maintaining an exquisitely sincere faith.

<sup>46</sup> The spiritual meanings given to the imagery associated with wine drinking reaches its pinnacle in Hafiz, but had become fairly standardized much earlier.

<sup>47</sup> The single entity (*'ayn al-wāhidah*) is explained by Chittick in *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 72f. It is in ibn 'Arabi's discussion of this topic that he comes closest to using the expres-

sion *wa hdat al-wuj ud* which would later be used as a label for the view advanced by him and his followers, and would give rise to much controversy.

- <sup>48</sup> In ibn 'Arabi's school, two levels of grace or effusion are distinguished, the higher of which is called *the most holy effusion (fayè al-aqdas)* and the lower, *sacred effusion (fayè al-muqaddas)*. As Qaysari explains: "Divine effusion is divided into the most holy effusion and sacred effusion. By the former the fixed entities and their fundamental capacities are obtained in knowledge, and by the latter, those entities are obtained in the outside along with what they imply and what follows from them. Shaykh [ibn 'Arabi] alludes to this in his saying, 'The receptor is not obtained except by His most holy effusion.' This seeking first goes back to the name *the First (al-Awwal)* and *the Interior (al-Bâ'in)*, then through these it goes back to *the Last (al-Akhar)* and *the Exterior (al-Îâhir)*, because firstness and interiority are established in cognitive existence, and lastness and exteriority are established in the outward existence."

<sup>49</sup> *haèrat a hadiyat*

<sup>50</sup> *wà hidiyat*

- 51 The throne (*'arsh*) is mentioned in connection with the footstool (*kursî*) as related to the highest and next highest cosmic realms, the empyrean and the level of the fixed stars, respectively; but from as early as the time of Tustari (d. 283/896) the throne and footstool of God are likened to the heart and breast of man. See Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), p. 163.

<sup>52</sup> Emanation or effusion is not a temporal process.

<sup>53</sup> As Qaysari explains, the levels of the descent of existence and its ascent form a circle. The level prior to this world is one of the levels of descent, while the level after this world is one of the levels of ascent.

<sup>54</sup> Or *nominal multiplicity (kathrat asmâ'iyah)*, but referring to the multiplicity of the divine names.

<sup>55</sup> That is, the divine names.

<sup>56</sup> For example, one of the divine names is *the Powerful (al-Qadir)*. The term, *the Powerful*, refers to the divine essence through mention of the attribute, *powerful*.

<sup>57</sup> *Perspectival* here is *i'tibâriyah*, more usually one finds *i'tibârî*, which is translated by Chittick as *mental*, and could also be translated in some cases as *subjective*. The root of the word (*'abr*) has a meaning of crossing over, and *i'tibârî* thus takes the meaning of pertaining to one means of crossing, or from one approach, consideration, perspective, respect. The word *i'tibâr* is also used in the sense of validity, in the sense of something credible, authorized, or logically or financially valid, like a proof or a check. Perhaps the sense is that in which a crossing is successful, enabling one to reach the destination. In any case, the term has an evaluative dimension that is not found in such terms as *mental* and *subjective*. In Ayatullah Misbâh's *Philosophical Instructions* (Binghamton: Global Publications, 1999) the following explanation is given:

The term *i'tibârî (respectival)*, which is frequently encountered in philosophical discussions, is employed with various meanings and is really equivocal. One must take care to distinguish among its meanings so as not to confuse them or make mistakes.

In one sense, all secondary intelligibles, whether logical or philosophical, are called *i'tibârî*, and even the concept of existence is counted as *i'tibârî*. This term is used extensively by Shaykh al-Israq, and in various books of his he uses 'intellectual *i'tibârî*' with this meaning.

Another sense of *i'tibârî* is specified for legal and ethical concepts, which in the lan-

guage of recent scholars are called 'value concepts'. In a third sense, only concepts which have no external or mental instances and which are constructed with the help of the faculty of imagination are called *i'tibârî*, such as the concept of a ghoul. These concepts are also called 'fantastic'. *I'tibârî* also has another sense to be contrasted with fundamentality (*asâlat*) which is employed in discussions of the fundamentality of existence (*asâlat wuj'ud*) or fundamentality of whatness (*asâlat mâhuwiyât*), and which will be mentioned in its proper place. (pp. 122-123).

<sup>58</sup> Another way of putting this point is that a letter of credit only has worth when it is backed up by cash.

<sup>59</sup> Or divine, *haqqânî*.

<sup>60</sup> Again, real means *haqqânî*, or divine. The disclosure is one in which divine or real existence is made manifest.

<sup>61</sup> Compare Principle 4, above.

<sup>62</sup> That is, becomes manifest, exterior, *zâhir*:

<sup>63</sup> Interior, *bâ'in*.

<sup>64</sup> *min haythu al-wujud*

<sup>65</sup> *i'tibârât*

<sup>66</sup> *mafh'umât*

<sup>67</sup> *îhur*

<sup>68</sup> That is, you should discover that it is one so that you find it to be so and know it.

<sup>69</sup> *tamathâlât*.

<sup>70</sup> *bî haèè*

<sup>71</sup> *hadîd*, what is at the furthest limit. The usage here is unusual.

<sup>72</sup> *Al-Zâhir*

<sup>73</sup> *Al-Bâ'in*

<sup>74</sup> This is a famous saying attributed to Imam 'Alî.

<sup>75</sup> There is a lovely alliteration in the Persian: "*Ân âb dar in hubâb daryâb.*"

<sup>76</sup> The first number was considered to be two, because number was so defined that it required a predecessor. Zero doesn't count!

<sup>77</sup> *firâgh*

## Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah Gonabadi The Renewer of the Nematollahi Order in Iran

*Dr. Shahram Pazouki'*

Sufism is the spiritual reality of Islam, even if it was not known as "Sufism" at the inception of Islam. Phenomenologically speaking, it proves to be the essence of Islam, which gives life to it, like the soul gives life to the body. In Sufi terminology, Islam has two aspects: *shari'at*, its outer dimension, or body, and *tariqat*, its inner dimension, or soul. These two aspects were inseparably joined in the person of the Prophet, but little by little through the history of Islam, there were people who paid attention only to the *shari'at*, Islamic law, and even confined Islam to this. Often the *fuqahà* or '*ulamà* took this attitude. In contrast to them there were people who emphasized the spiritual reality or *tariqat*, who became famous as Sufis.

The propagation of Islam was not through the sword of the rulers, but by the heartfelt word of the Sufis. The cutting swords of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi or Nàdir Shah Afshàr did not make Islam influential among the Hindus. It was by the spiritual attraction and life giving breath of Sufi masters such as the successors of Shah Nematollah Vali or Mir Seyyed 'Ali Hamadàni that they became Muslim.

Whenever the Muslims were weakened and deviated from the truth of Islam, great Sufis tried to renew and revive it. Sometimes this was done explicitly, as in the case of Ghazali, whose revival finds written form in his famous *Ihyà 'Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), and sometimes it was implicit, as with Shah Nematollahi Vali.

The idea of renewal in Islam was not a mere accident of history, but was foreseen by the Prophet himself. It is reported in a *hadith* that he

said, “Verily, at the beginning of every hundred years, God raises one for this community of Islam who renews its religion for it.” Regardless of the soundness of this *hadith*, and whether what is meant is exactly one century, which is beyond the scope of this paper, the idea of a revival of Islam and that it must be renewed in a manner appropriate to the times, was in the minds of the Muslims.

In Sufism itself, from time to time deviations occurred. The use of expressions such as, “false Sufi claimant” and “true Sufi claimant”, in books such as Jami’s *Nafahat al-Uns*, bears witness to this phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> Among the most prominent critics of such deviations were the Sufi masters. They were the true reformers and renewers of Sufism.

Sufism has usually suffered at the hands of two groups: (1) pseudo-Sufis who fancy that the inward aspects of Islam suffice for them and that they may consciously abandon its outward precepts; and (2) those *fuqahà* who restrict their understanding of Islam to its outward aspects and ignore its interior. Each of these groups has an incomplete understanding of Islam, one with respect to *shari’at* and the other with regard to *tariqat*. This is why the Sufi shaykhs were usually confronted by these two groups. Renewal and reformation of Sufism most often required a re-balancing of *shari’at* and *tariqat* in order to preserve its original formation. It is this effort at balancing that prompted the great Sufi shaykhs to take into consideration the circumstances of their times in order to make religious precepts appropriate to them. This enabled them to present Islam in a more complete fashion and to keep it from deviation. In a *hadith* attributed to the Imams, it is reported, “One who is conscious of his times is not in danger of being confounded.”

### **Shah Nematollah Vali**

One of the greatest reformers and renewers of Sufism was Shah Nematollah Vali. His was one of the most catastrophic times for the Muslims, especially in Iran, which had suffered through the attacks of the Mongols and the Timurids after them. In religious affairs there were Sufi pretenders on the one hand, who did not practice Sufi teachings, and hypocritical preachers on the other, who used religion for personal gain. In his poetry, Hafiz reproaches both groups, thus bearing witness to the situation in Iran. When the religious teachers had fallen so far astray, the religious ethos of the common people of the time would also have been in a state of degeneration.

In those days, Shah Nematollahi Vali, as master of the Ma'rufi Order<sup>3</sup> and successor to Shaykh 'Abdullah Yâfi'i, tried to improve both the inward and the outward religious conditions. He exposed the misdeeds and pseudo-teachings of the current Sufi pretenders, and criticized both Sunni and Shi'ite 'ulamâ. He called upon Sunnis to return to the *sunnah* of the Prophet of love for the Ahl al-Bayt, while he reminded Shi'ites that the main pillar of Shi'ism is the forgotten truth of *walâyat*,<sup>4</sup> rather than points of law and political issues. Thus, he refused to be a *rafizi* (one who rejected the Companions of the Prophet) or *khàriji* (one who rejected the leadership of 'Ali).<sup>5</sup>

### The Nematollahi Order

Due to the difficulties faced by the Sufis in Iran after the death of Shah Nematollah, the *qutbs* of the Order moved to India at the invitation of Sultan AhmadShah Bahmani of the Deccan. During this time, from the end of the Safavids until the end of the Zandi dynasty, because of the political upheaval in Iran, the kings' rejection of Sufism and the sovereignty of the 'ulamâ who had good relations with the government, most of the Sufi orders either left Iran or operated clandestinely.<sup>6</sup> Although the Safavi dynasty was itself based on a Sufi Order, the attitude taken by them was very exclusivist, so that they did not permit the free operation of other orders. This situation continued until 1190/1776, when Reza 'AliShah Deccani, who was then *qutb* of the Order, sent two of his authorized shaykhs, Hazrat Ma'Sum 'AliShah and Shah Tâhir Deccani, to Iran. The latter died soon after arriving in Iran, or on the way, and the revival of the Order in Iran was left to the former and one of his main disciples, Nour 'AliShah Isfahani. These two behaved in a way that attracted the attention of the people who had long forgotten Sufism. Many people, including some of the prominent 'ulamâ, such as Seyed Bahr al 'Ulum (d. 1212/1797) and 'Abd al-Samad Hamadâni (who was killed in 1216/1801 by Wahhâbis), became their followers, and Sufism became current in Iran again. The opposition of some of the 'ulamâ to Sufism, however, continued, and they even persuaded some of the Qàjâri kings to kill the Sufi shaykhs on the pretext that they sought to take over the government. One can mention the martyrdom of Mushtâq 'AliShah in Kermân, or that of his disciple Muzaffar 'AliShah in KermânShah at the order of the influential jurist, known as the "Sufi-killer", Muhammad ibn Bibbihâni.



After Nour ‘AliShah, the Nematollahi Order became the most popular Sufi order in Iran. Whenever Sufism becomes popular, pretenders to it abound. During the time when Rahmat ‘AliShah (d. 1278/1861) was the *qutb* of the Order, Sufism became especially popular, in part because the Qàjâr king, Muhammad Shah, entered the Order. After Rahmat ‘AliShah passed away, the Nematollahis divided into three branches: (1) the followers of Hajj Muhammad Kàzim Isfahàni Sa‘àdat ‘AliShah; (2) followers of the uncle of Rahmat ‘AliShah, Hajj Muhammad, famous as Munawwar ‘AliShah; and (3) the followers of Mirzà Hasan Safi, famous as Safi ‘AliShah. This division first appeared due to the differences about the explicit decree of Rahmat ‘AliShah that he should be succeeded by Sa‘àdat ‘AliShah. After some time, the opponents of Sa‘àdat ‘AliShah brought another decree attributed to Rahmat ‘AliShah according to which Munawwar ‘AliShah was to be the successor, despite the fact that Munawwar ‘AliShah himself admitted that he had not received the decree personally. Safi ‘AliShah first renewed his covenant with Sa‘àdat ‘AliShah, and denied the validity of the decree of Munawwar ‘AliShah. However, after Sa‘àdat ‘AliShah refused to appoint him as shaykh, he broke his covenant with him and became a disciple of Munawwar ‘AliShah. After some time, he also rejected the leadership of Munawwar ‘AliShah and proclaimed himself *qutb*. In this way the Nematollahi Order broke up into three chains: first, the Sultan ‘AliShahi or Gonabadi chain, which is the main and largest chain; second, the Dhul Riyàsatayn<sup>7</sup> chain; and third, the Safi ‘AliShahi chain.

### **Sultan ‘AliShah as Master of the Nematollahi Order**

The Sultan ‘AliShahi chain takes its name after the successor of Sa‘àdat ‘AliShah, Hajj Mullà Sultan Muhammad Sultan ‘AliShah, who was born in Gonabad in Khorasàn in A.H.L. 1251/A.D. 1835.

He was one of the most distinguished and famous ‘*ulamà* and Sufis of his time, such that in most of the books of that time his name is mentioned.<sup>8</sup> At the age of three he was faced with the loss of his father. Even at such a tender age, his excellence was apparent to all so that among the people and tribes of Baydukht and Gonabad he was known for his intelligence, wit, dignity and poise. After finishing his elementary studies in Baydukht, due to a lack of sufficient means, he temporarily suspended his studies, but because of his enthusiasm and eagerness, at the age of

seventeen, he continued to pursue studies and made great strides, such that his local teachers no longer satisfied his scientific yearnings. Therefore, he set out by foot for the holy city of Mashhad to pursue his studies where he spent some time and benefited from the presence of the scholars there. From there, he then went to Najaf, Iraq, where he became proficient in *fiqh*, *usul*, and *tafsir* (exegesis of the Qur'an). Under famous *fuqahà*, such as Shaykh Murtizà Ansàri, and was given permission for *ijtihàd* in *fiqh*. On his return from Najaf, he went to Sabzavàr, and under the direction of the famous philosopher, Hajj Mulla Hàdi Sabzavàri, he studied peripatetic philosophy, illuminationist philosophy and Mulla Sadrà's philosophy. He distinguished himself above all the other students of Sabzavàri, and wrote marginalia to the famous book of Mulla Sadrà, *Aşfâr*: Attaining mastery of these sciences did not satisfy his thirst for knowledge, which he began to seek from the hearts of the Sufis. At that time, the *qutb* of the Nematollahi Order, Sa'adat 'AliShah, together with some of his disciples, went to Sabzavàr. Mulla Hàdi, who was devoted to the *qutb*, cancelled his classes and suggested that his students come with him to visit Sa'adat 'AliShah. At that very first session, the late Hajj Mulla Sultan Muhammad was attracted to the Sa'adat 'AliShah, even though the latter was not one of the '*ulamà*, but he did not surrender to him, and after some time returned to Gonabad. Finally, in A.H.L. 1279, he set off on foot for Sa'adat 'AliShah's place of residence in Isfahan. With a passionate inner fire he went to him and was initiated in spiritual wayfaring toward God. Just as Mowlavi followed the illiterate Shams Tabrizi, he became a follower of the unlearned Sa'adat 'AliShah. He spent little time on the various stages of the journey toward Allah, and was authorized by the master for guidance of the Sufi novices and was given the spiritual title of Sultan 'AliShah. In A.H.L. 1293, Sa'adat 'AliShah passed away and Sultan 'AliShah succeeded him as the *qutb* of the Nematollahi Order. Sultan 'AliShah became renowned throughout the Islamic world for both his knowledge and spiritual guidance. This resulted in inciting the jealousy of his enemies, those who were against his way. As a result, unfortunately, in A.H.L. 1327/A.D. 1909, he won martyrdom by being strangled. His grave is in Baydukht, Gonabad.

He has written many epistles and books, the most important of which are: his great Shi'ite Sufi commentary on the Qur'an in 'Arabic in four oversized volumes, *Bayàn al-Sa'adat*; *Sa'adat Nàmeh*; and *Majma' al-*

*Sa'adât*; all of whose titles allude to his master, Sa'adat 'AliShah. He also authored *Walâyat Nameh*, *Bishârat al-Mu'minin*, *Tambih al-Nâ'imin*, *Iyzâh*, and *Tawzih*.

As during the period of Shah Nematollah, the times of Sultan 'AliShah were critical. It was the time of the encounter of Iran with modern Western civilization, when the people confronted new concepts, including scientific and social ones. Naturally, some completely rejected what was strange and new, while others superficially submitted. During this time, Shi'ite jurisprudence, which is based on *ijtihâd* and the derivation of precepts in accordance with the needs of the times, had become stagnated. Most of the *fuqahâ*, who were not conscious of the situation of the modern world, were zealous about the outward aspects of religion and only took into consideration the outward aspects of Western civilization, as well, which they judged to be contrary to Islam.

Sufism was also undergoing a crisis. The opposition of the *fuqahâ* that began at the end of the Safavid period was vigorously maintained. The practice of the pseudo-Sufis also was apparently contrary to both the modernists as well as Islamic law. Taking all this into account, Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah was confronted with three groups who opposed true Sufism: (1) some of the *fuqahâ*, (2) the pseudo-Sufis, and (3) some of the modernists. All three groups were taken into consideration in his attempt to renew Sufism.

Aside from his position of leadership, Sultan 'AliShah was a philosopher and a *faqih*, and both his philosophical positions and jurisprudential opinions were colored by his mysticism. He was a student of Mulla Hâdi Sabzawâri, who was at that time the most famous proponent of a philosophical system based on Sufism derived from the teachings of Mulla Sadrà, and he himself adopted a system of philosophy that mostly followed in this tradition. In *fiqh*, he was a *mujtahid*, whose permission for *ijtihâd* was granted by the great Shi'ite *faqih* of the time, Ayatollah Hajj Mirzâ Shirâzi.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, he did not issue any *fatwâs* as a *mujtahid*, because he considered it necessary to keep the realms of *tariqat* and *shari'at* separate. However, some of his juridical opinions may be found in his *tafsir*, *Bayân al-Sa'adat*. His jurisprudential views show that he was completely aware of the need to take contemporary conditions into account when reaching decisions about Islamic law, and accordingly, he viewed music and chess as lawful, the People of the Book as essentially having

ritual purity, slavery and opium smoking as prohibited, and taking more than one wife at a time as tantamount to being prohibited.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Prohibition of Opium**

One of the bad habits that was becoming current in the Far East, India and Iran during that time was smoking opium. This was a result of the colonial policies of some European countries.<sup>11</sup> This practice was becoming widespread among some of the Sufis for many years to the point that it would be considered a Sufi custom. They used to say that to be a dervish one should smoke opium or hashish. To justify this, they claimed that it promoted ecstasy and the attainment of the Sufi goal of annihilation, fanà. They imagined that the nothingness that comes from smoking opium is the same as the nothingness of mysticism. According to Mowlana:

*In order that for a while they may be delivered from sobriety  
(consciousness),  
They lay upon themselves the opprobrium of wine and  
marijuana.*<sup>12</sup>

Mystical nothingness comes from God, not from changes in physio-chemistry. Again, Mowlana says:

*Nothingness should come from God,  
So that the beauty of God may be seen in it.*<sup>13</sup>

The disadvantage of smoking opium from the point of view of mystical experience in Sufism is that one could confuse the hallucination produced by the use of the drug with the unveiling or opening from God for which every Sufi waits. From a social point of view, the practice led first to inactivity and then to idleness. The disadvantages for public hygiene are clear to all. For these reasons Sultan 'AliShah strictly prohibited the use of opium among his followers at a time when its subsequent social malaise had not yet become apparent, to the extent of cursing those who smoked it. He would not accept anyone who smoked opium as a Sufi novice. In his commentary on the Qur'an, Bayàn al-Sa'adat, with regard to the verse, (They ask you concerning wine and lots. Say: in both these is great sin... (2:219)), he pronounced the prohibition of opium on the

grounds that it violates the rights of ones faculties.<sup>14</sup> This pronouncement at that time appeared to be quite revolutionary, since none of the ‘ulamà had said anything about it. The prohibition also became a great obstacle to the activities of the colonialists who were trying to make the people weak and dependent on them.

After Hazrat Sultan ‘AliShah, his grandson and viceregent, Hazrat Nour ‘AliShah Gonabadi, wrote a separate book entitled *Dhu al-Faqâr: On the Prohibition of Smoking Opium*.<sup>15</sup> In that book he says that since this sin, that results from the temptations of Satan, had become current in most of the cities of Iran, and none of the ‘ulamà had paid any attention to it, it is obligatory for those who are familiar with this problem to try to repel it. The language of this book is simple and lucid in a way that ordinary people could understand the evil of it.

From the time of Hazrat Sultan ‘AliShah, the prohibition against smoking opium has been one of the characteristics of the Nematollahi Sultan ‘AliShahi Gonabadi Order of Sufism.

### **The Abandonment of Idleness**

In Islam, the outward is not separate from the inward. Any work done with the intention of pleasing God is considered to be an act of worship. So, occupation with worship is no excuse for abandoning worldly affairs. The Prophet said, “There is no monasticism in Islam.” In Sufism, in special circumstances, such as during the taming of the carnal soul, instructions may be given for seclusion. Before the divine commissioning of the Prophet, he spent time in seclusion in the cave of Hera. Due to divine attraction, it sometimes occurs that a Sufi abandons the world. In all of these instances, solitude is the exception rather than the rule. Occupation with the arts and crafts in traditional Islamic societies, e.g., architecture, calligraphy, etc., were integrated with the journey toward God. This is why anyone who wants to become a *fatâ*<sup>16</sup> and enter the way of Sufism, had to occupy himself with a craft or art. However, there were Sufis who both intentionally and unintentionally made use of the idea of *khalvat*, or seclusion, as an excuse for idleness and begging. They made a pretext of reliance on God alone, *tawakkul*, and contentment with one’s lot, *Reza*, as a Sufi manner. This is why some of the *khànaqâhs* turned into gathering places for the lazy.

During the time of Shah Nematollah Vali, this bad custom was com-

mon among many Sufis. Although he practiced seclusion many times, he instructed his followers to be occupied with some work and not to try to gain money through Sufism. He himself used to farm and praised this occupation.<sup>17</sup> He said that labor was a sort of alchemy.<sup>18</sup>

The custom of mendicancy was current among many Sufis during the time of Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah, who strictly prohibited all his followers from being idle and without work. He gave reasons for this prohibition based on rational argument, common sense and religious principles. He said, "Everyone should work for a living and for the sake of the improvement of the world. One should occupy himself with any work that he likes and is not against religious law, including farming, trading, or industry."<sup>19</sup> In another place he says, "Idleness is against civilization, too."<sup>20</sup>

This instruction, especially in the modern world, and with the appearance of civil society that necessitates close social relations and the occupation of each member of society with a work was much needed at that time. At the same time, as a Sufi master, he warned his followers against taking pride in worldly gains and wealth or being covetous thereof. He said, "One should consider himself poor even if one has limitless wealth.... No one takes more than a single shroud from this world. When one becomes aware of this truth, he will understand that he is poor in this world and needy to God.... Improvement of the world is by no means contrary to dervishhood."<sup>21</sup> He taught that any work, including prayer and fasting, but also trading and farming, with the intention of performing God's commands, is worship.<sup>22</sup> Earning money is not opposed to reliance on God. He says that the *faqir* should work but consider the results of his work to be from God.<sup>23</sup>

Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah like Shah Nematollah Vali used to farm, and he often had calloused hands. Once, someone came to his house to ask him about alchemy. He was not in the house at the time, but was in his garden. The man went into the garden, and after greeting him, before he could ask anything about it, Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah showed his hands to him and said, "This is our alchemy! We toil and benefit from it."<sup>24</sup> He even used to rebuke farmers who neglected their lands, saying, "If an earth that has the capacity of delivering 300 kilos of wheat, delivers only 270 kilos of wheat because of negligence, the farmer will be held responsible for the remainder."<sup>25</sup>

After Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah, the prohibition of idleness has become

one of the main characteristics of the Nematollahi Gonabadi Order, and all the subsequent *quthbs* have themselves worked and advised their followers to do so, as well.

### Social and Political Affairs

Essentially, Sufism is not a political school of thought, so it has nothing to do with politics. However, Sufis have entered into political affairs as individuals rather than as Sufis.

Generally speaking, the duties ordained by Islam have been divided by the Sufi *shaykhs* of the Nematollahi Order into three kinds:

- (1) Precepts of the *shari'at* that must be obtained from a qualified *mujtahid* (expert in Islamic law);
- (2) Precepts of the *tariqat* that must be obtained from the current Sufi master;
- (3) Personal precepts to be discerned by the individual himself. One should personally discover one's responsibilities by one's own religious thinking and reasoning.

Thus, interference and expressing views about social affairs is outside the scope of *tariqat* and the *fuqarà* do not expect instructions in such regards from the authorities of the Order. One's works and intentions are to be made pure for the sake of Allah, and one's own responsibilities are to be discovered. The authorities of the Order will not express views on such questions so that it is not imagined that these are duties of *tariqat*.<sup>26</sup>

During the constitutional crisis in Iran in the first decade of the twentieth century, when the *fuqarà* asked Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah about their duties, he used to say, "I am a simple farmer from a village. I don't know what constitutional and absolute monarchy mean."<sup>27</sup> He left it to them to figure out for themselves. At the same time, he gave advice to the rulers not to do injustice to the people. For example, in his book *Walâyat Nàmeh*, there is a chapter entitled, "On Explaining Sovereignty and the Treatment of Subjects," in which he severely criticized the rulers of the country, and says, "In this matter, they should take as their example the first caliphs of Islam; and if their time was too long ago, they should take as their example the rulers of the West, who do not live in luxury, make the country flourish, provide ease for their subjects and who fill the treasury."<sup>28</sup>

Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah lived during the dictatorship of the Qàjâr dynasty and its opposition to the reform of the Iranian constitution. The

idea of a constitution was one of the first political concepts from the West to enter Iran. Some of the *'ulamà*, like Bihbahàni approved of it as consistent with Islam, while others, such as Fazlullàh Nouri, disapproved of it as against Islam. Naturally, the formation of political groups and intrigue were current. The *fuqarà* were uncertain of their duties in this regard. Thus, he advised the *fuqarà* to employ their reason based on faith.

### **The Lack of Restrictions to Special Garb**

One of the old customs among the Sufis was wearing special garments, such as woolens, a patched cloak, and other items. Shah Nematollah Vali did not restrict himself or his followers to any special clothing by which they could be designated as Sufis. He sometimes wore a white wool robe, and sometimes a long gown.<sup>29</sup> To the contrary of his practice, many of his followers again began wearing distinctive dress, as is mentioned by 'Abd al-Razzaq Kermàni, the author of his biography: "The clothing worn by his dervishes was absolutely not worn by him or his children."<sup>30</sup> The prohibition of dervish vestments was only temporarily cancelled several centuries later by Hazrat Reza 'AliShah Deccani for two of his authorized shaykhs, Hazrat Ma'Sum 'AliShah and Hazrat Nour 'AliShah I, whom he had sent to Iran. These two great men entered Iran wearing special dervish robes and carrying the characteristic dervish bowl and ax. This policy was enacted to attract attention to the arrival of Sufism in Iran where it had been outlawed for many years.<sup>31</sup>

Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah once again prohibited his followers from wearing any distinctive Sufi clothing. He used to say: "Servitude to God does not depend on any special clothes. In the Qur'an it is written, *'The garment of piety (taqwà) is the best.*'"<sup>32</sup> With this rule, no difference could be made out between Sufi Muslims and the other people of the country, and their particular beliefs remained protected in their hearts. This rule is still current in the Nematollahi Gonabadi Order, which has been reissued by the *quths* after Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Revival of *Walàyat***

*Walàyat* is the inward aspect of the mission (*risàlat*) of the Prophet to guide the people. It is the source of *tariqat* in Islam, or Sufism. The outward aspect of this mission is bringing the *shari'at*, which is concerned with religious precepts. According to the Qur'an, the period of *risàlat*



came to an end with the passing away of the Prophet, but the period of *walāyat* extends until the end of time. *Walāyat* is the main pillar of both Shi'ism and Sufism. Accordingly, both of these refer to the same truth. In both Shi'ite and Sufi theory, the station of *walāyat* cannot be filled by the choice of the people or of an elite. The Prophet chose 'Ali to be his successor in accordance with divine command. In the same manner, each succeeding *Wali* must be appointed by the preceding one. This is why almost all Sufi orders trace their permission for guidance to Imam 'Ali.

Over the course of the centuries, Shi'ism became a set of theological and jurisprudential teachings coupled with a political movement, and *walāyat* was confined to a political interpretation. On the other hand, there were Sufis who completely neglected the issue of *walāyat*.

One of the main issues in the revival of Sufism is the revival of the idea of *walāyat* in Sufi books, which is especially evident after the fall of the 'Abbasid dynasty and the weakening of the political power of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*.

Undoubtedly, the main problem addressed in works of Shah Nematollah Vali is *walāyat*, the various aspects and views about which are discussed at length in many of his works. He raised the topic of *walāyat* to such prominence that the Sufis would understand this to be the source of Sufism itself. On the other hand, he addresses the official Sunni and Shi'ite positions, asking what it really means to be a true Sunni or Shi'ite. He says that to be a Sunni is to follow the tradition (*sunnah*) of the Prophet, one of whose requisites is love for the *Ahl al-Bayt*. To the Shi'ites, who were infamous at the time as *rafizi* (those who were considered heterodox because of their refusal to accept the authority of the first caliphs), he says that to be Shi'ite does not mean cursing the first three caliphs, but it means following 'Ali. In one of his poems he says:

*I am not a rafizite, but I am  
a pure believer, and enemy of the Mu'tazilite.  
I have the religion of my ancestor (the Prophet)  
after him, I am the follower of 'Ali the Wali.<sup>34</sup>*

He reminded the official Shi'ites that believing in the *walāyat* of 'Ali is not merely a matter of words. It is impossible unless there is a heartfelt connection of discipleship. In a poem he says:

*Although you do not have the walàyat of that Wali ('Ali),  
 you boast of walàyat.  
 You should know what you are boasting about.  
 We have raised the banner of his walàyat.  
 Why should the drum be beaten while under the rug?*<sup>35</sup>

In the teachings and works of the martyr Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah, the issue of *walàyat* is renewed, with the difference that in the time of Shaḥ Nematollah Vali, since the religion of the majority of the Iranian populace was Sunni, he addressed them primarily, while in the case of Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah, his polemic was directed primarily at those who had inherited a nominally Shi'ite affiliation because after the Safavid period the Iranian populace was mostly Shi'ite. In most of his books, including his Sufi commentary on the Qur'an, *Bayàn al-Sa'adah*, his main topic is *walàyat* and its different dimensions. His Persian book, *Walàyat Nàmeh*, is an independent treatise specifically devoted to a Sufi/Shi'ite presentation of the topic of *walàyat*. At the very beginning of the book, he says: "Many have erred, thinking that *walàyat* is love, or the mere verbal claim of the Imamate or *walàyat* of the *Ahl al-Bayt*."<sup>36</sup> In another book, he says: "Those whose fathers were Shi'ite think that they are Shi'ite because they imagine this to be no more than the verbal claim of the *walàyat* of 'Ali.... They didn't understand anything of Shi'ism except its name."<sup>37</sup> Thus, his main intention is to show the Sufi dimension of Shi'ism, i.e., *walàyat*, to the nominal Shi'ites who had confined it to a verbal claim or to jurisprudence and theology.

Among the important points that he made about *walàyat* is the issue of having permission for authority in Sufism. This topic became especially highlighted after the competing claims to succession following the passing away of Hazrat Rahmat 'AliShah, and the failure of some to obey his authorized successor, Hazrat Sa'adat 'AliShah.

As it has been said, one of the main principles of *walàyat* is that the master of the Order should have permission from his predecessor. These permissions for guidance should form an unbroken chain or series reaching back to Imam 'Ali. This is why the word *silsilah* (chain) is used for the Sufi orders. During the time of Hazrat Sultan 'AliShah, since there were numerous sectarian divisions of the orders, and there were many

who claimed to be masters without having any permission, there was an intense need to deal with this issue. He refers to this problem in many of his works. For example, he says: "Know that the tree of the shaykhs of every Sufi order of the past has been recorded."<sup>38</sup> He continues to explain that the explicit authorization (*nass*) of the shaykh is necessary to support the claim of being a shaykh, and is needed by the novice in order to recognize the one under whose direction he could enter the *tariqat*. This is why the Sufi shaykhs sought to protect this authorization. In another place he says, "In every religious affair it is necessary to have the permission of the religious authority of the time."<sup>39</sup>

Now in the Nematollahi Gonabadi Order, having explicit authorization has become the most important criterion for spiritual guidance.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmi, *Nafahāt al-Uns*, 2nd ed., (Tehran: 1373), pp. 9-12.

<sup>3</sup> This Order goes through Ma'ruf Karkhi to Imam Reza, the Eighth Shi'ite Imam.

<sup>4</sup> *Walāyat* literally means *nearness* and in Sufi terminology it means friendship with God and His guardianship. For further information about this concept see below, p. ??.

<sup>5</sup> Among his poems are the following lines:

*O you who are a lover of the household of 'Ali!*  
*You are a perfect believer, unique.*  
*Choose the way of the sunnah which is our religion,*  
*Otherwise you will be lost and confused.*  
*Who is the rafī'ī? The enemy of Abu Bakr?*  
*Who is the khārājī? The enemy of 'Ali.*

*Kulliyāt-e Ash'ār-e Shāh Ni'matullāhi Wali*, ed. Javad Nurbakhsh (Tehran: 1355), pp. 688-9.

<sup>6</sup> See Hāj Zayn al-'Ābidīn Shirvāni Mast 'Alishāh, *Hadū'iq al-Siyāhah*, p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> The Dhul Riyāsatayn chain is named after the successor and son of Munawwar 'Alishāh, 'Ali Dhul Riyāsatayn, famous as Wafā 'Alishāh.

<sup>8</sup> There are three books about him: *Rujum al-Shayātin*, by his vicegerent and son, Nour 'Alishāh Gonabadi; *Shahidiyah*, by Kayvān Qazvini; and *Nābiqah-ye 'Ilm va 'Irfān*, by another of his successors, Reza 'Alishāh. The last of these is the most comprehensive of the three.

<sup>9</sup> *Nābigheh-ye 'Ilm va 'Irfān*, p. 208.

<sup>10</sup> Although this is not prohibited in Islamic law, he judged that in modern times it is practically impossible to maintain justice among several wives, while one of the conditions given in the Qur'an for the permissibility of having more than one wife is that one be just to them.

<sup>11</sup> Many historians of that time have pointed out this dangerous problem. For example, E'timād al-Salianah, the author of the famous book, *Ma'āthir va al-Āthār*, contemporary with Sultān 'Alishāh, says, "In these years the colonialists have brought narcotics which they have

- circulated in India into Iran, and they began to encourage the cultivation of it in Kermàn. From this product, called the poppy, the narcotic opium is made.”
- <sup>12</sup> *Mathnavi*, VI, 225. In Nicholson’s edition the couplet ends with *zahr*, meaning *minstrelsy*, but in some other editions there is *bang*, a drink prepared from cannabis.
- <sup>13</sup> This couplet is not found in Nicholson’s edition of the *Mathnavi*.
- <sup>14</sup> *Bayàn al-Sa’adat*, Vol. I, p. 194.
- <sup>15</sup> *Dhu al-Faqâr*, 3rd ed., (Tehran, 1359), pp. 14-15. My respected friend, Dr. Leonard Lewisohn, in his article, “An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I,” published in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 61, (London: 1998), has mistakenly translated *tahrim* (prohibition) as *lauding the virtues*.
- <sup>16</sup> Literally, *fatâ* means a youth; but is used to refer to a person who has kindness, forgiveness, and bravery. *Futuwat* was one of the rites in the path of Sufism.
- <sup>17</sup> See *Majmu’eh dar Tarjomeh-ye Ahwâl-e Shah Nematollah Vali Kermâni*, ed., Jean Aubin, 106.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 106. In one of his poems, he says: “Listen to a good instruction from us. Do good and you will find good as a wage. Do farming; and do not beg. Earn your living lawfully. If you are searching for alchemy, seek it from the dark earth.”
- <sup>19</sup> *Majma’ al-Sa’adât*, pp. 419-428.
- <sup>20</sup> *Nâbigheh-ye ‘Ilm va ‘Irfân*, p. 179.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> *Majma’ al-Sa’adât*, p. 421.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 224, 323.
- <sup>24</sup> *Nâbigheh-ye ‘Ilm va ‘Irfân*, p. 172
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.
- <sup>26</sup> See *The Sufi Path: An Introduction to the Ni’matullahi Sultan ‘Alishâhi Order*, ed. Shahram Pazouki, (Tehran: Haqiqat Publications, 2002), pp. 79-81.
- <sup>27</sup> *Nâbigheh-ye ‘Ilm va ‘Irfân*, p. 122.
- <sup>28</sup> *Walâyat Nâme*h (Tehran: 1380/2001), p. 161.
- <sup>29</sup> Concerning his dress, see *Majmu’eh dar Tarjomeh-ye Ahwâl-e Shâh Ni’matullah Wali Kermâni*, ed., Jean Aubin, pp. 28, 304.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- <sup>31</sup> See, Hâjj Dr. Nour ‘Ali Tabandeh, “Hazrat Seyyed Nour al-Din Shah Ni’matullah Walî,” in *‘Irfân Iran*, No. 15, pp. 18-19.
- <sup>32</sup> *Nâbigheh-ye ‘Ilm va ‘Irfân*, p. 179.
- <sup>33</sup> For example, see *Pand-e Sâlih*, p. 113.
- <sup>34</sup> *Divân-e Shah Ni’matullah Wali*, p. 689.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 755.
- <sup>36</sup> *Walâyat Nâme*h., p. 12.
- <sup>37</sup> *Majma’ al-Sa’adât*, p. 209.
- <sup>38</sup> *Walâyat Nâme*h, p. 240.
- <sup>39</sup> *Majma’ al-Sa’adât*, p. 339.

## Shah Nematollah Vali: An Heir to two Mystical Literary Traditions

*Dr. Nasrollah Pourjavady<sup>1</sup>*

Nour al-Din Shah Nematollah Vali (1331-1437) is primarily known as a Sufi and the founder of the order that is named after him, an order which has experienced a revival in the past two centuries in Iran. What has added to Shah Nematollah's fame in Iran in recent decades is the publication of his Sufi treatises, which are almost all in Persian, as well as his *divan* of Poetry. In his prose works, Shah is obviously a follower and an interpreter of the works of the Andalusian Sufi Writer Muhyi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi (d.1240), particularly his *Fusus al-Hikam*. Shah's prose works, in fact, cannot be understood without some knowledge of the concepts and technical terms that were used by Ibn 'Arabi and his early commentators, particularly 'Abd al-Razzàq Kàshàní, who compiled a rather extensive list of Sufi vocabulary (*istilâhât*) which was developed by Ibn 'Arabi's followers.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Shah Nematollah was one of the first translators of Kàshàní's Sufi vocabulary into Persian.

The impact of the ideas and terminology of Ibn 'Arabi's School on Shah Nematollah is not only discernable in the latter's prose works, but also in his *Divan of Poetry*, a work of some 14,000 lines, containing lyric poetry (*ghazals*) as well as short *mathnawis* and quatrains (*rubà'is*). In fact, it is precisely because of Shah's use of Ibn 'Arabi's concepts and terminology in his *divan* that some contemporary writers have criticized Shah's poetry for its lack of artistic and aesthetic value.<sup>3</sup> These critics believe that Shah's *ghazals* are nothing but expositions of the mystical doctrines of Ibn 'Arabi, expressed in the technical Sufi terms and metaphors which are alien to the traditional Persian love poetry and *ghazals*,

the type of poetry that one finds, for example, in the Divans of Attar, Sa'di, and above all Shah Nematollah's contemporary Hafez.

The criticism made against Shah Nematollah's poetry hinges on the assumption that these Sufi technical terms do not sit comfortably with the language of Persian love poetry. This criticism is no doubt true for those poems in which he has heavily used such terminology; however, it ignores the many poems which are composed purely in the classical Persian style, where neither technical terms nor philosophical-mystical concepts of Ibn 'Arabi's school feature at all. In fact, it can be argued that Shah, as a poet, was not only under the influence of Ibn 'Arabi's school, but rather he was also following the tradition of classical Persian love poetry, the tradition which was developed by poets such as 'Attar, Sa'di, and Fakhr al-Din 'Iraqi. In this paper, I shall try to show by way of some examples how Shah drew on these two traditions in his *ghazals*.

The central idea in many of the verses of Shah Nematollah's divan is that of the *transcendent unity of existence* (*wahdat-e wujud*). It is repeatedly stated by Shah, through different metaphors, that there is only one Real Existence, namely God or the Truth/Reality (*Haqq*), while everything else that has the appearance of reality is nothing but imagination. In fact, the whole cosmos, according to Ibn 'Arabi and his followers, is made up of images, even though they are created by the Real. Shah Nematollah expresses this idea quite explicitly in a great number of verses. To cite only two examples:<sup>4</sup>

*We are all nothing but images,  
and yet in reality we are Him.*

*How can there be any other being in this world  
and the hereafter except the One Being.<sup>5</sup>*

*The whole universe is but His Imagination,  
And in that Imagination His Beauty can be perceived.<sup>6</sup>*

Shah Nematollah expresses the same idea using the metaphor of the ocean or the all encompassing sea (*daryâ-ye muhit*) and the bubbles or waves forming on the surface of it.

*We are all nothing but images  
and yet in reality we are Him,  
We are all bubbles,  
yet in our essence we are the sea.<sup>7</sup>*

*We are drowned in the all encompassing sea,  
We are the waves and the bubbles,  
yet our essence is water.<sup>8</sup>*

*The waves, the bubbles, the water, and the sea,  
All four of them, for us, are but one.<sup>9</sup>*

The bubble or foam is water and a part of the ocean, yet there is something in it which gives it its separate identity, as it were, and makes it distinct from the Ocean. The cause of the bubble's identity is nothing but the air inside it, and the air is nothing tangible or substantial, and for this reason it is a good symbol of the imagination. Human beings, who are like bubbles on the ocean of Being, think that they each have their own identity, and independent existence. But in reality they are all parts of the ocean of Being; or for that matter, they cannot even be said to be parts, for they are in complete unity with the One. If human beings think that they possess an independent existence and their own identities, it is because of the air in their head, i.e. their imaginations. Each person imagines a separate existence for his or herself, but it is only a figment of imagination.

*The whole world is like a reflection on the surface of water;  
like a dream which appears in sleep.<sup>10</sup>*

Another metaphor which Shah uses to express the oneness of Being is that of the cup and the wine. The air inside the bubble which imagines an identity and being for itself is the cup, while the essence (*zât*) of the bubble, which is water, is like the wine inside the cup.

*For us, the waves and the sea are both essentially water,  
You may think of the wine and the cup as the bubble.<sup>11</sup>*

In another ghazal, Shah interprets the meanings of the cup and the wine, by saying:

*If you want to know the meaning of the terms 'cup' and 'wine',  
Then consider one as the body, the other as the soul.*<sup>12</sup>

In his divan, Shah has also borrowed from Ibn 'Arabi's school the doctrine of the Divine Names and Attributes. The whole world of creation, according to this doctrine, comes to be as the result of the Divine Names and Attributes, and every entity in this world is a locus of the manifestation of a Divine Name or Attribute. Shah Nematollah uses the metaphor of a mirror to represent this idea. Thus every object is a locus or a mirror in which a particular Divine Attribute is reflected.

*In every mirror you can seek Him,  
Search for the One Named in all the names  
Read well the description of the Divine Names (in books)  
But seek their meaning in the Book of things.*<sup>13</sup>

Divine Names and Attributes are many, but since they have all originated from the Divine Essence, they are essentially one. Thus, the Divine Essence, which gives unity to the Names and Attributes, is reflected in everything through these Names and Attributes.

*With every Attribute Your Essence is a Name  
Observe one Reality in several Names.  
Thus, see unity and multiplicity together,  
One Reality reflected in many things.*<sup>14</sup>

The verses we have quoted so far bear witness to what the contemporary critics of Shah's poetry claim. Even more so are verses in which our Sufi poet tries to express his dogmatic beliefs. Shah particularly expounds his creed in his *qasidahs* and *mathnawis*, such as the *mathnawi* entitled "*Manzuma-ye imàNeyya*".

In some of his ghazals also, Shah expresses this type of belief. An example of such verses is:



*If the skeptic has doubts in the One  
How can the Unitarian have such a doubt.<sup>15</sup>*

In the following verses, Shah Nematollah expresses his belief in the Sunni doctrine:

*O, You who love the people of Ali,  
You are a perfect believer, unequalled.  
Tread on the way of Sunnism, which is our path,  
Otherwise you will be lost, wandering, and in fault.<sup>16</sup>*

In the poem we have quoted, the mystical aspect of Shah's ghazals are mostly under the influence of Ibn Arabi's ideas and terminology, such as unity, multiplicity, the essence, names and attributes of God, etc. We have also seen how Shah Nematollah uses certain metaphors and images to express these ideas. Many of these metaphors are in fact borrowed from traditional Persian ghazals, particularly the metaphor of cup and wine, the tavern, the mirror, the sea and the bubble, metaphors that were already established for the expression of mystical doctrines, outside of Ibn 'Arabi's school. Therefore, the criticism of the above mentioned contemporary writers who claim that Shah's poetry overuses Ibn 'Arabi's technical language is ill-founded. In fact Shah extensively employs two sets of metaphors which were common in classical Persian love poetry, namely the terms related to the tavern (*kharâbât*) and wine-drinking, on the one hand, and to metaphorical love (*'ishq-e majâzi*) and the beloved (*Shahid*) on the other.

We have already cited examples of poetry in which Shah has used the first of these two sets of metaphors (i.e. the tavern and win-drinking), and we have seen how he makes it clear that he is using these metaphors to express mystical ideas. Similarly he uses the second type of metaphors related to love and love-making in a mystical way, making it clear that by love he means hot human but divine love. To cite an example from one of his ghazals:

*You are the heart's beloved, comfort of the soul—what can be done?  
You are the Sultan of the universe—what can be done?  
In a pure heart the reflection of Your face appears.*

*In that mirror You see Yourself alone—what can be done?  
You are our king, and we Your obedient slaves;  
Whether You summon or dismiss us—what can be done?*<sup>17</sup>

In the above verses, Shah is speaking as a lover, composing lyrics to his divine Beloved, and it could be that this ghazal and others similar were composed while he was still young, for Shah has other love poetry in which he speaks not as a lover but as the beloved, when he is claiming to be a spiritual guide and master. In the language of love poetry, he claims to be the cup-bearer himself, not the lover who begs the cup-bearer for wine.

*I am the drunken cup-bearer in the tavern of the Universe,  
The King in the winehouse of the soul.  
I am the water of life in the stream of existence,  
I am the essence of the spirit that gives life to the body.  
I am the cup and the wine, the form and essence,  
I am the treasure and talisman, the manifest and the hidden.  
So strange it is, I am my own beloved, my own lover,  
I am the very object of my seeking.*<sup>18</sup>

Though this ghazal obviously uses metaphors of wine-drinking and love, there is no doubt that it is a mystical poem. In love poetry, whether it is mystical or not, the poet is the lover who speaks of the pain of love and his or her separation from the beloved. If the poet is a Sufi and speaks of the cup-bearer and handsome youth (*Shahid*), regardless of the kind of love he has in mind, be it metaphoric or divine, both the Sufi and non-Sufi reader will have his or her own reading of the poem. But in the above ghazal and others similar to it, the reader can understand it in only one way, because there is no ambiguity; he is talking about divine love. In the last line, as we can see, Shah is claiming to be a spiritual master and the beloved, and this type of claim is one that a non-Sufi reader, or even a Sufi who is not in the poet's own spiritual order, (*tariqat*), might not appreciate or find appealing. Readers of love poetry, in general, expect the poet to be in the role of lover, and speak of a human beloved, whether metaphorically or not.

Since Shah rarely uses the metaphors of human love and the poetic

motif of *Shahid-bâzi* (playing games with a handsome youth), detailed descriptions of the beloved are hardly found in his divan.

In the following ghazal, Shah speaks of getting completely drunk, breaking his vow of repentance and seeing his beloved in a dream and being captured by his curl. All the images in this poem are used to convey a mystical meaning, yet aesthetically it is one of the most appealing ghazals in his divan, precisely because it has been composed in the style of Persian Sufi love poetry.

*Blind drunk I have collapsed in the Magian tavern,  
 Breaking my vow of repentance, I have drowned myself in wine,  
 Fancying that he might come to me in my dream,  
 I fixed the image of him in my mind as I went to sleep.  
 I submitted my heart to his curl and he's dragging me along,  
 Like those curls of his, I'm being twisted this way and that,  
 The sun of his favor gently treats me,  
 My states are radiantly clear, for I am in the sun.  
 In the quarter of love, there are a hundred thousand like me,  
 Who have given up their lives for the beloved.<sup>19</sup>*

In the above ghazal, none of Ibn Arabi's technical terms have been used, neither does the poet claim to be the spiritual guide or beloved, yet throughout the ghazal one can see the depth of mystical meaning. There are not many ghazals in Shah's divan in which every line shows such poetic skill and touches the heart of the reader. However, in most of Shah's ghazals, one can find verses which are composed in this poetic language of love and wine-drinking. It may very well be that if a selection of Shah's ghazals were made, the artistic value and beauty of his poetry would be better appreciated.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Dr. Nasrollah Pourjavady is a professor of philosophy at the University of Tehran and is the director of the University Press Center.
- <sup>2</sup> For a classification of Shah Nematollah prose works, see N. Pourjavady and P. L. Wilson, *Kings of Love: the Poetry and History of the Nematollahi Sufi Order* (Tehran: 1978), pp. 47-9.

- <sup>3</sup> For this type of criticism of Shah Nematollah's poetry, see: M. R. Shaf'i Kadkani, *Zabér-e Pârsi: Negâhi bi zindegi va ghazal-hâye 'Attar*, (Tehran: 1378), pp. 59-60; and B. KhorramShahi, *Dihh o zabân-e Ââfiî*. 2nd edition, (Tehran: 1362), p. 10.
- <sup>4</sup> All of my examples in this paper are chosen at random from Shah Nematollah's divan. I have used the first edition of Shah's Divan, published by Dr. J. Nurbakhsh (Tehran: 1347).
- <sup>5</sup> *Ghazal* no. 1300.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ghazal* no. 541
- <sup>7</sup> *Ghazal* no. 32
- <sup>8</sup> *Ghazal* no. 2.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ghazal* no. 6.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ghazal* no. 564.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ghazal* no. 915.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ghazal* no. 1498.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ghazal* no. 1327.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ghazal* no. 811.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ghazal* no. 973.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ghazal* no. 1534.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ghazal* no. 529.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ghazal* no. 1020.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ghazal* no. 1072.

## Three Nematollahi Shrines: An Architectural Study

*Dr. Mehrdad Qayyoomi<sup>1</sup>*

Historians tell us that Sufism has been the main stream through the course of Iranian culture during its long history in the Islamic period. It is no surprise that this dominant cultural influence has been particularly manifest in architecture. Sufism has been given shape in most kinds of architectural works, both religious and secular. However, one can expect more obvious influences on buildings that have more direct relation to Sufism, say *Khaniqahs* and mausoleums of saints.

In this article, we will review three examples of saints' mausoleums by the Nematollahi Order in Iran: the first one is the shrine of Shah Nematollah in Mahan (near Kerman), the second is the mausoleum of Mushtâq 'AlîShah in Kerman, and the third is the mausoleum of Sultan 'AlîShah and the other Masters of the Order in Baydukht, Gonabad.

Analysis of these monuments may lead one to notice some of the subtleties of the architecture itself and the relation between the buildings and their function and meaning.

The building of mausoleums and tombs in Iran started in the ninth century. Over the course of eleven centuries from the ninth to the twentieth, excluding the first century after the Mongol invasion, this type of building was constructed continuously in various styles.

From a stylistic point, we can classify mausoleum architecture as having three major types: (1) tower mausoleums, (2) complex mausoleums, and (3) kiosk-like mausoleums. The first type was common during ninth to thirteenth centuries and the last two types were common during the fourteenth to nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, constructing mausoleums was not as common, but monuments were restored and expanded.

Each mausoleum typically contains one or more tombs, which belong to either a religious or a political figure. Before the Safavids, religious mausoleums used to include either Shi'ite Imams or Sufi masters and saints. After the Safavids, the shrines of the Shi'ite Imams were expanded and new mausoleums for descendants of the prophet and Shi'ite Sufi saints were built.

The largest mausoleums in Iran belong to Imam Reza, Hazrat-e Ma'sumah and Shah 'Abd al 'Azim, all of whom are descendants of the prophet. Shah Nematollah Vali's mausoleum is the biggest one after these. It is one of the three monuments that we are about to review in this article. In the last symposium, I presented an article entirely about this monument. Here I shall briefly review its physical development, so we will have more time for the two other monuments.

### **1. Mahan, the shrine of Shah Nematollah**

The shrine of Shah Nematollah in Mahan was founded during the Timurid period, in the fifteenth century. The construction of the shrine started almost immediately after the saint's death in 1431.

The building of the shrine is a vast complex with many closed and open spaces. Although different patrons and architects built it in different phases through five centuries, it is perceived as an integrated complex. The complex has a linear order that is oriented towards the *qiblah*.

The parts of the complex from West to East are: west forecourt and portal, Muhammad Shahi court, Mír Dàmád court, the central part of the complex, which consists of the domed sanctuary and the naves around it, Wakíl al-Mulki court, and finally 'Atábakí court.

The complex has an entrance at each of its two ends. No matter which entrance we choose to enter, we still must pass two caravanserai-like courts to reach the domed sanctuary and the tomb. To meet the holy tomb, the pilgrim has to pass these introductory spaces.

The domed sanctuary was the first building erected on the site. The first phase of the complex development was building the Shah 'Abbási nave, in the west of the domed sanctuary, in the late sixteenth century, in the age of the Safavid king, Shah 'Abbàs I. At the second phase, they built the first court, named the *Mír Dàmád* or *Shah 'Abbási* court in the west side of the nave. The court probably served as a caravanserai for pilgrims and Sufis. The third phase was accomplished two centuries later

in the age of the Qājār king, Muhammad Shah. The Muhammad Shahi court was constructed on the west side of the previous court. This court is the old entrance of the complex from the old Kerman road. In the late nineteenth century, the age of Nāsir al-Dīn Shah Qājār, another development occurred: (1) the building of the three other naves, which settle on the north, east, and south sides of the dome and form a U-shaped plan, probably replacing some older buildings, and (2) the building of the Wakīl al-Mulki court, the most pleasant court of the complex, on the west side of the main building. Some years later, Amīr Nizām Garusī, the ruler of Kerman province in the early twentieth century, added a second story to the east side of the Wakīl al-Mulki court.

Through a vestibule on its east side, the Wakīl al-Mulki court connects to the vastest and latest court of the complex, the ‘Atābakī court, built by Mirzā ‘Ali ‘Asgharkhān Atābak A‘zam, the famous chancellor of three Qājār kings.

Nobody can describe the architectural quality of any space as it is perceived by the one who is present in the space. This fact is especially true of this shrine complex. The use of several successive courts as different phases in the pilgrim’s path to reach the heart of the complex; the holy tomb with its sky-colored dome; several naves that circumambulate around the holy point; the naves which are fine and at the same time pure and mysterious, as the saint himself; and the interior dome over the tomb, which impresses the soul as if one is ascending in company with the saint’s spirit—all are among the architectural means which compatible with certain effects of Shah Vali’s spiritual presence in the shrine. The complex has no gildings, mirror works, or other luxurious ornaments; nevertheless, it is justly known as one of the most spiritual, splendid and purest religious, national and historical monuments in Iran.

## **2. Kerman, Mushtaqiyah (the mausoleum of Mushtaq ‘AliShah)**

The building complex called *Mushtaqiyah*, located in the old part of Kerman city. It contains the tomb of Mirzā Muhammad Torbat Khorasania famous Sufi sheikh of the Nematollahī Order. In the late eighteenth century, Mirza became a disciple of Fayè ‘AliShah and his son Nour ‘AliShah I, the master of the Order in the early Qajar period in Iran, who bestowed the Sufi title Mushtaq ‘AliShah upon Mirza. Titles in the Order generally

refer to the character of the person to whom the title is given. Therefore, the title of Mushtaq 'AliShah can be regarded as an indication of his character as an eager lover of God. In 1791 or 1792 he, accompanied by his master, left Khorasan for the shrine of Shah Nematollah as a pilgrim and to lead dervishes in Kerman. In 1792, he was killed in Kerman by a mob.

Most likely, he was buried in a common cemetery in the city in a mud-brick building of a local governor's tomb. In 1831, a Sufi shaykh named Kawthar 'AliShah died in Kerman and was buried near the tomb of Mushtaq 'AliShah. It was around 1844 when a Qajar princess, called Khan Baji, who was a follower of Kawthar 'AliShah, replaced the simple mud-brick building by an elaborate one. It is notable that the mausoleum was built in the reign of Muhammad Shah Qajar. He was the same king who developed the shrine of Shah Nematollah, as well.

The core of the Mushtaqiyah complex is a vast garden-like court, where the closed spaces are located at its north and south sides. The east and west walls of the court are transparent ones: simply colonnades, which subtly separate the court from its adjacent little gardens. The transparent walls make the court look more spacious and delightful.

The southern side of the court has a one-story one-layer building, consisting of two small iwans and four small entrances, which are located symmetrically about a portal, which once was the main entrance of the complex.

Looking at the court's plan, the north side is similar to the south one, but higher and more decorated. Furthermore, the elevated and colored domes above it make this elevation look more prominent.

The main part of the complex, which is located at the north part of the site, does not have the order and pure geometry that was common in Islamic architecture, although each unit is fully ordered in itself.

Analyzing it layer by layer, the design of the north side has four layers.

The first layer consists of the aforementioned small iwans and corridors. The small iwans are the same size; but the middle one, which leads to Kawthar's tomb, has a more elaborate *moqarnas* vault.

The second layer is symmetrical at its two ends, yet is not in the middle. Kawthar's dome, which is by far the most important space in the complex, is not on the axis of symmetry. This space is a domed sanctuary with solid proportions, a square base, and a double dome. The interior dome is a hemisphere decorated with an intersecting ribbed vault,



*moqarnas*, and painting on plaster. The exterior dome is a high turnip dome with an octagonal base that stands out in the overall view of the complex. The room in the south of this sanctuary acts as the common entrance to both Kawthar's and Mushtaq's tombs.

The third layer from west to east consists of: (A) a long corridor that leads to the court, (B) an octagonal space with cupola, (C) a space with two side-by-side cupolas, which is in fact a small mosque, (D) Mushtaq's sanctuary and (E) another corridor.

The mosque carries a couple of cupolas decorated by beautiful ribbed vaults and *moqarnas*. The double side-by-side cupola design is unusual among the known mosque models in the history of Iranian architecture. The spatial composition of Mushtaq's domed sanctuary is similar to Kawthar's, but is smaller and less decorated. In the west side of Mushtaq's sanctuary, there is another domed mausoleum that belongs to a Sufi named Shaykh Isma'il Haratí. It is newer and simpler than the two other domes.

The fourth layer consists of two corner patios and two vestibules between them. The utility and function of these patios are unknown. One of the vestibules reaches to the north portal and is a part of the north entrance system. The north portal, with *moqarnas* vault and tile inscription, is the most prominent physical element in the north elevation of the complex. The elevation has a beautiful and elaborate design, and are good examples of Qajar architecture.

### **3. Gonabad, Sultani Shrine Complex**

Baydukht, a village in Gonabad area of southern Khorasan, was the birthplace of the late Sultan 'AliShah, master of the Nematollahi Order in the late Qajar period. In the spring of 1909, he was martyred in the court of his house. His son and successor, Nour 'AliShah, buried him on top of a hill near the village's cemetery. First, he leveled the top of the hill and made a court for the coming mausoleum. Then he built a small room over the tomb and a small *Husayniyyah* in the west side of the court. Later, he built a caravanserai for Sufis and pilgrims at the foot of the hill. He also started to build a great sanctuary over the tomb, but while the first phases of construction were in progress in 1918, he was poisoned to death. His successors, Salih 'AliShah and Reza 'AliShah, made every effort to complete the mausoleum complex, which was finished in 1927.

We can identify three periods in the complex history: (1) the forma-

tion period, in the age of the late Nour ‘AliShah; (2) the institution and consolidation period, in the age of the late Salih ‘AliShah; 3) “development and completion period”, in the age of the late Reza ‘AliShah.

Salih ‘AliShah’s main work was to complete the main building construction. He replaced the mud-brick building over the tomb by a great domed building. Then he decorated the mausoleum interior with delightful stucco and mirror works. Furthermore, he developed the *Husayniyyah* founded by Nour ‘AliShah in the west side of the court. Another important step was to supply water for the complex by a special subterranean canal (*qanat*) for it. The project started in 1924 and finished in 1927. The water appeared in the south of the main court, in the forthcoming *Kawthar* court.

Salih ‘AliShah added two courts to the complex: the *Payin* court in the north and the *Kawthar* court in the south of the main court, in a form similar to caravanserais with rooms for pilgrims. He put a circular pool in the center of the latter court, filled by the canal. He also ordered the building of a clock tower over the north court in 1966.

It was the last year of Sâlih ‘AliShah’s life. They buried him in the shrine, beside his grandfather. His son and successor, Reza ‘AliShah, followed up on the shrine project. The third phase in the shrine development was to be started.

The *Husayniyyah* has a special position among religious buildings of the Nematollahi Order: it is a combination of *khaniqah* and a place for Imam Husayn’s funeral commemoration. In the same period, the *Husayniyyah* on the west side of the main court was developed. They built a special court for it, called *Tikyah* or *Firdaws* court in 1968.

When the *Payin* court was constructed in the second period, Reza ‘AliShah replaced a caravanserai built by the late Nour ‘AliShah with a new court, named *Jadid* court. He built a library in the south of this court in 1968. He also completed the mirror works in the mausoleum interior.

Reza ‘AliShah passed away in 1992 and is buried beside his father. Just five years later, his successor Mahbub ‘AliShah died and was buried beside them. Therefore, the shrine contains the tombs of four Sufi masters of the Order, which increases its importance among Sufi monuments.

The Sultâni shrine complex has a linear composition, oriented toward Qiblah. The three courts have such an arrangement: “Pâyin” court, “Bâlâ” (or main) court, and *Kawthar* court. The site has a northward slope,

so a court has a higher level if it is on the south side of the other. Then Kawthar court has the highest and Pâyin court has the lowest level. Main entrance is in the north end with a portal in Pâyin court.

No doubt, such a layout was on purpose: when a pilgrim passes the north portal and enters the lower court, he faces a charming view of the domed sanctuary. The pilgrim in his way to the domed sanctuary, where is the pilgrimage goal, must pass through the garden-like court and ascend the stairs between the two courts.

Pâyin court has rooms in its north and west sides. The east side is a simple wall and the south one has some delightful small iwans and a staircase in the center. These rooms and iwans visually unify the court's three sides. Each side has a visual center, which in the north side is the aforementioned entrance portal.

Levels of the main and Kawthar courts are not so different. The visual rhythms of their spaces are also similar, which unifies the two courts. It seems that each court is a combination of a vast caravanserai and a garden. The middle of each side elevation is made prominent by a greater and higher iwan. The central east side iwan in Kawthar court is the entrance portal of the court too.

The major physical aspect of the complex is its combination of several courts. In Iranian architecture, open space is often the main physical part of a design. This is true in complex and kiosk-like mausoleums, among them the Sultâni complex, which recalls the composition of Shah Nematollah's shrine complex.

We have already reviewed the major architectural aspect in the shrine complex of Shah Nematollah: its linear composition of several courts. Such a linear composition did not occur elsewhere except in just one case: the Sultâni shrine complex in Baydukht, built roughly five centuries after the shrine complex of Shah Nematollah.

The people buried in the shrine, who also founded it, were all the successors of Shah Nematollah. They certainly built the complex according to a template: the shrine complex of their holly predecessor. They modified the template, which originally was designed for a plane site, for a slope, by putting courts on different levels in a stair-like composition. The similarity between the two, which are the most prominent Sufi building complexes in Iran, is interesting. Therefore, the Sultâni complex is

the climax in the history of Sufi architecture in the last two centuries.

Comparing the Sultàni shrine architecture to typical mausoleum patterns in the history of Iranian architecture, we can see another prominent aspect: it seems that all of the three types are gathered in its design. Firstly, it is a complex mausoleum. Secondly, the position of the single main building in the middle of an open space shows a similarity to kiosk-like type. Finally, the building itself is similar to a single tower mausoleum.

The complex construction was started in the late Qājār period and was consolidated its final character in the early Pahlavi period when Iranian traditional architecture was being replaced by an eclectic one. Therefore, some confusion and disorder in its design is not surprising.

Nevertheless, the overall composition is based on a one thousand year experience of Iranian architecture. It is a successful combination of Iranian mausoleum, caravanserai, *khaniqah*, *Husayniyyah*, school, and mosque. Rooms, small entrances, and class chambers have delightful settings. The continuation of the traditional architecture is reflected in frequent small iwans that are connected to make arcades, the composition of brick and plaster and sometimes tile-work in the courts' revetments, the ribbed and moqarnas vaults in the portals, familiar ornaments in the domed sanctuary, and above all, the charming entrance portals.

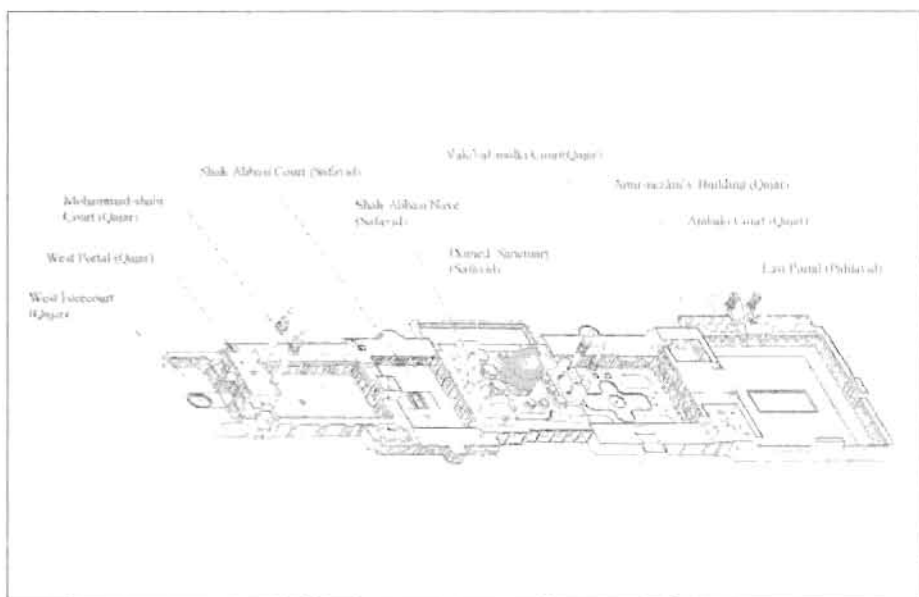
Can we regard the continuation of this physical tradition as a symbol of the continuity of the spiritual tradition that the masters of the *tariqah* have been its patrons and messengers?

### Notes:

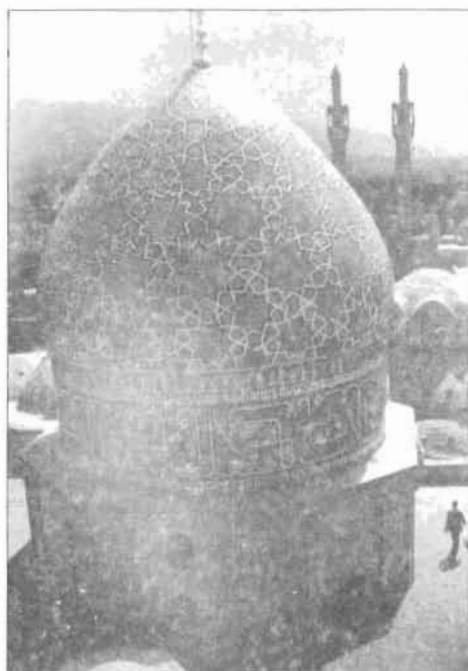
- 1 Dr. Mehrdad Qayyoomi is a member of the faculty of Architecture at Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran.



1. The shrine of Shah Nematollah (air view)

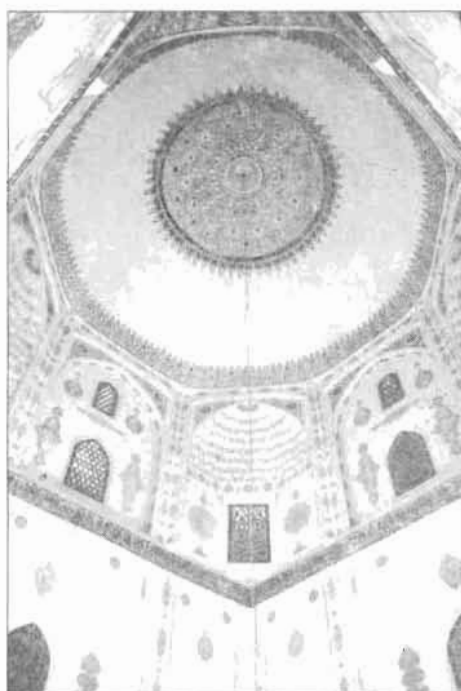


2. The shrine of Shah Nematollah (isometric view)



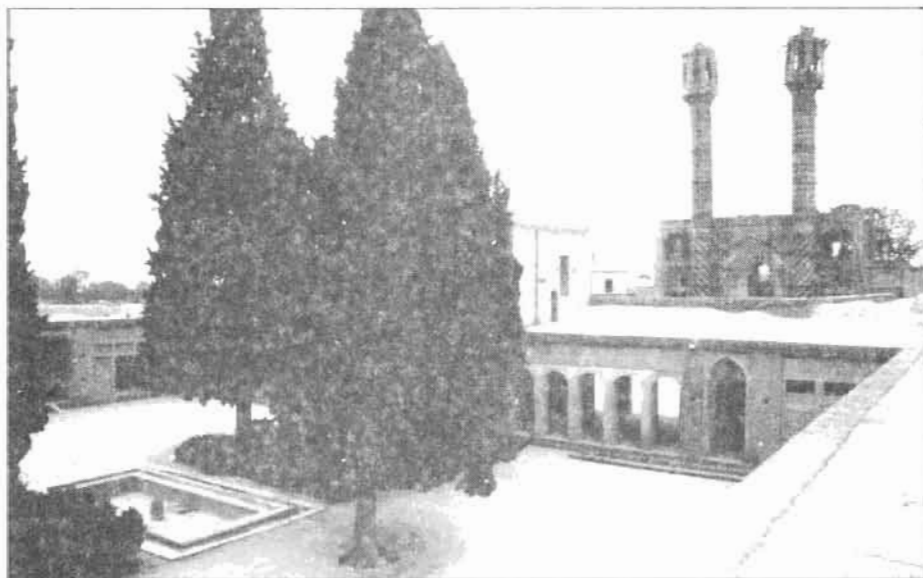
3. The shrine of Shah Nematollah  
(the dome- external view)

4. The shrine of Shah Nematollah  
(the dome- internal view)

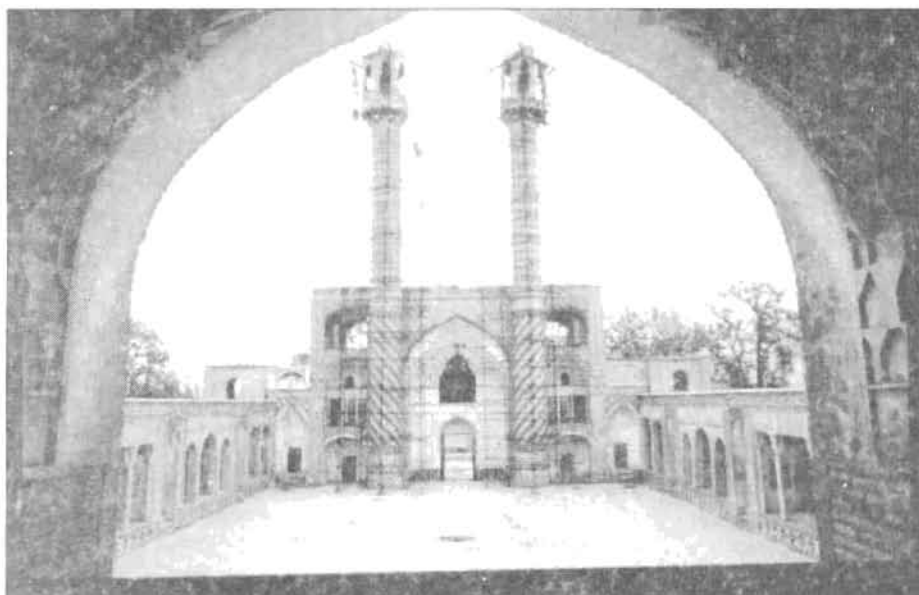




5. The shrine of Shah Nematollah (Shah-<sup>'</sup>Abbâsi nave)



6. The shrine of Shah Nematollah (Mir-e Dâmâd court)

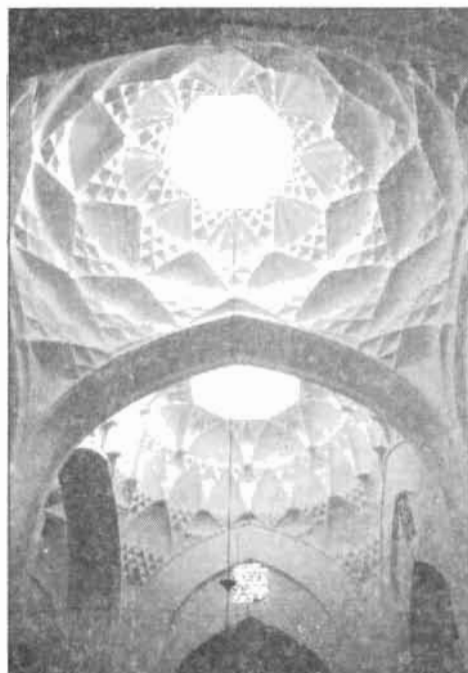


7. The shrine of Shah Nematollah (Mohammad-Shâhi court and east entrance)



8. The shrine of Shah Nematollah (east portal and forecourt)





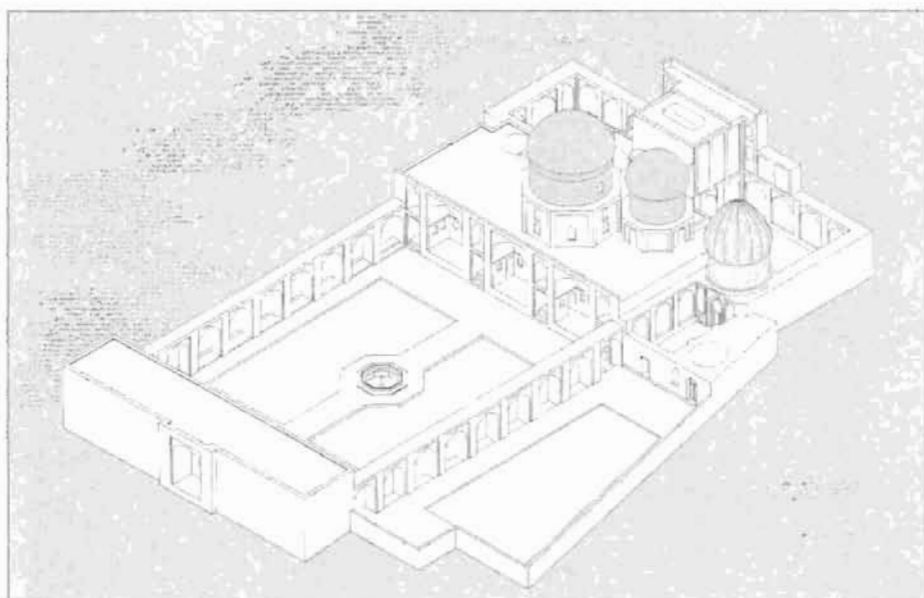
9. The shrine of Shah Nematollah  
(Vakil-ol-Molki nave)

10. The shrine of Shah Nematollah  
(‘Atābaki court)

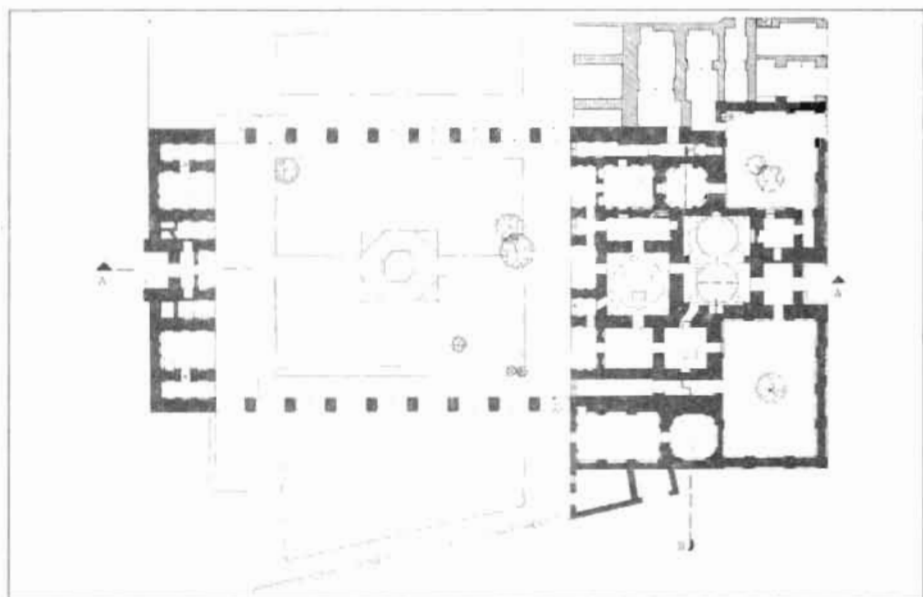




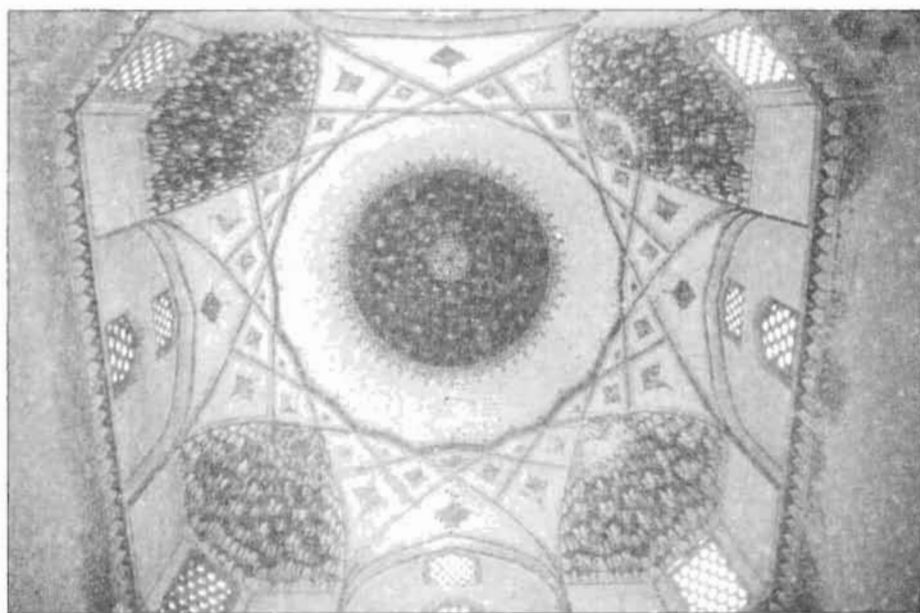
11. Moshtâqiyeh (the two domes)



12. Moshtâqiyeh (isometric view)



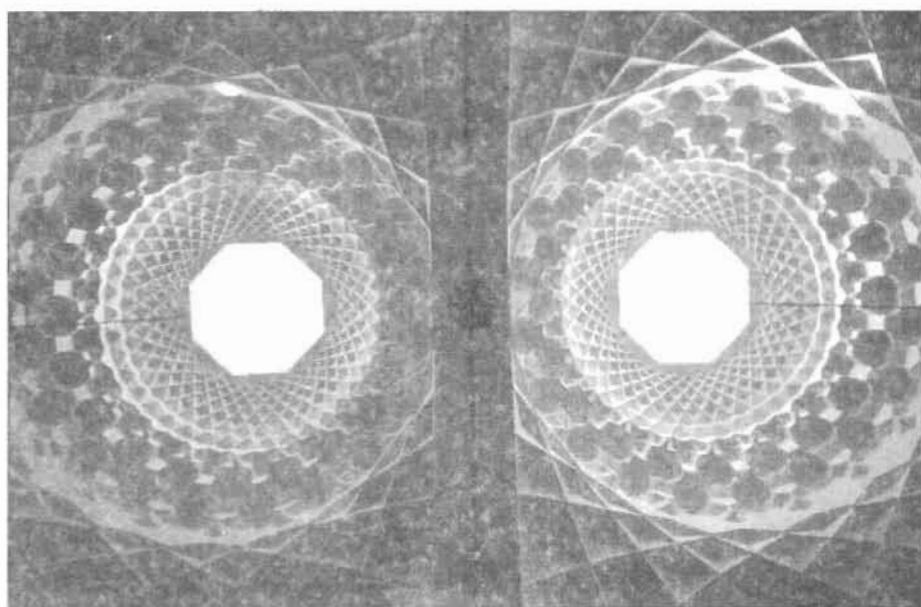
13. Moshâtâqiyeh (plan)



14. Moshâtâqiyeh (Kowsar dome, internal view)



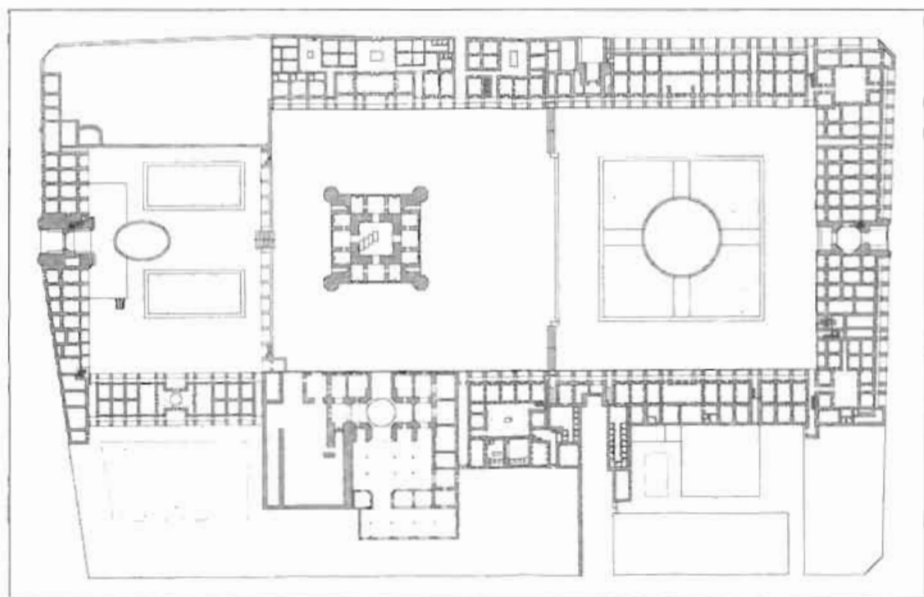
15. Moshâtâqiyeh (Kowsar iwan and dome)



16. Moshâtâqiyeh (double cupolas of the mosque)



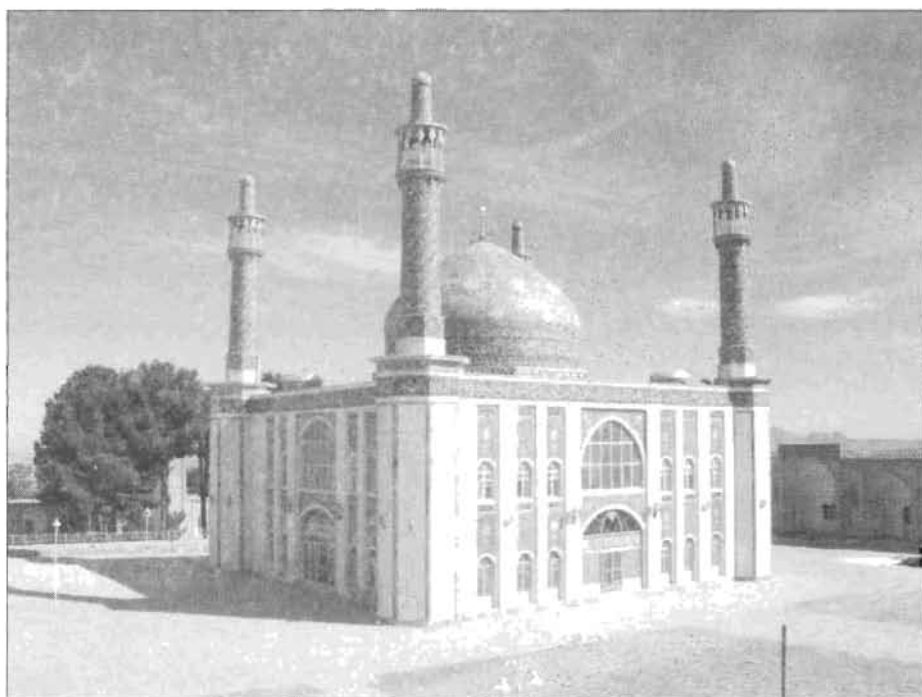
17. Soltâni Shrine Complex (overall view)



18. Soltâni Shrine Complex (plan)



19. Soltâni Shrine Complex (upper court)



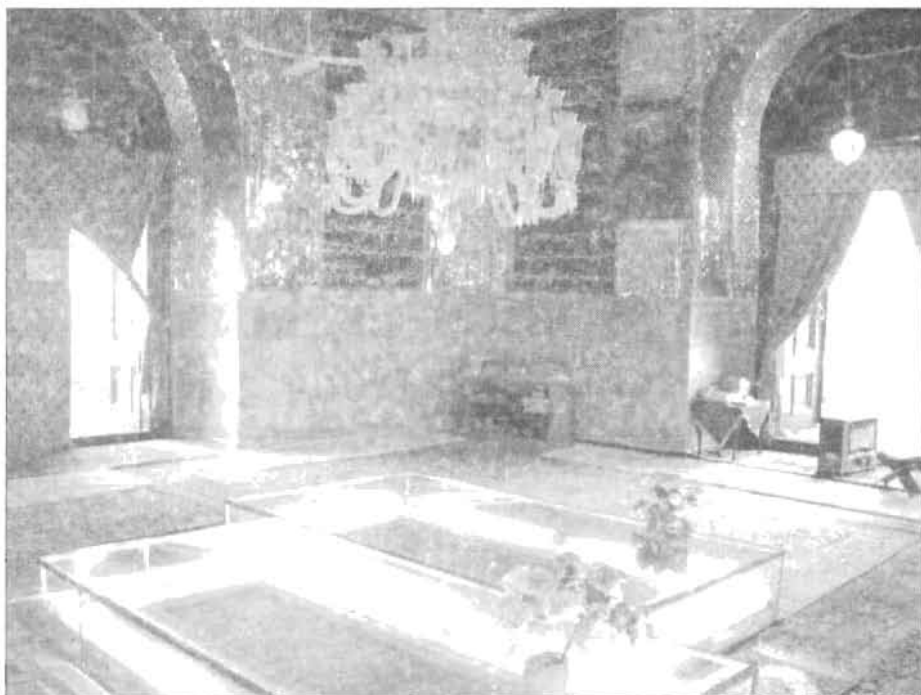
20. Soltâni Shrine Complex (main building)



21. Soltâni Shrine Complex  
(north portal, outer side)



22. Soltâni Shrine Complex  
(north portal, inner side)



23. Soltâni Shrine Complex (sanctuary and the tombs)



24. Soltâni Shrine Complex  
(lower court)





25. Soltâni Shrine Complex  
(south portal, inner side)



26. Soltâni Shrine Complex (south portal, outer side)

## On Sufism and the “Social”

MATTHIJS VAN DEN BOS<sup>1</sup>

This article is about the interplay between what I think are radically different traditions—theological Shi‘ism and social science. The method adopted here is also somewhat of a hybrid. I explore, on the one hand, general modern Sufi social history in Iran, and engage in more detailed content analysis of highly specific Sufi works on the other.

Starting with the first element, it is not very difficult to counter the notion of Sufism’s inherent traditionalism when studying modern Sufism in Iran—from roughly the late nineteenth century. But I was nevertheless amazed to find two books on the sociology of Islam, written by a Sufi, when I was doing fieldwork in the autumn of 2001. However modern some Sufis might have been, there also has been a noticeable reluctance towards social science among them.

So, things apparently have changed even in this respect. At the same time, Sufis seemingly did not really take part in the new civil society, specifically in Khatami’s Iran, despite a new socio-political climate that was far more lenient with regard to all kinds of difference.

Here, then, are the riddles that I address: previously, Sufi modernity had been characterised by a new orientation toward the here-and-now, but nowadays, notwithstanding new opportunities, Sufism is largely absent from the public sphere. Simultaneously, a Sufi produces a stunning work such as a mystic *Sociology of Islam*, or, as I argue, Islamic sociology, while the theme of ‘the social’ had been a marginal issue in traditional Sufi thought.

What I argue is that current quietism only apparently underscores the widespread view of Sufism as a traditionalist and otherworldly spirituality. The first line of argument against exploding the observed quietism into a general statement about the nature of Sufism, which I think is un-

founded, is that this quietism is relatively novel, that is, that Sufism has become less involved in social and political affairs after the Pahlavi era and even, strange as it may sound, after the Islamic Republic until Khatami. The second line of argument is to be found in the innovative Islamic sociologies, to which I'll return later.

### **Into Modernity**

To begin with, the fact of Sufi modernity and of a resilient Sufism in itself runs counter to received wisdom about Sufism's eclipse after or with the disintegration of the Qajar dynasty (1785-1925). It turns out that several masters were active during the Constitutional Revolution, and were very much focused on thinking up solutions for the ills of Iranian society. A second heritage of this period is the nation-state orientation that continued into the Pahlavi era.

Taking a similarly huge leap in time, there have been indications of Sufism's flourishing in the Islamic Republic. Nevertheless, Sufis generally have kept a low profile after the revolution, which had (at least) three reasons. Traditional religious objections might have gotten out of hand in the context of the new rigid religious regime. Secondly, modernist rejections of Sufism, based on the perceived anti-social identity of Sufism, carried the same risk. And thirdly, there was potential for Sufi religiosity being read as a competitor for spiritual authority.

Nematollahi Sufis in Iran generally sought accommodation with the new regime. In the Sultan 'Alishahi Order, a public record of good relations between the Order and respected clergy was helpful. At the same time, the Shi'ite orders often symbolized an uncorrupted, non-regime religiosity. But while they were to some degree counter-hegemonic symbolically, the orders do not appear as actors in Iran's civil society as it emerged since about 1995.

### **Current Conditions**

The reasonable prospect was for this situation to change after Khatami brought a new climate to power in 1997. There were additional reasons for this expectation. Those familiar with the work of 'Abdolkarim Soroush will be aware that Sufism, though not always in a positive sense, is an important topic for him. Indirectly, Sufism attained a reformist aura through his work, which might have facilitated a Sufi presence in the

public sphere. Lastly, Sufism's twentieth-century orientation towards the here-and-now in Iran showed that there was nothing intrinsic to Sufism to oppose it to worldliness. But as indicated before, Sufis still kept their distance.

Despite improved conditions, caution cannot be ruled out as a partial explanation of Sufi quietism. In the midst of Iran's current ideological strife, Sufis very likely would make themselves vulnerable when speaking out in public for or against a given politico-religious cause. But there are other inhibitions as well, except for this particular external factor, which I think are at least as important in explaining Sufism's virtual absence from the public sphere.

There is no such thing as a natural coalition of religious reformers and Sufis in Iran. There were physical if subtle signs of unease in my interviews with two representative new religious thinkers in September 2001 where talks touched upon Sufism. And conversely, it is often felt that non-Sufi religious reformers' thought remains exoteric, that is, shallow.

Now given this distant relation of Sufis to the realm of the social, society has not been completely absent from contemporary Sufi expressions. For example, the present master of the Nematollahi Order, Majzoob 'AliShah, published a collection of essays on social and other worldly matters. But these reflections stemmed from the period before he became *Qutb*. The foreword explains that the writings are not 'mystical' (*'irfānī*) but 'social'. In other words, despite the fact that their writer was a Sufi, the essays clearly do not provide Sufi conceptualisations of society.

The sociologies of Islam that I referred to earlier are to my knowledge the first modern Sultan 'Alishahi effort to do precisely that. Their writer is a Sufi who studied sociology in the United States. I must warn that they do not straightforwardly represent doctrine in the Order, although the writer did obtain permission for his books from three different masters.

### **Sufi Sociology**

It may be a suitable way to start discussing the books to point at a paradox that is symbolic of the project as well as its more problematic features. While the Persian titles mention 'Sociology of Islam', the books turn out to be really about 'Islamic Sociology.' This is evident from their beginning, where central questions are defined. "What is the social and economic structure of a healthy society from a Qur'anic viewpoint?" is

the sort of question that the author typically presents within the realm of sociology of religion.

The conceptual fusion of Islam and sociology is paralleled by an erasure of temporal difference. Thus, you find a treatment of Ibn Khaldun and Karl Marx as if they were sharing the same conceptual apparatus, as if addressing by and large similar issues, and as if by implication they are situated on the same temporal plane. In this particular respect of 'fusion', one intellectual background to the project is the 1960's and 1970's nativism of men like Jalal Al-e Ahmad and 'Ali Shari'ati who were after definitions of the authentic self which, paradoxically, at the same time applied Western frames of reference.

A good reason for making the comparison with Shari'ati is that this ideologue is famed for his so-called *Sociology of Islam*. Similarities between the two projects emerge in what Daryush Shayegan referred to as 'conceptual hybridisation'—another way of pointing to nativism, but focusing more strongly on problematic epistemic features. But in another respect, the Sufi sociologist reverses Shari'ati's *Sociology of Islam*, because Shari'ati in the final analysis reads Islam sociologically while he reinterprets sociology Islamically. I think it is a sign of this fact that he overlooks Shari'ati's heritage, while it is so obvious.

Following these preliminaries, I analyse the books in more detail, which comes down to, first, an overview of the larger arguments. Secondly, I try to find out what 'the Islamic social' consists of in them, how this might be grasped. And thirdly, I analyse the centrality of the doctrine of *walayah*. What I'm seeking to show here is that 'the Islamic social' remains highly abstract, and that this is caused exactly by the fact that the doctrine of *walayah* is put in its place.

Starting with the larger arguments, one of the books is titled *A Theoretical Sociology of Islam*. It treats various Muslim thinkers, among whom are Sufis and more specifically Sultan 'Alishahis. Of the Sultan 'Alishahi masters, the work focuses on the renowned Reza 'Alishah, who died in 1992. Reza 'Alishah's work is implicitly presented as an exemplary social science.

Filing this oeuvre under 'social science' means rubbing out epistemic boundaries between medieval Islamic geography, folklore, travelogues, and contemporary anthropology. Reportedly, Reza 'AliShah considered travelogues such as Ibn Battuta's 'scientific' and anthropological. The

master's travel(ogue)s were grounded in mystical views of *safar* (journeying). Travel was a duty for the *sâlik* (wayfarer) and probably a metaphor for wayfaring itself, *sayr-o-suluk*. Here, then, the mystical path and social science merge.

But except for these blurred boundaries, certain distinctions are also constitutive of the sociologies. *Historical Sociology of Islam*, the second book, is founded on anti-positivism and concepts that result from this orientation. It meets the expectation that the author subsequently charts that he labels a 'religious pathology', consisting of four major 'deviancies' that have developed in Muslim societies throughout history. The most important deviancy had occurred in the interpretation of the pillars of Islam—and concerned faith in *walayah*.

Deviance regarding *walayah* was the worst deviation. Things had seriously gone wrong immediately after the death of the Prophet and for this reason historical sociology was devoted to, "finding a suitable answer to this question: how was the issue of the leadership of society [...] dealt with in Islam?" So the historical sociology treats negative societal consequences, the Shi'ite drama of non-'Alid developments after the demise of the prophet.

It comes as somewhat of a surprise that while the analyses of deviant Muslim societies are rather clearly delineated, the solutions offered for a healthy society in accordance with Qur'anic guidelines remain highly abstract. There are references to 'mystical prescriptions and programs' and what 'planning' would look like on the basis of 'Alî's Islam. But this treats moral principles underlying planning, not the plans themselves or how they might contrast with non-Shi'ite plans. Clearly, then, the discussion is evocative more than it is analytical.

These and other cases suggest that this particular Islamic social occupies what may be called an epistemological nowhere land. A 'nowhere world', in Shayegan's words, that emerges through patching elements from different epistemic orders, often in neglect of their particular historicity. The relations of Shi'ite theological terms and sociological jargon—planning, technique-oriented, bourgeois sociologist—play this part in the two Islamic sociologies.

In contrast to the rather elusive nature of this Islamic social, the Shi'ite concept of *walayah* occupies a very central place in the two Islamic sociologies. Answering vital questions on the 'appropriate social, economic

and political systems', all sociologisms are cut short in the author's exclamation that, "the school of Shi'ism has been discerned as the straight way to Qur'anic *walāyah*". Here, *walāyah* means 'cure' for the mentioned deviancies that currently oppress Muslim societies. That is, it is their social essence.

Islamic sociology in both works is itself a part of *walāyah*. First, Islamic sociology forms part of a larger esoteric view of knowledge as metaphor of the divine. Secondly, as much as knowledge involved realizing Islamic potential, Islamic sociology was intrinsic to Shi'ism and embodied by 'Alī: it had been subsumed in his being a 'perfect friend of God'. From this notion, the linkage extends to Sufism, as the true Islam, the books stress, is 'Alī's Islam, and 'Alī's Islam is Shi'ism and Sufism taken together.

These explications of the authentic message do not involve political sociology in any substantial contemporary sense, but the Islamic sociologies do expand on relations between *walāyah*, society and authority. They oppose *walāyah* to monarchy and loosely associate it with democracy. The passage ends with the assertive claim that "deeds of true *walāyah* [...] may be seen as the ultimate example of [...] political and social-participatory pluralism".

I would say that it is perhaps because of the circularity of the argument—proceeding from and leading up to *walāyah*—that the ideal socio-political order plays no further role in the sociologies, in any more precise sense. Here lies a point of contrast with the more mundane terms of 'new religious thinking', nowadays in Iran. The works are not like the writings of Soroush and their relating of mysticism and reformist ideals. The interpretive principle is not developed here into the hermeneutics by which Mujtahid Shabestari radically rereads Shi'ite tradition—democratically. And there is no comparison to the work of Kadivar either, who critically re-examined and thus very effectively confronted the main *walāyah* theories.

Now ending my observations of the Islamic sociologies, its 'social' shines through hybrid conceptualisations such as the 'sociological unity of existence', with a predicate that stems from a completely different universe. It may be considered a 'surrogate' in comparison to Durkheim's *fait social*—an authoritative early definition of 'the social.' Durkheim's concept refers to a *sui generis* class of coercive phenomena that is exter-

nal to the individual—autonomy being the concept’s central element. But what lies at the heart of the surrogate social is the recurring attestation of mystical Shi‘ite faith. This has been stated by the namegiver of the Sultan ‘Alishahi order: “*Walāyah* is the last part but [also] the fundament of all pillars of Islam, and the other pillars are [but] an introduction to *walāyah*”.

I’d like to conclude by restating my initial statements on Sufism. Quietism does typify Sufism in Khatami’s Iran, but it is relatively new in comparison with earlier twentieth-century Sufism. Secondly, there are the Islamic sociologies, which do not underscore otherworldliness.

The Islamic sociologies’ religious concepts of the social are not a primal regression into mystic traditionalism but may be seen as a neo-traditional hybrid. This ‘social’ is traditional in the sense of ‘pre-Durkheimian’, lacking autonomy, and in the sense of being elusive in theological abstraction—in comparison with the work of new religious thinkers who do often specify sociological implications of their arguments. But on the other hand, this reading of *walāyah* into the social order of things is also a quite unique effort in Iranian Sufism and possibly beyond it to come to terms with this-worldly social science, society, and the social.

### Notes:

- 1 Matthijs van den Bos is an independent researcher in the Netherlands who is studying Sufism, especially its social aspects, in contemporary Iran.



## Comment a été géré le Sanctuaire de Shah-e Vali?<sup>1</sup>

*Dr. Bastani Parizi*<sup>2</sup>

Une femme zoroastrienne kermani—Varghanienne qui était stérile avait fait le vœu dans le sanctuaire de Nematollah Vali que si elle mettait un enfant au monde, elle mettrait un petit tapis devant le portail du sanctuaire du Shah.

Elle a enfanté a mis des Jumeaux au monde et bien sûr, elle avait tenu sa promesse et au lieu d'un petit tapis, elle avait mis deux petits tapis sur les deux cotés du portail d'entrée du sanctuaire.<sup>3</sup>

Il y a Cinquante ans, lorsque j'enseignais dans les lycées de kerman, en entendant cette histoire, je comprenais mieux que la position de ces deux guides spirituels était la base de la bénédiction de la province de Kerman.

Après avoir travaillé pendant des années dans l'université de Téhéran, je me suis posée une question: Comment ont-été dirigé ces sanctuaires pendant six cents ans? Les sanctuaires qui ont été l'abri de l'exportation et de l'importation? Dans ce bref article, je n'explique pas la biographie de Shah Nematollah car les autres l'expliqueront.

En réalité, parler en présence des professeurs connus et des chercheurs éminents, c'est comme: "Porter l'eau à la rivière."

Ou selon le proverbe anglais: "To carry coal to New castle". Ou selon le proverbe arabe: "Porter la datte au Bassora"

Ce que j'expliquerai brièvement, sera la direction de ces bâtiments et l'organisation des fondations pieuses, la manière d'accueil des convives et des pèlerins du sanctuaire de Shah Nematollah Vali car premièrement, cela remonte à 600 ans et les voyageurs y venaient de l'Inde, D'Azerbaïdjan d'Iraq et tous les habitants de la province de Kerman. Les

provinces de Kerman et Sistan et Baloutchistan ont une étendue de 250,000 kilomètres et étaient considérées comme la quatrième grande province d'Iran. Une étendue plus grande que l'Angleterre et la moitié de la France. La seule partie située dans l'entrée du golfe persique et la mer d'Oman est plus grande que les Pays-Bas dans lequel se déroule ce séminaire à la mémoire de Shah Nematollah Vali grâce à l'une des universités de ce pays et le Dr. Mostafa Azmayesh et une centaine des savants et les amis de Shah Vali. Ce séminaire s'est déroulé dans la cité universitaire de Leyden.

J'ai commencé mon discours avec une histoire étonnante d'une dame zoroastrienne qui attachait beaucoup d'importance au sanctuaire de Shah Nematollah, car ce sanctuaire n'était pas seulement pour les musulmans et des personnes d'autres religions y venaient. Et c'est l'un des caractères du milieu social de Kerman qui pendant des siècles le considérait comme un lieu de réconciliation pour tous les tribus de Kerman. C'est pourquoi des groupes comme les Kharidjites, les Ismaéliens de la période des Saljoughians, les Mazdéens de la période d'Anoushiravan, les Jésuites et les chrétiens et les disciples de Ikhavân al-safâ, les Zoroastriens et d'autres groupes qui ont été entièrement ailleurs existent encore dans la province de Kerman et ont une vie pacifique dont j'ai parlé dans mes articles dans le congrès des recherches de l'Afrique du nord et de l'Est dans la ville de Toronto en 1992.<sup>4</sup> Mais bien sûr, les groupes des soufis et des savants qui vivaient de longue date à Kerman, ont été à la tête. Et plusieurs des personnages religieux comme Mazdak (période préislamique) et le Qatari le Kharidjite et Hassan Sabah (post-islamique) qui disait: "La sagesse suffisante ou insuffisante" ont vécu des périodes de Retraite et de réflexion à Kerman. Tout comme, Hamidoddin kermani l'auteur du livre de "le repos de la raison (Rahat-ol Aql)" et Houjviri sisstani, Shaykh Hassan Bulgari, Shaykh Abu lshagh Kazeroni, Khajeh Nasiroddin Tossi, Haje Molla Hadi et récemment, M. Salleh Ali shah, Haje Zeinollabedin Shirvani, Haje Abbass Ali Keyvan Ghazvini et M. Rashed et le défunt Baba Reshad, le directeur de résistance et ressortissant de Moshtaghieh de Kerman. Une raison plus importante: Trois soufis connus iraniens comme seyyed Husseini dont la lignée spirituelle remonte à Shahabolldin Sohravardi, Shaykh Fakhredin Iraqi et Shaykh Ohedin (Kermani) ont fait, la même année, une retraite dans le couvent de Shaykh Ohedin et chacun a rapporté le fruit de cette retraite sous forme un livre important au Shaykh. Shaykh Fakhrodine, le livre de "lamat oll asheghin", Shaykh Ohedin, le livre de

“Tarji” et Amir Seyed Husseini, le livre de “Zad oll mossafarine”.<sup>5</sup>

Une centaine d'intellectuels connus ont résidé pendant des années dans la ville de Kerman.

Shah Nematollah est l'un d'eux qui a voyagé entre Damas et la ville de Khoye d'azarbaidjan et la Transoxiane et avait des milliers de disciples (selon un rapport 60,000) et qui a attiré l'attention de Tamerlan, l'un des deux grands conquérants d'Asie. Dans la ville de Yazd, il a eu des révélations spirituelles et enfin, il a fondé les écoles dans les villes de Kouhbanan et Mahan située à 25 Kilomètres de la ville de Kerman là où il est mort.

Il voyait dans le ciel étoilé de kerman des choses qui ne se trouvent pas ailleurs. Par exemple, selon Mehrabi Kermani, lorsqu'il traversait le passage étroit de Bolbolu et se rendait au sanctuaire d'Imam Zadeh Zeyd Khabisse, Shah Nourolldin Nematollah Vali des quil voyait la voûte d'Imam Zadeh Zeyed, il ôtait ses chaussures et disait quil y a tellement danges rassemblés sur le trajet qu'on ne peut pas facilement se frayer un chemin pour faire le pèlerinage.<sup>6</sup>

J'ai entendu dire que lorsqu'un des prêtres connus allait visiter la tombe de saint François d'Assise, il descendait près du portail de la ville et enlevait ses chaussures et allait à pied comme Beshr Haffy au pèlerinage.

J'ai vu personnellement que la ville de Kerman a été en congé pendant quatre jours et le marché a été entièrement fermé et des milliers de personnes avaient participé au cérémonie du deuil et ceci à plusieurs occasions:

Le jour du décès de Dadsen , le médecin anglais chrétien de lhôpital de Morsaline de Kerman est mort du Typhus (il avait été contaminé par son malade). On avait mis son corps dans Tondarestan et puis l'avait transféré en l'angleterre.

Le jour, que layatollah Haje Mirza Mohammad Reza est mort son tombeau est encore le lieu de pèlerinage du peuple au pied de Taq Ali et j'ai conservé beaucoup de ces lettres écrits pour améliorer les conditions de vie des zoroastriens de Kerman.

Le jour que l'autobus des ingénieurs russes qui allait à la mine de charbon de Hojedk, a été renversé, le ville de kerman était au congé et en deuil pour la mort de 20 ou 30 ingénieurs russes qui travaillaient dans la ville de Kerman alors quilés étaient communistes et athée. Et en ce qui concerne l'esprit de tolérance, lattitude du peuple de Kerman vis à vis

des ingénieurs russes, était exemplaire et avait consacré un quartier de la ville aux familles des ingénieurs russes.

L'Histoire nous dit du vivant du Shah Nematollah sa grande maison et son jardin étaient l'abri des réfugiés.

Ainsi, selon le livre *Manaqib*, édité par le défunt Jean Aubin, il recevait les fils et les filles de Kerman lors des attaques de l'armée étrangère et disait: "Ici, c'est le lieu des enfants chéris". Apparemment, il a été enterré dans le jardin de sa maison.

Après la mort de Shah Nematollah, ce lieu est resté l'abri des réfugiés et les sinistrés. Nombreux soufis y résidaient. Plusieurs personnes fortunées, des gouverneurs et des rois ont essayé d'améliorer les conditions matérielles d'accueil des pèlerins. Et on sent ce point le jour même de la mort de Shah Nematollah le 6 avril 1431 Ahmad Shah Bahmani le roi de Dakan qui, considérait qu'il devait sa règle au pouvoir spirituel du Shah Nematollah, avait envoyé des fonds suffisants à Kerman et on les avait employés pour réparer et améliorer le sanctuaire de Seyed éminent.

C'est vrai que Shah Nematollah portait lui-même des habits d'une étoffe grossière de coton, le manteau soufis avec un collier et une manche et un manteau de peau de mouton et un turban blanc et il a mis sur ses épaules un manteau en laine et parfois, il portait un sarrau en feutre et ses disciples étaient le plus souvent des classes moyennes, des travailleurs et des agriculteurs mais parmi ses disciples, il y avait eu aussi des rois, des ministres, des gouverneurs et des personnes riches. Comme on le sait, on a mis la première pierre de son mausolée par des fonds envoyés Ahmad Shah Bahmani Dakani (mort quatre ans après la mort de Shah Nematollah) et il paraît que le portail d'entrée du sanctuaire en bois et en ivoire a été aussi envoyé d'Inde.

Ahmad Shah était le disciple du Shah Vali, et le Shah Nematollah a confié une couronne verte à Molla Ghotbolldin Kermani et lui a dit: "C'est la consignation de Sultan Ahmad Shah Bahmani, donne la lui". Deux grands gouverneurs Kermaniens, Baktash Khan et Amir Nezam Garoussi ont été enterrés dans le sanctuaire de Shah Vali.

L'ensemble des bâtiments du sanctuaire de Shah Nematollah est composé de 329 arcs et 4 cours de 4323, 2128 et 3836 et enfin 3547 mètres et 4 grands portiques. Dans toutes les périodes historiques de l'Iran: Des timourides, des Safavides, des Ghadjars et des pahlavis, on a réparé cet ensemble et y ont ajouté quelques édifices. Et l'eau de farmithan passe

au milieu d'une des cours. Je dois noter que l'étable des bâtiments avait la capacité de recevoir 400 chevaux et ce qui donne une idée du nombre des pèlerins dans les périodes différents.

Il y a cent ans, un disciple soufi qui avait résidé longtemps dans ces bâtiments, écrit que le cierge brûlait toute la nuit jusqu'au matin et la porte du sanctuaire se ferme pendant la nuit pendant 3 heures et elle s'ouvre de bon matin. Un tel ensemble a besoin de fonds pieux. En plus des anciennes fondations pieuses situées dans les régions de Khabisse, Gouk et d'autres régions, Mohammad Shah Ghadjar qui avait visité ce tombeau avant d'arriver au pouvoir (en 1832) et après son accession au pouvoir a consacré trois sixième de Farmithan qui est une fontaine pleine d'eau et deux sixième de Baba Hussein. Et son régisseur, Seyed Mohammad Ali Kermani était responsable de payer les salaires des salariés, de servant, de lecteur de coran et le muezzin qui était environ 750 Tomans en 1911. Toutes ces personnes étaient en charge de recevoir les pèlerins. On rapporte qu'ils acceptaient toutes les personnes et ils parlaient avec eux. Shah-e Vali recevait et acceptait toute personne et en cela il suivait l'exemple de Seyd Ahmad Kabir et disait que si tous les maîtres refusent quelqu'un, je l'accepterai et compléterai selon sa capacité...<sup>7</sup>

les revenus de ce sanctuaire étaient en 1911 environ 5000 Tomans. Selon le rapport de Chales Issawi, une livre anglaise était l'équivalent de 52 Gheran dans la ville de Kerman. Trois ans après, trois kilos de pains étaient à 2 Gheran (ancienne unité monétaire) Trois kilos de viande de bœuf étaient à 8 Gherans et trois kilos de riz étaient à 4 Gherans. Dans cette année, une école gratuite a été inaugurée dans la grande cour, ses frais annuels s'élevaient à mille tomanes, la direction en fut confiée à Shaykh Abbass Ali Ghazvini.

En réalité, cela complète la sentence de Shaykh Abolhassan Karagany. Il a écrit sur le portail du couvent de Shaykh Abolhassan Karagany: "quiconque y entre, donnez lui du pain et ne lui demandez pas son nom car celui, qui vaut la vie auprès de Dieu, bien sûr, dans le couvent de Bolhassan, il vaut du pain."<sup>8</sup> Et toutes ces personnes ont été des héritiers de saint Benoît. (Environ 480-542. Il a écrit dans les rouleaux de manuscrits de son couvent: "Accueillez bien toutes les personnes qui frappent à la porte comme si Jésus frappait à la porte."<sup>9</sup>

Par ailleurs l'un des disciples de Shah Vali connaissait bien les quatre livres saints<sup>10</sup> (Coran, l'ancien testament, l'évangile, les psaumes et les

livres sacrés des prophètes et Avesta) et le Shah portait soi-même un froc de derviche rapiécé.

S'il ne s'agit pas les quatre religions connues, il faut le considérer comme les quatre califes d'après les sunnites.

Puis, Naser eddin Shah, en éditant un décret, a confirmé le farmithan consacré (et je présenterai son document datant de 1878).

Les revenus étaient 240 Tomans en espèce et 169 Kharvars de blé et d'orge. Chaque Kharvar Valait 300 kilos.

Désormais, il y avait eu un désaccord entre le régisseur, le surveillant et les prétendants et à ce propos, il y beaucoup de documents. En 1907, le salaire du régisseur était fixe. Mais en 1920, le ministre des fondations pieuses avait déclaré que le salaire du régisseur est 444 tomans et 428 dinars. En 1937, les revenus consacrés étaient 6000 Tomans. [Il y avait eu une bibliothèque du livre manuscrit avant de la période du Shah Vali C. T. D période de Saljoghi]. Il y avait aussi une pierre de poids sur la Pierre tombale en marbre qui remontait à la période du grand Dariush Sur laquelle se trouve une écriture cunéiforme et qui avait semble-t-il des pouvoirs magiques.

La responsabilité des fondations pieuses était un accueil chaleureux des pèlerins et des étrangers, la tenue des cérémonies du deuil dans toute la période de l'année- deux fois par semaine et durant la période de Moharam (Ashura),-la direction de bibliothèque, faire des vaisselles et la préparation du thé, du café et du narguilé dans l'ancienne cour. Le document le plus exact qui existe Depuis 150 ans et montre le fait que l'organisation du sanctuaire était sous la responsabilité du religieux qui dirigeait les prières des vendredis de kerman, M. Seyed Javad date de 27 septembre 1856. le total des revenus étaient en ce moment-là 128 Tomans et 600 dinars en espèce et 66 Kharvars de blé. Tous les membres avaient un salaire précis. Par exemple, le Derviche Mohammad cheragh recevait annuellement 12 Tomans en espèce et 1 Kharvar de blé. On dépensait 36 Tomans pour les frais de lumière et d'huile de ricin et 4 Tomans pour le thé et le café , 8 Tomans pour les mèches.

Haje Sayah Mahalati qui était allé 20 ans après cette date à Kerman, écrit: Le fils de derviche Mohammad Ali, Farash Astaneh était au service de Agha Khan Mahalati en Inde. Le prix du toile qui couvrait le tombeau du sanctuaire était 100 Tomans et Mirza Issa Vazir qui était en exil au Kerman, l'avait payé en 1888.

Il faut noter que ce mollah responsable de la prière de vendredi était l'un des personnages connus à Kerman et on allume encore des cierges sur son tombeau. Il était marié avec la fille Ibrahim Khan Zahirolldolleh, la sœur de Haje Mohammad Karim Khan, le chef des shaykhis. Il a eu une grande maison dans le quartier zoroastrien de zarisef qui est aujourd'hui, le bureau central de l'université de Kerman.

Haje Mollah Hady Sabzevari était pendant quelques années son disciple. Il avait eu un contact avec tous les groupes surtout les soufis.

Il employait toujours des vers de Molavi et du Hafez lors de ses prêches et il dit que pendant 3 mois d'ivers il commentait le premier vers de mathnavi.

Il a été rapporté qu'un jour le fils de Agha Seyed Hussein qui lui succédera pour diriger la prière du vendredi, avait dit à son père:

Mon cher père, dans un pays où des personnes rigides et fanatiques, par peur de se souiller, prennent le livre de Mowlana avec une pince et maudissent Hafez, est-ce une bonne attitude de citer tant de vers de ces deux poètes durant les prêches?

M. Seyed Javad aurait répondu:

“Mon fils, la bonne convenance n'a aucun rapport avec ma mauvaise situation”. Tout le monde sait que ce vers appartient à Hafez.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Résumé du discours prononcé au congrès.

<sup>2</sup> Professeur à l'université de Téhéran.

<sup>3</sup> Jameoll moghadamat page 828: un sujet plus étonnant, Gohar, accoucheuse zoroastrienne qui était elle-même stérile, et cela est un désastre pour une accoucheuse, avait fait le vœu que si elle devenait enceinte, elle illuminerait le sanctuaire de Shaykh Ali Baba connu comme Shaykh Gavri (C. T. D Shaykh des Gabres- zoroastriens) avec un moteur électrique et elle a enfanté et avait tenu sa promesse. Elle avait illuminé le sanctuaire de Shaykh, le disciple de Shah Nematollah vali qui était situé dans le six kilomètres de segotch (mahan).

<sup>4</sup> Principes de l'évolution de la tolérance dans l'histoire de Kerman. in contacts between cultures. Edited by A.Harrak, 1992, Ontario, Canada pp. 374-383.

<sup>5</sup> Nafahatollonse, Habibollsiar et Rozatollsafa.

<sup>6</sup> Les documents et les sources utilisées dans le principe de cet article sont en persan.

<sup>7</sup> Eloges de Shah Nematollah Vali, édité par Jean Aubin, p. 112.

<sup>8</sup> Guide spirituel, page 370, un rapport de l'événement du désert.

<sup>9</sup> VII dorante p. 669.

<sup>10</sup> Morshedolldin Ishagh Bahrami.

○ Lovers, ours is a different language  
○ seekers, ours is a different sign  
○ nightingales, ours is a sweeter song  
for our rose garden is in a different land

○ sweet tongued Khosrow and sweet scented Joseph  
and all you sugar loving parrots  
ours is a different tongue

since love was revealed, my soul has been in love with the Beloved  
whether openly or secretly, ours is a different revelation

the heavenly sun resides in the forth sky  
but the glorious sun of the Lovers is in a different sky

this world is the territory of the body  
the soul is the territory of the heart  
but the placeless domain of the Lovers is a different territory

drunken Lovers sit at the tavern's gates  
prayerful ascetics at their corner of solitude  
but our throne sits at a different gate

the Master is my pain and my cure  
He is from a different reality  
my soul is devoted to Him  
for He is the soul of my soul

*Selected poetry of Shah Nematollah Vali  
Translation by Vraje Abramian*



**Simorgh Sufi Society**

