

# Mystical Journey in the Modern Times<sup>1</sup>

## Part 1

Haj Dr. Nour Ali Tabandeh

### In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

**Q:** In some of your speeches, Your Holiness, you brought up the term “Spiritual Mind” and you have warned that it is necessary to apply such sense to personal life and social affairs. Meanwhile, due to the fact that fakirs; mysticism wayfarers; are in absolute obedience to their master, some have criticized that in that case, the questioning mind has already been shut down. Considering the importance of wisdom especially in the modern life, the question is now, how to decide on it? Does the wisdom really have to be dismissed? Is this wisdom the same as what you have called “Spiritual Mind” to which you have recommended being obedient? What if these two should confront each other? In other words, in case the materialistic mind should decide something and the “Spiritual Mind” disagrees, how do people judge between these two, that this mind is spiritual and the other is not? This question is very controversial in our time, and you have talked about it for a couple of times from different points of view. Now, would you mind further clarifying, please?

**A:** According to the old and conventional definition, the difference between humans and animals is that humans have wisdom, they are talking animals, whereas other animals are not wise based on the said definition. However, some have recently believed that animals are also wise and intelligent to some extent. The difference is, humans are aware that they are intelligent and animals are not. Anyway, animals and humans are different in this way. Therefore, basically, speaking of wisdom we mean the kind of wisdom distinguishing between animals and humans. To us; fakirs and the Shiites, Ali (AS) and Muawiyah are the graphical depictions of these two types of wisdom. They were both known as wise. People called Muawiyah the wisest of wises at that time. Among Arabs, there were seven or eight known wise men, one of whom was 'Amr ibn al-'As and another, Muawiyah. Ali said: “I know all Muawiyah’s politics, but my faith prevents me from doing such shenanigans<sup>2</sup>”. It was Ali’s spiritual mind that prevented him from committing wrongful acts, unlike Muawiyah. Thus, the wisdom that does not allow us to commit any wrongdoing, in spite of capability, is the Spiritual Mind.

Aside from biological evolution, when we compare living species, the distinguishing feature is

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<sup>1</sup> A transcript of an interview with his honorable Haj Dr. Nour Ali Tabandeh on May 5, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Nahj al-Balagha, revision and foreword by Subhi Saleh, Dar-al Kitab-ol-Lobnani Publication, Beirut, 1980, Sermon 200: “والله ما معاوية بأدهى مني، ولكنه يغدر ويفجر، ولولا كراهية الغدر لكنت من أدهى الناس”

the wisdom. Humans utilize this wisdom in two ways: first, to go back; back to animality and animalism, second, to transcend and get going. The latter is feasible through the Spiritual Mind. That side of wisdom whose target is to move back and focuses only on the survival of the fittest and all the pleasures related to the physical body is called the animalistic mind; the worldly mind, or the monkey mind. Whereas the other side, which believes that humans have originated from, are concentrating on, and traveling toward some genesis, is called the Spiritual Mind. The mind that believes in God and in the justifiability of his willpower is the Spiritual Mind.

However, it is not distinguishable in all cases to be able to tell the difference. It is an abstract, understanding of which lies with the humans on their own. As a result, mistakes happen most of the time. In Muawiyah's case, we cannot say he did not believe in God because he bowed down in worship and praised to God when he was informed that Imam Hassan (AS) had been killed. As a matter of fact, he wanted a kind of deity to have control over, not a kind of god to be in control of. He needed a kind of god who agreed with his evil mind, but the god of the Spiritual Mind disagrees with the evil mind, and as I said, telling the difference is individuals' own responsibility. Another example is when Malik Ashtar (one of the most loyal companions of Ali) was poisoned with honey, he stated: "There are agents and angels of God even in honey", which proves that Muawiyah literally considered his mind to be divine.

It could not have been his fault if supposedly Muawiyah unintentionally and pure-heartedly had believed that Ali was wrong and had to come to trial, because as soon as he learned that it was his own mistake, he would have regretted the accusations he had made against Ali, he would have admitted his fault. But because his attitude was like "I must be in charge", this egotism caused his behavior to be against the Spiritual Mind. Take Abu Musa Ashaari for instance, in the beginning, he most probably behaved according to his Spiritual Mind, but since he was captured by egocentrism and wanted everything for himself, his mind turned into evil and consequently he went astray. The evil mind is egomaniac and self-centered.

**Q:** Can we say that this Spiritual Mind is a mixture of wisdom and love?

**A:** What is love anyway? Love for truth is the same as having faith in that truth. In one situation, the word faith is used, and in another, the word love. Faith is the purity hidden in the heart, which no one can see, and love is the exterior and the outward appearance. They are synonymous. As the saying by Imam Sadiq (AS) goes: "Isn't religion anything but love?" Therefore, as we; Muslims, believe in a divine genesis, this faith makes us realize that there is a judgment about our doings. Here, it is called the Spiritual Mind.

**Q:** Is it possible for all followers of any religion (to use the Spiritual Mind)?

**A:** Yes, followers of any religion can have this spiritual mind. But we believe, if other religions' followers use their spiritual mind, they will realize that Islam came after their own religion and is more complete. As love can exist in every human, even in an evil person, faith also can exist in anyone. But when we say faith, we mean the genuine faith; faith in God and in the Resurrection.

**Q:** Speaking of these two terms (worldly mind and spiritual mind), are they the same as two other terms used in Sufism context as the Materialistic Mind and the Judgment-Day Mind?

**A:** There has been a variety of categorizations for the mind. The evil mind does not have the judgment-day side and has only the worldly side, but the spiritual mind has both the judgment-day and the earthly aspects. The earthly mind provides us with the day-to-day needs; all the needs of the materialistic world. On the other hand, the judgment-day mind considers the comfort of the afterlife and adjusts our doings with it. If these two conform to the genuine faith, there comes the spiritual mind.

**Q:** In mysticism, there is a different method other than wisdom to tame the ego and reach the gnosis, which is called “the Companionship”. The next question is, while the population of the dervishes (followers) today is so large that there is less chance for them to talk directly to the authorized sheikhs, and now that your authorized sheikhs have less time due to the large number of fakirs’ questions and other different problems, how can we find such companionship? Whereas in the past, there was a closer relationship between the sheikhs and the fakirs and especially the young followers, and this fellowship automatically resolved many questions for beginners and trained them for the way of mysticism.

**A:** Talking is the result of companionship as it literally means the same when we say companionship in Farsi. Nevertheless, here, companionship does not necessarily mean talking to each other, but it is exactly the literal definition of companionship; enjoying someone’s company. This word is also used for the Prophet’s companions. They got along with the Prophet. This means that He was the Pir of Companionship. In fact, every old and experienced dervish; whose attitude conforms to the principles of Sufism and it seems quite apparent to the young dervishes, can be a pir of companionship. The more they are together, the better. As long as the beginners can see him as an example can learn from him. Although mystical companionship, due to the large crowd, is less frequent now in comparison with the past, we can make it like the Prophet’s time when he called for the companions and asked them to provide each other with companionship so that each could be others’ companion. In most cases, the goal of this companionship was actually to balance out one another’s mental and spiritual state. For example, the Prophet set brotherhood between Salman the Persian and Abudhar Ghifari to be each other’s companion. Salman’s worldly mind was so strong that sometimes his spiritual mind could not keep pace. Abudhar was otherwise. However, as soon as the Prophet decided the companionship between those two, they enjoyed each other’s physically spiritual companionship in spite of mental differences. The wisdom behind this companionship was to balance out their attitude.

Therefore, of the goals of the companionship is to find out our faults in the journey. You may have seen that some dervish is fond of a certain sheikh and goes to him most of the time; this is the companionship, one way or another. We may no longer mention it as the Companionship, though. Due to the small number of the fakirs in the past, it was possible to designate a dervish to be the companion of another in order to both foster his attitude and give him a hand to promote. Now, a dervish should follow the public mysticism instruction and should take all other dervishes as his companions. Applying those guidelines reinforces and strengthens his attitude.

**Q:** From this viewpoint, in your opinion, each fakir is a pir of companionship for another?

**A:** Yes, everybody is a pir of companionship for others. Every believer is a pir of companionship for another. As we have a saying by Jesus Christ (AS): **“Of the features of a good companion or a believer is that when he is along, seeing him reminds you of God, his words enhance**

**your knowledge, and his actions attract your interest in the afterlife.”<sup>3</sup>**

**Q:** Those who are away from Sufism gatherings, for example, they live abroad or in countries where there is a less spiritual connection, what do they do in terms of their spiritual journey when they come across some possible issues related to ethical codes which are inevitable in modern countries?

**A:** Perhaps, it is a punishment. Although God has said: **“No one burdens the bag of guilt of another”<sup>4</sup>**, suppose that when an economic crisis hits a country, it affects everywhere. For example, now, the exchange rate of dollar fluctuates on the other side of the world and it influences our life. This is a punishment for humanity as humans must have unity, but since it is not possible, the punishment is imposed on us. Therefore, where there is a flood striking everybody, one may find a rock on which he can stand. Although it is not permanently safe, he can wait until the flood subsides. That faraway fakir also must hold on to the piece of rock; the mystical instructions and the silent dhikr, given to him after the Tasharruf (Mystical Bay’at). His thought will gradually have the power to lessen the discomfort imposed by God as the Quran reads: **“Fear the disaster that may not only smite the evildoers; but also the virtuous.”<sup>5</sup>** Besides, dervishes’ duty is to ease the crisis everyone is going through, and it is beneficial both for themselves and for others. There is no other choice actually, for the one who is dying of hunger, alleviating the hunger shall have priority over saying his prayers.

**Q:** Taming the ego is directly related to the guide of this (mystical) journey. From the principles and viewpoint of mysticism, what is the touchstone for announcing sheikhs by the Master of tariqa? To what extent should fakirs be obedient to them?

**A:** Nowadays, the mysticism has also been hit by the economic crisis in the world, and certain decisions and instructions shall be considered. Sheikhs are also human beings and may make thousands of mistakes. Fakirs should not be involved with these mistakes and should not take them for example. The entrance to the dervishism and mysticism is the Bay’at (Transaction), as God said to the Prophet: **“Surely, those who do bay’at with you do bay’at with Allah”<sup>6</sup>**. Therefore, the Prophet was allowed to conduct the bay’at on behalf of and for God. Consequently, He allowed the Imam to do the same bay’at on behalf of the Prophet for God. Therefore, also, at that time, no one was allowed to do the bay’at other than those who were authorized by the Prophet and the Imams (AS). Accordingly, in Sufism, the authorized sheikhs’ permissions by the Qutb (Master) are only to do the bay’at unless something is added to this permission. According to the principles of tariqa, sheikhs cannot leave the fakirs any generalized instructions. This is only the Qutb’s task. Sheikhs are authorized only at a certain time and in a certain situation. They are not entirely permitted to voice their opinion on every subject matter.

Anyway, subordinate sheikhs’ instructions cannot be generalized, because fakirs’ behavior now

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<sup>3</sup> Kitab al-Kafi, The Book of Knowledge and its Merits, On Questioning Scholars, Vol. 1, Hadith 3.

<sup>4</sup> The Quran, Al-Anaam (Cattle), 164: وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

<sup>5</sup> The Quran, Al-Anfal (Spoils of War), 25: وَأَتَقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً

<sup>6</sup> The Quran, Al-Fath (Victory), 10: إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ

in Northern provinces might be different from that of those who live in Western regions of the country. They can alter due to different situations. Only Qutb; the tariqa Master, can give general instruction.

**Q:** Considering the increase of mental illnesses and suicide rate in the recent years, even among educated people and university students, and that the depression is now known as the illness of century, and it is progressing, here a question is sometimes brought up whether the mystical stultification (*qabz*), which is the opposite of mystical floating (*bast*), is the same as depression. Another question is, whether the somatic and/or mental depression can lead to the mystical stultification, or, material and/or emotional cheerfulness can help with the mystical floating. Are they two different subject matters?

**A:** The traditional psychology; called “the science of soul” in the past, did not meddle with mysticism that much, but the conventional psychology sometimes helps and sometimes bothers it. The modern psychology and psychiatry can be useful in terms of explaining and justifying mystical experiences, but if they interfere in mysticism matters, it is wrong. Feeling down; as psychologists call it “depression”, is related to a mental condition or a kind of mental illness, but when we say stultification, we mean an obstacle which prevents the mysticism wayfarer from going on, and it will be removed if he pays attention to some mysticism principles. In other words, if someone is traveling to a specified destination (the Journey to the Origin) and a problem comes up, they will receive assistance from that very destination. For example, for the one who is in the stultification mood, a question may come up why God has created so many sinners and will eventually send them to the Hell, while He has already determined everything. Now, if he keeps pondering on that destination, it will gradually cross his mind that God is merciful and will forgive all sins. This concentration washes away and clears that mind. It does not close but cleans the mind and then brings him back to normal life.

Nevertheless, in the depression illness, one’s day-to-day life causes him not to believe in a genesis where all the Creation comes from. The more he seeks a solution to his problems and issues, the less he finds. It pushes him toward committing suicide. On the contrary, if all these problems happen for a Sufi; a mystical wayfarer, all the teachings, and exercises practiced by him will help him. Therefore, there are some symptoms and effects in common between the mystical stultification and the illness of depression, but the treatment is different.

**Q:** Does it work if fakirs help their troubled fellow brother remove this obstacle?

**A:** Yes. This recalling or reminding is useful as said in the Quran: “**And continue to remind, for surely this reminding will profit the believers**”<sup>7</sup>. In other words, when a believer reminds his faith brother some hints, he has already helped him, because he will remember those righteous ideas and it slowly helps clean those previously wrong ideas.

**Q:** As you said, focusing on dhikr is possible in the mystical floating. Considering the daily social life of today when it is very difficult to concentrate on remembering God in heart, even in

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<sup>7</sup> The Quran, Adh-Dhariyat (The Winnowing Winds), 55: **وَذَكِّرْ فَإِنَّ الذِّكْرَى تَنْفَعُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ**

daily prayers, how can we remember God together with all these problems, issues, and frustration of mind in today's social life?

**A:** First, we should ask what God and remembering God mean. God says in the Quran: **“I blew from my spirit into him”**<sup>8</sup>. So this divine soul in us is from that very God. As Mevlana says:

O' you that desire for God, behold  
There is nothing outside you, listen to your inner voice, listen to your inner voice

Some do not pay attention to the meaning of the first line “behold” and wrongly interpret it as “you are God” in Farsi.

At the time of the spiritual bay'at, a dhikr and an instruction are given to the applicant and the more he practices them, the more that heart-dhikr and remembering God will dominate his being; just like the example of he who is thirsty and does not need to be told how he should drink water, as soon as he sees water he drinks it, because if he has that thirst in him, everything will look water to him:

Seek not the water, obtain the thirst;  
Then the water showers below and above you<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, if the wayfarer follows those instructions, he will gradually realize that he does not have any existence of his own; there is no existence other than that of God. He will come to the realization that he does not own anything and this condition is the result of concentrating on and remembering God, even though he does not verbally repeat “Allah, Allah”. As there has been a narration told by one of the Imams (AS): I said a lot of additional prayers. My Father told me not to be obsessed with my prayers that much. (Of course, it does not mean that His Father wanted Him not to say prayers, but He wanted Him not to say the prayers only verbally and to pay attention to the depth and truth of it also.) In Usūl Kāfi, His Honorable Sadiq is mentioned narrating<sup>10</sup>: “My Father continually chanted dhikr while I was walking and eating along with him, and while talking to each other”. The point is, one cannot chant any dhikr while chewing on food, so it is obvious that His being was indeed the dhikr itself. Accordingly, unless the mystical wayfarer has reached those transcendental stages, he should try his best not to forget about remembering God. About this forgetting says God in the Quran: **“As soon as you find out that Satan has been distracting your attention away from remembering and dhikr of God, stay away from the wrongdoing people”**<sup>11</sup>, repent and restart chanting your dhikr. In other words, you should be engaged with your dhikr as much as you can. Of course, it is the ideal condition for a wayfarer to be drowned in his dhikr. In the past, when we were studying geometry, to learn

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<sup>8</sup> The Quran, Al-Hijr, 29: نَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي

<sup>9</sup> Masnavi-al Ma'navi, Revised by Towfiq Sobhani, Rozaneh Publishing, 2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter, 3213.

<sup>10</sup> Usūl al-Kāfi: كان أبي كثير الذكر ، لقد كنت أمشي معه وإنه يذكر الله ، وآكل معه الطعام وإنه ليذكر الله ، ولقد كان يحدث القوم وما يشغله ذلك عن ذكر الله

<sup>11</sup> The Quran, Al-Anaam (The Cattle), 68: وَإِنَّمَا يُنْسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَتَّعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

asymptote we drew a curve alongside a line and continued the curve closer and closer to the line but it never intersected the line. Now, we also keep moving along with the line, trying to get closer, although we cannot meet it.

**Q:** To what extent do the social and financial issues decrease the perpetual dhikr-chanting? Is it considered dhikr if someone intends to remember God in some of his superficial things like trading or teaching? Can we call it dhikr if we deal with our earthbound matters while remembering God's satisfaction?

**A:** Yes. This is worshipping and dhikr because he remembers God whenever he does something for God's sake; it is not the real meaning of dhikr, though. In that case, whatever he does is to remember God. Therefore, the mystical instruction the applicant is given is a practice for him to remember God all along. It is not feasible in all conditions, but it can be similar to a basic warm-up exercise to an athlete to be carried out.

That mystical instruction is like a warm-up exercise carried out by an athlete, but that is not the goal; he warms up in order to strengthen his muscles, for example, to run. Therefore, strengthening the muscles is not the goal, but the running is. The instructions given to the applicant also is to train his muscles to be able to run and reach the destination.

**Q:** To define the Sufism, one of the greatest mystics, probably it was Junayd of Baghdad, said that Sufism is to clear the mind. How does the mind relate to dhikr and remembering?

**A:** Dhikr is something deliberate in the beginning, and via dhikr, the mind is intentionally moved toward God. This state of mind shall not be confused with illusions. Illusions are to imagine things that do not exist, that we are interested in or afraid of. These are illusions. When we convert the mind into dhikr of God, we will pay attention to something that exists and is not frightening. This means to clear the mind. In other words, we should draw the attention of mind away from illusions to the Necessary-Being God. This is exactly to clear the mind.

**Q:** Is it viable only through dhikr?

**A:** Practicing dhikr is to train mind and imagination to focus on God. People who do not have dhikr can hypothesize, so to speak. Take Isaac Newton for example, when the apple fell off, he paid attention and discovered the gravity. Although you and I, and also our ancestors saw apples fall off trees, we did not figure out that it was the gravity. He found it because he was focused on these matters, and that thought was inspired by that concentration. In mysticism, we believe that our thoughts are inspired by God. In the example of Newton, he created a deity in his imagination, and this deity inspired the idea of gravity. In the future, his theory may be rejected as some scientists now believe that there is no gravity but it is the repulsive force that extends the distance between the moon and the earth but because the sun's repulsive force is stronger, the earth stays in the middle. So there is no gravity, and this force is meaningless. Anyway, whether or not the gravity exists, since Newton was focused on his intended subject matter- it actually became his god- and it infused the gravity into him.

**Q:** One of the methods to increase the ability of concentration is the meditation. Does the meditation clear the mind as they do in yoga?

**A:** Yes. But the difference is, they consider an illusion as a god, but we connect everything to God with a chain, to that Necessary-Being which is the Origin and the cause of everything. However, some philosophers have disagreed on the concept of causality. Examples like water boils at 100 degrees Celsius, or an effect is the result of a cause; they believe that there is no causality between them. You habitually believe that some effects are the result of certain causes as they have taken place many times at the same time. Another example: it is said that honeydew melon cannot be eaten together with honey as this mixture has caused health problems for a couple of times. Nevertheless, one may eat them together and no problem there will be. Sophists in the past, too, disapproved of the causality in some other ways. Here, from a mysticism viewpoint, Mevlana says:

I am euphoric when He reveals causes  
A sophist when He aborts the effects<sup>12</sup>

In fact, Mevlana has gone beyond all these words and believes that there are no other causes, in essence, he does not care about them. He knows only one cause, and that is God.

**Q:** Our next question is about Pluralism in religions, which believes in the justifiability of all religions. This subject matter also conforms to the validity of the variety of mystical schools that exist in Islam. In other words, when we listen to or read works of followers of other tariqas or great mystics of other religions, we realize that their words are similar to the findings and works of Islamic scholars. Taken this into consideration, can we believe in their validity? What is the reason of this plurality?

**A:** There are several verses in the Quran about religions in general. One of them reads in the surah of Hajj: **“Surely, those who believe and those who are Jews and the Mandeans and the Christians and the Zoroastrians and those who associate other gods with Allah, surely Allah will judge them on the day of resurrection”**<sup>13</sup>. In fact, He will separate their lines, the line of believers or Muslims, Christians, Jews and Mandeans and the line of Polytheists on the day of resurrection. In other parts, He says: **“Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Mandeans, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord”**<sup>14</sup>. According to the latter verse, if the believers of other divine religions have good deeds and faith, they will be rewarded. It does not mean that they must believe in Islam. If they believe in the principles of their own religions such as Monotheism, Prophecy, and Resurrection, and have good deeds, they will be rewarded. Of the best of good deeds is to find and understand which religion is the most reasonable in comparison with the other religions. This means that a Jewish, based on his intelligence, should see whether Judaism is better or Islam and if he concludes that Judaism is better, he will be rewarded if he follows his own religion’s principles and has good deeds.

<sup>12</sup> Masnavi-al Ma'navi, 1st Chapter, 552.

<sup>13</sup> The Quran, Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage), 17:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئِينَ وَالنَّصَارَى وَالْمَجُوسَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

<sup>14</sup> The Quran, Al-Baqara (The Cow), 62:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ

The reason why there has been diversity in mysticism is that some Imam or Qutb might have lived in Arabia or Iraq and would have sent some sheikh like Khwaja Abdullah Ansari to a city like Herat in order to salvage the followers, and as the distance was large between the cities, (as I have mentioned before that it took 11 months for His Honorable Saleh Ali Shah to travel from Baydokht to Mecca), then he would allow that sheikh to assign another successor after himself and this attitude would go on. Thus, a number of orders were derived from them. Although, it is obvious that some of them have come to an end and discontinued.

There have also been different reasons as to why behavior and practices of different mysticism orders differed, for example, the demands of the different places and times. Imagine how the word “generosity” would mean in some countries like Khorasan and Nishabur where the precipitation was high, and the produce was plentiful. In there, it would mean to donate properties and wealth. But, in Arabia where the amount of precipitation was low, it would mean differently. Other features also would conform to the demands of the environment, as it is said that Ali (AS), Abu Bakr and Omar were traveling together and at night while they were sleeping, they had a wet dream each. When they got up to say the prayers, they did not have enough water to perform ablution, and there had not yet been such instructions as tayammum (dry ablution). One of them said: “We cannot say prayers since we do not have enough water” and he did not say his prayers. Another said: “Because we cannot perform ablution, we must roll down our body over dust”, and he did it. But Ali (AS) did the tayammum and said his prayers. The Prophet validated what Ali (AS) did. The verse of tayammum was revealed about that and says: **“When you cannot find water, do the tayammum by rubbing pure dust into your face and hands”**<sup>15</sup>.

What I mean is, in Arabia, Muslims had to wash up themselves with a small jug of water (called “Abriq” in Arabic and we call it Briq in Gonabadi accent) to get rid of the dirt. They would use the same water both to drink and to do ablution. But those who live near the sea behave differently due to the abundance of water. Therefore, some of the changes in behavior are due to the facilities provided by God for the people, but the teachings and instructions are the same, as the origin of mysticism exists in every religion.

**Q:** Here is a question about the different schools. Take Naqshbandi for example that disagreed with the Nimatollahi order for a while in some cases, and seemingly it was due to some political provocations, and today is of the questionable orders due to the uncertainty of authorization. However, when we study poems and works of some Naqshbandi followers like Jami, we cannot come to this conclusion that he had learned those words from some other books, on the contrary, it seems that some of his subject matters are based on his own findings and experiences. What can we say about his findings, while he was basically on an ineffective way? Can we say that his findings are also invalid?

**A:** His findings cannot be invalid. They were primarily valid for him and then for us as well if they conform to our teachings and feelings. Interestingly, he has some good works. But when he addresses Muawiyah like “May God approve of him”, we do not accept it because it is wrong and

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<sup>15</sup> The Quran, An-Nisa (Women), 43: فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ

does not conform to what we know, and we believe that it is wrong. Imagine, someone is leaving the airplane, walking out of the ramp on which there are some holes so that light comes through and he can partly see the outside. Not everything he sees and tells is true, as he has seen only random things. For example, he says there is a big light on out there, and he may be right, but he does not have any idea what that is. Such writers also talk about some subject matters partly. If those ideas conform to our spiritual feelings, we accept them, and we believe they are right. If not, we do not approve of them, but we cannot deny all of them either because they had faithfully followed the way they thought was right.

Another example is late Zahir-od-Dowlah who succeeded Safi Ali Shah. After late Nur-ol-Hokama showed Zahir-od-Dowlah the evidence that late Sultan Ali Shah had been the right successor, he said “I have been serving and guiding faithfully and sincerely so far but I will not do it anymore”<sup>16</sup>, and he did not. Therefore, he was honored as long as he had been serving faithfully. Just like the story told by Mevlana in Masnavi which says that someone was saying prayers by an idol, and God said: he wants me but he calls a wrong name.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, as long as they want Him, whatever they say is right.

**Q:** And this way, it can be true for the mysticism of other religions, too?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Even for those religions other than Christianity, Judaism, and Mandaeism which are not mentioned in that Quranic verse?

**A:** That verse has separated the atheists and the followers of God. However, it is true for those who have something in common with us that is God. There has been a recent trend towards other mysticisms such as Native Americans’ Mysticism, and when we read their books, we find out that they are in parts talking about some findings. I have read a couple of Carlos Castaneda’s books. We accept subjects people like him talk about which comply with our ideas and feelings, and with those which do not, we do not agree.

**Q:** Can this idea be true for someone who is on a deserted island away from the official religions and other people, and who is apparently worshipping an idol that probably means God to him?

**A:** If such a presumption comes true, yes, it can.

: Thank you for giving your valuable time.

: I am glad that fakirs and other people interested in mysticism are researching into understanding and perceiving more about mysticism, and I, too, appreciate your effort for this interview.

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<sup>16</sup> Science and Mysticism Genius (in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century); a biography of late Haj Mullah Sultan Muhammad Gonabadi Sultan Ali Shah. The author: Haj Sultan Husain Tabandeh Gonabadi, Haqiqat Publishing, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2005, p543.

<sup>17</sup> Masnavi-al Ma'navi.