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The Rise of the Ni'matullāhī Order: Shi'ite Sufi Masters against Islamic Fundamentalism in 19th-Century Persia

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THE RISE OF THE NI'MATULLĀHĪ ORDER

SHI'ITE SUFI MASTERS AGAINST ISLAMIC
FUNDAMENTALISM IN 19TH-CENTURY PERSIA

REZA TABANDEH



LEIDEN
UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Rise of the Ni'matullāhi Order

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*SHĪ'ITE SUFI MASTERS AGAINST ISLAMIC
FUNDAMENTALISM IN 19TH-CENTURY PERSIA*

Reza Tabandeh

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System of Transliteration

Consonants

ء	'
ب	b
پ	p
ت	t
ث	th
ج	j
چ	ch
ح	ḥ
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
ژ	zh
س	s
ش	sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	'
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
گ	g
ل	l
م	m
ن	n

ه	h
و	w
ی	y
ة	a

Vowels

Long:

آ	ā
او	ū
ای	ī

Doubled:

ئی	iyy
وو	uww

Diphthongs:

آو	aw
آی	ay

Short:

ا	a
و	u
ی	i

Introduction:

19th-Century Persian Sufism in its Shi'ite Milieu

The Rise of the Safavids and the Establishment of Shi'ism in Iran

The Safavid Empire¹ was the first and greatest Persian Empire following the Muslim conquest of the Iranian plateau. The first Safavid King, Shāh Ismā'īl (r. 1502-1524), was only 15 years old when he assumed the throne and declared that his realm was to follow the Twelver Shi'i teachings. He required all mosques henceforth to add to the call to prayer the recognition of the Imām 'Alī, the cousin and son-in-law of Muḥammad, as the true heir to the Prophet by means of the declaration, 'I witness that 'Alī is God's friend (*walī Allāh*).'² The Safavid kings were able to create stability for Persia. During their reign (907-1135/1501-1722), the Shi'ite seminary schools in Persia became centres for religious and philosophical sciences, fostered by the Safavid royal policy of inviting Shi'ite scholars from other Muslim lands to Persia, mostly from the Shi'i centres in Syria, southern Iraq and the Arabian peninsula. The religious and social impact of the Safavids pro-Shi'i policies changed the lives of Persians, who prior to this time were primarily Sunnis.

The shift from Sunni to Shi'i was the great turning point for the religious history of Persia. The enormous efforts of the Safavid kings to develop Shi'ism as an established jurisprudential seminary school in Persia formed a new religious lifestyle for Persians. It is also undeniable that the Safavids had a great effect on the history of Shi'ism through the establishment of Shi'i seminary schools (*ḥawza*) especially in Qum, which has been among the most influential centres for theological and jurisprudential studies since Safavid times.



The Stoning to Death of Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh. (From Gulābzada, Pazhūhishī dar rüyād-i qatl-i Mushtāq, p. 84)

The Rise of the Qājār Dynasty

After two centuries of Safavid rule, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's (r. 1074-1101/1694-1722) inability to govern the empire led to the Afghan invasion, which ended in the fall of the Safavids (1135/1722). After the fall of the Safavid dynasty (907-1135/1501-1722), Persia faced several chaotic eras. Although strong charismatic leaders such as Nādir Shāh Afshār (d. 1160/1747) and Karīm Khān Zand (d. 1193/1779) were able to establish relative stability in their territories, soon after their deaths Persia again faced renewed chaos. These leaders were not able to form strong, long-lasting dynasties. However, a powerful leader, Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār (r. 1195-1211/1782-1798), was able to consolidate his kingdom and form the Qājār dynasty (1210-1344/1796-1925) which would rule Persia for over a century. From the Safavid time to the Qājār era, the majority of Persians were followers of Twelver Shi'ism, which was inherited from the Safavid era.² Shi'ite clerics were more involved in the private and political lives of Shi'ites than Sunni clerics were in the lives of Sunnis. Consequently, there were always powerful clerical elites in Shi'ite societies, although, in certain periods (especially during Nādir's reign), their powers were reduced.³ The clerics were not favoured by Nādir and Karīm Khān.⁴ This was a bitter experience for Shi'ite clerics, but under the Qājārs they managed to regain and even increase their authority. Under Qājār rule the role of the Shi'i clerics became a determining factor for the religious, political and social life of Persians. The Qājār monarchs consistently asked for their help on certain political occasions, and so became indebted to them.

Shi'ite clerics wanted to gain influence and a power that would be independent of the state. They did not want to experience the same bitter treatment which they had endured with Nādir Shāh Afshār, who dismissed them from court and did not subsidise their positions. And things only got worse under Karīm Khān, who viewed them as parasites on society.⁵ Therefore, they formed an independent system that became increasingly powerful, to the extent that, at times, they challenged the power of the state. Shi'ite clerics thus played an important role in the formation of the political, intellectual, religious and mystical milieus of the era.

The Political Milieu

The Zand dynasty ruled Persia for about half a century (1163-1209/1750-1794), and Karīm Khān, its founder, was able to stabilise the country to a

certain extent, as Persia had been divided into different territories ruled by various princes after Nādir Shāh’s death.⁶ Karīm Khān established Shirāz as his capital city. However, the Zand rulers were not able fully to recover from the destruction, and after Karīm Khān passed away the former chaotic political situation returned to Persia. Karīm Khān was a charismatic and humble leader, who believed that a man must be proud of his sword and work rather than his noble lineage. He ruled Persia for 22 years.

Luṭf ‘Alī Khān Zand (d. 1209/1794) was the last Zand ruler and was opposed to Muḥammad Khān Qājār (d. 1211/1797), Karīm Khān’s most powerful enemy and chief of the Qājār tribe. After a long period of quarrel between Luṭf ‘Alī Khān and Muḥammad Khān Qājār, Luṭf ‘Alī Khān was betrayed by the governor of Bam, a city near Kirmān. He was captured and, consequently, the Zand dynasty ended in 1209/1794.⁷ Āqā Muḥammad Khān became king, while Persia faced disunity, the threat of neighbouring countries and civil war. For most of his rule he was in negotiation with enemies or at war.⁸

Āqā Muḥammad Khān did not adopt the title of Shāh until he had subdued Georgia and unified Persia, and about a year later he passed away.⁹ To help promote his legitimacy, Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār related himself to the Safavids. He strongly emphasised his Shi‘ite beliefs as he claimed to be the legitimate heir to the Safavid legacy.¹⁰ Āqā Muḥammad Khān turned to any influential class in the social, religious or political system of Persia to consolidate his power. The Uṣūlī mujtahids¹¹ (a high rank of Shi‘ite clerics following the Uṣūlī School) were such a class. Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim Qumī, known as Mīrzā-yi Qumī (d. 1231/1816),¹² composed a ‘Book of Guidance’ (*Irshād-nāma*) in which he clarified the importance of having a king within a nation. He used the term ‘Shadow of God’ to describe kings. However, he was very careful not to downplay the authority and independence of Shi‘ite clerics. He stated, ‘As God Most High has established kings for the protection of the world of men . . . the *‘ulamā*’ need them; and as He established the *‘ulamā*’ for the protection of the religion of men . . . the king and other than the king need them.’¹³ Qumī had close ties to Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār and his heir, Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1250/1834).¹⁴

During the Qājār era, the people of Persia faced an unstable economic situation. The Persian army faced a long war with Russia, which made it weak and tired from continuous fighting.¹⁵ In the 18th century the Russians were looking to expand, and they invaded territories in Persia and Central Asia. The Russians were especially interested in certain Persian territories. In 1194/1780 a small army of Russians attacked Bihshahr in Northern

Persia, where Āqā Muḥammad Khān's army captured a number of these Russian officers and forced them to retreat.¹⁶ Caucasia and Georgia were the two main territories that Persia and Russia fought for. Sometimes these wars were beneficial for other colonial powers, especially for England.¹⁷ The Perso-Russian wars can be divided into two eras. The first era lasted from 1218-1228/1803-1813, and in it the Persians were defeated. The second era started in 1241/1825, when the Russian army unexpectedly invaded Persian borders. This expedition ended in 1243/1827, and some Persian territories were handed over to Russia.¹⁸

In 1211/1798 Āqā Muḥammad Khān was assassinated, and his nephew, Fath 'Alī Shāh, became king of Persia. Edward Browne's description of Fath 'Alī Shāh is quite useful for a better understanding of his personality. Browne noted:

Āqā Muḥammad Khān was succeeded by his nephew, the uxorious and philoprogenitive Fath 'Alī Shāh. He was avaricious and vain, being inordinately proud of his handsome face and long beard, but not by nature cruel (at any rate compared to his late uncle), and it is related that, though obliged by custom to witness the execution of malefactors, he would always avert his face so as not to behold the unhappy wretch's death-agony. He was something of a poet and composed numerous odes under the pen-name of Khāqān.¹⁹

At that time, England desired a friendly relationship with Persia. Therefore, Lord Marquess Wellesley (d. 1842)²⁰ appointed Sir John Malcolm (d. 1833) to lead a diplomatic mission to Persia. The British deputies, John Malcolm and the diplomats sent from the East India Company who accompanied him were warmly welcomed by the Persian state and Fath 'Alī Shāh.²¹

In January 1801 (Sha'bān 1215) two treaties were signed between Persia and the East India Company, one of which was political and the other commercial. In the political treaty, the Persian monarch promised the British that if Afghanistan attacked India, the Persian monarch would declare war against Afghanistan. Persia was also not allowed to have any diplomatic relationship with the French government. In the commercial treaty, the Englishmen were exempt from paying duties to the Persian government. Englishmen had the right to punish domestic natives for debts.²²

Despite these treaties, the British authorities did not support Persia when the Russians started to attack in 1218/1803. In response, Fath 'Alī Shāh started a friendly correspondence with French authorities instead.²³

On 4 May 1807, Napoleon and Fath ‘Alī Shāh signed the Finkenstein treaty, under which France promised to support Persia in restoring its army. Consequently, General Comte de Gardane (d. 1818) came to Persia with his army corps to train the Persian army. In June 1818, Russia and France signed the Treaties of Tilsit, which meant that the treaty of Finkenstein was no longer beneficial for the French. The French governor accused Fath ‘Alī Shāh of being hesitant to sign the Finkenstein treaty, and they annulled it.²⁴

The Perso-Russian wars were major threats to Persia, resulting in the two disastrous peace treaties of Gulistān (1228/1813) and Turkaman-chāy (1243/1828).²⁵ In both treaties, Persian monarchs agreed to give certain territories to Russia. However, Muḥammad Hāshim Āṣif, Rustam al-Ḥukamā’, a bureaucratic historian of the Qājār era, claimed that the Shāh accepted those treaties for the benefit of his nation.²⁶ Britannia took advantage of this political situation and tried to persuade Persia again to have diplomatic relationships with her, which would benefit Britain economically and politically. Therefore, Persia went through a series of struggles and wars for England’s colonial purposes.²⁷

In 1809, Sir Harford Jones-Brydges (d. 1847) entered Persia as the plenipotentiary deputy of England from India and was welcomed by the state and people of Persia.²⁸ One of Jones-Brydges’s duties was the limitation of financial subsidies from Britannia to Persia. In March 1809, Persia and Jones-Brydges signed a treaty which nullified the Finkenstein treaty between France and Persia.²⁹

Persia, like most territories in that area, became the subject of quarrels between France, England and Russia. Fath ‘Alī Shāh’s weakness as a leader was a huge factor in the country’s downfall. The religious establishment of Persia was very involved in the political milieu of the time, and Fath ‘Alī Shāh was known to be a superstitious person who relied heavily on Shi‘ite clerics, praising them to an extreme extent. In this respect he always stated, ‘Our [Fath ‘Alī Shāh’s] rulership is on behalf (*bi-nīyābat*) of the mujtahids of the Age.’³⁰

The Religious Milieu

After the greater occultation of the twelfth Imām,³¹ Twelver Shi‘ism gained a distinct character because Shi‘ites no longer had access to the living source of divine knowledge, that is the Imām.³² One cannot understand the religious environment of the Qājār era without considering the history of Shi‘ism, especially after it was declared the state religion of Persia by Shāh Ismā‘īl (d. 930/1524), the first Safavid king. The institutionalised hierarchy of Shi‘ite

clerics and their struggle for authority is another important issue after the solidification of Shi'ism in Persia. The quarrel between the traditionalist Akhbārī school of Shi'ism and the Uṣūlī cult of mujtahids resulted in the triumph of the Uṣūlī school, which gained ultimate authority over Shi'ites.³³

As we have seen, one of the key outcomes of the Safavid revival of Shi'ism was the vast power acquired by seminary scholars in Shi'ite society. Browne has pointed out that the terms 'clergy' and 'seminary scholar' cannot accurately define the Shi'ite seminary scholars and their hierarchy, vis-à-vis the role of Sunni religious scholars, who were simply men learned in the Qur'an, hadith and shariah. The Shi'ite clerics believed that they had a kind of spiritual power and divine faculty.³⁴ However, as they became more powerful in society, they permitted themselves to take over the role of the Imām in Shi'ite communities, as they collected obligatory religious payment meant for the Imām (*saḥm-i Imām*) and issued edicts to conduct holy wars on the assumption that they were the true spokespersons for the Imām.

The Safavid version of Shi'ism was more of an institutionalised Shi'ism as opposed to esoteric Shi'ism. As Henry Corbin has observed, '[Their Shi'ism gave birth] to something like an official clergy, exclusively concerned with legality and jurisprudence, to such a point that original Shi'ism, in its essence gnostic and theosophic, has, so to speak, to hide itself.'³⁵ As a result of that institutionalisation, Shi'ite clerics felt the need to have supreme authority,³⁶ for the consolidation of their political and social influences. However, they all believed that the sole legitimate ruler was the Imām.

Prior to the 18th century, the majority of Shi'ite thinkers and clerics avoided any political power and believed all governments to be illegitimate during the occultation of the twelfth Imām. However, as they felt the need to have their status in the religious hierarchical system elevated to the rank of deputy or sometimes even to that of the ultimate deputy and sole representative of Imām, their political power became more evident in the 19th and 20th centuries.³⁷

Consequently, some high-ranking clerics began to emphasise their political duty to ensure that the acts of the ruler were in accordance with Divine Law, and people began to view both kings and clerics as qualified to lead the community politically.³⁸ The emphasis on the king's religious duties and even criticism of the king's rulership during the Qājār dynasty is indicative of the vast influence and power of Shi'ite clerics.

During the chaotic period of the Afsharid and Zand rules, which was an era of civil wars as well as wars with neighbouring countries, Shi'ite clerics had the opportunity to develop their own independent power, and their

authority increased considerably.³⁹ Mīrzā-yi Qumī (d. 1231/1816) was among the influential Shi'ite clerics of his time. He was a staunch Uṣūlī and a student of Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī (d. 1205/1791), known as *waḥīd*, the reviver of the Uṣūlī school.⁴⁰ It is clear from his correspondence that he had a close and friendly relationship with the Qājār court.⁴¹ His book *Irshād-nāma* was written during Āqā Muḥammad Khān's reign (r. 1195-1211/1782-1798). In this treatise Qumī claimed that a king becomes a king by Divine will; therefore, others are obliged to obey him, while the king is obliged not to do injustice to his subjects. However, the treatise also states that even if the king is a tyrant the subjects must still follow his orders, regardless of his tyranny.⁴²

Qumī also kept a very close bond with the next Qājār monarch, Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh, and recognised him as a legitimate ruler.⁴³ In this treatise he indicates that the kingship of the Shāh of Persia continues to the coming of the Mahdī.⁴⁴ He specifies that all subjects, including the Shi'ite clerics, are in need of the king for their political protection, while at the same time the king and his subjects are all in need of Shi'ite clerics for religious protection.⁴⁵ Qumī's views of kingship are much more positive here than in his later writings.⁴⁶ However, he never gave ground on the supremacy of Shi'ite clerics.

In another treatise called *Principles of the Religion (Uṣūl al-Dīn)*, written for his followers, Qumī criticised Sunnis heavily for believing in the king as the one 'who must be obeyed' (*wājib al-tā'a*).⁴⁷ He said that a subject's obedience to the ruler of the Shi'ite community is obligatory only at a time of defence or to prevent domination by the enemy.⁴⁸

In his *Jāmi' al-Shatāt* Qumī questioned the rulers of the time, calling them 'oppressive rulers' (*hukām jā'ir*). He indicated that it is not permitted to pay any religious taxes, including legal alms (*zakāt*), to the oppressive Shi'ite ruler, unless permitted by a just, high-ranking Shi'ite cleric.⁴⁹ Only with the authorisation of a just mujtahid can people give legal alms to the state for the good of Muslim society. In a letter to Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh he challenged those who called the king 'the one with ultimate authority' (*ulū'l-amr*) and he clearly stated that the ones who have the ultimate authority are the prophets and Imāms. If the Imāms are not accessible, one can go to the clerics.⁵⁰

Both Shi'ite clerics and the king, Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh, had reason to keep a friendly relationship. In order to legitimise the kingship of the Qājārs, Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh needed to preserve his close relationship with Shi'ite clerics. He renovated and rebuilt some of the holy Shi'ite shrines for this purpose.⁵¹

Continuous wars with Russia were another political issue for which the Shāh needed the support of Shi'ite clerics, as explained earlier in this chapter. For the Shi'ite clerics, although they viewed themselves as having higher authority over the community than the king, they also felt the danger of Sufism spreading in Persia, and in order to suppress the Sufi movement they needed the support of the Shāh. Since Faḥr 'Alī Shāh was a superstitious man, his superstitious inclinations created more opportunities for the Shi'ite clerics to make him antagonistic to Sufi beliefs.⁵²

Shi'ite clerics were extremely cautious about their rivals (court elites, Sufis and Akhbārī scholars), and they did not tolerate any challenges.⁵³ As they were trying to regain their challenged political and social authority, in order to do so they developed the theory that they were the channels to the Imāms, just as the Imāms have always been the intermediaries between God and humanity. According to this theory, the mujtahid was qualified to be an exemplary model and common Shi'ites could emulate him. As Algar claimed, 'The resemblance of the ulama to the Imams lies rather in their supplying a living source of reference and leadership for the Shi'i community.' The mujtahid became the personification of leadership, which became the chief source of their political and social influence in Qājār Persia.⁵⁴

Akhbārīs were a group of traditionalist Shi'ites who were opposed to *ijtihād* (personal striving on jurisprudential matters based on the Qur'ān and Shi'ite tradition) and *taqlīd* (emulation of a recognised member of the ulama). *Ijtihād* and *taqlīd* were the two main factors in creating a strong authority for Shi'ite clerics over the community. Akhbārīs rejected the division of community into the elite group of mujtahids, who became the exemplary models, and their imitators (*muqalid*). They believed that all members of a Shi'ite community are imitators of the Imām.⁵⁵

Due to several theological disagreements, Akhbārīsm constituted a serious challenge to the authority of Uṣūlī scholars⁵⁶ such as Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī, who did not tolerate Akhbārīsm. This led to the harsh persecution of Akhbārī scholars.⁵⁷ The Uṣūlī seminary scholars were able heavily to suppress Akhbārī scholars, so much so that they almost wiped out Akhbārī thought from Shi'ite seminary schools of Persia.

The Shi'ite Sufis were other major victims of the Uṣūlī movement.⁵⁸ Most of these Sufis were charismatic leaders, emphasising an emotional relationship with and direct experience of God. In certain cases they challenged the authority of Shi'ite clerics. This disagreement ended in the harsh persecution of Sufis, which will be explained in more detail below. As Man-gol Bayat asserts, 'The bitter Akhbārī-Uṣūlī controversy that dominated

Twelver Shi'a circles in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries must be viewed as a reaction to the power acquired by the mujtahids. Some leading Sufi masters and theologians also strongly resented the mujtahids' dominance of the Shia intellectual scene, and objected to the limitations imposed by the official Usuli determination of Shia doctrines. Some of them echoed the Akhbaris in charging the mujtahids with literalism and a narrow-minded interpretation of the holy text.⁵⁹

An example of a jurist living during the end of the Zand period and the beginning of the Qājār period is Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī,⁶⁰ who claimed that the persecution of Sufis was his religious duty. He constantly pressured the royal court to capture and persecute Sufis. Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī forced the court to summon Mu'aṭṭar 'Alī Shāh (d. 1217/1802), another Sufi master, and Mu'aṭṭar 'Alī was beaten to death in Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh's court.⁶¹ Bihbahānī believed that the persecution of Sufis was under the jurisdiction of Shi'ite clerics, as he declared, 'The responsibility of such acts [punishment of the Sufis] falls only within the jurisdiction of the 'Ulama and the executors of the holy law.'⁶² Therefore, he viewed himself as a legitimate authority to issue a death sentence. He followed the same path as his father as regards Akhbārī scholars. Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī (*Waḥīd*) was surrounded by groups of thugs (*mīrghazabs*) who would execute capital punishment and commit murder at his command. They attacked Akhbārī Shi'ites by Bihbahānī's order.⁶³

Some powerful men paid tribute to the Shi'ite clerics to gain fame. Ḥājī Ibrāhīm Khān I'timād al-Dawla (d. 1216/1801), a powerful minister, was among this group. Ḥājī Ibrāhīm Khān sent two of the Ni'matullāhī masters to Bihbahānī and, in his letter to Bihbahānī, stated, 'We send them . . . to be delivered over to you, whom we consider the wisest, the most learned, and the most virtuous of all the ulāmāhs of our kingdom. Put them to death, confine them, or punish them in the way you deem most proper and most consonant to the decrees of the holy religion.'⁶⁴ Some of the people belonging to the royal court officially recognised the clergymen's ability to order capital punishment. This culture of persecution of the Sufis was inherited by Shi'ite clerics from the Safavid era,⁶⁵ and Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī, the true heir of his ancestor Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1110/1700), continued this animosity towards any mystical belief and philosophy, especially Sufis. He was successful to a certain extent, since the rapid growth and propagation of Sufism ceased for a short time. However, from the end of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh's reign to Muḥammad Shāh's reign Sufism regained its popularity.⁶⁶

The primary sources of income for the Shi'ite clerics were endowments (*awqāf*) and the financial support of their followers through bequests and gifts.⁶⁷ They also collected alms and other religious tithes.⁶⁸ Fath 'Ali Shāh also used to send money to certain Shi'ite clerics, Qumī among them.⁶⁹ Even during the time of economic crisis, when Fath 'Ali Shāh himself received financial support from England, he did not cease these payments to Shi'ite clerics.⁷⁰ Certain religious taxes also had to be paid only to Shi'ite clerics and not to the state. Therefore Shi'ite clerics were financially able to establish a powerful independent authority in Persian society. They were so influential that Qājār monarchs would ask for their help on many political and social occasions. Becoming the ultimate religious authority in Persian society made them intolerant of any challenging religious beliefs and philosophy such as Akhbārism and Sufism. As we can see, the intolerance of modern-day Iranian Shi'ite fundamentalism toward Sufism was both terminologically and theologically a by-product of this hard-line outlook espoused by 19th-century Uṣūlī theologians.⁷¹

The Literary and Intellectual Milieu

As Browne has pointed out, 'The eighteenth century of our era, especially the troubled period intervening between the fall of Ṣafawī and the rise of the Qājār dynasties (A.D. 1722-1795), was the poorest in literary achievement; after that there is a notable revival, and several poets of the nineteenth century, Qā'ānī, Yaghmā, Furūghī and Wiṣāl and his family, can challenge comparison with any save the very greatest of their predecessors.'⁷²

Most of the poets mentioned by Browne lived at the end of or even after the timeframe of this work, and this literary revival did not reach its apex during the time under consideration here. Religion played a crucial role in the formation of Persia's literary milieu. Although many intellectuals did not have any background in Shi'ite theology, that theology still dominated, or at least affected, their work. As an example, Persia was facing modernisation, and Qā'ānī (d. 1270/1854) was known to be one of the least moral and most irreligious poets of his era. However, the dominance of religion in Persian culture can be seen in his elegy on the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn.⁷³ Mourning for Imām Ḥusayn became a popular activity. Sessions were led by a preacher from the Shi'ite clerical class. The culture of 'reading eulogies and narrating the story of Ḥusayn's martyrdom' (*rawḍa khānī*) became so popular that some of the intellectuals criticised the excess of mourning and the luxurious settings in which these mournings were celebrated.⁷⁴

A large number of writings of this era were about the role of the king. Most of the literary elite was related to the royal court and its writings inevitably extoll and praise the king. For instance, Muḥammad Hāshim Āṣif, Rustam al-Ḥukamā', praised Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh as holding the rank of deputy of God and believed that everyone was obligated to follow his orders. He claimed that rulers were the deputies of the twelve Imāms.⁷⁵ Rustam al-Ḥukamā' also asserted that, as God governs the whole world, kingship is the manifestation of divinity. His opinions on this matter were closer to those of the scholars who were against mujtahids and wanted to prove that Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh had the role of 'the one with ultimate authority' (*ulū'l-amr*). At the same time, however, he condemned those who permitted the damnation of Sunni caliphs. He stated that the intellectual and educated clerical classes of Persian society do not practise these irrational acts which are practised only by the ignorant classes.⁷⁶ Rustam al-Ḥukamā' stated that the quarrels and disagreements between Shi'ites and Sunnis were useless and futile,⁷⁷ demonstrating his reconciliatory behaviour towards Sunnis.

Asad Allāh Shīrāzī (d. 1262/1846), another philosopher of the Qājār court, claimed that kingship was equivalent to prophethood.⁷⁸ His statement was outrageous to the religious seminary class. Muḥammad Nadīm Bārfurūshī (d. 1241/1825), the royal librarian, also claimed that only two groups, prophets and kings, had ultimate authority over the people. He avoided mentioning the names of any Shi'ite clerics.⁷⁹

The war against Russia not only affected the religious clerics; it also resulted in the creation of a genre of religious treatises about the conduct of holy war, called *Jihādīyya*. There were signs of hatred in those writings. 'Abd al-Wahāb Mu'tamid al-Dawla Nishāt (d. 1243/1828), royal scribe and poet in Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh's palace, stated that the Russians were infidels; his hatred of Russians is clear.⁸⁰

Persia was increasingly modernising, and Persians had begun travelling to European countries. As a result, sciences other than seminary sciences gradually became part of their intellectual milieu. Shi'ite seminary scholars had to elaborate their views about modern sciences, as they were always known to be the possessors of knowledge. They had different views regarding modern sciences of the time. Qumī, for example, did not allow any sciences to be taught in the seminary school of Qum other than the Uṣūlī seminary sciences.⁸¹ Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī (d. 1245/1829) had a different view; he did not reject all types of modern sciences. He believed that sciences such as medicine and astronomy were obligatory (*wājib kafā'i*) for some people to learn in order to supply society's needs. He also asserted

that learning mathematics strengthened intelligence. However, he did not accept all modern sciences. He asserted that the 'real sciences' are divided into three types. The first was the 'divine science' (*'ilm Ilāhī*), which was about the principles of religious beliefs, origins of creation, and resurrection. The second was the 'science of ethics' (*'ilm akhlāq*), which was the science needed to reach salvation and suppress the carnal soul (*nafs*). The third was 'the science of jurisprudence' (*'ilm fiqh*), which was about the exoteric laws and how to follow religious laws. He believed that it was obligatory for everyone to learn these three sciences.⁸²

There were numerous compendia of poetry belonging to the Qājār era. Browne claimed that there was a period of poetic revival under Qājār rule. That is true to some extent because Āqā Muḥammad Khān, the first Qājār monarch, was able to stabilise Persia after a long period of war and chaos. Also, afterwards, his heir and nephew, Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh, had a milder administrative method and paid more attention to literary works at the royal court. And as noted above, he himself composed some poetry under the pen-name of Khāqān. Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh gathered poets around him, compiling several anthologies such as 'Ornaments of eulogies' (*Zīnat al-madā'ih*), 'Meeting with the Emperor' (*Anjuman Khāqān*), 'The Praised Garden' (*Gulshan-i maḥmūd*), 'The Praised Ship' (*Safīnat al-maḥmūd*) and 'Dār's Picture Pavilion' (*Nigāristān-i dārā*).⁸³ The literary value of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh's poetry is undeniable but, as Browne has stated, 'his poetry, being mostly panegyric, has little attraction for us, but is extraordinarily melodious'.⁸⁴ Muḥammad Taqī Malik al-Shu'arā' (d. 1370/1952) called this period the 'Era of Revival or Renaissance of Literature' (*rastākhīz ya bāzgasht-i adabī*), which lasted from the era of Nādir Shāh to the Qājārs.⁸⁵

Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat (d. 1250/1871) believed that there was an extreme decline in Persian poetry before the Qājār era. Riḍā Qulī's claim was far from the reality, as the dominant form of early Qājār poetry was the panegyric ode (*qasīda*) to the king, which was only flattery. Maḥmūd Khān⁸⁶ Malik al-Shu'arā'-yi Ṣabā (d. 1237/1822) is a good example of this literary trend. He used to compose poems for the princes of the Zand dynasty, but prudently destroyed nearly all of them after their overthrow. His poems were all flattery, with no mystical element or any indication of the society of his time.

Another poet drowned in the system of flattery was Mīrzā 'Abd al-Wahhāb Mu'tamid al-Dawla, with the pen-name of Nishāṭ. He was a Sayyid, a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, from Isfahan. He was a literary man, well versed in poetry and knowledgeable in the Persian, Arabic and

Turkish languages. He was first appointed as a royal secretary to Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh and later became the director of the royal court's correspondence. He accompanied the Shāh in all his travels and arranged all his letters and orders. He was well aware of the political situation of his time, but he never spoke of it because of his allegiance to the Shāh, for fear of undermining his own security. Another great poet of this era is Sayyid Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1226/1811), with the pen name of Mijmar. He was given the title of Muḥtāhid of Poets (*muḥtāhid al-shu'arā*) by Riḍā Qulī Khān and was praised by Persian princes.⁸⁷

During this era, the noble and wealthy classes of society were becoming familiar with the West. However, there was no movement against colonisation. Contrary to his traditionalist and superstitious beliefs, Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh did not commission any intellectuals or scholars to research the evils of colonialism and its dangers. Some intellectuals such as Abū al-Ḥasan Ilchī (d. 1262/1846) became infatuated with the West. The latter was fascinated by British culture, and he said, 'I became a freemason and I became extremely happy.'⁸⁸

The dominant literary works of that era were odes, as noted above, mostly in praise of the Shāh. Even scholars such as Ḥājī Asad Allāh Qawāmī (death date unknown), whose father and uncle were executed by order of the Shāh, praised him after being pardoned. Qawāmī called the Shāh the '[u]nique king of kings and the king with the virtue of Muḥammad.' He also called the Shāh 'deputy of God on earth.'⁸⁹ Obviously, flattery dominated the literature of the era and the culture of obsequiousness towards the Shāh became part of the society. Serious literature based on reason or genuine spirituality was extremely rare.

Overall, the intellectual and literal milieu of the Qājār era was not one of return to the peak of Persian literature that existed in the days of Rūmī (d. 672/ 1273), Sa'dī (d. 690/ 1291) or other great poets of the 7th/12th to 9th/14th centuries. However, there was a progression in Persian literature in comparison to past eras. Even Sufi masters and poets like Nūr 'Alī Shāh (d. 1212/1797) and Muẓaffār 'Alī Shāh (d. 1215/1800), who were enthusiastic and charismatic besides being knowledgeable in philosophy and the semi-nary sciences, were not comparable to the classical Sufi poets. Their poetry overflowed with passion and mystical love and was full of extravagant utterances about divine union, but their level of literary skill is much lower than that of the earlier classical Sufi poets. Overall, the chaotic social environment, the dominance of Shi'ite clerics and the culture of flattery did not create a favourable atmosphere for serious literature to bloom in.

The Mystical Milieu: The Sufis and Their Orders

Sufis were an important element of the religious history of the Qājār era. The oppression of Sufis during the Safavid era had led to the migration of many Sufi orders from Persia to other, more welcoming and stable places. Many Sufi masters with Sunni tendencies migrated to the Ottoman Empire, but most of the masters and orders migrated to India. Despite the Safavids' systematic persecution of Sufi orders,⁹⁰ some of them retained their identity as Persians and always anticipated a return. After the fall of the Safavids, Persia faced a chaotic period of social turmoil and political quarrels between Afshārs, Zands and Qājārs. Therefore, only a few Nūr-bakhshī masters in Mashhad and Dhahabī masters in Shīrāz remained in Persia.⁹¹

The revival of Sufism in the Persian empire started during the Zand dynasty and continued through the Qājār era. As Zarrīnkūb has pointed out, the Qājār era was a time of nostalgia for the noble past. Of course, their mystical philosophy had to fit the theological standards of Shi'ite society.⁹² The two leading Sufi orders in this revival movement were the Ni'matullāhīs and the Dhahabīs.⁹³ These two had much in common, as both emphasised the importance of following Islamic laws and Shi'ite beliefs. They were known to be the propagators of Akbarian philosophy in Persia.⁹⁴ These Sufi orders aimed for survival despite the inquisitions of Shi'ite clerics.⁹⁵ Besides the two orders, there were some minor activities by Naqshbandīs, Qādirīs, Khāksārs and wandering dervishes, but these were not as influential as the Dhahabīs and Ni'matullāhīs, as speculative Sufism (*taṣawwuf-i naẓarī*) predominated in these two orders.⁹⁶

The *Qalandarān* and the *Darwīshān-i gul-i Muwlā* were two groups of wandering dervishes who became popular at the time. Their food was provided through offerings from passers-by and tradesmen in the bazar. Their earnings were based on begging. They did not ally themselves to any particular Sufi order. However, they soon formed a system of unified beliefs, practices and philosophy and called themselves *Khāksār*. Their hierarchical system was not as well established as that of the Dhahabīs and Ni'matullāhīs. *Khāksārs* (also known as Jalālīs) traced themselves back to Ghulām 'Alī Shāh Hindī.⁹⁷ Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān, with the spiritual title of Ghulām 'Alī Shāh, was also known to be a Khāksār master who entered Persia through Bushihr's port from India.⁹⁸

Mast 'Alī Shāh believed that the Jalālī order in India had Shi'ite beliefs. However, when he travelled to India, he found them to be a group of lib-

ertines who did not follow Islamic laws, smoked hashish and wandered around.⁹⁹ These wandering dervishes were known for their charismatic powers and their knowledge of occult sciences; therefore, there was a sense of general respect mixed with fear of them in society.¹⁰⁰

As mentioned above, the seminary-trained religious classes in Persia adopted an exclusivist approach towards other religions and religious minorities. The Shi'ite clerics engaged in the refutation of other schools of Shi'ism. Sufis were not immune to similar exclusivist views, although they have always been known to be more lenient towards other religious beliefs. As Ibn 'Arabī says:

My heart is open to every form:
It is a pasture for gazelles,
And a cloister for Christian monks,
A temple for the idols,
The Ka'ba of the pilgrim,
The tables of the Torah,
And the book of the Quran,
I practice the religion of Love;
In whatsoever direction His Caravan advance,
The religion of Love shall be my religion and my faith.¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, as Shi'ite clerics were extremely influential over the population of Persia, they also influenced Persian Sufi masters. This calamity of exclusivism existed between different Sufi orders as well, which led to intense and long-lasting disagreements between different Sufi orders, criticisms and quarrels about their leadership, which still continue today.

The Ni'matullāhī Order

The Ni'matullāhī order is named after a prominent Sufi master of the 14th-15th century, Shāh Ni'matullāh (d. 834/1431). Shāh Ni'matullāh was a Sufi, poet and mystic philosopher who played a crucial role in the revival and reformation of Sufism and Sufi philosophy in Persia. Shāh Ni'matullāh was born in Aleppo, Syria, and claimed descent from the seventh Shi'i Imam, Musā al-Kāẓim. Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī was among the most influential Sufis of the 14th/15th centuries during the Timurid dynasty. He is traditionally considered by his followers to be *ra'īs al-silsila wa ab al-ṭā'ifa* (head of the order and father of the [Sufi] tribe).¹⁰² Like many great Sufi

shaykhs, Shāh Ni'matullāh travelled extensively to meet with and learn from various Sufi masters, and he studied the works of Ibn 'Arabī.

One of his mentors was Shaykh Rokn al-dīn Shirāzī (d. 769/1367), who was a Sufi and a well-known commentator on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (*Bezels of Wisdom*) of Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī (560–638/1165–1240).¹⁰³ Shāh Ni'matullāh was a strong promoter of the 'unity of being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) school of mystical philosophy that was established by the followers of the famous Andalusian Sufi and metaphysician Ibn 'Arabī.

In Mecca he met Shaykh 'Abd Allāh al-Yāf'ī and became his disciple. Shaykh 'Abd Allāh al-Yāf'ī was a great Yemeni Muslim jurist, theologian, historian and *ḥadīth* scholar, who gained the title of *nazil al-ḥaramayn* (the resident of the two holy sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina).¹⁰⁴ Shāh Ni'matullāh served Al-Yāf'ī for seven years, attaining the rank of spiritual master. He then set out on new travels throughout the Islamic world and settled in Samarkand, where he reportedly met Tamerlane, and then settled in the Kirmān region. He lived to the age of 104 and his shrine is in the city of Māhān.

Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī gained fame among the people because he brought to Persian society a traditional way of thinking that not only emphasised the inner meaning of religion, but also popularised Sufism among all classes of society instead of focusing only on the elites. His spiritual and social fame reached the royal courts of the Timurids and Bahmanids.

Shāh Ni'matullāh insisted that his disciples should follow the *sharī'a* and refused to separate the inner aspect of religion (*ṭarīqat*) from its outer aspect (*sharī'a*),¹⁰⁵ which occasionally resulted in libertine behaviour and views being attributed to some Sufis. He also insisted that his disciples should pursue a gainful occupation, instead of leaving society and becoming hermits. He believed that farming or having a mundane profession and serving society were part of the Sufi path.¹⁰⁶

It was customary for Sufis of that era to wear distinctive clothing. Although in most of his portraits he is shown wearing a *tāj* (Sufi hat), he discouraged his disciples from demonstrating their affiliation with Sufism in their clothing.¹⁰⁷ Some Sufi orders were elitist in their choice of followers. Shāh Ni'matullāh, however, believed that anyone could be a member of his community. He once said, 'All those whom the saints have rejected, I will accept, and, according to their capacity, I will perfect them.'¹⁰⁸ This policy led to his popularity, as many people from all classes of society flocked to him and became his followers.

He worked as a farmer and his spiritual influence was vast, he having initiated hundreds of thousands into his Sufi order. Shortly before his death

he was invited to live near the court of Sultān Shāh Al-Walī Bahmanī but, claiming he was too old for the move, he sent his son, and thus began the rise of the Ni‘matullāhī order in India.¹⁰⁹ The heritage of Shāh Ni‘matullāh continued through the Ni‘matullāhī Sufi order that is one of the most influential Shī‘ī-Sufi orders in Persia. His son, Shāh Khalilullah (d. 860/1455), succeed him at the head of the order after his death.

The Ni‘matullāhī Sufi order was in its decline prior to the formation of the Safavid empire. The successors of Shāh Ni‘matullāh migrated to the Deccan plateau, India.¹¹⁰ Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1214/1799) was the last Ni‘matullāhī master in India. He felt the need for a revival of the Ni‘matullāhī order in Persia after receiving complaints from Ni‘matullāhī Sufis in Persia about their not having a local master.¹¹¹ Mīr Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1212/1797) was a noble Indian and a well-known disciple of Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh who was eventually appointed as a spiritual guide to revive the order in Persia.¹¹³ This revival movement will be explained in detail later on in this book.

Ma‘šūm went to Persia in 1190/1776 for his spiritual mission. Before long, he became very popular among the people of Shiraz and his charismatic personality attracted many common people to the Ni‘matullāhī Order. It is undeniable that Ni‘matullāhī masters gained lots of popularity although Sir John Malcolm probably exaggerated the number of Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh’s disciples as amounting to ‘thirty thousand’.¹¹² Sufism was rapidly spreading among the Persians. Amanat claimed that Ma‘šūm gathered a small number of disciples around him, who were extremely active in propagating Ni‘matullāhī beliefs.¹¹³ Ma‘šūm’s charisma and enthusiasm attracted many disciples in Shiraz, among whom were Mullā ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Ṭabasī Fayḍ ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1199/1785), his son, Mullā Muḥammad ‘Alī Nūr ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1212/1797),¹¹⁴ and Mullā Mahdī Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1206/1792), who were initiated into the order during this period. For the purpose of their spiritual mission, these Ni‘matullāhī masters travelled to cities such as Mashhad, Hirāt, Najaf, Kirmān, Kirmānshāh and Mūṣil for the propagation of Sufism.

The Ni‘matullāhīs entered Persia with the appearance of wandering Sufis, wearing *Qalandar* cloaks.¹¹⁵ The first masters of Ni‘matullāhī’s revival movement—namely Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh, Nūr ‘Alī Shāh and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh—were all enthusiastic masters with *Qalandari*’ite appearances. Their charismatic personality, their poetry and their emphasis on direct mystical experiences and love of God created a philosophy which attracted Persians. However, as they challenged the political system and religious clerics, they faced harsh persecution. Most Shi‘ite clerics opposed the Ni‘matullāhī mas-

ters, and those few who openly showed sympathy towards Ni'matullāhīs were excommunicated by the Shi'ite clerical class.

As a result of this challenge to their authority in society, Shi'ite clerics decided to persuade Karīm Khān, the king of Persia at the time, that Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh's beliefs were corrupt. According to Dhahabī texts, Karīm Khān followed Shaykh Mufid in exoteric matters of religion and Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim Shirāzī Dhahabī (d. 1190/1776) in mystical matters,¹¹⁶ and was very suspicious of any quasi-Mahdi figures or beliefs. He believed that those dervishes who propagated magic and hashish-smoking deserved punishment. Considering societal attitudes towards dervishes, it proved easy to persuade Karīm Khān about the danger of Ma'ṣūm's beliefs. Shi'ite clerics also managed to convince Karīm Khān that, besides Sufis' heretical beliefs, they claimed kingship by adding the term 'Shāh' to their spiritual titles.¹¹⁷ They were so successful in damaging the relationship between Karīm Khān and Ma'ṣūm that Ma'ṣūm was banished from Shiraz. Aḥmad Dīwānbaygī claimed that it was due to Karīm's generosity and humility that he only banished Ma'ṣūm from Shiraz with no other punishment.¹¹⁸

As mentioned earlier, there was also some opposition from other Sufis towards the Ni'matullāhīs, as is indicated in some of the Dhahabī texts. It is even narrated that aspersions cast by Jānī, a wandering dervish, were the main reason for Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh's exile from Shiraz.¹¹⁹ Yet Muḥsin Kīyānī believed that the persecution of Sufis by the state was to gratify Shi'ite clerics, and that the banishment of Ni'matullāhī masters was mainly for this reason.¹²⁰

Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh, two other Ni'matullāhī masters, were also banished from Isfahan by 'Alī Murād Khān's order. Contrary to this order, the Ni'matullāhī masters were only welcomed in Tehran by Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār, the Qājār king, who paid for their pilgrimage to Mashhad.¹²¹ Despite Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār's good relationship with Sufis, he did not have enough time to establish any firm beliefs regarding Sufism because he was busy with wars and the consolidation of the Persian kingdom. His heir, Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh, was against Sufism, being more inclined towards the exoteric aspects of religion.¹²² However, he took direct action against them only when the Shi'ite clerics began to feel threatened by the renaissance of organised Sufism and tried to stand up to it.¹²³

A small group of Shi'ite clerics, including Mirzā-yi Qumī, preferred an intellectual debate with Sufis as opposed to their persecution, so they refuted the Sufis in speeches and writings. Other groups of Shi'ite clerics, whose champion was Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī, believed that there must be physical persecution of Sufis as well. They viewed themselves as protectors

of religion; therefore, they thought they were qualified to demand persecution for those who ‘polluted’ the religion of God. Bihbahānī encouraged the Qājār rulers to discriminate against Sufis, which resulted in the martyrdom of Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh¹²⁴ and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh. Nūr ‘Alī Shāh was also poisoned twice. For that reason, Bihbahānī gained the title of Sufi-killer (*Şūfi Kush*). Malcolm, who had a close relationship with him, took a reproachful tone when talking about Bihbahānī’s conduct towards Sufis. He stated, ‘Aga Mahomed Ali treats every Soofee sect with a severity that must detract from the credit due to his extensive knowledge.’¹²⁵

Sufism in Persia was generally interpreted in the light of the conduct of the wandering dervishes. The Ni‘matullāhī masters became well aware of this perception people had of Sufism, which was not pleasant for them. Therefore, they felt the need for more education about the intellectual and practical beliefs of Ni‘matullāhī Sufis in order to revive the Ni‘matullāhī order in Persia. Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh aimed to propagate Ni‘matullāhī philosophy in the clerical environment of Shi‘ism. Mullā ‘Abd al-Şamad Hamadānī (d. 1216/1802), Mullā Muḥammad Naşīr Dārābī (d. 1226/1811) and Shaykh Zāhid Gilānī (d. 1222/ 1807), who were influential people in Shi‘ite society, were initiated into the Ni‘matullāhī order.¹²⁶ They were among the scholars who elaborated on the philosophical beliefs of Sufism based on seminary teachings.¹²⁷ Before Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh’s death, Ma‘šūm and the other masters appointed by him were able to revive the old pattern of hierarchy within the Ni‘matullāhī order in Persia. Although they looked like *Qalandars*, they advocated the necessity of following Islamic laws.¹²⁸

The first Quṭb after Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh was Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh (see chapter IV below), who belonged to a clerical class of society with few philosophical or mystical tendencies. He was known to be a good preacher in the mosque. Therefore, he did not change his lifestyle. His religious seminary background was always a path of rescue for him. For instance, when he was imprisoned along with Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh and Nūr ‘Alī Shāh, he was released because of his seminary background.¹²⁹ During his leadership period, the Ni‘matullāhī order entered a state of complete dissimulation, so that even Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh did not declare his Sufi beliefs. The Sufi hat (*tāj*), wandering dervish bowl (*kashkūl*) and Sufi axe (*tabarzīn*), which were all used by wandering dervishes, were replaced by clerical cloth. Not only did the members’ outward appearances change, but also their personalities. That was because the enthusiastic, charismatic dervish masters had been persecuted, and so the three poles (*aqṭāb*) after them adopted the personality of seminary scholars.

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh was a preacher who spent most of his time in seminary school. He guided only a small number of elite disciples. The Sufi practice of vocal invocation (*dhikr jalī*), or any activity that indicated Sufi practices, was forbidden in public by Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh's command. Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh managed to stabilise the Ni'matullāhī order. Although he was relatively able to reduce the persecution of Ni'matullāhīs, Shi'ite clerics continued their opposition, and due to their influence on Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh's court, they were still able to make the Shāh anxious as regards Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh. As a result, Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh was summoned to the royal court. He was tormented and humiliated; but because of his seminary knowledge and his clerical background, he was able to win the heart of the Shāh.¹³⁰ The Shāh eventually ordered him to continue preaching in the mosque.

Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh, Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh's successor, was also a seminary scholar, but with more mystical tendencies. He was well versed in mystical philosophy, being highly influenced by Mullā Ṣadrā (d.1050/1640), Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1090/1680) and Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 787/1386). He became familiar with these philosophers while studying in Kāshān.¹³¹ He spent most of his time writing apologetic texts for Sufism. He strove to prove that real Sufism was in complete accord with Shi'ism. He was able to attract some of the seminary scholars, and thereby to propagate the Ni'matullāhī order to some extent. As a result, the Ni'matullāhī order flourished under his leadership, but in a different form from in the time of Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh, Musṭaq 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh. Instead of an enthusiastic movement, Majdhūb led the order towards becoming a scholarly movement. His apologetic treatises in defence of Sufis reached the seminary schools.

This transformation is evident in the manner of their opponents, Shi'ite clerics. Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī, who was the champion of Sufi persecution and wrote a 'Treatise on Good Deeds' (*Risāla-yi khayrātīyya*)¹³² in refutation of Sufism, as well as a number of rude anti-Sufi treatises in which he did not hesitate to use the most indecent terminology towards Sufi masters. The most vehement of these works was against Ma'ṣūm and his disciples. In a brief religious verdict (*fatwā*) he declares, 'Beyond any doubt, the deviation of this condemned group from the path of rightfulness and true guidance, and their efforts to provoke discontent and to corrupt people of the cities, have become obvious and apparent.'¹³³ He believed that Sufis deserved death, being deviators from the Shi'ite community.

Majdhūb was a student of Qumī, and always mentioned him as his teacher in his writings. Qumī's manner towards Majdhūb was different from Bihbahānī's. He was against Sufism and he wrote a treatise against it;

however, he kept his polite manner. His politeness represented a transformation of Shi‘ite clerics’ conduct towards Sufis. Mast ‘Alī Shāh followed a path between that of the enthusiastic Ni‘matullāhī Sufis (companions of Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh) and that of his master, Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh. He was very outspoken, but not as knowledgeable as Majdhūb about seminary sciences. As he narrated in his writings, he was victimised by Shi‘ite clerics many times, and he always condemned that persecution.

These three poles (*aqṭāb*) of the Ni‘matullāhī order after Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh all played their own role in the revival and survival of the order. In accordance with the circumstances of the time, they were able to keep the order alive in Persia. Although the diffusion of Ni‘matullāhī Sufis may have suffered a decline under Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, it was in a way necessary at the time, based on Ni‘matullāhī texts. Generally speaking, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh and Mast ‘Alī Shāh were all able to continue the Ni‘matullāhī Sufi tradition, despite the persecution to which they were subjected.

The Dhahabī Order

Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh was banished from Shiraz when the city was no longer a welcoming place for Ni‘matullāhī Sufis. However, the Dhahabī masters managed to live there in peace and prosperity. They had been living in Shiraz for generations,¹³⁴ and in order to stay there they were very careful in their actions. As Leonard Lewisohn pointed out, ‘For the last three centuries the Dhahabiyya has been characterized by an overtly Shi‘ite spirit, and pious conservatism which enabled it to survive the anti-Sufi pogroms of the Safavid period, and to endure the pressure of the fundamentalist regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran.’¹³⁵ Dhahabīs were known for being very precise in following the exoteric laws of Islam.¹³⁶

Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim Shīrāzī (d. 1190/1776) and his successor, Āqā Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Nabī (d.1230/1815), were the two main masters of the Dhahabī order during this era. They avoided any possibility of struggle with Shi‘ite clerics.¹³⁷ Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim Shīrāzī, known as *darwish*, was one of the greatest Sufi figures of this era. He was born sometime between the years 1105/1693 and 1109/1697 into a bureaucratic family and was himself a bureaucrat in Fārs.¹³⁸

At some point in his life he became disillusioned with worldly matters and gave up his worldly life. Soon afterwards, Nādir Shāh’s army occupied Shiraz and he was among the captives taken to Isfahan. However, Nādir pardoned Hāshim and he returned to Shiraz.¹³⁹ There are many hagiologi-

cal narratives about his abandonment of worldly matters; for instance, it is said that due to some chronic disease, his right index finger was amputated. During the amputation, he heard a spirit saying, 'Do you still want to write for the court with this finger?'¹⁴⁰

Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim Shīrāzī was about 28 or 29 years old when he began living in solitude as an ascetic. He practised brutal self-mortifications, which made him extremely weak. These self-mortifications led him to a 'spiritual quest' (*ṭalab*) for truth. He wandered around in search of a qualified master, and in this hope resided in Isfahan and Najaf for a time.¹⁴¹

He also met an Indian dervish known as Shāh Kawthar and was initiated into the Shaṭṭāriyya order.¹⁴² During this period, he wore *qalandar* garments and lived as a wandering dervish. He returned to Shiraz because he did not find Kawthar satisfying enough for his spiritual thirst. In Shiraz he met Mīrzā Muḥammad Nasābih, who was the deputy of Shaykh 'Alī Naqī Iṣṭahbānātī (d. Circa 1129/1717).¹⁴³ Iṣṭahbānātī commanded him to practise certain mystical practices and to recite the Qur'ān to prepare for initiation into the order. Iḥsānu'llāh Istakhrī and Muḥammad Yūsuf Nayrī believe that Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim was initiated into the Dhahabī order through Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad Nayrīzī (d. 1173/1760).¹⁴⁴

Dhahabī texts indicate that from the time he met Iṣṭahbānātī, he passed the state of spiritual drunkenness and entered the path of spiritual sobriety. He spent most of his time in the company of the masters or reading the Qur'ān. The key spiritual quest of the Dhahabīs was to enable the mystic to attain a deep mystical perception of the Qur'ān. Hāshim met Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad Nayrīzī in Shāh Dā'ī's Shrine in Shiraz. Hagiographies indicate that Nayrīzī told him that he had been with Hāshim spiritually from the beginning of his mystical quest. This was how he met the 32nd pole of the Dhahabī order. Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad gave his daughter's hand in marriage to Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim as a sign of Muḥammad Hāshim's succession.¹⁴⁵ Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim Shīrāzī was, therefore, the successor to Quṭb al-Dīn Nayrīzī.

Karīm Khān Zand, the King of Persia at the time, not only had a good relationship with Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim Shīrāzī, but he also admired him. While Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh of the Ni'matullāhī order were banished by Karīm Khān, Hāshim Dhahabī enjoyed a close relationship with him.¹⁴⁶ He was at Karīm's deathbed and all of Karīm Khān's successors had respect for him and his successors.¹⁴⁷ According to Dhahabī texts, their good relationship continued into the Qājār era as well; the texts narrate a story about Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim and Āqā Muḥammad Khān,

the Qājār monarch, where Hāshim prayed for Āqā Muḥammad Khān and told him to recite the Qurʾān.

Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim lived for about 90 years and, at the end of his life, he adopted an ascetic lifestyle and spent most of his time praying.¹⁴⁸ He was well known for his piety. He wrote a poem in praise of Imām ʿAlī called *Qaṣīda-yi Shamsīyya*¹⁴⁹ and a compendium of poetry called *Wilāyat-nāma*. He also wrote *Manāhil al-taḥqīq*¹⁵⁰ about the reality of sainthood and the deputies of God on earth.

His successor, Āqā Mīrẓā ʿAbd al-Nabī (d. 1230/1815), was the custodian of the *Shāh Chirāgh* shrine in Shiraz (shrine of the son of the seventh Imām, who died in 202/835), which was a holy place for all Shiʿites. This created further prestige for him among all the various classes of Shiʿite society. The Dhahabīs claim that he was a descendant of a leading theologian, Mīr Sharīf Jurjānī (d. 816/1413). Being from a noble religious line brought more legitimacy to the masters of the time. He studied in Shiʿite seminary schools and became well versed in religious sciences. He was also educated in Persian literature and the Hebrew language. He taught in *Madrasa-yi Manṣūrīyya*, a seminary school.¹⁵¹

ʿAbd al-Nabī met Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim, who initiated him, and followed this master for 28 years until, eventually, Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim appointed him as a guide to the Dhahabī path in the year 1198/1783. Although most of Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim's close companions and disciples believed that ʿAbd al-Nabī was Hāshim's successor,¹⁵² there are texts stating that Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim did not appoint any successor for himself, believing that Dhahabī Sufis must ask for the spiritual intercession of the twelfth Imām to show them the true master.¹⁵³ For 50 years after the time of Āqā Mīrẓā ʿAbd al-Nabī, there was a period of interregnum for the Dhahabī masters, since ʿAbd al-Nabī's legitimacy as the successor was not clear to all.¹⁵⁴

Āqā Mīrẓā ʿAbd al-Nabī was known to be a quiet and retiring person, which encouraged this period of intermission for the Dhahabī tradition. He was also very cautious about following Islamic laws and did not utter any statements challenging the authority of Shiʿite clerics.¹⁵⁵ He retired into the seminary school of Manṣūrīyya where he lived as an unmarried bachelor in solitude. After giving lessons, he would go to his room and spend most of his time praying.¹⁵⁶

The Dhahabīs believe that he lived in seclusion due to the exclusivist views of Sufi masters and the quarrelling between Sufi orders. Since Shiʿite clerics also persecuted Sufi masters, he had adopted a quiet life so that he could advance Dhahabī culture in Persia without facing any persecution

or quarrels.¹⁵⁷ He dissimulated his mystical state to the extent that even his own family was not aware of it. He did not write any books and he remained for most of his life in Shiraz, where he died in 1231/1815.

The Dhahabīs, like other Shi'ite Sufi orders, claim that all Sufi orders can trace themselves back to one of the Shi'ite Imāms. Dhahabī masters strongly emphasise their Shi'ite beliefs. They believe that there were certain periods of time when other Sufis were integrated into Sunnism, whereas the Dhahabī order was always strongly attached to its Shi'ite beliefs.¹⁵⁸ The Dhahabīs divided *wilāya* (sainthood) into two forms, one superior to the other. The superior form of sainthood is present only in the Prophet Muḥammad and Shi'ite Imāms, and it is called 'Solar Sainthood' (*wilāyat-i shamsīyya*). The inferior part is called 'Lunar Sainthood' (*wilāyat-i qamarīyya*) and is the possession of Sufi masters. This philosophy indicates that the ultimate guidance is the light of Shi'ite Imāms (the sun) and, through this light, the Dhahabī master can become illuminated with the light of Shi'ite Imāms' guidance, the way the moon receives its light from the sun.¹⁵⁹

The Dhahabīs placed tremendous emphasis on following the exoteric Islamic Law, claiming that the 'shariah is the pillar of Dhahabī Sufism' (*sharī'at pāyih faqr-i Dhahabī ast.*).¹⁶⁰ They claimed that the reality of the Sufi path (*ṭarīqat*) was one of strict obedience to Islamic exoteric laws. To reach the state of sainthood one must honour the heritage of the Prophet Muḥammad, meaning the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet's household (*ahl al-bayt*).¹⁶¹ They also refuted those Sufis who did not follow Sharī'a and believed that there was no need for shariah once a person had entered the state of *ṭarīqat*.

Dhahabīs and Ni'matullāhīs were strong promoters of the school of the 'Unity of Being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). However, both orders condemned narratives and traditions that inclined towards pantheism. Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim's poetry was greatly inspired by both Akbarian and Ishrāqī philosophy.¹⁶² Thus, Khāwarī dedicated a chapter in his book to the Dhahabī view of the 'Unity of Being'.¹⁶³

The Naqshbandī Order

The Naqshbandīs and Qādirīs are the only two Sunni Sufi orders that managed to survive during the transition from the Safavid to the Qājār era; however, the sources explaining their social and political role are scarce. There is almost no information about the followers of these orders in Balūchistān in Persia.¹⁶⁴

The Kurdish orders are in many cases led by their tribal elders or their *sādāt*¹⁶⁵ (Sayyids). Therefore, these elders figured more as a tribal custom than leaders of a specific Sufi order. If a tribal elder changed his Sufi order, the whole tribe would change its beliefs in response. Evidently, tribal ties and connections played a crucial role in the spiritual leadership of Kurdish tribes.¹⁶⁶ Shi'ite seminary scholars and Shi'ite theology had little influence on Sunni Sufi orders, which were not as exclusivist and intolerant as the Shi'ite Sufi orders.

The Naqshbandī order traced itself back to Shaykh Bahā al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389) from Bukhārā.¹⁶⁷ There are different narratives about the origin of the word Naqshband; some believe that it is the name of the village Bahā al-Dīn came from. Others believe that due to Bahā al-Dīn's excessive practice of a Sufi invocation (*dhikr*), the repeated invocation was engraved (*naqsh bast*) on his heart.¹⁶⁸ Although many Naqshbandī masters were Persian and most Naqshbandī texts are written in Persian, this Sufi order did not have any impact on later Persian Sufi culture.¹⁶⁹

After the Safavid era when Shi'ism became the dominant religion of Persia, the Sunni Sufi orders became weakened and persecuted. Naqshbandīs became known as *Bakrīs* (an order belonging to Abū Bakr, the first caliph according to the Sunnis), which was used as a pejorative term. The Safavids began persecuting Naqshbandīs right after the conquest of Hirāt during Shāh Ismā'il's time.¹⁷⁰ The Naqshbandī Sufi order is among the Sunni orders whose followers were drastically reduced during this era and, as stated above, there are very few sources explaining their circumstances during the early Qājār era. One must go through other social and historical texts of that era in order to find information about Naqshbandīs. One of these sources is *Bustān al-Sīyahā* by Mast 'Alī Shāh.

As mentioned above, the Naqshbandī order traced itself back to Abū Bakr (d. 13/634). The order was also called *Ṣiddīqiyya*, referring to the first caliph's reputation as impeccably truthful (*ṣiddīq*). However, Mast 'Alī Shāh believed that there was no strong evidence of this.¹⁷¹ Mast 'Alī Shāh did not name a person, but he narrated that one of the Naqshbandī masters, who lived in India and was originally from Uzbekistan, traced the Naqshbandī chain of spiritual authority through Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 145/765) back to Abū Bakr. Obviously, all Shi'ite Sufis refuted this claim, and believed that the Naqshbandīs were nothing but a perverse Sunni Sufi order. Mast 'Alī Shāh referred to Qādī Nūrullāh Shushtarī (d. 1019/1610). In Mast Ali Shah's writing he stated that the claim of the Naqshbandīyya to be a Sunni order was an innovation.¹⁷² However, on the other hand, Mast

‘Alī Shāh also claimed that the Naqshbandī order was originally a Shi‘ite order, and the innovations of its contemporary masters led them to claim it was a Sunni order.¹⁷³

Mast ‘Alī Shāh did not accept the Naqshbandī order as a legitimate spiritual and mystical path; however, he admired some of the contemporary Naqshbandī masters. He met the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām Muḥammad Durīzada Effendī, who followed the Naqshbandī order for spiritual matters. Mast ‘Alī Shāh stated that he was Durīzada’s guest for a while and that he was a unique person in nobility.¹⁷⁴

Mast ‘Alī Shāh reported on the activities of Naqshbandīs in Khurāsān (which is part of today’s Iran and Afghanistan). He met Sufi Islām (a Naqshbandī Shaykh), who was an Uzbek. Sufi Islām was said to have more than 200 deputies propagating Sufism in Khurāsān, Tūrān, Khāwrazm and other areas in North East Persia. Mast ‘Alī Shāh claimed that more than 100,000 households were his disciples. He was eventually killed in one of the wars fought in Kurkh (near Hirāt) at the beginning of the 19th century.¹⁷⁵ This account by Mast ‘Alī Shāh indicated that there were probably vast numbers of Naqshbandīs in the North East on the borders of Persia, but not in the heart of Persia.

The most important figure in the history of the Naqshbandī order during the 19th century is Mawlānā Khālīd Naqshbandī Shahrūzī (d. 1242/1826). He was from Sharūz in the Ūramān Mountains in Kurdistān, which today is part of Sulaymāniya in Iraq.¹⁷⁶ He was a scholar of Kurdish, Persian and Arabic literature. He was first initiated into the Qādirī order and was a disciple of Sayyid ‘Abd al-Karīm Barzanjī, who was a Qādirī Shaykh.¹⁷⁷ Then he went to India where he became a disciple of Shāh ‘Abd Allāh Dihlawī Naqshbandī.

He returned to Persia from India and resided in Sulaymāniya, where the Qādirīs opposed him. Their pressure limited his propagation of Naqshbandī beliefs to such an extent that he left Sulaymāniya a few times. His biographers noted that he taught in a Sulaymāniya seminary school and composed poetry in Kurdish, Persian and Arabic.¹⁷⁸ He passed away in 1242/1826. Khālīd had numerous deputies, none of whom were his blood relatives or descendants. However, his brother, Shaykh Maḥmūd Şāhib, who passed away in 1283/1866, was one of the most influential masters in Sulaymāniya. Having said this, the spread and propagation of Naqshbandī Sufism was not very influential on the culture of central Persia during this era. The Naqshbandīs had more influence on Kurds (on the western border of Persia), Balūchs (on the eastern border of Persia) and Uzbeks.

The Qādirī Order

The Qādirī Order was named after a great 6th-century Sufi master, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Gīlānī (d. 561/1166).¹⁷⁹ Mast ‘Alī Shāh declared that this order had expanded in Persia, Iraq and other areas around him.¹⁸⁰ This was a Sunni Sufi order as well, and therefore the number of its initiates was reduced after the Safavid era. The majority of Qadirīs were Kurdish, and their order had no significant influence on Persian Sufism in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The sources explaining the Qādirī order in Persia are scarce as well; however, there are indications that they were not totally wiped out. Baghdād continued its heritage from the Abbasid era of being a welcoming city for all types of religious beliefs and sects. Mast ‘Alī Shāh reported that he had visited Qādirī masters in Baghdād.¹⁸¹ He also told that there were Qādirīs in Constantinople. Most of these Qādirī Sufis lived outside Persia.

The masters of the Qādirī order in Kurdistān were the elders and knowledgeable men of their tribes. The Sayyids of Barzanj are a good example. Although they claimed to be descendants of Mūsā and ‘Īsā Barzanjī, known to be brothers of Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh (d. 869/1465),¹⁸² it is not clear how these two brothers had come to a Kurdish area and how they had become connected to the Qādirī order. Even in academically authentic sources about the Qādirī order there is very little evidence about the Kurdish Qādirī order's origins.¹⁸³ The authenticity and legitimacy of the Kurdish Qādirī order can be questioned because of the appearance of names such as Sayyid Aḥmad Badawī (d. 675/1276) (the founder of the Badawīyya order) and Sayyid Aḥmad Rifā‘ī (d. 578/1182)¹⁸⁴ (the founder of the Rifā‘īyya order) in their chain of initiation (*Silsila*), who were not part of the normal Qādirī chain of initiation.¹⁸⁵

Mūsā and ‘Īsā Barzanjī, the two brothers, claimed that they had had a vision of the Prophet Muḥammad who had commanded them to settle in Barzanjih (in what is now Iraq) in the year 685/1287. Mūsā did not have any descendants and Sādāt Barzanjī claimed to be the descendant of ‘Īsā Barzanjī. All of these *sādāts* trace themselves back to Bābā Rasūl (d. 1074/1646), who died in Barzanjih.¹⁸⁶

Shaykh Aḥmad Galih Zarda (d. 1184/1771) was the one who received permission to guide spiritual seekers to the Qādirī order.¹⁸⁷ Another influential figure in the history of the Qādirī order in this era was Shaykh Ma‘rūf Nudihī (b. 1165/1752), who travelled to different cities in order to learn seminary sciences, jurisprudence, the science of hadith and interpretation of the Qur’an under the direction of well-known seminary scholars. He

also received permission from Shaykh 'Alī Barzanjī to engage in various mystical practices.¹⁸⁸ He wrote numerous books on the seminary sciences and Sufi spirituality.¹⁸⁹ He was a poet as well, and composed his poetry in Persian, Kurdish and Arabic. His son, Kāk Aḥmad Shaykh (d. 1304/1887), became the leader of the Qādirīs after him.

A number of *sādāt* of Barzanjīh became well-known seminary scholars in Mecca and Medina. They were very wealthy, which made them more popular and influential among the men of power in the Ottoman Empire, Persia and surrounding territories.¹⁹⁰ For a long time, the Barzanjī Qādirī order became a hereditary order, which resulted in a diminution of its spiritual quality. Lineage became more important than achieving a higher mystical state, and spiritual merit lost any real significance among them.

The Ṭalībānī Qādirī masters were the rivals of the Barzanjī Qādirī order. Mullā Maḥmūd Ṭalībānī was the first Qādirī master in his tribe. His son, Shaykh Aḥmad Ṭalībānī (d. 1256/1841), became a popular Qādirī master and gathered a large number of disciples from Turkey, Persia, Iraq and Syria. His son, Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān Khālīṣ (d. 1273/1857), succeeded him, and his brothers were sent to spread his order. It can be noted that the Qādirī order flourished in areas of Kurdistān in Persia, Iraq and Turkey. As they were Sunni tribal groups and did not challenge the authority of Shi'ite clerics, their names did not appear in the religious verdicts or treatises written in refutation of Sufism. However, some Shi'ite scholars have written quite critically of the founder of the Qādirī Order, 'Abd al-Qādir Gilānī.

The Ahl-i Ḥaqq Order

The Ahl-i Ḥaqq order is a quasi-Sufi Kurdish group. The Ahl-i Ḥaqq Sufis are also known as 'Alī Allāhīs, a pejorative term used by those unfamiliar with their beliefs and philosophies. The term '*Alī Allāhī*' indicates that 'Alī (the first Imām) is the incarnation of Allāh (God). Nūr 'Alī Ilāhī (d. 1394/1974), a well-known master of the 'Ahl-i Ḥaqq order, dedicated a chapter in his mystical treatise, *Burhān al-Ḥaqq*, to denying that the Ahl-i Ḥaqq actually believe that 'Alī was a divine incarnation.¹⁹¹ Yet Mast 'Alī Shāh has referred to them as 'Alī Allāhī. A number of Ahl-i Ḥaqq masters claimed to be 'people of Truth' (*ahl-i ḥaqq*) instead of 'people of the Sufi path' (*ahl-i ṭarīqat*), and they differentiated themselves from Sufis. They believed that they were in a higher state than the 'people of the Sufi path'.¹⁹² Well-known Ahl-i Ḥaqq masters, known as *sayyids*, lived in Kurdish areas, mostly in Persia and Iraq.

It is said that Nādir Shāh Afshār had a good relationship with the Ahl-i Ḥaqq dervishes since some of his theological beliefs were close to Sunnism. Nādir respected the Ahl-i Ḥaqq mystics and he reconstructed some of their shrines. He also gave some land as fiefs to Ahl-i Ḥaqq's masters and brought the sayyids of Atash Baygī tribes of the Ahl-i Ḥaqq back to their homeland of Kirmānshāh after they were exiled during the Safavid era.¹⁹³

Āqā Sayyid Farḍ 'Alī, known as Āsid Farḍī (d. 1169/1756), was one of the Ahl-i Ḥaqq's Sayyids who was believed by his disciples to be a manifestation of 'Alī. Nādir Shāh met him on his way to Baghdād and asked for his blessing, and appointed lands as fiefs to Sayyid Farḍ 'Alī.¹⁹⁴ The Afsharid era was a time of revival for the Ahl-i Ḥaqq.

The Ahl-i Ḥaqq continued to flourish during Karīm Khān Zand's reign, but there is not much information about them from the time of Karīm's death down to the Qājār era, when Ahl-i Ḥaqq masters were scattered around Persia. Darwīsh Dhu'lfaghār Gūrān (b. 1172/1758) was a poet who, by the command of a master, started to interpret Kurdish Ahl-i Ḥaqq poetry.¹⁹⁵ Khalifa Naẓar Garmīyānī (d. 1295/1878) from Karkuk was another great figure in the history of Ahl-i Ḥaqq. He was a great poet, following the model of Gūrānī Ahl-i Ḥaqq Kurdish poetry. Sayyid Ḥaydar from Kirmānshāh, known as Sayyid Būrākih (d.1290/1873), was also another great figure in the history of Ahl-i Ḥaqq, a poet who was eventually murdered. Darwīsh Ujāq Gahwāriyī (d. 1286/1869) was a disciple of Sayyid Būrākih who also composed poetry. Mīrzā 'Alī 'Abbāsbandī (d. 1276/1859), known as A'lā Dīn, is yet another disciple of Sayyid Būrākih who composed poetry in the Gūrānī dialect of Kurdish.¹⁹⁶ During the later Qājār era, the Ahl-i Ḥaqq's masters formed different movements against governments in Irāq, Persia and Turkey. They began to be seen as a threat to the state, but this concerns an era beyond the scope of the timeframe of this work. Since the Ahl-i Ḥaqq were wandering mystics who lived in Kurdish areas of Persia, there is very little historical information about their activities during this period. It is clear that their poetry, which was largely written in Kurdish, did not have much influence on Persian poetry and literature of the Qājārs.

Jurists and Sufis from the Mongols to the Qājārs

The conflict between the jurists and the Sufis was a fundamental characteristic of the religious life of Qājār Persia, but it had a long history behind it, which first must be reviewed and understood in its proper historical context — as a distinct sectarian phenomenon in the theological history of Iranian Islam over the preceding six centuries. In what follows I will focus on the relations between the two groups from the 13th century onwards.

From the early days of Islam to the present there have always been severe differences between the representatives of the esoteric and exoteric approaches to faith and practice. These stem from two fundamentally different religious temperaments. The jurists' legally oriented understanding of Islam, what Marshall Hodgson identifies as 'shariah-minded' Islam vs. the 'haqīqah-minded' Islam of the Sufis. Despite the efforts of several important Muslims, particularly al-Ghazālī (1058-1111), who tried to bridge the chasm between exoteric (*ẓāhir*) and esoteric (*bāṭin*) faith perspectives, the divide between these two religious worldviews has been a constant since the second Islamic century. Many great Sufis such as Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī were scholars of *fiqh* and hadith and felt that the shariah was essential to hold on to but that deeper Islam must include a deep dive into the esoteric mysteries that are referred to frequently in the Qur'an.

However, particularly in the world of Shi'ite Islam, the scholars of *fiqh* generally resented and rejected the doctrines of the Sufis. The opposition to Sufism dates back to the first generation of Sufis, even before the name 'Sufi' had been adopted.¹ The early Muslims who are looked to as early masters of this esoteric understanding of Islam and are acclaimed as the founders of the Sufi way adopted an ascetic lifestyle. In doing so they were criticised by Muslim scholars, who believed that asceticism was against the tradition of the Prophet Muḥammad.² Among the early generations of the Muslim community, Sufis were not a distinct class like theologians (*mutakallimūn*) and clerics (*ulama*), and their difference from the rest of the Muslim community lay only in their adherence to certain strict codes of piety.³

As Vincent J. Cornell says, 'One of the oldest stereotypes in Islamic studies is that of the eternal conflict between scholar and Sufi, legalist and mystic, doctor and saint, or *sharī'a* and *ḥaqīqa*.'⁴ Jurists viewed Sufis as their rivals, challenging their authority, and in return Sufis condemned them for being enthralled by worldly matters. As a matter of fact, on numerous occasions during the formative period of Sufism, Sufis directly challenged the authority of clerics, as Ibn 'Arabī observed in the *Futūḥāt*:⁵ 'The name *faqīh* is much more appropriate for the Tribe [i.e. the Sufis] than for the exoteric scholar, for . . . it is he [the Sufi] who calls to God "upon insight", just as the messenger of God calls upon insight.'⁶

The conflict between the jurists and Sufis also arose because Sufis claimed to have a knowledge of God/the Truth (*Ḥaqq*) that could not be gained through academic study in the seminary colleges of Islam. They claimed access to an intuitive knowledge (*ma'rifat*, gnosis or intuitive insights and *dhawq*, literally tasting) that could be gained through certain methods of spiritual guidance and by means of mystical experiences or unveiling (*kashf*).⁷ It is said that Dhū'l-Nūn (d. 246/859) was the first Sufi master to explain intuitive knowledge of God (*ma'rifat*) as opposed to knowledge of the seminary sciences.⁸ It was through the mystical experience of union that one could gain this intuitive knowledge; as Qushayrī remarked, 'Without union there can be no true knowing (*ma'rifa*).'⁹ A number of Sufi masters were illiterate and some viewed formal learning and the seminary sciences as veils to this union. They made a mockery of the clerics studying in seminary schools. They claimed that everything was revealed to their hearts from God.¹⁰ Therefore, Sufi doctrines of gnosis came to be viewed not as complementary modes of religious understanding but as direct challenges to the beliefs of the exoteric Muslim clerics that religious knowledge could only be gained from formal studies in a *madrasa*.

The early Sufis seldom challenged political authority, but merely condemned those who were involved in worldly matters. As Gerhard Böwering observes, 'The Muslim mystics of classical Sufism — from the beginnings of Islamic asceticism to the time of al-Ghazālī — did not challenge their opponents with an agenda of the just society, a blueprint of political reform or a call for an Islamic state.'¹¹ However, after the abolition of the Caliphate in Baghdad in 556/1258, Sufi masters began to lead some of the political movements.

Sufism also underwent different stages of transition. There was, first of all, an evolution in Sufism from asceticism to mystical philosophy. This occurred, as Van Ess has pointed out, once early Sufis like Junayd (d.

297/910) became concerned about defining the phenomenon of mysticism.¹² Secondly, during the 13th century Sufis started to form *ṭarīqas* or Sufi brotherhoods, a development which had been anticipated two centuries earlier in the institution of the Sufi meeting lodge (*khanaqāh*), first established in Khurāsān during the time of Abū Saʿīd Abū al-Khayr (357/967–440/1049). In the 12th century, during the Mongol period, Sufism became organised into different brotherhoods, most of which demanded unconditional obedience to their masters.¹³ In some places Sufism became affiliated with the state and in some cases an instrument for the government to control the masses.¹⁴ As the brotherhoods became more formalised, their affiliation to different sectarian and theological schools of Islam became more crucial. Shiʿite and Sunni Sufi orders became clearly distinguishable from each other.

Particularly in the Shiʿite world, the clerics were prone to accuse Sufis of being innovators in religious matters. These shariah-oriented scholars referred to traditions from the Prophet and Shiʿite Imāms,¹⁵ such as one of the most often-quoted sayings of the Prophet, ‘O Abū Dharr, those wearing wool in the summer and winter, are cursed by the angels of heaven and earth.’¹⁶ They claimed that Sufis were rejected by the Prophet and Shiʿite Imāms. They were viewed as infidels deserving to be fought with and put to death (*kāfar ḥarbī*).¹⁷

In the 16th and 17th centuries in Iran, during the period of the clerical formation of Shiʿism under the Safavids, and again in the 18th and 19th centuries with the consolidation of the Uṣūlī school in the Zand and Qājār eras, Sufis challenged the authority of the mujtahids. The ulama reacted with an inquisition of the Sufis near the end of the Safavid dynasty. This inquisition and persecution continued throughout the Qājār era. The two major figures in this anti-Sufi movement were Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1110/1700) and Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī (d. 1216/1801).¹⁸ Shiʿi Sufis presented a spiritual and esoteric understanding of Shiʿism that was a direct threat to the Shiʿi ulama. As Mangol Bayat observes, ‘Refusing to acknowledge the mujtahids as the sole exponents of Shii Islam, denying them the right to represent the collective voice of religious conscience, the Sufi leaders offered their followers a spiritual alternative to the *fuqahā*’s legalistic institutionalized religion.’¹⁹

The revivalist movement of Sufism at the end of the Zand and the beginning of the Qājār periods was largely based on charismatic Sufi leaders who encouraged the enthusiastic participation of their followers in Sufi practices rather than have them focus their faith on the rulings of the exoteric clerics

whose fatwas competed among themselves for more and more arcane and pointless rules to be followed revolving round issues of ritual purity. As a result, those Muslims who were tired of the strict exoteric understanding of religion became more interested in the systematised and formalised path of Sufism presented by these masters.

During the latter half of the Safavid period, and throughout the Afsharid and Zand periods and into the Qājār era, many wandering dervishes migrated to Persia. They were known for performing miracles for which they would receive alms. They were also known for libertinism and not following religious laws.²⁰ Ordinary people believed in the charismatic power of these wandering dervishes who were treated with respect or fear. These dervishes were not organised into 'orders', so there was no mass conversion to their teachings. Their behaviour and conduct were not generally accepted by Persian society, which objected to the idea of a libertine who did not work, and some rulers and scholars viewed them as parasites on society.

However, stories about these wandering dervishes became deeply rooted in Persian culture and mythology, with tales of their feats becoming mixed with local religious practices. The history of Persia is full of fables and epics, which are extremely important for understanding Persian culture, although to the modern eye they are too unrealistic to be accepted as fact. Malcolm has an explanation for the Persian attitude to such tales and hagiographical stories:

If we desire to be fully informed of a nation's history, we must not reject the fables under which the few remaining traces of its origin are concealed. However extravagant they always merit attention. They have influence on the character of the people to whom they relate. They mix with their habits, their literature, and sometimes with their religion. They become, in short, national legends, which it is sacrilege to doubt; and to question the deeds of Roostum would raise in the breast of a Persian, all those feelings which would be excited in an Englishman if he heard a foreigner detract from the name of Alfred.²¹

Sufism was part of this culture too, as one can find in the proliferation of legendary stories about the lives of Sufi masters, such as 'Atṭār's *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*.²² As stories about the extraordinary acts of wandering dervishes became part of the popular and oral culture of Persia, they affected the historical views of scholars too. However, in order to understand the religious

situation of Sufism during the Zand and the Qājār periods, it is necessary to look at how Sufism had evolved in Iran several centuries earlier, when Iran was still a Sunni country. In what follows I will examine the development of Sufism in Iran during the Mongol period.

Sufism in Mongol Iran

The invasion of Persia and other Islamic lands by the Mongols at the beginning of the 13th century was a devastating event for all Muslims. As Lewisohn has pointed out, “‘Nightmarish’ is too light an adjective’ for this era.²³ It was an era of mourning, as the ruthless Mongol commanders slaughtered untold numbers of Persians through their ‘shock and awe’ military strategy. Mast ‘Alī Shāh calls the invasion of Mongols ‘the great calamity and the major event’ in the history of Persia.²⁴ Browne pointed out that the Mongol invasion was one of the most ‘dreadful calamities’ for humanity.²⁵

Nevertheless, there were positive cultural developments during this era as well. Roger Savory has noted, ‘This event [abolishment of the Caliphate and the capture of Baghdad] not only marks a watershed in the political history of the Islamic world but had far-reaching effects on religious developments as well. For 600 years, the Caliphate had been the visible symbol of the unity of the Islamic world, and the upholder of the orthodoxy of the Islamic faith.’²⁶ It created an opportunity for those religious beliefs not in accordance with the Caliphate system of Sunnism to flourish. Sufism, Shi‘ism and messianic movements started to grow as the Sunni ideology of the Caliphate faced a military, cultural and theological challenge. Mongol rulers showed tolerance towards other religious beliefs as long as they were no political threat to the new Mongol order.²⁷

Sufism as an esoteric spiritual path which brought about hope for union with God became a sanctuary for those whose lives had been overtaken by the Mongol conquest, and thus, paradoxically, the disaster of the Mongol invasion led to a mass cultivation of Sufism.²⁸ At the same time, the Il-khanid era (654-750/1256-1335)²⁹ (that of the Mongol dynasty that ruled Persia) was a period of decline for the Islamic judicial system.³⁰

Genghis Khān did not follow a particular religion, though he felt sympathetic towards all mystics of different religions, including Sufis.³¹ This favourable attitude of Genghis Khān, and after him the Ilkhānid rulers, towards Sufism created a constructive period for the organised development and spread of Sufi movements and ideas in Persia.³² Some of the

Kubrawī masters of the period were well-respected by the Mongol rulers. Shaykh Sayf al-Dīn Bākharzī (d. 659/1261), a Kubrawī master, converted the Mongol ruler Berke (r. 1257-67) to Islam.³³ Sulṭān Ghāzān (d. 703/1304) was another Ilkhānid ruler who embraced Islam. He was known to be kind to the saints, clerics and theosophers. Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad Ḥamūya (d. 722/1322), a Kubrawī master, was his consultant.³⁴

The Ilkhanid ruler, Sulṭān Muḥammad Khudābanda (Üljāytü) (r. 716/1316), became a Shi'ite and had a good relationship with both Shi'ite clerics and Shi'ite Sufis.³⁵ He also respected all the religious scholars from different theological and mystical persuasions within Islamic culture.³⁶ He reconstructed the shrine of Biṣṭāmī and paid homage to it.³⁷ It was especially during Üljāytü's reign (r. 703-716/1304-1316) that Shi'ites started to propagate their strongly messianic beliefs. Messianic movements, most of which were quasi-Shi'ite and quasi-Sufi, soon became popular among the general population. As Shahzad Bashir observed in this respect, 'The need for a savior arises in an unstable political environment such as after the death of a caliph.'³⁸ One of the major Shi'ite-Sufi movements against the Mongols was that of the Sarbidārān in Sabziwār.³⁹ The Sarbidār leader, Shaykh Khalīfa, preached in a mosque and claimed that his order could be traced back to Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq through Bāyazīd al-Biṣṭāmī; the latter, he claimed, had been taught by Ja'far al-Ṣādiq to rise against the tyranny of the ruler, by extension implying rising up against the tyranny of the Mongols. As a charismatic person who claimed to be a Shi'ite Sufi, he became famous among the Shi'ites of Sabziwār. This caused the religious clerics of Sabziwār to feel that their authority over the people had been challenged by followers of Sarbidār teachings. They wrote letters to Abū Sa'īd Ilkhān (r. 716-736/1316-1335) about Shaykh Khalīfa's beliefs and told him that Khalīfa deserved to be put to death. Shaykh Khalīfa was murdered under mysterious circumstances in 736/1335.⁴⁰

Theosophical Sufism

Alongside these revolutionary movements, there were a few Shi'ite-Sufi philosophers who attempted to synthesise the Sufi metaphysics of Ibn 'Arabī with Shi'ite mystical theology. Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 787/1386) was the most important figure to unite Shi'ite theology with Sufi philosophy. His main doctrine, which was especially evident in his masterpiece, *Jāmi' al-asrār*, is that true Sufism is in essence Shi'ism, and vice versa. This idea of the essential unity of Shi'ism and Sufism, which was maintained by

means of various theological, metaphysical and mystical arguments, later became very popular with pro-Sufi thinkers in Safavid Iran.⁴¹

One of the great Sufi figures of this period was Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistārī (d. 737/1337). His view was similar to that of Ibn ‘Arabī, which was that exoteric scholars were in opposition to the Sufis due to greed and spiritual ignorance. Shabistārī accused them of being enthralled by money and possessions. These criticisms of exoteric scholars clarify the relationship between the exoteric and esoteric leaders and their very different take on what is true Islam. As Leonard Lewisohn said, ‘Albeit this dislike for the anti-unitarian dogmatism of the Muslim clergy is not particular to Shabistārī; it is generally characteristic of all the Sufi poets of this period.’⁴²

In sum, Sufism flourished during the Mongol era.⁴³ This is a formative period in which many religious scholars joined different Sufi brotherhoods as they became more institutionalised.⁴⁴ It is during this period that Sufis started to gain more respect and dignity among the Sunni masses.⁴⁵ The Sufi saints developed an alternative to literalist, shariah-minded Islam by the combining of the shariah and haqiqah dimensions of Islam. In doing so they came closer to orthodoxy without relinquishing the higher mystical ground of intuitive knowing through the Sufi path as presented by its leaders.

The Jurist-Sufi Conflict in Timurid and Turkemen Persia

Timur-i lang, known to the West as Tamerlane (d. 807/ 1405), was a Turko-Mongol ruler and commander who was one of the greatest conquerors of Asia. He claimed to be a descendant of Genghis Khān and upheld his nomadic Mongol values.⁴⁶ Beside his nomadic heritage, Timur was a Muslim ruler who tried to create legitimate sovereignty for himself. Being the protector of exoteric laws (shariah) and having connections to supernatural forces were two of the most important qualifications for a ruler among Muslim elites in this era.⁴⁷ Tamerlane was a ruthless commander and he invaded Persia three times, carrying out massacres in Isfahan and other cities, and made minarets with the heads of people during his genocidal campaigns.⁴⁸

As under Mongol dominion, the harsh social and political conditions under the rule of the Timurids created an environment in which people were receptive towards mystical movements. Messianic and mystical movements became popular among Persians, and the spiritually deadening focus

on the minutiae of theoretical but impractical legal rulings by the shari'ah-minded scholars became less popular. From the Mongol to the Timurid eras, the mystical beliefs of Shi'ism and Sufism became assimilated to one another. As Shahzad Bashir has observed, 'In addition to the enhancement of Sufis' societal functions, the Tīmūrīd period is known also for a kind of rapprochement between Sufism and Shi'ism leading to messianic doctrines and other "syncretistic" ideological formations.'⁴⁹

The Sufi shaykhs adopted political roles and sometimes took on many of the roles attributed to the Shi'ite Imams. Bashir in this regard commented, 'With his religious prestige and political pretensions, the new type of Sufi shaykh now becoming common approximated more and more closely the status given to the religio-political figure of the imām in Shi'ism.'⁵⁰ So, messianic figures who appeared among the Sufis, revolted in some cases even against the ruler. For example, the movement of the Sarbidārs mentioned above, which started under the Mongols and continued under the Timurids. Other quasi-Mahdi masters of Sufism arose during this period, as Abbas Amanat pointed out:

The presence of latent messianic aspirations in Shaykh Khalīfa and Shaykh Ḥasan Jūrī (d. 746/1342), Shaykh Ishāq Khutlānī (the founder of the Ightishāshīya, d. 826/1423), Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh (d. 869/1464), and Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī (d. 834/1431) made the Sufi orders they represented a fertile ground for chiliastic speculation. Yet neither the Sufi Mahdis nor the claimants to the position of deputyship of the Imām went so far as to proclaim a new cycle of inner truth free from the exterior realities of Islamic *sharī'a*.⁵¹

Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī and Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh are the two most important figures among these Sufi masters of the Timurid period. The two well-known Sufi orders of Nūrbakhshīya and Ni'matullāhīya trace themselves back to or through these two masters. Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh was the most influential figure to rise up against the Timurid ruler Shāhrukh (r.807-850/1404-1447). Nūrbakhsh traced his order back to the Kubrawī order,⁵² which had a strong influence on mystical Shi'ite philosophy and messianism.⁵³

Some Sufi masters who professed messianic doctrines that were close to Shi'ite religious beliefs were persecuted by Timur with the support of Muslim clerics. Shaykh Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī (796/1394) was a quasi-Sufi master who founded the Ḥurūfī sect (a mystical movement based on

numerology, with many similarities to Sufism).⁵⁴ His beliefs about the inner meanings of letters (*hurūf*) and their relationship to the Divine had some similarities with the Ismā‘īlī beliefs as well as with the extremist Shi‘ites (*ghulāt-i shī‘i*), which provoked the animosity of Muslim clerics.⁵⁵ Mīrānshāh (d. 810/1408), son of Timur, eventually executed Astarābādī and suppressed his sect and followers.

Muslim clerics were successful in consolidating their religious authority in society and recovered from the decline they had experienced during the Mongol era. Sufis also gained popularity among the masses, such that many Sufi orders developed into strong political, charismatic and organisational movements under the Timurids. There were occasions when Timur challenged the authority of Sufi masters.⁵⁶ However, there is strong historical evidence that Timur and Shāhrukh highly respected the Sufi Shaykhs, but only those who were no threat to their power and authority, such as Khāwja Bahā al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389).⁵⁷ The Timurid rulers showed respect to the shrine and descendants of Shaykh Aḥmad Jāmī (d. 536/1141). It has also been said that Shāhrukh respected the Naqshbandī master, Khāwja Ḥasan ‘Aṭṭār (d. 802/ 1399),⁵⁸ son of the great Naqshbandī Shaykh Khāwja ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (death date unknown).⁵⁹

In general, the Timurid rulers had a good relationship with the Sufis. In one incident, as a sign of respect, none of the Timurid princes took their seats while Naqshbandī Shaykh Khāwja ‘Ubaydu’llāh Aḥrār (d. 895/1490) was present in a session.⁶⁰ According to accounts found in certain hagiographies, the Timurid Sulṭān, Abū Sa‘īd (d. 873/ 1469), had a successful accession to the throne due to the spiritual support given him by Khāwja ‘Ubaydu’llāh.⁶¹ Those Sufi masters who attracted many disciples often provoked the jealousy of shari‘ah-minded Islamic clerics, who consequently persecuted Shāh Ni‘matullāh Walī (d. 834/1431) and Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī (786/1385).⁶² Although Terry Graham maintained that Timur had an ambiguous relationship with the Sufis, it can be said that if he had not felt them to be a threat to his power, he would have been more sympathetic towards Sufis.⁶³ It is related that once Timur invited Shāh Ni‘matullāh Walī (d. 834/1431) to his court and asked him why he had accepted the invitation and agreed to eat with him. Ni‘matullāh said it was because Timur liked dervishes.⁶⁴ It is also related that when he received a similar invitation to visit Shāhrukh’s court, the visit ended in the monarch becoming an admirer of Shāh Ni‘matullāh.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, there were certain cases where the Timurids, with the support of Muslim clerics, suppressed Sufi masters and Sufi movements.

Shi'ism and Sufism in Safavid Iran

The Safavids came to power as an influential Sufi order with a philosophy of armed revolt against the rulers of Persia. Like all other Sufi orders, they had to legitimise their order through chains of spiritual initiation, and thus they traced their order back to Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn Iṣḥāq Ardabīlī⁶⁶ (d. 735/1334), who was initiated by Shaykh Zāhid Gīlānī⁶⁷ (d. 700/1301), who traced his order back to Abū Najīb Suhrawardī (d. 1168 C.E.), the founder of the Suhrawardīyya order.

Shaykh Ṣafī was the key link in the chain and a crucial figure in the development of this Sufi order. For a long time Shaykh Ṣafī held Sufi sessions and became known for his spiritual power. The Mongols venerated him, and in many cases he prevented the Mongols from harming people in his home town.⁶⁸ After Shaykh Ṣafī passed away, the leadership of the order became hereditary and his son, Ṣadr al-Dīn, was appointed to lead the Ṣafawīyya Sufi order.⁶⁹ The order was named Ṣafawīyya after Shaykh Ṣafī by his spiritual successors. Ṣadr al-Dīn continued with the propagation of Ṣafawīyya Sufi beliefs.

Junayd (d. 864/1460), the great grandson of Ṣadr al-Dīn, and Ḥaydar (d. 839/1488), the son of Junayd, are the two crucial figures in the history of the Ṣafawīyya Sufi order since they transformed its mystical ideology into a militant movement.⁷⁰ Junayd's years of exile in Anatolia were crucial for the formation of a nucleus Turcoman group, known as Qizilbāsh. These Qizilbāsh devotees considered their leaders to be divine and formed an extremist religious sect.⁷¹ As a result, what was later to emerge as 'Safavid Sufism' was more akin to a mystical path filled with extremist beliefs (*ghuluww*). It was also different from the institutionalised Shi'ism at the end of the Safavid era.⁷²

Thus, the Safavid dynasty came to power with extremist Shi'ite beliefs, which were close to extremist Sufi beliefs although their ideology did not have any systematic jurisprudence or scholastic theology. As Roger Savory notes, 'The Safavid leader was even apotheosised as divine incarnation', Safavi Sufis would address Safavid kings as "God".⁷³ As Leonard Lewisohn pointed out, 'His [Shāh Ismā'īl] religion was a kind of sectarian religious totalitarianism focused on *ghulāt* Islam, the doctrines and practices of which are completely alien to both traditional Shi'ism and classical Sufism.'⁷⁴

The Safavi Sufis had exclusivist views about Shāh Ismā'īl whom they viewed as the 'Perfect Master' (*murshid kāmīl*) and 'Grand Sufi' (*ṣūfī-yi a'ẓam*). Other Sufi masters were denounced and the shrines of Jāmī, Abū Iṣḥāq Kāzīrūnī and 'Ayn al-Qudāt Hamadānī were demolished on Ismā'īl's

orders.⁷⁵ Shāh Ismā‘īl’s purpose was to weaken all other rival Sufi traditions in Persia in order to monopolise power only for himself.

The Suppression of the Sufi Orders under the Safavids

The intolerant religious policies of the Safavid Sufi order did not allow for the propagation of other Sufi orders, which were expelled from the country.⁷⁶ The persecution of Sufi orders happened gradually during the Safavid era. Shāh Ismā‘īl obliged Sufi orders to decide either to accept Twelver Shi‘ism or to leave Persia. Shāh Ismā‘īl was hostile to rival Sufi orders; for instance, the followers of the Sufi order of Abū Ishāq Kāzirūnī (d. 426/1035)⁷⁷ were suppressed by the Shāh’s command.⁷⁴ However, the Ni‘matullāhī Order was to a certain extent exempt from persecution, since Shāh Ni‘matullāh’s descendants, who controlled the order in Persia, were related to the Safavid court through intermarriage,⁷⁸ as the head of the order in Persia, Nūr al-Dīn Bāqī (d. 920/1514), had married a sister of Shāh Ṭahmāsb and lived with the nobles in a Safavid palace.⁷⁹ Once Shāh ‘Abbās II (r. 1052/1642-1077/1666) was enthroned, the Safavid relationship with Ni‘matullāhīs became less friendly. Shāh ‘Abbās was heavily influenced by Shi‘ite clerics, a fact which led to the suppression of Sufi orders, and most of these Sufi orders went underground.

The Ni‘matullāhī Sufi order was in decline before the ascension of the Safavids, as Shāh Ni‘matullāh’s son and spiritual successor, Shāh Khalilullāh (d. 862/1458), departed for India in 1447.⁸⁰ The decline of the order reached its peak when the sole deputy of Khalilullāh and his son, Mīr Shams al-Dīn, passed away in 854/1450. There was a spiritual hiatus experienced by the Ni‘matullāhī order when the Ni‘matullāhī masters, blood descendants of Shāh Ni‘matullāh, became more political and symbolic figures under the control of Safavids with no spiritual charisma.⁸¹

The animosity between the followers of the Ṣafawī and the Ni‘matullāhī orders had a long history, which became part of the doctrinal beliefs and practices of both groups. Zarrīnkūb proposes that it started as a quarrel between two religious groups because the Ḥaydarīs, named after the Ṣafawī Sufi master Ḥaydar, had more Shi‘ite tendencies, whereas the Ni‘matis, named after Shāh Ni‘matullāh, had Sunni tendencies.⁸² In the latter part of the Safavid era this quarrel ceased to have any religious meaning and became a ritual played out for the Safavid kings. According to Kathryn Babayan, ‘By the age of Shāh Abbas I (r. 1587-1629), these spontaneous performances were

transformed into ritualized fights between two *futuvvat* factions (Ni‘matulahi and Haydari), in which the monarch himself participated.⁸³

The Dhahabīyya order is known in Persian history for its contribution to the mystical and theological literature of the Sufi orders. Due to the suppression of all Sufi orders, there was a decline in the Dhahabī order as well as the other great Shi‘ite Sufi orders, such as the Nūrbakhshīyya.⁸⁴ Scholars have claimed that some of the great figures who belonged to the School of Isfahan during the Safavid period were affiliated to this order.⁸⁵

The Naqshbandīyya and Khalwatiyya, which were known to be Sunni, were the first two Sufi orders to be suppressed by the Safavids. Many other Sufi orders which had Sunni spiritual chains of initiation were forced to disguise themselves and adopt an Alawī system of belief.⁸⁶ Later on, the Safavid kings were able to suppress Shi‘ite Sufi orders with the support of Shi‘ite clerics. As Amanat writes, ‘By the end of the seventeenth century, Ni‘matullahīs, Nuqṭavīs, Ḥurūfīs, and the Sufi ghulāt were systematically persecuted and removed from the political scene.’⁸⁷

The Importation of Shi‘ite Clerics from Lebanon

After the consolidation of the Safavids and the declaration of Shi‘ism as the state religion, there was a need for a more theological and jurisprudential religious organisation. Persian Shi‘ite thought started to be formalised during this era, and as a consequence of the importation of Shi‘ite ulama from *Jabal al-āmil* in Lebanon the Shi‘ite clergy gained an authoritative position in the Safavid social and political system. As Mansur Sefatgol observed:

Since they [Shi‘ite seminary scholars] had close relations with the state, and it, in turn, needed them for elements of its operation, the new class of Shi‘ī *‘ulamā* constituted a significant proportion of the administration. The religious institution, then, occupied a position of considerable power throughout the Safavid period, and was involved in all aspects of Iranian society. In effect, the Safavid state became the defender of Shi‘ism, while at the same time it used Shi‘ism as a tool to legitimate their political and cultural claims.⁸⁸

Therefore, the relationship between Shi‘ite clerics and Safavid kings was mutually beneficial. Again, according to Sefatgol, ‘The Safavids supported the religious institution through financial aid and appointed members of the ulama to the religious offices of the state. In return, the religious institu-

tion supported the political and religious goals of the state and defended it against internal political and religious challenges.⁸⁹

Shāh Ṭahmāsb Ṣafawī (r. 930-984/1524-1576) was very enthusiastic about importing Shi'ite scholars from Shi'ite seminary schools. His support for these scholars eventually created a religious environment in which any opposition to the Shi'ite clerics was considered a blasphemous act. 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Karakī, known as Muḥaqqiq Karakī, (d. 941/1534) was among those scholars venerated by Shāh Ṭahmāsb Ṣafawī who became an influential Shi'ite scholar in the history of Safavid Shi'ism in Persia.⁹⁰ Karakī was appointed as 'Deputy of the Imām' (*nā'ib al-imām*), which legitimised his religious authority as the ultimate religious power after the Imām.⁹¹ Shāh Ṭahmāsb stated, 'It is clear that opposition to the religious verdict of highly ranked Shi'ite scholars (*mujtahidīn*), who are the protectors of the law of the master of messengers, is equivalent to polytheism (*shirk*).'⁹²

It was during the reign of Shāh Ṭahmāsb (r. 930-984/ 1524-1576) that the Shi'ite seminary scholars were given the supreme authority over religious matters, which marked the beginning of the struggle between Sufis and Shi'ite scholars. At this time Shāh Ṭahmāsb also expelled the Mevlevi Sufi order from Persia.⁹³ As Shi'ite religious sciences were being formalised in Persia, Karakī was the first scholar to revive the old animosity between the 'people of the Sufi Path' (*ahl-i ṭarīqa*) and the 'people of the religious laws' (*ahl-i shari'a*). He also was the first person to write a treatise against Sufism in Safavid Persia.⁹⁴

Qalandars and Libertinism

Shi'ite clerics during the Safavid period often denounced Sufis for their alleged 'libertinism' and for not following Islamic laws. This accusation was largely based on their distaste for the antinomianism of the wandering dervishes. Many wandering dervishes, known as *Qalandars*, had migrated to Persia from India; they were not known for following all Islamic laws and were therefore called antinomian dervishes (*darwīshān-i bī-shar'*). These dervishes were not initiated into any Sufi order and did not have any firm discipline based on following the traditions of an order.⁹⁵

Indian Qalandari culture was slightly different from what are known as the classical Qalandari beliefs and doctrines. During the 7th and 8th centuries of the hejira (13th and 14th centuries C.E.), there were numerous Qalandars in India. La'l Shabbāz Qalandar (d. 672/1274) and Abū 'Alī Qalandar (d. 722/1323)⁹⁶ were the most influential figures among them. La'l

Shahbāz adopted the lifestyle of the people of blame (*malāmatiyya*),⁹⁷ and resided in the taverns (*kharābāt*) becoming popular because of his miracles (*karāmāt*).⁹⁸

The *Malāmatiyya* (the Path of Blame) was a mystical movement which began in Nishābur in the 8th century, the point of which was to mortify one's passions by incurring public blame.⁹⁹ The movement began as a reaction to the increasingly artificial, hierarchical formalisation of Sufism and the hard-line views of certain shariah-minded Sufis, which did not mean, however, that they rejected either the letter or spirit of the shariah. Nonetheless, the *Malāmatī* movement became open to misinterpretation of its philosophy, such that after a while some Sufis used *Malāmatī* doctrine as an excuse for their libertinism and rejection of shariah.¹⁰⁰ This group of Sufis, who did not follow shariah and were not initiated in any Sufi order, were known as *darwīshān-i jalālī*¹⁰¹ or the *Jalālīyya*.¹⁰² Zarrīnkūb proposed that the *Jalālī* Sufis represented what remained of the Qalandari'ite culture, which involved wandering and begging.¹⁰³

The Qalandars criticised the relationship between the Sufi master and his disciple. The path of Sufis was generally considered to be separate from that of the Qalandars, as Sufis had their own codes of conduct and station, whereas Qalandars adopted a libertine path of life without any obligations. The *Qalandarī* movement soon became known for its decadence, and the name *qalandar* became a derogatory term in society, while preserving its positive value as a poetic topos.¹⁰⁴ The claim by the Qalandars and wandering dervishes to be the inheritors of the culture of Sufism provided the Safavids' Shi'ite clerics with a perfect excuse to accuse Sufis of libertinism and not following Islamic laws.

The Qizilbāsh and the Safavid Monarchs

The leaders of the Safavid movement came to power through the self-sacrifice of devout Safavid Sufis called Qizilbāsh.¹⁰⁵ During the Safavid era, the Qizilbāsh were committed disciples of the shāhs. As Ata Anzali observed, 'Qizilbash religiosity was marked by a mixture of shamanistic ideas, Sufi ideals, and a distinct messianic vision.'¹⁰⁶ They were extremist Sufis in the service of their master. They soon became an elite group of Safavid bureaucrats who wielded enormous influence on Persian social and political affairs.

After the initial period of the consolidation of exoteric Shi'ism, the Safavid kings soon perceived the Qizilbāsh as a threat to the state.¹⁰⁷ Their passion for political authority and their strongly authoritarian character made the

Safavid shāhs suspicious of their activity,¹⁰⁸ since the diehard Qizilbāsh had ultimate authority after the king. However, after the importation of Shi'ite scholars into Persia, the Shi'ite scholars became the second most important authority within the political and social systems of Persia, and successfully rivalled the Qizilbāsh. Shāh 'Abbās I (r. 1588-1629) in particular was suspicious of the Qizilbāsh and reduced their tribal and spiritual power in society.¹⁰⁹ He suppressed some of them and clearly demonstrated his dissociation with their extremist views,¹¹⁰ emphasising his reliance on Shi'ite clerics.

As Rasūl Ja'farīyān has noted, Shi'ite tradition allowed Shi'ites (especially Shi'ite scholars) to penetrate the royal court, the caliph's court or other ruling classes of society which were not part of Shi'ite society or did not follow Islamic laws.¹¹¹ Most Shi'ite scholars supported the Safavid kings, viewing them as their protectors although they had no religious legitimacy.¹¹² The last Safavid king, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn (r. 1105/1694-1135/1722), was the only ruler who was himself a seminary student, and as a result he put a lot of effort into supporting the hierarchy of Shi'ite clerics.¹¹³ As a ruler, Sulṭān Ḥusayn was opposed to Sufism. He insulted, humiliated and persecuted Sufis. Sufis who practised *dhikr* were executed and many Sufi masters were banished from their homes. One of the most active and fervent supporters of Sulṭān Ḥusayn was that great Shi'ite scholar and enemy of Sufism, Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1110/1700).¹¹⁴

As Mast 'Alī Shāh observed:

In every province and suburb they humiliate the people of spiritual knowledge (*ahl-i ma'rifat*) and the adepts in mystical states (*ahl-i ḥāl*). And in every land and in every place, they try to eliminate the people of certainty (*ahl-i yaqīn*) and possessors of sainthood (*ṣāhib wilāyat*). The worst part is that they think these obscene acts are good deeds and they dub their iniquity 'relieving religion of troublesome elements'.¹¹⁵

Mast 'Alī Shāh for this reason referred to Sulṭān Ḥusayn as an 'ignorant king' whose persecution of Sufis ended with the emigration of all Sufis from Persia and led to the fall of the Safavids.¹¹⁶

The School of Isfahan

Shāh 'Abbās I (r. 996-1038/1587-1629) moved the capital of the Safavid Empire from Qazwīn to Isfahan. Although Isfahan was an abandoned city after the Seljuk era (429-552/1037-1194), it flourished under the kingship of Shāh

‘Abbās. His domination of the Persian Gulf and his ability to consolidate the Persian Empire created a better opportunity for commerce and economy. Isfahan, being the capital city, became the centre of attention for Safavid kings. Numerous magnificent mosques, bazaars and monuments were built, and much effort was put into the improvement of Shi‘ite seminary schools. Isfahan became a centre for Shi‘ite seminaries and the religious sciences.¹¹⁷ All Shi‘ite sciences from jurisprudence to mystical philosophy flourished in Isfahan. Some of these philosophers taught the classical mystical philosophies of Ibn ‘Arabī and Suhrawardī, which were not part of practical Sufism.¹¹⁸

The School of Isfahan was an asylum for scholars of a Sufi temperament who wanted to be immune from clerical persecution. None of the philosophers following this school openly declared their affiliation to a Sufi order,¹¹⁹ although they had respect for Sufi ethics and beliefs.¹²⁰ These theosophers were careful to distinguish themselves in the eyes of the elite and the common people from the wandering dervishes. According to Leonard Lewisohn, “They [the highest adepts of the Iṣfahān School of theosophers] rigorously insist on distinguishing between the “vulgar” or “popular” (*awāmm*) generality of dervishes and the “high” and “elect” (*khāṣṣ*) Sufis.”¹²¹

Muḥammad Bāqir Astarābādī, known as Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/ 1632), was the earliest figure in the ‘School of Isfahan.’¹²² He was highly respected by Shah ‘Abbas and was connected to Sufism through the philosophy of illumination (*ḥikmat al-ishrāq*) initiated by the works of Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) and Ibn ‘Arabī’s philosophy,¹²³ although he was not affiliated to any Sufi order. Mullā Ṣadrā (d.1050/1640), the greatest philosopher in the School of Isfahan, was also influenced by Sufi philosophical ideas and his works were full of references to Sufi masters. *The Transcendent Philosophy of the Four Journeys of the Intellect (Al-ḥikmat al-muti‘āliya fi-l asfār al-‘aqliyya al-arba‘a)* is his masterpiece, in which work he used Sufi terms like ‘unity of being’ (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and ‘presential knowledge’ (*‘ilm-i ḥuḍūrī*).¹²⁴

Mullā Ṣadrā was highly influenced by Ibn ‘Arabī but opposed to the libertinism of Qalandar forms of Sufism. He wrote a book called *Kasr al-aṣnām al-jāhiliya fi kufr [dhamm] jamā‘at-i al-Ṣuffiyya [mutaṣawwifa]* (*Breaking the Idols of Ignorance through Refutation of Sufis*),¹²⁵ written in defence of mystical philosophies and in refutation of vulgarised forms of Sufism.¹²⁶ As Lewisohn maintains, “[The treatise] is one of the most important documents for the understanding of seventeenth-century Persian Sufism and the causes of the clerical persecution of Sufism during the period.”¹²⁷ In this treatise he condemns both pseudo-Sufism and the superficial observance of the religious laws.

In his ‘Treatise on Three Principles’ (*Risāla sih aṣl*), Mullā Ṣadrā condemns the jurists (*fuqahā*) and scholastic theologians (*mutakalimīn*) of his time and defends the ideals of true Sufism against both groups. Lewisohn points out that Mullā Ṣadrā introduced himself as *khādīm al-fuqarā* (servant of the poor—a common term for Sufis), which clearly shows his affiliation with Sufism. He also wrote about the necessity of having a master on the Sufi path.¹²⁸ One can conclude that he was an advocate of philosophical Sufism. As Lewisohn explains, ‘Mullā Ṣadrā, in this work [*Sih aṣl*] at least, is an advocate of specifically *Sufi* philosophical mysticism (*ḥikmat*), rather than some independent Shī‘ite philosophical mysticism divorced from the Sufi tradition.’¹²⁹

Another great figure in the history of mystical Safavid Shī‘ism was Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1090/1680), a disciple of Mullā Ṣadrā and his son-in-law, who had spiritual connections with Shaykh Bahā al-Dīn ‘Āmilī (d. 1030/1621).¹³⁰ ‘Āmilī, who was a seminary teacher, jurist, mystic (*ārif*) and master theosopher (*ḥakīm*),¹³¹ was a crucial figure for the connection of Sufism and Shī‘ism. There is no doubt that he was a Sufi while acting as Shaykh al-Islam of Isfahan where he was respected by all the different religious groups in Persian society.¹³²

Theosophers of the School of Isfahan accomplished their mission to a certain extent by keeping the mystical tradition and philosophy of Sufis alive in the seminary schools. Their influence is undeniable, given that Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, who was known to be a vehement enemy of Sufism, admired Mīr Dāmād.¹³³ Mīr Dāmād, Mullā Ṣadrā and Shaykh Bahā‘ī were generally respected by Shī‘ite clerics. They were among the very small number of people who were crucial for the survival of the mystical philosophy of Sufism during the Dark Ages of the Safavid dynasty.

Clerical Opposition to Sufism in Safavid Persia

From the very first generation of Shī‘ite clerics during the Safavid era, the animosity between ‘people of the Sufi path’ (*ahl-i ṭarīqat*) and ‘people of religious laws’ (*ahl-i sharī‘a*) became evident. Karakī, one of the first Shī‘ite scholars from Lebanon, as mentioned above, was extremely anti-Sufi and wrote a treatise in refutation of Sufis. The Shī‘ite clerics were politically and financially supported by the Safavid kings, and in return the Safavid kings were theologically and religiously legitimised by Shī‘ite scholars. Shaykh Ḥur ‘Āmilī (d. 1091/1680) was a well-known scholar of hadith (*muḥadith*), author of an encyclopaedia of Shī‘ite traditions called *Wasā’il al-Shī‘a*,¹³⁴ who wrote an anti-Sufi treatise called *Risālat al-Ithnā ‘asharīa fī al-radd ‘alā*

al-Şūfiyya (*The Treatise of the Twelver Shi'ites in Refutation of the Sufis*),¹³⁵ in which he referred to the Qur'ān, Shi'ite traditions and the narration of Shi'ite seminary scholars to demonstrate the heretical beliefs of the Sufis.¹³⁶

Mullā Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qumī (d. 1098/1686) was another figure among the major Shi'ite scholars opposed to Sufism and philosophy. He was contemporary to both Majlisī and known to be affiliated with the Akh-bārī school of Shi'ism. In a dispute recorded between Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī and Qumī, he vehemently refuted Sufism.¹³⁷ *Tuḥfat al-akhyār* by Qumī was among the most important Sufi refutations of Sufism written in this era.¹³⁸ His *Mūnis al-abrār* is a compilation of his poetry in praise of Imām 'Alī, in which the poet refutes Sufis. *Muḥibbān-i Khudā* is another treatise dedicated to Shāh Sulaymān in refutation of Sufism, and *Malādh al-akhyār* is yet another treatise written by him, in which disparaged the Sufis. He also wrote *al-Fawā'id al-dīniyya*, which contains a denunciation of Sufism and philosophy.¹³⁹

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ardabīlī, known as Muqaddas Ardibīlī, (d. 993/1585), was an influential Shi'ite scholar to whom a treatise called *Ḥadiqat al-Shi'a*, partially written in refutation of Sufism, is attributed.¹⁴⁰ In this treatise all Sufis are viewed as heretical Sunnis in opposition to the Shi'ite Imāms, with traditions and sayings going back to the Shi'ite Imāms showing that the Imāms were against Sufism. The author also criticised Ḥallāj, Bisṭāmī, Ibn 'Arabī and other great figures within the Sufi tradition.¹⁴¹ Some Sufis like Mast 'Alī Shāh (d. 1253/1837) maintained that this treatise was not written by Muqaddas Ardibīlī, citing in this respect Muḥammad Bāqir Khurāsānī's (d. 1090/1679) claim that *Ḥadiqat al-Shi'a* was written by Mu'iz al-Din Ardistanī (in the 16th-17th centuries).¹⁴²

However, the most serious blow to Sufism to be delivered by the Shi'ite ulama came from Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1110/ 1700), who was appointed the Shaykh al-Islam of Isfahan,¹⁴³ and who, as Rasūl Ja'fariyān observed, was crucial to the campaign of the Shi'ite seminarians against Sufis.¹⁴⁴ Majlisī was a bigoted, exclusivist Shi'ite who exhibited fanatical behaviour towards all Islamic sects other than his own, and was zealously concerned with gaining a monopoly over the religious system of Persia.¹⁴⁵ As Mangol Bayat has pointed out, Majlisī was one of the first Shi'ite clerics to lay down the doctrinal basis for the supremacy of Shi'ite clerics, allowing themselves to intervene in personal lives of people.¹⁴⁶

Although *Ayn al-Ḥayāt* is Majlisī's best-known and most detailed refutation of Sufism, he wrote numerous books on the subject, such as *I'tiqādāt*. He maintained that all Sufis were Sunnis. However, he did not deny that

there were Shi'ites who were ascetics like Shaykh Ṣaḫī al-Dīn Ardabīlī, Ibn Ṭāwwūs and Ibn Fahad Ḥillī, who belonged to the mystical tradition. Majlisī, however, claimed that they were not Sufis but merely held mystical beliefs.¹⁴⁷

Interestingly, Majlisī's father, Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, held strong Sufi beliefs. Muḥammad Taqī (d. 1070/1660), known as the 'First Majlisī' (*Majlisī-yi awwal*), was born in 1003/1594.¹⁴⁸ He was a pupil of Shaykh Bahā'ī. The senior Majlisī's solid reliance on sayings and traditions said to have come from the Prophet and the Shi'ite Imāms (*akhbār* or *aḥādīth*) led to the assumption that he was an Akhbārī jurist.¹⁴⁹ Based on the first Majlisī's writings and historical evidence, it seems more than likely that he belonged to a Sufi tradition.¹⁵⁰ Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh and Mast 'Alī Shāh suggested that the first Majlisī was initiated into Sufism by Shaykh Bahā'ī.¹⁵¹ His mystical beliefs led contemporary Shi'ite clerics to oppose him. Sayyid Muḥammad Mīr Luwḥī Sabziwārī Iṣfahānī (d. after 1000/1592 before 1083/1673) attacked the first Majlisī for defending Sufis.¹⁵² One of the staunch enemies of Sufism was Mullā Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qumī (d. 1100/1689), who had harsh disputes with the first Majlisī for writing so favourably about Sufi philosophy.¹⁵³ The first Majlisī's treatise entitled *Encouragement to the Wayfarers* (*Tashwīq al-sālikīn*) is strong evidence of his Sufism.¹⁵⁴

Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī's belief about the position of his father in respect to Sufism was highly inconsistent. In some of his writings he mentioned that his father was a Sufi but repented of his beliefs at the end of his life.¹⁵⁵ In other places he claimed that he was not a Sufi but socialised with them because he wanted to guide them to the path of truth.¹⁵⁶ The relationship between Majlisī Senior and the Sufis is undeniable, and it would seem that Majlisī Junior was looking for a way to justify his father's relationship with Sufis.

In his campaign against the Sufis, Majlisī Junior banned all Sufi gatherings and the uttering of the Sufi invocation *yā hū* (O He!), such that his disciples were known publicly to smash any pots in which the blowing of the wind could create the sound of *hū*. Majlisī's campaign succeeded in turning the public against Sufism, and nearly all the seminary scholars used to curse the Sufis during their sermons in the mosque. Sayyid Quṭb al-Dīn Tabrīzī wrote a letter to Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn stating that animosity towards Sufism was so dominant that the Shi'ite clerics damned the shāh's ancestors for being Sufis.¹⁵⁷ As a consequence of this poisonous atmosphere, the majority of the Sufi Orders emigrated to India or else went underground during the 17th century. The mystical path of Sufism continued to be represented among members of the School of Isfahan, who, however, did not publicly

declare themselves to be part of the Sufi tradition. Unfortunately, the teachings of this school were available only for the educated elite. Lastly, there were bands of wandering dervishes, whose approach to Sufi doctrine and practice was a world apart from that of the classical Sufi orders.

In conclusion, the Safavid era was one of severe decline for the entire Sufi tradition in Persia in terms of organisational development, practical teachings and mystical literature. Although nearly all religious minorities were suppressed, among them all the Sufis received the harshest treatment.

Sufism and Clerical Shi'ism during the Afsharids and the Zands

This decline in Sufism continued throughout most of the Afsharid (1148/1736-1163/1750) and Zand (1163/1750-1209/1794) periods. The chaotic nature of the period precludes any academically reliable historical account of the state of Sufism in Persia during this time, but it is clear that the majority of the Sufi orders had already emigrated out of Persia. There are very few accounts about the Sufi revival by Ma'şūm 'Alī Shāh at the end of Karīm Khān's reign (1163/1750-1193/1779). As Mast 'Alī Shāh put it, for about half a century Sufism had been dormant in Persia.¹⁵⁸ About this particular period Ma'şūm Shīrāzī maintained, 'For about seventy years, people were distant from any spiritual merit or station. People of knowledge were pushed to the periphery. After the arrival of Sayyid [Ma'şūm 'Alī Shāh], however, discussions about Sufism and the Divine Reality [*ṭarīqat wa ḥaqīqat*] reappeared among people.'¹⁵⁹ From the end of the Safavid period and into the Zand rule, seminary scholars and philosophers did not command respect among the ruling class and, as Ma'şūm Shīrāzī observed, 'The people of that era lived in ignorance and neglect.'¹⁶⁰

The Shi'ite clerics, despite their relative lack of authority, did not tolerate any other religious group and continued to persecute the Sufis.¹⁶¹ The scholars tried to maintain their prestige among the masses and cultivate their relationship with the royal court. As Mansur Sefatgol stated, 'The religious offices, which were a vital part of the state, survived and were operative even under Nādir Shāh. The Afsharid and Zand dynasties had their own state-religious administration, and they regularly appointed leading religious leaders to state religious offices, such as Şadr, Qādī or Mullābāshī.'¹⁶² These titles became formalised but the rulers, especially Nādir, did not have much respect for them, and they had little power or influence among the ruling classes.

The Afsharid Dynasty (1148-1163/1736-1796)

The mighty king of Persia and the founder of the Afsharid dynasty, Nādir Shāh (1100-1160/1688-1747), was born into a low social class in Khurāsān and was the eldest son of Riḍā Qulī Khān.¹⁶³ He was a talented man, and his brilliance as a general in battle was remarkable. Nādir's attitude towards religion was much more liberal than those of any of his predecessors or successors. He had studied the Jewish and Christian holy books¹⁶⁴ and was open to learning from other religions, accepting some aspects of other religions as divine revelation. He was interested in religious debates and gathered Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders together to debate different theological matters. He was not popular among the Shi'ite clerics, mainly because he supported reconciliation between Shi'ism and Sunnism and the idea of Shi'ism being taught within Sunni schools of laws. Nādir's views on Shi'i and Sunni disagreements were more liberal than those of other kings and rulers of that period,¹⁶⁵ although Nādir's attempt to reconcile the two sects was rebuffed by the Turks (Ottomans).¹⁶⁶

During certain periods, Nādir suppressed and reduced the power of Shi'ite seminary scholars and favoured Sunnis.¹⁶⁷ Although he built a golden dome and minarets for Imām 'Alī's shrine in Najaf, he did not favour the clerical hierarchy of Shi'ism.¹⁶⁸ Nādir seized the mosque revenues and abolished the position of high priest (*ṣadr al-ṣudūr*) in the country, while assigning him a very small pension just for maintaining the name.¹⁶⁹

Sufism was part of popular culture, but, as Malcolm said, 'The contempt of Nādir for the arts by which the dervishes, and other religious mendicants, imposed on the credulity of his countrymen, was shown on every occasion.'¹⁷⁰ Mast 'Alī Shāh in this regard commented, 'Since Nādir Shāh murdered some of the descendants of Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn and harmed a number of friends of God, the kingdom of Afsharids vanished quickly.'¹⁷¹ This judgement, whether true or not, is at least indicative of Nādir's poor relationship with the Sufis, and theirs with him.

Karīm Khān Zand

Karīm Khān Zand (1116-1193/1705-1779) was the ruler of Persia and founder of the Zand dynasty. He made great effort to establish a unified kingdom while fighting his rivals. For a short period he was able to create a stable and prosperous capital city, Shiraz, in South Western Persia. Malcolm said of Karīm Khān, 'It is pleasing to recount the actions of a chief, who, though

born in an inferior rank, obtained power without crime, and who exercised it with a moderation that, for the times in which he lived, was as singular as his humanity and justice.¹⁷² Karīm Khān, not of high birth, had no authority in Nādir's army, but was capable.¹⁷³ He was the chief of a small tribe, which was a branch of the Lak tribe. Although he was an ambitious man, goodness of heart, noble courage and a forgiving personality.¹⁷⁴

According to Amanat, 'By 1757 the rise of Karim Khan Zand in the south was the only positive outcome. His regency was the most benign and durable of any attempt since 1722 to revive a nominal Safavid rule and govern in the shadow of its memory.' He rewarded and gave encouragement to all industrious classes of his subjects. Persia's cities flourished under his rule but none more than Shiraz.¹⁷⁵ The prosperity and stability Karīm brought created an opportunity for different guilds, groups and religious minorities to flourish under his rule, which in turn allowed the Sufi missionaries to return to Persia for their revivalist movement.¹⁷⁶

During the Zand period, dervishes were viewed as mystics with supernatural powers, connected to Indian culture. Jānī, a Qalandar who was against Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh (the first master in the revivalist movement of the Ni'matullāhīs in Persia), was one of the wandering dervishes from India who lived, according to the historians of time, like other wandering Sufis. In this context, Rustam al-Ḥukamā' narrates stories about dervishes of that time who were 'perfect Sufis' and spiritual kings, mentioning a certain Darwīsh Bay-rākī who was 300 years old, and could talk to animals. He used to eat bread with tobacco juice and smoke as much opium as possible. He possessed only a horse, a parrot and a ragged garment, and no shoes or hat, which are all indicative of Dervish Bayrākī's metaphysical power. Rustam al-Ḥukamā' categorised him among the group of 'pure Muslims' (*Musalmān-i pāk*).¹⁷⁷

Following the migration of Ni'matullāhī masters to India in the Safavid period, the connection between Persian Ni'matullāhī disciples and masters became extremely limited due to the geographical distance between Persia and India. However, they were not totally disconnected and a few Ni'matullāhī disciples would still go to India for visitation with their masters. It was during this era that Riḍā 'Alī Shāh (d. 1214 A.H./1799 C.E.), the Pole (*quṭb*) of the Ni'matullāhī order, received complaints from his disciples who were scattered across Persia regarding their need to be under the direction of a master to reunite the order.¹⁷⁸

Shī'ite clerics did not have much influence in the royal courts of either the Afsharids or Zands, which made it possible for Ni'matullāhī masters directly to interact with their disciples in Persia.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, teachers were

sent off to Persia to guide the Ni‘matullāhī disciples and seekers of the path. As Abbas Amanat asserts, ‘Some of his [Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh] disciples were dispatched to Iran for the purpose of providing guidance to the remnants of the order.’¹⁸⁰ Hence, the revival movement of the Ni‘matullāhī order was formed by the spiritual guides sent by Riḍā ‘Alī to Persia.

Upon the Ni‘matullāhīs’ arrival in Persia, Karīm Khān established a good relationship with the Ni‘matullāhī masters. Shi‘ite clerics who did not want to lose their social authority were able, however, to spread slanderous accusations about Ni‘matullāhī masters. As a result, Karīm Khān became suspicious and intolerant of the order and banished Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh and his disciples from Shiraz.¹⁸¹

There are different accounts of Karīm Khān’s religious lifestyle. John Perry asserted that Karīm Khān revived traditional Shi‘ism, which was suppressed by Nādir Shāh.¹⁸² It is true to an extent that Karīm Khān did not suppress Shi‘ite clerics, but he did not favour them as had the Safavid kings. Malcolm said, ‘The mode which Kerreem Khan took to attain and preserve his power, was different from that pursued by any former monarchs of Persia. He made no effort to gain strength with the aide of religious or superstitious feelings.’¹⁸³ He did not accept many irrational traditions narrated by the seminary scholars. One of these traditions was about the Antichrist. Once, when he was accused by Shi‘ite seminary scholars of not accepting the sayings of the Shi‘ite Imāms, he replied, ‘The Imām never uttered irrational words, these [certain Shi‘ite traditions] are attributing irrationality to the Imāms.’¹⁸⁴ On the whole, although Karīm Khān was a religious person, he made use of his own innate powers of reasoning, and did not rely on the interpretations of Shi‘ite clerics *per se*; however, one cannot deny Shi‘ite clerics’ influence over all the classes of Persian society, including the king. However, in comparison to other kings, he was far less subject to their influence.

Malcolm notes how ‘[h]e built tombs over the remains of Sadi and Hafiz, which are deposited near Shiraz, and endowed these edifices with gardens and lands for the support of the dervishes, or holy men, appointed to watch over them.’¹⁸⁵ He was a powerful and strong ruler of Persia, who was always cautious lest he lose power among people and his rivals. While he never declared himself against Sufism or all Sufis, neither did he show much sympathy for Sufism.¹⁸⁶ If he felt that a certain group would challenge his authority, he would suppress it. Seeing that he was suspicious of Ni‘matullāhīs claiming political authority, he banished them. Karīm Khān did not support any seminary schools or Sufi lodges during his reign. It has been said that he believed that those religious classes—Shi‘ite clerics, seminary

students, wandering dervishes and sayyids collecting money for religious matters—were parasites on Persian society and refused them a pension.¹⁸⁷ Karīm Khān died in 1194/1780 at nearly 80 years old. He had been a ruler for 26 years, 20 of those without any rival to his rule. Following Karīm Khān’s death, there was a three-year period of civil war (1193-1195/1779-1782), which Zarrīnkūb has rightly called ‘the age of terror’ (*‘aṣr-i waḥshat*).¹⁸⁸

‘*Alī Murād Khān (r. 1195-1199/1781-1785)*

‘Alī Murād Khān Zand (d. 1200/ 1785) was the fifth Zand ruler, who spent most of his time suppressing revolts and his Zand and Qājār rivals. His approach to social, religious and philosophical minorities was not as tolerant as Karīm Khān’s. He was not a humane ruler and was intolerant of religious minorities, ordering the plundering of the Church of Julfā from which he took the gold for use in minting his own coins.¹⁸⁹

The historical narratives about his relationship with Ni‘matullāhīs indicate that it underwent different stages. ‘Alī Murād Khān supported the Ni‘matullāhīs at the beginning of his rule.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, since the wandering dervishes showed no respect for the Zand rulers, he eventually turned against all Sufis. ‘Alī Murād Khān’s reaction to the wandering dervishes affected all other Sufis.¹⁹¹ He ordered that the ears of Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh and Nūr ‘Alī Shāh should be cut off and banished them from Isfahan. (A detailed account of this incident is in the following chapter.) He died in the year 1199/1785.

It was at the end of the reign of the Zands and beginning of that of the Qājārs that Shi‘ite scholars became seriously alarmed about the Sufis, whom they viewed as a serious rival religious movement. The revival movement of Uṣūlī scholars took place in this era. Shi‘ite seminary schools were divided into two schools: Uṣūlīsm and Akhbārīsm. The roles of Akhbārī scholars were less authoritative. On the other hand, Uṣūlī scholars considered themselves to be deputies of the Imām with more of an authoritative role towards every aspect of the lives of the Shi‘ite community. The Uṣūlī scholars had faced a bitter loss of power after the Safavid era, and so fought intensely to regain their power and would not tolerate any rival theological or mystical schools. As Joanna De Groot pointed out, ‘By the end of the century [during Afsharid and Zand rule], twelver ulama were consolidating an orthodoxy that buttressed the arguments for the authority of *mujtaheds* with clearer opposition to rival tendencies.’¹⁹²

The Uṣūlī scholars during the Zand period had lost the financial support of the government and so had little authority among society’s govern-

ing class. As a result, the ulama entered the economic market. The chronic weakness of the state was a powerful incentive for the ulama to venture into trade, agriculture, moneylending and property speculation.¹⁹³ Even though Uṣūlī jurists such as Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī and other Shi‘ite clerics put a lot of effort into suppressing Sufism, specifically the Ni‘matullāhī order, during the end of the Zand and beginning of the Qājār period, Sufism flourished due to the revivalist movement led by the Ni‘matullāhī masters who migrated back from India to Persia.¹⁹⁴

The Jurist-Sufi Conflict in Qājār Iran: Āqā Muḥammad Khān (r. 1195-1211/1782-1798)

The founder of the Qājār dynasty, Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār (d. 1211/1797), was the most powerful enemy of Karīm Khān and chief of the Qājār tribe.¹⁹⁵ Following the reign of the Zands, Āqā Muḥammad Khān became king of Persia when the country faced disunity, conflict with neighbouring countries and civil war. For most of his life he had to negotiate with enemies and engage in wars with neighbouring countries.¹⁹⁶ He had had close contact and meetings with the Ni‘matullāhīs¹⁹⁷ during the time he had been imprisoned by Karīm Khān in Shiraz, and thus became sympathetic towards them. Mast ‘Alī Shāh stated that long before the reign of the Qājār dynasty, the Qājārs had had a good relationship with Sufis.¹⁹⁸

It was during these chaotic years that the Shi‘ite clerics had the opportunity to consolidate their power without reliance on the royal court. In the late 18th century, as the Qājārs wanted to control Persia, Shi‘ite Uṣūlī clerics waged their bloodiest movement against other Shi‘ite scholars whom they accused of holding heretical beliefs. The two major victims of this movement were their old enemies: the Akhbārī scholars and the Shi‘ite Sufis.¹⁹⁹

During the initial years of the formation of the Qājār dynasty, the Shi‘ite clerics of the Uṣūlī School consolidated their power and suppressed the rival school of Akhbārism. Waḥīd Bihbahānī, known as the reviver of the Uṣūlī School, was mainly responsible for the suppression. His son, Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī, continued his father’s career of intolerance and succeeded in suppressing the other movement rivalling Uṣūlism, that is to say, Sufism, and thus gained the title of ‘Sufi-killer’.²⁰⁰

These persecutions of Sufism forced Sufi masters to conceal their beliefs to safeguard themselves from complete annihilation by the Uṣūlī scholars. Despite this clerical hostility different parts of the Qājār state witnessed

a revival of Sufism. During the reign of Fath‘Alī Shāh (r. 1212-1250/1797-1834), the Uṣūlī Shi‘ite clerics who viewed Sufis as dangerous rivals to their authority became influential in the government. One such influential figure was the aforementioned scholar, Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī, who was the champion of the anti-Sufi movement.

These clerics were alarmed about the danger that Sufism posed to their authority. They also knew that some of the Qājār princes had sympathy for Sufis, and were aware that some Sufi masters such as Rawnaq ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1225/1810) did not hesitate to criticise them.²⁰¹ According to Rawnaq, the Uṣūlī scholars did not have any legitimate spiritual permission from the Imām to guide the masses, nor were they his deputies.²⁰² Shi‘ite clerics were more often than not victorious in these quarrels, which usually ended in the banishment, flogging or execution of the Sufis. Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh was thus, for example, executed by Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī, an episode that will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

Fath‘Alī Shāh, the second Qājār monarch, is known to have been a religious man, interested in following those exoteric Islamic laws which provided religious legitimacy for the Qājār dynasty. As Kamran Aghaie indicates, ‘Like the Safavids before them, the Qājārs used Shi‘ī religious symbols and rituals to promote their legitimacy.’²⁰³ These efforts by Fath‘Alī Shāh created a mutually beneficial relationship between the Shi‘ite clerics and the monarch. In fact, it is said that Fath‘Alī Shāh used to say that he was the deputy of Shi‘ite clerics. As Amir Arjomand observes, ‘Fath‘Alī Shāh showed his gratitude for the clerical support of the new dynasty with deference, stating “our rulership is on behalf (*bi-nīyābat*) of the *mujtahids* of the age”’.²⁰⁴

Many Shi‘ite scholars emphasised the religious role of the king, with some believing the monarch to be the deputy of the twelfth Imām. The ulama believed their seminary studies qualified them to be the best interpreters of the tradition of the Shi‘ite Imāms and gave them spiritual authority from the Hidden Imām as the living guides for society.²⁰⁵ In this capacity, they also collected religious taxes and alms as representatives of the Imām. Therefore, they became financially powerful and limited the role of the king.

Shi‘ite scholars successfully influenced Fath‘Alī Shāh and convinced him to embrace their animosity towards the Sufis. As Abbas Amanat declares, ‘Despite their great though ephemeral popularity, the Sufis were losing ground to the ulama, who under Fath‘Alī Shāh (1797-1834) enjoyed even greater support. Fath‘Alī Shāh’s attitude toward Sufis was one of reticence and suspicion, which no doubt contributed to the increasing hostility of the ulama and was reflected in their numerous anti-Sufi refutations.’²⁰⁶ Some

of these clerics, such as Āqa Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī and Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī, wrote poetry and treatises in refutation of Sufism. These scholars tried to maintain a friendly relationship with the Qājār king because they were concerned that the Sufis would penetrate into the Qājār court, thereby directly challenging their authority. This behaviour ended in the suppression of both Sufism and all other Shi‘ite schools of thought. They practised excommunication, as Joanna de Groot narrates:

One expression of professional identity was the expanded use of ‘orthodox’ *mujtaheds*’ exercise of *takfīr* — the act of declaring opponents *kāfir*/infidel or heretical. These powers were used against *Sufis* in Kirmān in the 1790s, Kirmānshah in the early 1800s, in Gilan in 1819-20 and Tehran in the reigns of Fath ‘Alī Shah (1797-1834) and the pro-*Sufi* Muḥammad Shah (1834-48). While this did not eliminate Sufi interests and beliefs, it sharpened ideas or boundaries of orthodoxy and the *‘ulamā’s* power to establish them.²⁰⁷

In this context, Mast ‘Alī Shāh quoted a wise man, without mentioning his name, who laconically opined that one can summarise Shi‘ite beliefs as the damnation of all other Muslims.²⁰⁸ Mast ‘Alī Shāh indicated that Uṣūlī scholars believed that all other followers of the Prophet Muḥammad besides themselves, meaning all the Islamic groups and Shi‘ite groups other than the Uṣūlī school of law, were debauchees (*fāsiq*) and infidels. They also believed that they were the only true heirs of the Prophet Muḥammad.²⁰⁹ As Mangol Bayat says:

The bitter Akhbari-Usuli controversy that dominated Twelver Shia circles in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries must be viewed as a reaction to the power acquired by the mujtahids. Some leading Sufi masters and theologians also strongly resented the mujtahids’ dominance of the Shia intellectual scene, and objected to the limitations imposed by the official Usuli determination of Shia doctrines. Some of them echoed the Akhbaris in charging the mujtahids with literalism and a narrow-minded interpretation of the holy text.²¹⁰

As will be discussed in detail, in certain cases Ni‘matullāhī masters echoed Akhbārī views on certain issues such as *taqlīd* (imitation) and challenged the authority of the *mujtahids*. Mast ‘Alī Shāh is among those Sufi masters who always complained about exclusivist Uṣūlī views.

Mast 'Alī Shāh remarked about the Uṣūlī clerics of his time, 'The majority of the scholars in that city [Karbalā] are Uṣūlī and people imitate them. All of them are enemies of Sufis and Akhbārī Shi'ites. They follow the path of taunting and damnation toward these two groups or any other Muslim group. [Their enmity is to the extent] that they would annihilate anyone who belongs to one of these two groups in Karbalā.'²¹¹ Even a conservative seminary scholar and Sufi like Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh (d. 1234/1818) was not protected from persecution.²¹² As mentioned earlier, the Uṣūlī scholars were intolerant towards any Shi'ite scholars who had mystical tendencies. Mullā 'Abd al-Ṣamad Hamadānī is among those few seminary scholars who became disciples of the Ni'matullāhī masters. However, he was persecuted by the other seminary scholars after his initiation into the Ni'matullāhī order.²¹³

Most of the wandering dervishes and *Khāksār* Sufis (known as Jalālis) during the Qājār era traced themselves back to Ghulām 'Alī Shāh Hindi (Indian), for whom there exists no biography or dates. It is clear that he was of Indian origin and inheritor of the Indian Qalandari culture.²¹⁴ Shi'ite Sufis like Mast 'Alī Shāh vituperated the antinomian behaviour of Qalandars in an effort to clarify their own respect for and belief in Islamic laws.²¹⁵ The masters of the organised Sufi orders were well aware of the accusation of jurists about the libertinism of all Sufis.

Ghuluww (religious excess and exaggeration) about the Shi'ite Imāms was another accusation made by Shi'ite scholars to refute those Sufis who were Shi'ites. However, masters like Mast 'Alī Shāh responded by claiming that extremism had always been a part of Uṣūlī Shi'ism and not Sufism.²¹⁶ However, Uṣūlī clerics deliberately made generalisations that all Sufis practised *Ghuluww* and condemned them as heretics.

As mentioned above, Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī (118-1205/1706-1790) is recognised as the founder of the modern Uṣūlī school, and his views led to its triumph²¹⁷ and the imposition of absolute religious authority on society.²¹⁸ Bihbahānī and his disciples developed the Uṣūlī school into a methodological theory for the emerging body of the mujtahids trained in the 'Atabāt (the holy cities of Najaf and Karbalā in Iraq) madrasas. His efforts resulted in consolidation of the power of *ijtihād*, which became restricted to them alone, the so-called mujtahids.²¹⁹ Besides the theological disputes between Uṣūlīs and Akhbārīs, Bihbahānī often resorted to physical violence to enforce his views.²²⁰

Bihbahānī had his own executioners (*mīr ghazab*) to persecute his rival Akhbārī scholars and later on his son, Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī, followed a similar path in relation to the Sufis.²²¹ The final blow to the Akhbārī School was

accomplished at the end of the 18th century at the hands of Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī and his son, Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī, known as the ‘Sufi-killer’.

Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī (the eldest son of Baqir Bihbahānī)²²² became a well-known scholar, largely due to his zealous campaign against Sufism. In a brief fatwa issued on the question of the Ni‘matullāhīs’ activities he declared, ‘Beyond any doubt, the deviation of this damned group from the path of rightfulness and true guidance, and their efforts to provoke discontent and to corrupt people of the cities, have become obvious and apparent.’²²³ Bihbahānī bluntly declared, ‘The responsibility [for] such acts [punishment of the Sufis] falls only within the jurisdiction of the *‘ulamā’* and the executioners of the holy law.’²²⁴ The powerful minister, Hājji Ibrāhīm Khān I‘timād al-Dawla (d. 1216/ 1801), arrested two Ni‘matullāhīs and sent them to Kirmānshāh, stating, ‘We send them . . . to be delivered over to you [Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī], whom we consider as wisest, the most learned, the most virtuous of all the *oulāmāhs* [‘ulama] of our kingdom. Put them to death, confine them, or punish them in the way you deem most proper and most consonant to the decrees of the holy religion.’²²⁵ Mast ‘Alī Shāh remarked that the enmity of Ibrāhīm Khān, ruler of Kirmān, and other rulers towards Sufis was due to their overwhelming ignorance (*jahl-i murakkab*) and prejudice (*ta‘āṣsub*). The governor of Kirmānshāh, Muṣṭafā Qulī Khān Zanginih, thus supported Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī in the execution of Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh.²²⁶

Mast ‘Alī Shāh maintained that Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī was second only to Mullā ‘Abd Allāh Kirmānī for murdering Sufi masters during this period,²²⁷ although the former was more active in propagating the execution of Sufis in Persia. In certain cases, he used his powerful connections to capture Sufi masters such as Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh and Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1215/1800).²²⁸ From his letters to the Qājār rulers such as Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh, it is clear that he had a good relationship with the ruling class of Persia.²²⁹

The two-volume treatise written by Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī in 1796 and entitled *Risāla-yi Khayrātīyya* constituted the harshest refutation of Sufism penned during this era and is still quoted by bigoted anti-Sufi Shi‘ite mullahs in modern-day Iran.²³⁰ Mast ‘Alī Shāh complained that the Shi‘ite scholars did not see any problem with accusing other Muslims, even if their accusations were not true, justifying their bigotry by a tradition from Imām Naqī to the effect that Shi‘ites are supposedly permitted to slander Sufis. Bihbahānī in his *Khayrātīyya* everywhere resorts to this technique of pious blanket slander of his Sufi opponents.²³¹

Bihbahānī was apprehensive about the popularity of Nūr 'Alī Shāh, Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh, Muẓaffar 'Alī Shāh and Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh, calling them 'the beasts of the path' or 'the wolves attacking the lambs of Islam,' in particular fiercely criticising Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh for his 'corrupt' beliefs.²³² He accused them all of 'misguiding' the public and of 'undermining the rules of the applied *sharī'a*'. He also condemned Sufis for being tolerant towards other religions.²³³ In a couple of places in his treatise, Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī calls Ma'sūm a *Chūkī* (yogi), connecting Ma'sūm to 'heretical' Hindus and Indian Sufis.²³⁴

He sent letters to Shi'ite scholars and governors warning them about the dangers of the Sufi movement in Persia. He did not mind at all using force to physically suppress the Sufis. He described in detail his own view about the formation of Sufism as being an innovation in religion,²³⁵ and referred to the traditions of the Shi'ite Imāms in the refutation of Sufis and Sufism.²³⁶ He tried to demonstrate that Sufi masters were careless about observing Islamic laws (*sharī'a*)²³⁷ and permitted what should have been prohibited by Divine Law.²³⁸ His treatise has two main chapters: one on the erroneous beliefs of Sufis and the other on the infidelity of Sufis.²³⁹ The subtitles in reference to Sufi masters give an indication of the sort of poisonous jargon and vituperative tone of the work: '[c]iting some of the nonsensical beliefs of Sufis such as Ibn 'Arabī and others.'²⁴⁰ The greater part of this book is dedicated to biographies and explanations of Sufi masters' lives, but the tone of the work reflects the author's conceited bigotry and intolerance. Being pervaded by foul language and insults towards Sufi masters and Sufism in general, any dignity which he may have had as a scholar is lost, so that his work sinks to the basest level of personal polemic. Despite Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī's knowledge of poetry, his poems against Sufism are trite and superficial. His son, Āqā Muḥammad Ja'far Āl-i Āqā (d. 1259/ 1843), followed his father's path by writing a book in refutation of Sufism, which is almost a complete copy of his father's treatise.²⁴¹

Another well-known opponent of the Sufis was Mullā 'Abd Allāh Kirmānī, who lived through the end of the Zand and beginning of the Qājār eras and was an influential cleric among the people of Kirmān. Although there are no accounts of his life in the well-known biographical books of Shi'ite scholars such as *Qiṣaṣ al-'ulamā'*, Mast 'Alī Shāh states that he was the first seminary scholar who dared to order the murder of Sufi masters in Persia.²⁴² Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh even predicted that he would be killed by Mullā 'Abd Allāh Kirmānī, who in fact issued the death sentence on Mushtāq in 1206/1792.²⁴³

Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim Jāpulqī, known as Mīrzāy-i Qumī²⁴⁴ (d. 1231/1816), also wrote a treatise in refutation of Sufism. He was a contemporary of Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh, and accordingly there will be a detailed explanation of this treatise in the chapter on Majdhūb. From the correspondence between Qumī and Fath ‘Alī Shāh it is clear that they had a friendly relationship. Royal princes and courtiers had a lot of respect for Qumī.²⁴⁵ Qumī was always anxious to prevent the penetration of Sufis into the king’s court.²⁴⁶ He maintained that the path of Sufism did not conform to the divine law of Shi‘ism.²⁴⁷

Conclusion

The animosity of Shi‘ite scholars in general and Uṣūlī clerics in particular towards Sufism during the 18th and 19th centuries has been a prominent feature in the social and religious history of early Persia over the past 300 years. There were apogee points of the persecution of Sufism during this period. After the formalisation of the Shi‘ite seminary sciences at the end of the Safavid era, the inquisition of Sufism led by Shi‘ite scholars was championed by Majlisī Junior in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. His polemics succeeded in causing the emigration of all the Sufi orders from Persia. During the Afshār and Zand eras, the power of the Shi‘ite clerics waned, and Persia experienced political instability, providing an opportunity for Sufi masters to revive their spiritual doctrines and practices in the main towns of Persia.

However, at the end of the Zand dynasty and at the beginning of the reign of the Qājārs, Uṣūlī scholars consolidated their power and started to persecute the Sufis again. The champion of this second inquisition of Sufism was Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī. Sufis were the indirect victims of the libertinism of the Qalandars and wandering dervishes, whose lack of observance of Islamic laws was used by the Shi‘ite scholars as a reason to refute all Sufis. They were also direct victims of their main rivals, the formalist Uṣūlī Shi‘ite clerics, who were extremely zealous in maintaining their social and religious authority over the populace at all costs. As a result, it became customary for most Persians to be against Sufism. Rejection of Sufism was no longer just a religious act but became a prestigious and fashionable intellectual position for elites and men of learning to hold, a position which is still largely maintained by intellectuals in contemporary Iranian society today.²⁴⁸

The seminary scholars were thus largely successful in their campaign to marginalise Sufis and Sufi masters from the greater society of Persia.²⁴⁹ Mast ‘Alī Shāh confessed that the majority of the Persian people were against Sufism due to the power of the Uṣūlī clerics over the masses.²⁵⁰ In his chapter about Isfahan, Mast ‘Alī Shāh stated that although many Sufi masters came from that city, during his own time the majority of the people were against Sufis. He commented as well that:

The general tradition of Persians is that whoever talks about self-mortification, spiritual striving, improvement of morals, and disciplining the carnal soul or follows the path of perfection of the soul, actualization of the spiritual path, purification of the heart, and refinement of the soul, and whoever mentions the term ‘Sufi Path’ (*ṭarīqat*), or ‘Divine Reality’ (*ḥaqīqat*), or the tradition of gnosis, or follows the path of asceticism, piety, submission, acceptance, poverty, and annihilation is to be declared an infidel and heretic without any proof or evidence.²⁵¹

It is undeniable that the clique of anti-Sufi mujtahids delivered a strong blow to both the survival and the revival of the Sufi orders in Persia, especially to the Ni‘matullāhī order during the Zand and Qājār periods. But unlike in the Safavid era, the Ni‘matullāhīs did not emigrate from Persia during the Qājār period, but rather made superficial changes in their appearance and practices in order to adapt to the oppressive anti-mystical milieu that surrounded them. After Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh passed away, many of the later Ni‘matullāhī masters adopted the wearing of the garments of Shi‘ite scholars and decreased their emphasis on Sufi practices that might draw public attention to them. As an example, silent *dhikr* replaced the practice of loud *dhikr* sessions. This tactic of dissimulation made them less vulnerable to persecution by Shi‘ite scholars who opposed them.²⁵²

The Ni‘matullāhī Order from Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh to Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh

Introduction

After a period of social turmoil in Persia under the Safavids during the 16th and 17th centuries, and the ensuing religious inquisition against Sufis, Sufism was almost completely suppressed; only a few Nūrbakhshī masters in Mashhad and Dhahabīs in Shiraz remained. In the 16th century the Ni‘matullāhī masters of Persia had immigrated to the Deccan plateau in India. As Amanat states, ‘By the end of the seventeenth century the Ni‘matullāhīs, Nuqṭavīs, Ḥurūfīs, and Sufi ghulāt had been systemically persecuted and removed from the political scene.’¹ As a result, and as noted above, there was an intermission in Sufi activity in Persia that lasted until the Zand era.² As Mast ‘Alī Shāh stated, ‘From the middle of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn’s era to the end of Karīm Khān’s, the tradition of Sufism was abolished in Iran.’³ He continued, ‘For approximately sixty years, Iran was devoid of Sufi doctrines and the subtleties of certitude and no one’s ear heard the name of the spiritual path (*ṭarīqat*) and no one’s eye saw a person of the spiritual path (*ahl-i ṭarīqat*).’⁴

The religious system of society during the Zand and Qājār periods was inherited from the Safavids and was based exclusively on the exoteric aspects of religion. This belief system gave all power to Shi‘ite Uṣūlī scholars. For this reason, only conservative Sufi orders that simultaneously addressed both the exoteric religious and the esoteric spiritual needs of the people could play any open role in Persian society. The Ni‘matullāhīs and Dhahabīs were the two major Sufi orders involved in the intellectual and spiritual revival of Sufism during this period. The instability of the political leadership also opened up the opportunity for charismatic Sufi masters to enter Persia and propagate their beliefs. As Foltz observes, ‘With the weakening and instability of government, however, came a resurgence of

charismatic leadership from among the Sufi brotherhoods, particularly the Ni‘matollahis and the Nurbakhshis whose esoteric teachings held sway over a large number of the general population.⁵

All the three main Sufi orders (Ni‘matullāhī, Dhahabī and Nūrbakhshī) already had their followers scattered around Persia, and indeed Sufism, contrary to Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s assertion above, had not been completely eradicated. However, the Sufis had remained dormant underground until the advent of the revival movement. Amanat points out that ‘[t]he most outstanding example of this revival can be seen in the activities of the Ni‘matullāhī emissaries, who by the second half of the eighteenth century had attracted a large audience in the southern and central provinces.’⁶ One of the most crucial acts in the Ni‘matullāhīs’ revival movement was the centralisation of the leadership around a few of the charismatic Ni‘matullāhī masters. Of necessity, these charismatic leaders were aware of the persecution of Sufis by their clerical foes.

Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1214/1799) was the last known master of the Ni‘matullāhī order in India. Some of the hagiographers of the order believe that he was of Persian descent, but his ancestors had lived long enough in India to be called Deccani.⁷ He had not attended any religious seminary schools. He was an ardent Shī‘ite and had good relationships with both Muslims and non-Muslims.⁸ Living in Indian society during a relatively calm period made him more tolerant towards other religious groups. He felt the need to dispatch some of his disciples to Persia to provide guidance to the remnants of the Ni‘matullāhī order there,⁹ especially after he received complaints from those who sought guidance on the Sufi path but could not find any Ni‘matullāhī masters. It has been said that, once in Persia, a sayyid kept seeking to enter the Ni‘matullāhī path but, after searching far and wide, could not find a master and therefore went to the Deccan. In the Deccan, he complained to Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh which resulted in him deciding to send a deputy to Iran.¹⁰ It was in 1184/1770 that Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh Deccanī appointed Mīr ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd with the spiritual title of Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh to propagate the spiritual teachings of the Ni‘matullāhī order in Persia.¹¹ Mast ‘Alī Shāh claims that Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh was the main reason the people of Persia heard about Sufism and were able to meet people of the spiritual path.¹² To a certain extent this statement is accurate, yet Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh himself played the main role in the return to Persia of the Ni‘matullāhī order, which soon became one of the most important Sufi orders there. Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh (Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh’s spiritual deputy) played the crucial role in the revival of the order and trained all the influential masters on whom the continuance of

this movement heavily relied. Numerous scholars and poets belonging to the Ni‘matullāhī order were originally initiated under his guidance.¹³

The Ni‘matullāhī Persian Sufi Order and Ma‘şūm ‘Alī Shāh

Ma‘şūm ‘Alī Shāh was born in Ḥaydarābād (modern-day Hyderabad) in the Deccan.¹⁴ Īzadgushasb’s *Shams al-tawārīkh* is one of the few texts in which Ma‘şūm’s birth date is mentioned, and in it the author gives it as being the year 1147/1734.¹⁵ Ma‘şūm ‘Alī Shāh had come from a noble Muslim family who were sayyids.¹⁶ Mast ‘Alī Shāh said, ‘He was from a family of wealth and honorable lineage.’¹⁷ It is narrated that he rode a horse, moving through the streets like a prince, and 80 people used to accompany him holding gold and silver staves, as was the tradition in wealthy Indian families.¹⁸ Despite all this wealth, he was not satisfied and his inner desire for spiritual truth led him to seek a spiritual guide. Eventually, he met Riḏā ‘Alī Shāh and became his disciple. A day after his initiation he gave up all his wealth to the poor and needy.¹⁹ The account of Ma‘şūm’s admission to the *khānaqāh* of Riḏā ‘Alī Shāh gives a good picture of the dominant culture of asceticism among the Ni‘matullāhīs. Ma‘şūm, being among those Sufīs who reached the highest state of spirituality in the order, is a guiding model for other wayfarers on this path, as is narrated in *Janāt al-Wiṣāl* (a compendium written by Nūr ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1212/1797) and completed by two other Ni‘matullāhī masters):

He said to himself, ‘The king has told me
 If you want admission you must come alone;
 Truly, I am accompanied by much worldly wealth-
 How can I be alone with all these possessions?...
 So all that our hero owned
 He gave away amongst his friends
 And of all his wealth kept not even enough
 To carry a gift to his sovereign lord...
 Along the road, on his way to the khānaqāh,
 He found some camel dung,²⁰
 And, having nothing else, took it with him
 As an offering to that incomparable one.²¹

Under Riḏā ‘Alī Shāh’s guidance, Ma‘şūm became qualified to be a spiritual guide (*murshid*), resulting in Riḏā ‘Alī Shāh bestowing the Sufi cloak

(*khirqa*) on him, qualifying him to tread the Sufi Path and initiate others into its mysteries.²² Riḍā 'Alī Shāh then appointed Ma'ṣūm to go to Persia and guide the seekers of spiritual truth on to the path of Imām Riḍā.²³

During Ma'ṣūm's life in Persia the masters of the Ni'matullāhī order adopted the life of wandering Qalandars. They wandered around and did not have any profession or work. As Pourjavady mentioned, they were supported by the endowments of their wealthy disciples. They did not deny the fact that they had no income or jobs. As Riḍā 'Alī Harātī (d. 1211/1796), one of Ma'ṣūm's disciples, said:

My idleness is busyness and all my business is idle;
I have no job — I am unemployed — and I dance.²⁴

The path of Sufism as propagated by Ma'ṣūm was an ecstatic path oriented towards intoxication (*sukr*) rather than Sufism of the school of sobriety (*ṣaḥw*). Ma'ṣūm and his disciples conducted themselves with enthusiasm and fervour.²⁵

Mast 'Alī Shāh says that around the year 1190/1776, Ma'ṣūm and his wife went to Shiraz via the sea route,²⁶ although 'Abd al-Rafī' Ḥaḳīqat relates that a different route by way of Afghanistan was taken for Ma'ṣūm's entrance to Persia. From Afghanistan he went to Mashhad in Khurāsān, and from there he went to the holy shrines of the Shi'ite Imāms in Iraq. Finally, he went to Shiraz where he took up his Sufi teaching work.²⁷

Shiraz and Karīm Khān Zand

Shiraz, which was ruled by Karīm Khān (r. 1164-1193/1751-1779), was known to be more socially and politically stable than many other areas of Persia. Karīm Khān was able to improve the trade routes, as a result of which communication with other trading cities became easier. This brought relative prosperity to Shiraz. Therefore, lots of wandering Indian dervishes started to migrate to the prosperous cities of Persia.²⁸ Some scholars believe that Karīm Khān's system of governing people was based on a tribal and fatherly manner.²⁹ He was not particularly religious and was known for his tolerance and forbearance. Malcolm indicated that during Karīm Khān's reign Ma'ṣūm arrived in Shiraz, where he soon gained fame by having more than 30,000 followers.³⁰ Most probably Malcolm overestimated the number of initiates, though the figure does represent the popularity of Ma'ṣūm among the people of Shiraz.³¹ Abbas Amanat believes that Ma'ṣūm gathered round him a small number of disci-

ples who were very active in propagating Ni'matullāhī beliefs.³² Ma'şūm's charisma attracted a growing number of disciples in Shiraz, among whom were Mullā 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Ṭabasī Fayḍ 'Alī Shāh (d. 1200/1786),³³ his son Mullā Muḥammad 'Alī Nūr 'Alī Shāh (d. 1212/1797),³⁴ and Mullā Mahdī Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh (d. 1206/1792) who were initiated into the order during this period.³⁵

Nūr 'Alī Shāh's description of his first encounter with Ma'şūm 'Alī Shāh is a good depiction of the Sufi path of love. Whether or not it is a true story, it represents the beliefs and the mentality of the Ni'matullāhī masters during that era. While Nūr 'Alī Shāh was wandering around the city of Shiraz, he met a sayyid (Ma'şūm) at whom children were throwing stones at the instigation of some Shi'ite scholars. In response, Ma'şūm 'Alī Shāh did not lament, but sang a poem:

Children's stones have turned
My head into a tulip bed
Ah, it's springtime
And madness reblossoms.³⁶

He viewed this attack in a poetic manner. The stones were viewed as rain, which is a blessing that ends in the blossoming of flowers, and so he did not exhibit any protest.

The majority of Persians viewed Sufis as libertine dervishes who smoked hashish and did not bother seriously to follow shariah. For instance, Rustam al-Ḥukamā', a well-known historian of the time, talked about Dervish Bayraki (*Darwīsh Bayrākī*) and mentioned that dervishes smoked opium and received offerings from people.³⁷ On some occasions dervishes were very arrogant regarding warning the rulers and kings and were known to take the side of the people in their opposition to the king. A good example is the account of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī (1134-1186/1722-1773) who lived during the era of Nādir Shāh's and ruled Afghanistan. Once when he decided to attack Khurāsān, a dervish came to him and started to insult the king in order to dissuade him since his decision would end in the massacre of people.³⁸

Another challenge to the state was the quasi-Mahdist beliefs of the Sufis and their masters.³⁹ These beliefs of certain masters had a very strong influence and authority over their disciples. The ultimate spiritual authority of a master could sometimes present a challenge to the authority of a sovereign. As a result, they were not always favoured by the kings.

The ethical uprightness, courtesy, friendliness and humility of the Sufis towards the common people greatly facilitated their public fame. Ma'şūm

became popular among the masses and Ni'matullāhī doctrines, which were steeped in the Shi'ite spiritual tradition, became popular, while emphasizing spiritual matters of religion. They focused on the interior contemplative disciplines of Sufism but, unlike Qalandars, they did not reject the exoteric rituals and laws of Islam. Consequently, the Sufis came to represent a middle path between the extremes of antinomian libertinism and philistine religious formalism. It has been said that once one of Shāh Ni'matullāh's disciples asked him whether an authority was needed for his disciples to administer their following of exoteric Islamic laws (*sharī'a*). Shāh Ni'matullāh replied, 'The Ni'matullāhī libertines (*rindān-i Ni'matullāhī*) do not need a magistrate (*dārūgha*).'⁴⁰ In another incident, a person taunted Shāh Ni'matullāh, stating that those who committed sins were not worthy of being his disciples. Ni'matullāh replied, 'How can they be worthy enough to be a slave of God and the people of the Prophet Muḥammad, but not a disciple of poor Ni'matullāh?'⁴¹ Basically, the spiritual doctrines of the Ni'matullāhī order were based on a moderate way of following the exoteric aspects of Islam while focusing on the esoteric aspects, which made this order quite popular, being suitable for the modest needs of the common people.

This popularity led to the jealousy and opposition of Shi'ite Uṣūlī scholars, who were always looking to undermine the position of the Sufis.⁴² These clerics were cognizant of the fact that Karīm Khān was suspicious of any quasi-Mahdist beliefs and that he had his own peculiar understanding of the anti-Christ (*dajjāl*). Karīm Khān had stated that he did not believe in the traditions (*akhbār*) about the anti-Christ narrated by the ulama but had his own belief that the anti-Christ would be a person who claimed to be the divine manifestation and would be accompanied by many magicians and hashish smokers.⁴³ Basing themselves on the vulgar social parody of Sufis as all being hashish-smoking wandering vagabonds, it proved easy to manipulate Karīm Khān's mind and persuade him that Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh and his disciples really espoused corrupt, deviant and dangerous beliefs that were a serious threat to the religious standards of Persian society. Besides the Sufis' 'heretical' beliefs, the clerics added that they also claimed kingship by adding the title of shāh to their spiritual titles, which was also a threat to Karīm Khān.⁴⁴ These insinuations offended Karīm Khān enough to cause his relationship with the Ni'matullāhīs to deteriorate⁴⁵ and ultimately caused him to banish Ma'sūm and his disciples from Shiraz.⁴⁶

The fact that previously dispersed and fragmented Sufis were now cohesively reuniting and effectively reconstituting their orders after several centuries of exile and suppression (the foremost example of which was the

Ni‘matullāhī revival movement) came to be viewed as a real threat to both the Shi‘ite clerical establishment and the state. As mentioned earlier, Sufi orders were scarce in Persia and only a few Sufi masters had been living in Mashhad and Shiraz. However, the population of wandering dervishes was considerable, and their revival and unification under the banner of the Ni‘matullāhī order presented a real challenge to the state and also to the authority of the ulama.

Mast ‘Alī Shāh believed that it was not Shi‘ite scholars who persuaded Karīm Khān to banish Ma‘šūm, but Jānī Hindūzādih, to whom Ma‘šūm refused to teach the knowledge of alchemy.⁴⁷ Jānī is known to have been a Sufi: a wandering dervish with strong ties to Khān’s court. A number of hagiographical biographies of Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh state that six months after this banishment Karīm Khān died, suggesting that this was divine punishment for his persecution of the mystics.⁴⁸

Isfahan and ‘Alī Murād Khān

Due to Karīm Khān’s decision, Ma‘šūm relocated to Isfahan where Fayḏ ‘Alī Shāh became one of his most important disciples. Fayḏ was appointed the spiritual guide of seekers.⁴⁹ At the time ‘Alī Murād Khān was the ruler of Isfahan. He favoured Sufis and built a tekke⁵⁰ for the Ni‘matullāhīs called *takīyya-i Fayḏ*, named after Fayḏ ‘Alī Shāh. Nūr ‘Alī Shāh succeeded his father (Fayḏ ‘Alī Shāh) after his death, and became famous among the



Shrine of Fayḏ ‘Alī Shāh in Takht fūlād of Isfahan. (Photo by Ḥasan Roholamīn)

people of his time.⁵¹ The number of Ma'ṣūm's disciples had increased in Isfahan, a fact which in turn increased the suspicion of the Shi'ite scholars and they consequently warned 'Alī Murād Khān that the heretical beliefs of Sufis could bring about the end of his reign.⁵² Another account indicates that while 'Alī Murād Khān escaped Isfahan because of the Qājār threats to capture the city, some of the wandering dervishes (*darwīshān-i kuchih gard-i jalāli*) blew their trumpets, which was indicative of their rejoicing at his troubles.⁵³ This event of rejoicing led to Alī Murād Khān harbouring feelings of hatred towards the Ni'matullāhīs.⁵⁴ Javād Nūrbakhsh states that 'Alī Murād Khān felt offended by Fayḍ's behaviour, which led to his hatred of Sufis.⁵⁵ Abbas Amanat's view is that the Ni'matullāhīs had a secret relationship with Āqā Muḥammad Qājār, and when 'Alī Murād Khān left the city he found out about this relationship and subsequently banished them from the city.⁵⁶

Eventually, as Aḥmad Dīwānbaygī notes, the Shi'ite scholars of Isfahan motivated Rustam Khān ('Alī Murād Khān's commander) to plunder and demolish the Fayḍ tekke and banish Sufis from there. Rustam Khān and Aṣḻān Khān ('Alī Murād Khān's second-in-command for this mission) were sent to cut off the ears of Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh in Mūrchiḥ Khurt near Isfahan as they fled the city. They also shaved the beards off these Sufi masters, which was a great insult and meant to deprive them of any spiritual legitimacy in the eyes of the populace.⁵⁷

Tehran, Kirmān, Mashhad and Hirāt

Some scholars state that Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār either had previously met Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh or was familiar with the basic tenets of the Sufi doctrine from the time of his incarceration in Shiraz.⁵⁸ Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh travelled to Tehran where Āqā Muḥammad Khān welcomed them and paid their travelling expenses to Mashhad.⁵⁹ According to Malcolm, Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh fled to Kirmān, where a Shi'ite scholar issued religious verdicts against them. Thus, Ma'ṣūm was forced to flee to Mashhad, but was refused admission.⁶⁰ Other traditions, though, indicate that they arrived in Mashhad but were expelled after a short time.⁶¹ Mast 'Alī Shāh also stated that Ma'ṣūm headed directly for Mashhad after his banishment from Isfahan. There, he was able to visit the shrine of the eighth Imām of the Shi'ites. From Mashhad he dismissed Nūr 'Alī Shāh, Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh, Rawnaq 'Alī Shāh, and Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh and commanded them to return to their cities or anywhere else they were appointed to.⁶²

After leaving Mashhad, his next destination was Hirāt. There are two accounts of Ma'ṣūm's journey after entering Hirāt. Malcolm said that Ma'ṣūm went to Hirāt, desiring to go to Kabul and then India; however, the King of the Afghans compelled him to return to Persia.⁶³ Another source suggests that Ma'ṣūm had a dream about Riḍā 'Alī Shāh and, because at the time Ma'ṣūm 'Alī was so close to the city of his master, Riḍā 'Alī Shāh proposed that Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh should return to Persia, perhaps knowing that he was destined to martyr there.⁶⁴

Najaf, Karbalā and Kirmānshāh

During Ma'ṣūm's time, the Shi'ite holy cities of Najaf and Karbalā were places of refuge for Sufis. On his return from Afghanistan, Ma'ṣūm first stayed in Najaf briefly and then headed for Karbalā, where he was reunited with Nūr 'Alī Shāh, staying there for the next five years.⁶⁵ It was during this period that Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh initiated the following persons to the brotherhood: Mullā 'Abd al-Ṣamad Hamadānī (d. 1216/1802), Mullā Muḥammad Naṣīr Dārābī (d. 1226/1811) and Shaykh Zāhid Gilānī (d. 1222/1807). These persons were influential scholars in Shi'ite seminaries and but became a group of Sufi scholars who started the transformation of the Ni'matullāhī order and its doctrines into an intellectually solid and theosophically sophisticated movement, elaborating its philosophical beliefs based on seminary teachings.⁶⁶

Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh decided to go on another pilgrimage to Mashhad. But due to numerous invitations from his disciples from Kirmānshāh, he stayed in Kirmānshāh before travelling to Mashhad. In Kirmānshāh, Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī, a staunch follower of the Uṣūlī school and an active anti-Sufi scholar, became suspicious of Ma'ṣūm's presence in Kirmānshāh and arrested him.⁶⁷ Bihbahānī was supported by Ibrāhīm Khān I'timād al-Dawla, a minister, who was a strong supporter of Shi'ite jurists, to the extent that he defended the view that the Shi'ite jurists should act independently of the state when issuing jurisprudential verdicts, including verdicts of religious excommunication.⁶⁸ Aḥmad Dīwānbaygī states that Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh and his uncle Muḥammad Khān paid a considerable amount of money to a person to help Ma'ṣūm to escape, but Ma'ṣūm refused, claiming he was not guilty and therefore had no need to flee.⁶⁹

There are different accounts about Ma'ṣūm's martyrdom. One tradition narrates that he was murdered while performing a congregational prayer with his disciples. It is also reported that he was murdered in Bāgh-i 'Arsh in Kirmānshāh by Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī himself and buried there.

Yet another account suggests that Ma'ṣūm was drowned in the Qarasū river in 1212/1797.⁷⁰ Likewise, Nūr 'Alī Shāh, who was appointed the successor to Ma'ṣūm 'Alī, was not immune from religious persecution; he was banished and so departed for Karbalā and Mūsil.⁷¹

Ma'ṣūm was said to have lived for about 60 years and reputed to be a charming man with brown skin and hair, who wore the garment of the Qalandar Sufis and kept his hair long.⁷² On his first encounter with him, Nūr 'Alī Shāh said he saw a sayyid clothed in rags (*jhindhīh pūsh*). He was known for being a quiet person who paid no attention to worldly matters,⁷³ which connected him to the Qalandari'ite way of life. When he received a gift it would immediately be distributed among the needy and his disciples.

From Popular Mysticism to Elitist Sufism

There are numerous sayings and traditions about Ma'ṣūm's life which confirm the view that he had adopted the Qalandari'ite way of life. Abbas Amanat calls Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh 'an Indian wandering dervish'.⁷⁴ As a result of several centuries of persecution of Sufism by the fundamentalist Shi'ite clerics, the people of Persia had become strangers to their own traditional mystical culture. Mystical philosophy had ceased to be popular among the general population or among the merchants and craftsmen of the bazaar, and there were very few seminary schools where one could find theosophers teaching mystical *ḥikmat*, much less anything related to *taṣawwuf*. The only way to meet Sufis was by meeting wandering dervishes who would beg for food or money as payment for a prayer or blessing. It was a popular way of being a dervish and attracted initiates and disciples who were more familiar with this type of Sufism than with its more sophisticated forms.

These wandering dervishes initially came from India. They were called *Qalandars* among the common people, although their beliefs may have differed from the classical Qalandari'ite beliefs. They were known for the performance of extraordinary acts such as fire eating. People had respect for them and would bring votive offerings to them. They were known as lone Sufis (*munfarid*) because they did not belong to any Sufi order. Most of these wandering dervishes were known as *darwīshān-i bī shar'* because they did not follow Islamic laws.⁷⁵ This type of dervishhood was culturally popular in all Persianate societies, including that of India. Their beliefs were not accepted by Shi'ite scholars in India, but they were not systematically persecuted by scholars or rulers, and it was problem free for a wandering dervish to enter Persia.

The Ni'matullāhī masters' beliefs on worldly matters were very close to those of the early ascetic Sufis, or even the wandering dervishes that lived during their time. Early Sufis such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) are known for their path of renunciation of the material world.⁷⁶ Ma'şūm believed that there were four types of death to reach the state of poverty (*faqr*): White Death (*muwt-i abyad*), which is hunger; Black Death (*muwt-i aswad*) refers to acceptance of the hurts caused by others; Red Death (*muwt-i aḥmar*) refers to the suppression of the carnal soul; and Green Death refers to being content with one's possessions.⁷⁷ These four types of death indicate a way of life that renounces the material world. There are numerous traditions and sayings by Ma'şūm indicating the futility of this material world. He believed that the ease and comfort of this world are inconstant; thus, one should not rely on them.⁷⁸

Ma'şūm Shīrāzī mentioned that Ma'şūm 'Alī Shāh always advised his disciples to eat as little as possible.⁷⁹ He encouraged them to undertake physical mortifications and not to pay any attention to anything other than God. He said that one may not accumulate wealth although one's heart may desire it. A real Sufi must be free of desiring anything other than God. He mentioned that there are some Sufis who are not outwardly ascetics (*zāhid*), such as Solomon, who was inwardly an ascetic despite all his worldly wealth and dominions. If one's heart is occupied by worldly matters, then there is no room for God to enter. Only the love of God can be in the heart of Sufis.⁸⁰ As one of the early Sufis, Rabi'a, said, "There is no place in my heart for the love or hatred of another."⁸¹ To a certain extent, these beliefs were later emphasised and adopted by the Qalandars.

Ma'şūm's conduct, philosophy and practice were strongly influenced by the classical practices and beliefs of the Qalandars. But at the same time he was careful not to be confused with the libertine wandering dervishes, as some of these dervishes claimed to be *Malāmātī* Sufis and were often blamed for not following the *sharī'a*. Ma'şūm's understanding of *Malāmātī* philosophy was quite different from the general understanding of *Malāmātī* beliefs. He asserted, "The *Malāmātī* is not the one who attracts blame through deliberately breaking the *sharī'a*; he is one who fears not following God's commands regardless of the blame received from others."⁸² He is clear that all Sufis must follow the path of the Prophet Muḥammad. He said, "Liberation of the divine bird from the imprisonment of the cage of human nature is not accomplished without the effects of spiritual rapture, which is dependent on following the Prophet Muḥammad."⁸³ Shi'ite scholars frequently charged Ni'matullāhīs with blasphemy, but Ma'şūm was able, to a

certain extent, to reconstruct the exoteric framework of Ni'matullāhī beliefs in Persia by strongly advocating the necessity of following the *sharī'a*.⁸⁴

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh (d.1234/1818),⁸⁵ the sole master of the Ni'matullāhī order after Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh, came from a family of Shi'ite seminary scholars. He travelled throughout Islamic countries in search of spiritual truth. Finally, he met Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and Fayḍ 'Alī Shāh, and the former directed him to follow the spiritual guidance of Nūr 'Alī Shāh.⁸⁶ Mullā 'Abd al-Ṣamad Hamadānī was among the scholars converted to Sufism by Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh during Ma'ṣūm's life.⁸⁷ Ma'ṣūm's charisma also thus attracted some of the shariah-minded seminary scholars whose spiritual quest led them to enter the Sufi path.⁸⁸

Another important decision of Ma'ṣūm's was that the majority of the disciples he spiritually trained for Persia would be Persian, though he himself was from India. It was highly likely that he was aware that in order to revive the Ni'matullāhī order in Persia he needed to train some Persian Sufis and gain followers who had a seminary background.

The Anti-Sufi Movement of the Shi'ite Uṣūlī Scholars

As mentioned in the last chapter, this was a period of consolidation for the Uṣūlī Shi'ite scholars. Their triumph over the Akhbārī school of Shi'ism increased their centralised power. As Joanna De Groot states, 'By the end of the century [thirteenth century A.H./eighteenth century C.E.] twelver *'ulama* were consolidating an "orthodoxy" that buttressed the arguments for the authority of *mujtaheds* with . . . opposition to rival tendencies; this did not preclude the pragmatic pursuit of alliances in particular local settings, as when the *'ulama* of Kirmān, who attacked the popular Sufi missionaries . . . also acquiesced in the rule of a local governor, whose wealth came from the leadership of dissident Ismā'īlī, as a guarantor of law and order.'⁸⁹ Shi'ite scholars claimed to be the religious authority drawing the boundaries between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. This allowed them to monopolise religious matters from within the seminaries.

The religious practice of *takfīr* was used by seminary scholars as a means of suppressing their religious rivals, and in this respect the Uṣūlī scholars practised *takfīr* against their rivals, the Akhbārīs. With the start of Ni'matullāhī revivalism in Persia, these Shi'ite scholars practised *takfīr* against Sufis in the 1790s, in cities such as Kirmān, leading to the death of Musṭaq 'Alī Shāh, and Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh.

As explained in the previous chapter, Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī, known as the Sufi killer, was the leading figure in the suppression of Sufis in Persia, especially the Ni'matullāhīs. His father, Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī (d. 1205/1790), known as Waḥīd, is recognised as the founder of the modern Uṣūlī school.⁹⁰ The prestige of his father's acclaim as a famous theologian gave Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī more privilege and power among Shi'ite scholars. He also had some strong supporters among the ruling class of Persia. Ibrāhīm Khān was among those powerful ministers who supported him. When Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī arrested Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh, Ibrāhīm Khān told him, 'Put them to death, confine them, or punish them in the way you deem most proper and most consonant to the decrees of the holy religion.'⁹¹ Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī also warned Mullā 'Abdullāh, a low-ranking cleric among the followers of Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī, in Kirmān about Mushtāq, which led to Mushtāq's tragic martyrdom in 1206/1792.⁹²

The Ni'matullāhī Sufi Order and Nūr 'Alī Shāh

Nūr 'Alī Shāh (d. 1212/1797) is one of the most important figures in the history of the Ni'matullāhī revival of the 18th century.⁹³ He also played a significant role in the history of the revival of Persian Sufism after decades of oblivion. Nūr 'Alī Shāh's mystical way of life was close to that of the wandering dervishes. His appearance was more like that of a Qalandar than a scholar like Ma'sūm, although he belonged to a family of scholars and his grandfather led the congressional Friday prayers (*Imām jum'ih*) of Ṭabas.⁹⁴ There are two different stories about the birthplace of Nūr 'Alī Shāh's father, Mīrzā 'Abd al-Ḥusayn, who had the spiritual title of Fayḍ 'Alī Shāh. According to one account, he was born in Tūn (Ṭabas) in Khurāsān and later migrated to Isfahan to study seminary sciences.⁹⁵ Other scholars like Mast 'Alī Shāh recount that he was born in Isfahan some time around 1758.⁹⁶ It is also said that Mīrzā 'Abd al-Ḥusayn left everything behind in search of the truth, and went to Isfahan.⁹⁷ It was at the end of Nādir Shāh's reign that Mīrzā 'Abd al-Ḥusayn entered Isfahan and took up residence there,⁹⁸ where he became interested in the occult sciences, and practised numerical divination (*jafr*) and other occult sciences.⁹⁹

Under the supervision of his father, Nūr 'Alī Shāh studied the common religious sciences of the day.¹⁰⁰ According to Muḥammad Taqī Khuyī, 'As the exterior sciences (*'ulūm ḡāhirī*) do not open the gate of inner



Portrait of Nūr 'Alī Shāh. (From Nūr 'Alī Shāh, *Janāt al-Wiṣāl*)

sciences (*'ulūm bāṭini*) and having the knowledge of exterior is a cause for the knowledge of inner, therefore, he entered the valley of seeking (*wādī ṭalab*).¹⁰¹ Fayḍ 'Alī Shāh took Nūr 'Alī Shāh to Ma'sūm for initiation into the order and both father and son were initiated at about the same time, while Ma'sūm was in Shiraz.¹⁰² As is written in *Janāt al-wiṣāl*, father and son became brothers on the spiritual path.¹⁰³ Later on, the young Nūr 'Alī Shāh reached the highest station of Sufism such that he even rose above the spiritual station of his father. Nonetheless both, after passing through certain spiritual states, reached the level of perfection to guide others. Ma'sūm gave them permission for the inculcation of *dhikr* and propagation of the spiritual path (*ṭariqat*).¹⁰⁴ They were to become the two most important figures to be initiated into this order in the 18th century. Fayḍ passed away in 1199/1784.¹⁰⁵

Nūr 'Alī Shāh was the closest and most important disciple of Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh and accompanied Ma'sūm on all his travels. Even in Mūrchiḥ Khurt, when Ma'sūm dismissed everyone, warning his disciples that the commanders of 'Alī Murād were coming to torture them, Nūr 'Alī Shāh said, 'Where should I take a refuge, when I am from this refuge?'¹⁰⁶

In Mashhad, Ma'sūm dismissed him and told him to stay in Persia, whilst Ma'sūm headed towards Hirāt.¹⁰⁷ Most probably, Ma'sūm felt that Persia and the Persian Sufis needed spiritually strong masters like Nūr 'Alī Shāh and Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh. Later on, Ma'sūm handed over the leadership of the Ni'matullāhī order to Nūr 'Alī Shāh who continued the revival movement.¹⁰⁸ Upon the spiritual confirmation of Riḍā 'Alī Shāh, Nūr 'Alī Shāh received permission to choose a successor for himself, hence the continuation of the movement.¹⁰⁹

Nūr 'Alī Shāh and Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh went to Kirmān. Mushtāq was martyred in 1206/1792 and Nūr 'Alī moved on to Shiraz.¹¹⁰ Luṭf 'Alī Khān was the ruler of Shiraz at the time, and tried hard to harm Nūr 'Alī, which eventually made him migrate to the 'Atabāt in 1207/1792.

In Iraq, he was favoured by Aḥmad Pāshā, the ruler of Baghdād and the surrounding area. Nūr 'Alī Shāh became a popular figure among the people of Persia too. His eagerness to broadcast the Ni'matullāhī doctrines led to the initiation of a large number of people into the brotherhood. Muḥammad 'Alī Mudarris notes how 'Nūr 'Alī Shāh became famous everywhere: when he would stay in a city for a while to guide, people would gather around him to an extent that rulers would become suspicious of his activities and order his banishment from that city.'¹¹¹ His popularity led to the jealousy of those who thought of Nūr 'Alī Shāh as a rival to their authority. His primary

opponents were Shi‘ite scholars who accused him of claiming kingship and not following Islamic laws.¹¹²

Some of Nūr ‘Alī Shāh’s poetry directly challenged Shi‘ite clerics. In one of his poems he says, ‘And from the command of Mahdī, I will revive the universe with my breath.’¹¹³ For Shi‘ite clerics this was an outrageous claim and a direct challenge to their authority, as they considered themselves deputies of the hidden twelfth Imām. Claiming to have direct contact (spiritual or physical) with the twelfth Imām was much more dangerous than not following Islamic laws. In extreme cases, it could end in the execution of the claimant.

Nūr ‘Alī Shāh’s poems were full of ecstatic utterances (*shaṭḥiyāt*). He says, ‘If you seek the divine light, the search is a vain effort; I am the orient of lights.’¹¹⁴ Or he goes further and directly addresses the Shi‘ite scholars and says:

O pious clergyman,
If by now
You haven’t known us
In the truth of Absolute Unity:
It’s we in the Ka‘aba,
We in the idol-temple.
The worlds are but attributes,
We are the essence.¹¹⁵

He used to sing these poems in the street while he was wandering around the city as a water bearer wearing the garments of the wandering dervishes. People would be attracted to him and gather round him, and this became a successful way to broadcast the Ni‘matullāhī doctrines. He also wrote poems in praise of the Shi‘ite Imāms, which he used to sing in the streets. All of his poems were full of hidden mystical meanings, and many were ‘ecstatic utterances’ in a rhythmic format. Later Ni‘matullāhī masters did not dare to make the claims Nūr ‘Alī did in his poetry. For example, Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh stated that only the Prophet and Shi‘ite Imāms are the manifestations of divine essence, a rank which Nūr ‘Alī Shāh had claimed for himself.

In the shrine cities of the ‘Atabāt many Shi‘ite scholars were outraged by Nūr ‘Alī Shāh’s successful propagation of Sufism.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, despite all the animosity, many well-known Shi‘ite scholars were secretly initiated into the order or felt sympathy for Nūr ‘Alī Shāh.¹¹⁷

Two perfect examples of this are Mullā 'Abd al-Ṣamad Hamadānī and Āqā Sayyid Mahdī Ṭabāṭabā'ī, known as the 'Sea of the sciences' (*Baḥr al-'ulūm*) (d. 1212/ 1797).¹¹² It is recounted that some of the Shi'ite seminary scholars went to Sayyid Mahdī Ṭabāṭabā'ī and asked him to issue an order for the excommunication of Nūr 'Alī Shāh. Sayyid Mahdī refused to do so without meeting Nūr 'Alī Shāh first. He asked Mullā 'Abd al-Ṣamad for a secret meeting with Nūr 'Alī Shāh. When they met, Sayyid Mahdī began by denying Sufism. However, it is said that, by the end of the meeting and due to the spiritual influence of Nūr 'Alī Shāh, Sayyid Mahdī felt extreme sympathy for Sufism and, according to some Ni'matullāhīs, it is believed that he was eventually initiated into Sufism.¹¹⁸ However, scholars like Abbas Amanat believe that Baḥr al-'Ulūm's sympathetic attitude has been exaggerated.¹¹⁹ Zarrīnkūb goes even further, saying that Baḥr al-'Ulūm did not issue any religious verdicts because, while he was cautious with regard to the Sufis, he did not have any genuine sympathy for them.¹²⁰ Some Sufi masters from other orders, such as Ḥājī 'Abd al-Wahāb Nā'inī (a Nūrbakhshī master), were initiated into the order and became disciples of Nūr 'Alī Shāh because of his charisma.¹²¹

Nūr 'Alī Shāh resided for about five years in the 'Atabāt, where he was poisoned twice. In 1212/1797, he passed away in Mūṣil and was buried beside Jonah's tomb.¹²² He wrote numerous treatises and books of poetry, including *Risāla Jāmi' al-asrār*, where the style of his writing is similar to that of the *Gulistān* of Sa'dī.¹²³ Zarrīnkūb, though, has asserted that his writing is not comparable with Sa'dī's *Gulistān*. However, his prose style represents a combination of the styles of two great Persian writers, Sa'dī and Khāwja 'Abdullāh Anṣārī (d. 481/1088).¹²⁴ His *Risāla uṣūl wa furū'* discusses theological matters and is written in rhymed prose form, which is similar to the writings of Khāja 'Abdullāh Anṣārī.¹²⁵ In this treatise he also refers to mystical poetry and explains the exoteric religious duties, before indicating that there are some esoteric duties which are crucial to practice in order for one perfectly to accomplish the exoteric religious duties. He wrote about the spiritual path and the necessity of having a master to guide one on the path.¹²⁶ He also wrote a poetic interpretation of the Chapter of the Cow (*Sūrat al-Baqara*) and translated the *Khutbat al-bayān* into a poetic form consisting of 152 verses.¹²⁷ Amongst his other writings is a *Dīwān* of *ghazals* and *Qaṣāyid* and a *Mathnawī* called *Janāt al-wiṣāl* (only two volumes of this compendium were written by Nūr 'Alī Shāh).¹²⁸ This *Mathnawī* was written at the end of his life in the city of Dhahāb. His aim was to write eight books alluding to the symbolic number of the eight heavens (*janāt*). However, he passed away before he could finish it, so he asked his disciples to finish the

rest of that compendium.¹²⁹ Michel de Miras believes that Nūr 'Alī Shāh's purpose in writing this treatise was to enable wayfarers to obtain gnosis.¹³⁰ Nūr 'Alī also wrote a book of poetry about Imām Ḥusayn called *Rawḍat al-Shuhadā'*,¹³¹ which was one of the first books written about the story of 'Āshūrā, after Mullā Ḥusayn Wā'iz Kāshifi's *Rawḍat al-shuhadā'*.

Nūr 'Alī Shāh was known to have a charming face and to wear his hair long, and his personality attracted many people.¹³² However, he did not have much contact with Shi'ite scholars, nor did he write any treatises in response to their accusations. Although he was propagating Ni'matullāhī doctrines among the masses, some scholars were attracted by his beliefs and personality; yet he did not have any desire to meet scholars. When Baḥr al-'Ulūm asked 'Abd al-Ṣamad Hamadānī to meet Nūr 'Alī Shāh for the second time, Nūr 'Alī Shāh's response was, 'It is not me who wants to see him, but if he wishes to see me, he can come over.'¹³³ Once, when he was passing a village near Mashhad, his dignity and his beauty led the people of that village to think erroneously that he was their missing prince. Nūr 'Alī Shāh tried to convince them that he was not the prince they had been waiting for, but they would not accept it. It was during this period that Mirzā Mahdī Mujtahid ordered him to cut his hair.¹³⁴ He was also a singer who sang his own poetry which, along with his charisma and charming face, led to his vast popularity but frightened the Shi'ite scholars and even the rulers.

As Mast 'Alī Shāh said, 'He suffered oppression from the scholars of the time (*'ulamā-yi zamān*) and rulers of the period (*ḥukām 'aṣr*).'¹³⁵ He was persecuted almost everywhere he went: Iraq, Fars, Kirmān and Khurāsān, etc. In his poetry he lamented being misunderstood by common people and the literal-minded:

First, I sold my donkey's ears
and acquired other, more human organs
so that every moment now I hear
from doors, from walls, the voice of Surūsh (angelic inspiration)
and as his songs ring in my ears
so secrets sing in my heart.
Where is your heart? Where is your ear
that I may sing these secret songs to you?
Secrets boil in my heart but to whom
can I reveal them, since there is not man of heart?
I used to speak in parables of these things
but now, O artful one, I have unveiled them for you.¹³⁶

These lines were written in the *Janāt al-wiṣāl* at the end of his life in Irāq, where he was put under pressure by exoteric Shi‘ite scholars for his mystical views about religion. He was tired of his opponents not hearing his message, which was a message of love. Unlike his opponents he did not threaten them with death or persecution; he just complained about their foolishness.

Nūr ‘Alī Shāh played a crucial role in the history of the Ni‘matullāhī revival in Persia. Indeed, without his efforts it would not have been achieved. According to Zarrīnkūb, his form of Sufism represented a union of Shi‘ite Sufism with Ḥallāj’s and Shibli’s intoxicated mysticism.¹³⁷ Nūr ‘Alī Shāh’s revival of the Sufi tradition in Persia was also a reformation of it, an attempt to purify it of ossified traditionalism while at the same time affirming the necessity of following the shariah, and for this reason Nūr ‘Alī Shāh appointed some of his disciples like Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh, Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh, Mullā ‘Abd al-Ṣamad Hamadānī and Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh to propagate exoteric Islamic laws as well as Ni‘matullāhī beliefs.¹³⁸ Some of Nūr ‘Alī Shāh’s beliefs, however, were close to those of the Shi‘ite extremists (*ghulāt*).

Nūr ‘Alī Shāh’s emphasis on the path and the wayfarer was also important for the revival of the order. His propagation of the spiritual path of Sufism and the wayfarers thereon gave great lustre to the order, but his persecution by the legalist clergy signalled the need for a change from a charismatic to a more rational approach.¹³⁹ The order’s adherents needed to be more moderate in espousing their doctrines in accordance with Uṣūlī theology.

The first Persian Ni‘matullāhī master to succeed Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh was Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, a disciple of Nūr ‘Alī Shāh.¹⁴⁰ Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh was spiritually trained by Nūr ‘Alī Shāh but belonged to the class of Shi‘ite seminary scholars, and thus was among the first masters who started the transformation of the Ni‘matullāhī order from a popular to an elitist movement. His contributions to the mystical and religious milieu of Persia will be discussed in Chapter Four.

The Ni‘matullāhī Sufi Order and Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh

Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh (d.1215/1800) is another influential master in the history of the Ni‘matullāhī order. Although his role in the revival of the order was not as crucial as that of Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh and Nūr ‘Alī Shāh, he was one of the most active and knowledgeable masters of the Ni‘matullāhīs during this era. He was the first master after the return of the order to Persia to write about its cosmological views. Owing to his knowledge of seminary

sciences, his works were highly respected by Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh.

His full name was Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī ibn Muḥammad Kāzīm and his ancestors were all traditional doctors who came from the upper class of society in Kirmān.¹⁴¹ Aside from studying medicine, he began studying the rational and traditional seminary sciences (*'ulūm 'aqlī wa naqlī*) and became well-versed in these sciences. He had his own pupils studying these sciences, and it is said that every time he walked towards the mosque, as he was about to enter 12 professional readers of the Qur'ān would recite around him.¹⁴²

He was more of a philosopher (*hakīm*) than a jurist (*faqīh*). He had studied natural philosophy (*hikmat ṭabī'ī*) and divine theosophy (*hikmat-i ilāhī*).¹⁴³ Like other Sufi masters, he was not satisfied with the seminary religious sciences and so started to search for a spiritual master. In Kirmān he met Nūr 'Alī Shāh, Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh and Rawnaq 'Alī Shāh, and became a disciple of Mushtāq 'Alī.¹⁴⁴

Before his initiation Muẓaffar had a strong bias against Sufism and avoided being with Sufis. He first encountered Mushtāq when he was invited to a session of the *rawḍa khānī* (mourning of Imām Ḥusayn). Mushtāq attended the session without being invited, and at dinner he sat in front of Muẓaffar. Muẓaffar did not eat because of Mushtāq's presence and Mushtāq became offended and said, 'O you, if this is the table of the Lord (*muwla*) then it does not matter if friends or enemies are sitting around it. It does not matter if dervishes or non-dervishes are eating from it.' And he left the session. Muẓaffar went after him and from that incident his inner fire of spiritual love was kindled.¹⁴⁵

Following that incident, Muẓaffar went to Nūr 'Alī Shāh, who directed him towards Rawnaq 'Alī Shāh for the inculcation of *dhikr* and initiation into Sufism.¹⁴⁶ However, it was Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh's spiritual charisma that had attracted Muẓaffar and caused him to be initiated into the order.¹⁴⁷ After the initiation, he accompanied Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh who became his spiritual guide on the path.¹⁴⁸ His attraction to Mushtāq might have been the reason Ma'sūm commanded Mushtāq to go to Kirmān and guide seekers.

Mast 'Alī Shāh, with typical hyperbole, compared Muẓaffar's importance in Sufism with that of Rūmī, for both had dedicated their works of poetry to men less literate than themselves but possessing a high degree in Sufism, and both recounted similar experiences of love of their master. Rūmī dedicated his *Dīwān-i Shams* to Shams-i Tabrīzī, while Muẓaffar 'Alī Shāh dedicated all his *Ghazaliyāt* and *Qasāyid* to Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh. Muẓaf-

far ‘Alī Shāh, just like Rūmī, was well versed in the religious sciences of the day. However, Mast ‘Alī Shāh believed that he was more knowledgeable in the philosophy of illumination (*falsafa-yi ishraq*) and Peripatetic philosophy than Rūmī.¹⁴⁹

Muẓaffar’s pupils and those who would gather round him at the mosque were upset by his behaviour towards the illiterate Mushtāq. They begged him to return to seminary school, and some believed that he had become mentally unstable. Muẓaffar’s response was, ‘Your rational Mīrzā (*mīrzā-yi mantiqī*) [Muẓaffar] is dead. Leave and search for another Muḥammad Taqī [Muẓaffar].’¹⁵⁰ This response is similar to the one Rūmī’s gave to those who came and begged him to his return to seminary school and abandon Shams-i Tabrīzī.

Although the path of Sufism in Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh’s time was outwardly a path of calamity, as the majority of the masters were persecuted and killed by those who rejected their utterances, nevertheless Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh entered into this path and diligently passed through the spiritual stations. After he had become spiritually qualified, Rawnaq ‘Alī Shāh authorised him to be a guide for seekers.¹⁵¹ Mast ‘Alī Shāh believed that it had been centuries since there had been a well-versed Sufi master like Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh, while Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat noted that he was referred to as the ‘Second Rūmī’ (*Muwlawī thānī*).¹⁵²

As mentioned earlier, Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh’s poetry had in-depth mystical meanings, and was very influential in the development of the Ni‘matullāhī order. However, his knowledge of the seminary sciences did not protect him from persecution by fundamentalist Shi‘ite scholars. Eventually, Mullā ‘Abd Allāh Kirmānī issued a religious order for the murder of Mushtāq and wrote a letter to Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār proposing that he put Muẓaffar to death. However, owing to Āqā Muḥammad Khān’s positive view about Sufism, especially the Ni‘matullāhīs, he ignored Mullā ‘Abd Allāh and invited Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh to Tehran.¹⁵³

After Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār passed away in 1797, Fath ‘Alī Shāh became the king of the Qājārs. With the help of Ibrāhīm Khān-i Kalāntar, Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī brought Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh to Kirmānshāh. Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī tortured and persecuted Muẓaffar but he never invited him to a theological debate because he was aware of Muẓaffar’s seminary knowledge.

Muẓaffar passed away in 1215/1800, three years after Nūr ‘Alī Shāh. He wrote numerous books and literary papers which are highly valuable for a better understanding of Ni‘matullāhī thought, although his role was not as

crucial to the success of the revival movement as that of his contemporaries, Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh, Nūr 'Alī Shāh and Riḍā 'Alī Shāh.

Muẓaffar also wrote a book called *Summary of the Sciences (Khulāṣat al-'ulūm)* each chapter of which explains a common science of the time.¹⁵⁴ His masterpiece was 'Red Sulphur' (*Kibrīt al-aḥmar*), a treatise devoted to the meaning of the invocation of God (*dhikr*) in the Ni'matullāhī Order.¹⁵⁵ However, this treatise has been attributed to some other Ni'matullāhī masters as well. Some scholars believe that it was written by Nūr 'Alī Shāh under the title of *'Awārif al-ma'ārif*. Others attribute it to Majdhūb, who most probably copied it from Muẓaffar, which was common among Sufi masters of that era. In this treatise Muẓaffar explained Sufi litanies and the practice of *dhikr* and asserted that the continuous practice of litanies and *dhikr* would lead to a state of proximity to the divine, and to divine peace of heart (*sakīna-yi qalbīyya*), which is among the first stations on the path. After Mushtāq was martyred in Kirmān, Muẓaffar 'Alī Shāh started to write poetry lamenting his separation from Mushtāq, to whom he dedicated an anthology of his poetry, calling it *Diwān-i Mushtāqīyya*.¹⁵⁶ 'Compendium of the Seas' (*Jām'-i al-biḥār*) and 'Sea of the Secrets' (*baḥr al-asrār*) are two other anthologies of poetry written by Muẓaffar 'Alī Shāh.¹⁵⁷

Unlike the future Ni'matullāhī master, Muẓaffar did not dissimulate his opposition to the seminary scholars. Muẓaffar said, "Those scholars who are called the inheritors of the prophets are not the exoteric jurists, because the exoteric people confess that they are ignorant of the paths toward heaven."¹⁵⁸ Muẓaffar 'Alī Shāh stated that all this bitter opposition to the Sufis was due the jurists' lack of understanding. His beliefs about the perfect man (*insān-i kāmīl*) were highly influenced by Ibn 'Arabī's philosophy. He also believed that during the time of the occultation of the twelfth Imām, perfect Sufis could act as the manifestation of the Imām, stating, 'Ma'sūm 'Alī is the manifestation of the guiding Mahdī'.¹⁵⁹

Therefore, like some of his predecessors, he believed in the Mahdī-like role of the Sufi master. However, he made it clear that when he mentioned the term Mahdī, he was referring only to the twelfth Imām of the Shi'ites, and never used the term Mahdī directly for a Sufi master. In praise of Mushtāq, he wrote:

I swear to God that in this cycle,
I am the deputy to the Mahdī of the 'Askarī faith.
I am the sun of truth, I am the one,
who was taught the art of fostering inferiors.¹⁶⁰

However, such beliefs constituted challenges to the authority of the Shi'ite seminary scholars. Muẓaffar indicated that their understanding of the traditions of the Shi'ite Imāms was limited and lacked true understanding of their in-depth meaning. However, the real Sufis, through the blessings of Shi'ite Imāms, had gained the gnosis that is the true understanding of religion.¹⁶¹ Here he clearly indicated both his Sufi and Shi'ite beliefs, which were later adopted by Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh.¹⁶² In this respect Muẓaffar 'Alī Shāh was an important influence on the mystical doctrine of Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh, who played an even more crucial role in the future formation of Persian Ni'matullāhī theosophy.

Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter, the period during which these masters led the Ni'matullāhī order was far from tranquil. The order faced a great deal of opposition alongside its growing fame. Even when for short periods they were favoured by the rulers of different cities, the Shi'ite ulama were usually successful in persuading those rulers against giving any support to Sufism with the accusation that the Sufi masters they favoured intended to make a claim on kingship.

However, despite these vicissitudes, the three masters discussed in this chapter were responsible not only for the revival of the Ni'matullāhī order in Persia but also for its reformation. Their aim was to revive an esoteric tradition in Persia that had been absent for a long time, and to redirect Sufism back in the right direction. These masters fought against two different classes of society and tried to purify both. On the one hand, they endured opposition from the exoteric religious class who were led by Shi'ite shariah-minded scholars and yet tried to introduce the inner meaning of religion to them. On the other hand, they struggled against the decadence of the wandering *qalandars* and libertine Sufis who were careless about observance of the exoteric laws of Islam.

One of the main reasons for the opposition of the Shi'ite scholars and rulers to the Sufis was the relationship between the masters of the Ni'matullāhī order and their disciples. The absolute submission of disciples to their masters implicitly challenged the authority of both the rulers and Shi'ite seminary scholars. Nūr 'Alī Shāh had clearly stated that the power of the *quṭb* (sole master of the order) was greater than that of any ruler.¹⁶³ More essential was their emphasis on the relationship between the Mahdī

(Twelfth Imām) and the Sufi Master. In certain cases, as explained in the story of Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh, one of the Imāms would command the Sufi master through dreams or visions. The Sufi belief that the seeker should choose his master based on spiritual attraction gave more freedom to the individual seeker than was allowed by the *mujtahids*.

As Zarrīnkūb notes, the enthusiastic popular reception of this movement was suppressed by the triumph of the Shi‘ite fundamentalist scholars and, in particular, their main champion, Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī.¹⁶⁴ The historical events would seem to indicate that Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī and other anti-Sufi scholars were triumphant in suppressing Sufis, but in reality this was not the case. On the one hand, the enthusiastic preaching and propagation of the order by masters such as Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh, Fayḍ ‘Alī Shāh, Nūr ‘Alī Shāh and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh led to its popularity and revival; on the other, opposition to the order was harsh and there was a desperate need for consolidation for the order to survive the clerical persecution it was subjected to.¹⁶⁵ These masters gained fame among the people because they brought to Persian society a traditional yet new way of thinking that emphasised the inner meaning of religion. Although the people of Persia had become strangers to Sufism, during this historical period of political turmoil, an exoteric religious system could not respond to all the social and spiritual needs of the community.

During these masters’ lives, the seat of the leadership of the Ni‘matullāhī order was in the Deccan. Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh was the *quṭb* (pole) of the order for about 60 years, and lived through the revival movement in Persia.¹⁶⁶ He trained those masters who dedicated themselves to its revival, and the historical record shows that the persecution of the Sufis by Shi‘ite fundamentalist clerics more or less changed the direction of the order from an enthusiastic movement, which had been based on ecstatic poetry and a Qalandari’ite lifestyle, into an elitist movement providing a new, mystical interpretation of the Shi‘ite seminary sciences. This evolution into a scholarly order even affected the outward appearance of its master, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh or Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh, who swapped the traditional dervish cloak and hat (*tāj*) for the cleric’s gown and turban. As we shall see in the next chapter, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh even lived in a seminary school as a professor of religious studies for much of his life.

The Life and Works of Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh

The Socio-Political Situation of Sufism in Early 19th-Century Persia

Ḥāj Muḥammad Ḥusayn Iṣfahānī, known as Zayn al-Dīn, with the spiritual title of Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1234/1818), became the master of the Ni‘mat-ullāhī Order during a critical period in the history of Persia, that is during the age of colonial expansion when Persia became the battleground for the competing political objectives of Russia and England.¹

Fath ‘Alī Shāh Qājār (r. 1176-1213/1797-1834) was the Persian monarch during this period. He was a superstitious person who believed in astrological signs, talismans and magic (as long as they were not in contradiction with orthodox Shi‘ite Islam),² who wanted to be known as a pious king but was in need of the influential Shi‘ite scholars religiously to legitimise the Qājār dynasty and thus consolidate his power. The volume of correspondence between the Shi‘ite ulama and the monarchy is evidence of their close relationship.³ These scholars expertly cultivated the monarch’s superstitious beliefs.⁴

During his 37-year reign, to a large extent he was preoccupied with the problems of internal rebellions, civil wars and the transgressions of foreigners.⁵ The long period of war with Russia and the subsequent loss of territory were bitter episodes in the history of Persia. The monarch was indebted to the ulama for inciting the common people to go to war against the ‘infidels,’ which led to a new genre of *jihādīyya* treatises.

The ulama became powerful to the degree that they sometimes challenged the state. The monarch was sometimes forced to pay ‘hush money’ (*haqq us-sukūt*) to the jurists (*fuqahā*).⁶ In many cases, their greed was justified, even glorified, by Shi‘ite historians and theologians such as Tunikābunī, who considered their blackmail of the sovereign a kind of miracle (*karāmāt*) that had been wrought by the ulama.⁷

Religious Opposition to Sufism in Early 19th-Century Persia

In return for their obeisance and obedience, Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh allowed Shi‘ite ulama to participate in state matters. In this respect, as Algar rightly remarks, ‘The Shi‘ism of his age was marked by a reassertion of the power of the *mujtahid*, judicially and socially.’⁸

The theological system elaborated by the Shi‘ite Uṣūlī clerics during this period was aimed at making them the focal point of religious authority and power, emphasising their own importance as the religious, and sometimes political, guides within Persian society. Mīrzāy-i Qumī (d. 1231/1816), the influential cleric discussed in the last chapter, always emphasised the importance of the ulama, and reminded people that together the Shi‘ite clergy and the monarch shared the complete directorship of the community. Qumī clarified that the monarch was not like an Imām, therefore, it was not obligatory for a Muslim to obey him, in the religious sense.⁹ However, a number of seminary scholars issued a fatwa that Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh should be counted among ‘those in authority’ (*ulū’l-amr*),¹⁰ although Qumī argued against their stance.¹¹

Anxious that Sufis might try to infiltrate the royal palace and influence governmental officials, the ulama maintained close relations with the royal court.¹² The monarch also took some repressive measures against Sufis that were admired by the ulama.¹³ Due to his shariah-mindedness, Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh was against Sufism in general, even if he occasionally admitted that he found Sufis to be highly spiritual people of prayer. There were numerous cases in which he persecuted Sufis, as can be seen from his request to Mu‘aṭṭar ‘Alī Shāh to curse his master Nūr ‘Alī Shāh.¹⁴

Some of the ulama, such as Qumī and the bigoted Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī (d. 1216/1801), both of whom were contemporaries of Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, wrote treatises in refutation of Sufism. Qumī, for example, wrote a treatise called *Risāla al-Radd ‘alā ṣūfiyya* (*Refutation of the Sufis*), and Bihbahānī, wrote *Khayrātīyya*,¹⁵ in which he called Nūr ‘Alī Shāh the guide on the path of deviation (*hādī rāh-i ḍalāl*). On the martyrdom of Nūr ‘Alī Shāh, Bihbahānī also wrote a poem in which he remarked, ‘Nūr ‘Alī passed away as if he were a dog that left the world.’¹⁶ Bihbahānī wrote satirical poems about Sufis and cursed masters like Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh.

At the same time, the king’s regent in Fars, Ḥājī Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī, gave the ulama complete independence with respect to issuing religious edicts (*fatāwā*) against anyone who displeased them, even if these involved death sentences.¹⁷ Therefore, it was a particularly critical period for Sufis in the history of Persia: they were constantly harassed, attacked and criticised

by different classes of society. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s mission during this chaotic period therefore aimed less at furthering the propagation and more at maintaining the bare survival of the Ni‘matullāhī order.

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh: Preacher and Mystic

In addition to being the master of the Ni‘matullāhī order, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh had attained considerable fame as a seminary scholar (*‘ālim*), preacher and jurist. There are different opinions about his origins. Zayn al-‘Ābidīn Shīr-wānī put it about that he was from Khwansār, while Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat said that he came from a family originating from Tabrīz.¹⁸ What is clear is that Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s male family members mostly belonged to the class of Shi‘ite ulama. Ma‘ṣūm Shīrāzī indicated that there were some great Shi‘ite scholars (*‘ālimān*) among his ancestors and family.¹⁹ His grandfather was Shaykh Zayn Al-Dīn, a renowned jurist, whom Mast ‘Alī Shāh called the one who had gained a complete knowledge of the rational and traditional sciences (*jāmi‘ ‘ulūm-i ‘aqlī wa naqlī*), and who had migrated to Isfahan.

During his youth, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh studied the religious sciences in Isfahan.²⁰ He was a distinguished student of his uncle, Āqā Muḥammad, the head of jurists in the area. It was during this stage of his life that he became a jurist in seminaries and a preacher in mosques.

After he had completed his studies, his spiritual thirst was not sated, so he started to travel to different places in Persia and Arabia, where he sought out many religious scholars and spiritual masters.²¹ At the end of his travels he met and became the disciple of Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh, Nūr ‘Alī Shāh and Fayḍ ‘Alī Shāh, and through their guidance and instruction obtained the enlightenment and gnosis he sought.²² He practised self-mortification under their instruction. As he advanced on the spiritual path, his masters allowed him to become a guide for other seekers within Persia. These Ni‘matullāhī masters saw in Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh a person whose juridical background could be influential for the order. He accompanied Nūr ‘Alī Shāh to Hirāt. Nūr ‘Alī Shāh then appointed him as a spiritual master and told him to return to his city and guide the seekers.²³ Nūr ‘Alī Shāh also directed him to continue preaching and praying in the mosque and religious seminaries as before. Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh in fact explicitly commanded that he not divest himself of the clerical robes worn by the exoteric Shi‘ite clerics. Therefore, he was able to continue his life as a cleric without anyone recognising him as a member of the Ni‘matullāhī order.²⁴

Finally, in the year 1212/1797 in the village of Dhahāb in Kurdistān, Nūr 'Alī Shāh appointed Ḥāj Muḥammad Ḥusayn Iṣfahānī as the sole leader (*quṭb*) of the order with the spiritual title of Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh.²⁵ When Riḍā 'Alī Shāh Deccanī died three years later in 1215/1800, Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh became the first *quṭb* of the Ni'matullāhī order who was a native of Persia, thus making the return of the Ni'matullāhīs to Persia complete after an almost 300-year diaspora of the order in the province of Hyderabad, India. However, since the situation for the Sufis was one of extreme tribulation, Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh was careful that his conduct did not arouse the suspicions of Shi'ite clergy; he always talked and behaved as if he were merely a jurist (*faqīh*) and preacher.

As mentioned in the last chapter, for most of the 18th century before Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh became master there had been considerable tensions and opposition between jurists and Sufis which eventually led to the martyrdom of Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh, Nūr 'Alī Shāh and Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh. During Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh's leadership, on the other hand, none of his disciples were tortured or arrested. Although he himself was once arrested, owing to his family background and his knowledge of the religious sciences he was never tortured or imprisoned.

Ma'ṣūm Shīrāzī quoted from an unknown biographer that Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh was 'a compendium of the canonical law of Islam and the Sufi path' (*jāmi' sharī'at wa ṭarīqat*).²⁶ He was a recognised scholar and instructor of sharia laws and Sufi mysticism. He received a small inheritance from which he supported his family and gave the remainder to charity.²⁷ This enabled him to stay in seminary schools and spend more time in the propagation and teaching of his beliefs among seminarians.

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh diligently followed sharia laws in order to ensure that he would not attract the suspicion of Shi'ite ulama. He was always open to dialogue with seminary scholars and he used a conciliatory tone towards them.²⁸ Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh instructed his disciples in the practice of spiritual remembrance through invocation (*dhikr*) and spiritual contemplation (*murāqaba*) in such a way that enabled him to conceal his Sufism from the eyes of the vulgar and non-initiates. When Shi'ite seminary scholars who became close to him asked about these practices, he would reply that they were prayers and the repetition of the names of God that he had received during his travels, without any indication of their being part of Sufism.²⁹

He also instructed his novices and dervish disciples not to close their eyes while they were practising *dhikr*. He said to his followers, 'One must always consider maintaining the proper outer appearances (*marātib-i*

zāhir)³⁰ which indicates how important it was for him to avoid any conflict with traditional Shi‘ites who rejected Sufism. His Sufi disciples thus viewed him as both a Sufi master and a Shi‘ite cleric. In his sessions Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh did not permit wandering dervishes who did not follow the sharia or were careless in its observance to participate. Because of this conservative attitude which was in accord with the hyper-orthodox spirit of the times, he became more popular among followers of the Ni‘matullāhī order.³¹

It is said that Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s wife and mother were ill-tempered, and their constant quarrels drove him out of the house. This family quarrel turned out to have positive consequences for the development of Ni‘matullāhī Sufism, because when he left home he moved into a seminary school — the Madrasa-i ‘Alī Qulī Āqā in Isfahan, where he taught and preached — thus allowing him to cultivate better relations with the exoteric Shi‘ite ulama.³² Nevertheless, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh was not totally free and safe from the criticism, jealousy and attacks of the ulama. Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī (d. 1246/1830), who was a great philosopher with many students and disciples, was his greatest enemy. Mullā ‘Alī’s jealousy of Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh arose when some of his disciples left him and became devotees of Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, confessing to the deficiency of their past beliefs.³³ Here we see how Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s bridging of shariah and haqiqah paths created the opportunity for mystical dialogues with Shi‘ite clerics, leading at times to the initiation of a number of jurists and philosophers.³⁴

Hāj Muḥammad Ḥusayn Khān Marwī, an influential noble who claimed to support the jurists, accepted Mullā ‘Alī’s request to have Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh prosecuted for treason and so wrote a letter to Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh accusing Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh of treason and aspiring to become a king. The Shāh summoned Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh to Tehran and ordered his arrest.³⁵ Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh changed his mind while Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh was on his way to Tehran, ordering that he be escorted into his presence as a guest rather than a convict.³⁶ Strangely enough, he became Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s admirer after their meeting in Tehran, calling him a person of spirituality. During the interrogation of his beliefs, the Shāh was so impressed by Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh that he even asked to receive spiritual instructions from him. The Shāh eventually ordered Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh to return to Isfahan, and to continue to lead prayers in the mosques there.³⁷

In the year 1322/1818 Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh went to Karbalā on pilgrimage. He gathered all his followers and appointed Muḥammad Ja‘far Kabūdarāhangī, who held the spiritual title of Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh, as his successor. Dur-

ing his stay in Karbalā, on 10 November 1818 (11 Muḥarram 1234 A.H.), he passed away and was buried in the mosque of Kāzīm Rashtī, near Karbalā.³⁸

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s vigilant and cautious lifestyle served the cause of the revival of the Ni‘matullāhī order in Persia. As a preacher and seminary teacher, he gained fame among his seminary disciples. His constant appearance in the garment of seminary scholars also attracted more mainstream Shi‘ites to him, which inaugurated a period of growth after centuries of suppression of Sufism. The development of the order was continued by Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh and Mast ‘Alī Shāh.

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh and the Polemics of Henry Martyn

One of the important social and political events in the history of Qājār Persia that occurred during Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s lifetime was the arrival in Persia in 1196/1781 of the Christian missionary, Henry Martyn, who eagerly commenced his religious mission to convert the Shi‘ite Muslims of Persia to Christianity. The extent of his influence was described by Muḥammad Ma‘ṣūm Shīrāzī as a calamity (*fitna*) for Persian society.³⁹ Due to the socio-political circumstances of the Qājārs, Protestant missionaries had many opportunities to come to Persia and propagate Christianity. As the Qājār monarchy was in debt to the great western powers, the monarch usually kept silent and did not make his objections to their presence public. Although Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh commissioned some scholars to write refutations of their doctrines, he avoided direct personal engagement in these theological disputes.⁴⁰

Christian missionaries were powerful in Azerbāijān, active in the fields of medicine and education, and belonged to a class of elites.⁴¹ As a consequence of the appearance of Christian missionaries like Joseph Sabastiani and Henry Martyn in Persia, the Shi‘ite clergy inaugurated a new religious and literary genre devoted to the refutation of Christian doctrines.⁴²

Henry Martyn (1781-1812 C.E.)

Henry Martyn’s family were followers of John Wesley (d. 1791), the founder of the English Methodist movement.⁴³ Like other Christian missionaries based in England, they carried out numerous religious activities abroad, especially in poor countries, such as helping the poor and sick, and setting

up schools to educate children as a means to facilitate acceptance of their missions and conversion of Muslims to Christianity.⁴⁴

During his youth Martyn was influenced by the beliefs of his Master, Charles Simeon (d. 1836). After graduating in 1802, Martyn was hired by the ‘Society for Missions to Africa and the East’, which was later renamed the ‘Church Missionary Society.’ He studied Eastern languages such as Arabic, Persian, Hindi and Bengali.⁴⁵ In 1806 he went to India as a priest in the employment of the British East India Company. He invested a great deal of effort into translating the New Testament into the local Indian languages, for which he became known as ‘the Holy Father’ (*Paderi*) in India.⁴⁶ His attitude to Muslims and Hindus was aggressive and intolerant, such that he called them the ‘enemies of God.’⁴⁷

Martyn left India for Persia, where he immediately continued his mission by revising an earlier translation of the New Testament into Persian.⁴⁸ Although John Malcolm warned Martyn about the danger of broaching and discussing theological controversies between Islam and Christianity, Martyn ignored his warning and started religious disputations with Shi‘ite scholars, which soon led to a strong reaction from them. The Persians were called ‘immoral’ by Martyn, and he remarked that his mission was to spread the message of Christ to the ‘Devilish Muhammadans.’⁴⁹

Out of political considerations, Faḥ ‘Alī Shāh and his followers did not publically oppose Martyn as he was supported directly by the English Royal Court. Nevertheless, Faḥ ‘Alī Shāh needed to satisfy the ulama and receive their approval. Therefore, he indirectly encouraged Shi‘ite scholars to write strong treatises (*jawābīyya*) in refutation of the Christian missionaries. Indeed, in the prefaces to their treatises many noted the support and encouragement of the Shāh and his court.⁵⁰ While in Shiraz from June 1811 to May 1812, Martyn completed his translation of the New Testament into Persian and then prepared two more copies of it in order to dedicate one to Faḥ ‘Alī Shāh and one to Prince ‘Abbās Mīrzā (d. 1212/1833). Martyn wanted to hand these copies to them personally; therefore, he left for Tehran. On his way to Tehran, he stayed in Isfahan where he edited the translated copies once again.⁵¹ On his way to Tehran, whilst in Qum, he had hoped to debate with Mīrzāy-i Qumī, but the latter excused himself, citing old age and sickness.⁵²

Ultimately, he could not meet Faḥ ‘Alī Shāh or ‘Abbās Mīrzā themselves in order to dedicate his Persian translation of the New Testament to them.⁵³ He left for England and he died on 16 October 1812 in Turkey of the illness he had developed during his journey.

Henry Martyn's Confrontation with Shi'ite Clerics

His first encounter with religious scholars was with some students of the chief mujtahid of Shiraz, Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Fasā'ī, in which they debated the validity of Islam and Muḥammad's prophecy. The result of these discussions was an exchange of polemical tracts and the composition of written responses. Fasā'ī wrote a response to Martyn's verbal refutations and Martyn countered with his treatises. He also had long debates with Sufi masters in Shiraz.⁵⁴ He also wrote a number of polemical tracts refuting Islam, in which he made use of the Qur'ān and the prophetic traditions to argue against Islam itself.⁵⁵ Henry Martyn was well versed in Islamic theology, Shi'ism and the seminary sciences in general, and this was acknowledged even by his most animated Shi'ite opponents. Ma'ṣūm Shīrāzī, himself a scholar of considerable repute, gave Martyn the title of 'Christian Sage' (*ḥakīm-i naṣrānī*) to indicate his respect for Martyn's knowledge and understanding.⁵⁶

Martyn's tracts played a crucial role in the social and religious history of this period and led to the formation of a new polemical genre in literature, known as responses. Martyn's treatise was written in fluent Persian, exhibiting Martyn's broad knowledge of hadith literature, the Qur'ān, as well as his acquaintance with the history of Islam based on precise references to historical events.

Refutations (jawābiyya) of Henry Martyn's tracts

Henry Martyn's stay in Persia and his composition of his tracts gave rise to a kind of new literary genre among Shi'ite scholars, known as 'Refutations of the Priest' (*radd-i pādri*). By the end of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh's era (1250/1834) 28 responses had been written by Islamic scholars, philosophers and Sufi masters.⁵⁷ Later, it became routine for many lay writers, such as Mīrzā Muḥammad Hāshim Āṣif, known as Rustam al-Ḥukamā', to write refutations of Martyn.⁵⁸ The Sufi masters who did so followed the same path as jurists, while adding their own spiritual doctrines.

Perhaps the most important response to Henry Martyn's treatise was that of Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh. Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm Shīrāzī contended, 'truly [Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh] responded in a clever and pleasing manner with fascinating phrases.'⁵⁹ From this citation one can conclude that one of the first responses to Henry Martyn was from Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh. But before embarking on a detailed explanation of his response, it will be helpful to

review a few of the other responses to Martyn’s work by other ulama and Sufi masters of this period.

Mullā Muḥammad Riḍā Hamadānī

Mullā Muḥammad Riḍā Hamadānī (d. 1247/1831) was well versed in the Shi‘ite religious sciences.⁶⁰ Mast ‘Alī Shāh mentioned him in the *Bustān al-Sīyāḥa*, saying that he was ‘the most learned among learned men of his time and the most knowledgeable among the ulama of the period. His high degree in respect to human virtues and his spiritual qualifications’, he stated, ‘were greater than all the clergymen of his time.’⁶¹

There were two treatises refuting Henry Martyn by Mullā Muḥammad Riḍā. The first was called ‘Guidance for the Misguided on the Proof of the Prophecy of the Seal of Prophethood’ (*‘Irshād al-mudhlīn fī ithbāt-i khātām-i al-nabī‘īn*), written with the encouragement of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh and supported by the influential Mīrzā Buzurg Qā‘im-Maqām Farāhānī. It was completed in 1812 just before Henry Martyn left Persia.⁶² In this treatise Mullā Muḥammad Riḍā criticised Martyn by analysing his quotations from the New Testament. He considered that the Christians misinterpreted the word ‘Paraclete’ (*fārḡilīt*) by translating it as ‘Holy Spirit’, whereas it really meant the Prophet Muḥammad.⁶³ The second treatise was called ‘The Key to Prophethood’ (*Miftāḥ al-nubuwwah*), which Muḥammad Riḍā wrote three years after *‘Irshād al-mudhlīn* as a kind of updated, revised and more complete version of the former work. It was written in six parts and was presented to Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh.⁶⁴ Mullā Muḥammad Riḍā criticised the fact that Henry Martyn followed his ‘ignorant carnal soul’ (*nafs-i jāhil*) by denying the Qur‘ān. He also asserted that Martyn’s claims were unjust and were meant to deceive the masses.⁶⁵

Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim (Sukūt)

Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim (d. 1239/1823),⁶⁶ known as Sukūt, was a Sufi master with heterodox views who also wrote a treatise in response to Martyn. He had met Nūr ‘Alī Shāh in Isfahan⁶⁷ then he became a disciple of Ḥāj ‘Abd al-Wahāb Nā‘īnī (d. 1212/1797).⁶⁸ Nā‘īnī, known as *Pīr Nā‘īn* was a Nūr-bakhshī master in the city of Nā‘īn.⁶⁹ He interpreted Christian ideology based on the Sufi belief in the ‘unity of being’ (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Sukūt

maintained that the differences between prophets and other creatures are matters of relative perfection. Amanat states, 'Sukūt even seems to imply that organized religions and the Islamic *Sharī'a* in particular, are of no eternal validity.'⁷⁰ This is likely to be true as Sukūt had certain heterodox views about Islam and Muslims.⁷¹

Ali Nūrī (d. 1245/1830)

One of the best-known scholars and philosophers of this period was Mullā 'Alī Nūrī, whom Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat referred to in his *Ri'yāḍ al-Ārifīn* as a divine philosopher (*Hakīm-i ilāhī*).⁷² He wrote a refutation of *Mīzān al-Haqq* in a philosophical manner,⁷³ at the request of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh and 'Abbās Mīrzā, called 'the Proof of Islam' (*Hujjat al-Islām*).⁷⁴

Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī (d. 1245/1829)

Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī, a well-known jurist (*faqīh*) and contemporary of Henry Martyn, also wrote a treatise in refutation called 'The Sword of the Nation' (*Sayf al-ummah*),⁷⁵ in which he presented a perfect example of what came to be known as 'scriptural argument' (*iḥtijāj kitābī*) being based on a textual analysis of the Qur'ān and the New Testament.⁷⁶

Abū al-Qāsim Qumī (d. 1231/1816)

Another well-known Uṣūlī scholar was Mīrzā-yi Qumī (1151-1231/1738-1815), who was mentioned in the last chapter. He wrote an incomplete response to Henry Martyn, arguing against some key Christian beliefs. Qumī intended to write a fuller response to Martyn but he died before its completion, so he did not have time to title his treatise.⁷⁷ In many parts of it he based his exposition on the same theory of 'scriptural argumentation' (*iḥtijāj kitābī*) that had been used by Narāqī.⁷⁸ He maintained that Christians denied the soundness of the Qur'ān and, therefore, it was impossible to expect Muslims to believe in the past prophets, including Jesus.⁷⁹

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s Response to Martyn (1248/1833)

As an Islamic scholar, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh felt obliged to write a theological response to Martyn. In this regard, Muḥammad Ma‘ṣūm Shīrāzī stated that after Martyn’s disputation with many of the Shi‘ite ulama and citizens, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh invited him for *mubāhilah*.⁸⁰ He quotes from Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, ‘You are a Christian and I am Muslim, come thou that we go to the fire, whoever does not burn, his religion is based on the Truth.’⁸¹ In response to Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, Martyn remarked, ‘I must be persuaded with knowledge and not with action’, stating he would only be persuaded by arguments based on reason.⁸²

The importance of Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s treatise is that it was his only written work and one of the first written refutations of Martyn. It became the basis and source for all the other treatises that followed.⁸³ He said that he wrote the treatise because of the numbers of requests made by his companions.

His treatise, following the style of other jurisprudential and theological treatises, started by praising God and continued with a salutation to the Prophet and the ‘People of the House’ (*ahl al-bayt*), before eulogising Faḥr ‘Alī Shāh and Abbās Mīrzā. He referred to ‘the Abode of Peace’, *Dār al-Islām* [Persia], which was in a state of holy war (*jihād*) with Russia under the leadership of the Shāh and his heir; he called the Russians ‘enemies of the religion of Prophets.’⁸⁴ He then responded to the ‘futile’ objections of Henry Martyn who refuted the miracle of the Qur’ān and other miracles from the Prophet Muḥammad. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh proposed that Martyn was motivated by ‘carnal desires and temptations from Satan.’⁸⁵

After establishing the validity of the pillars of Islam, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh asserted that he would not rely exclusively on Islamic sources, such as the hadith or stories about the Prophet, to provide evidence for prophecy, but would employ rational ways of proving his ideas that would be acceptable to anyone from any religion. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh confirmed his firm belief in Judgment Day and, contrary to the beliefs of philosophers and many Sufi masters, he asserted that the spiritual and corporeal resurrections would happen together.⁸⁶ His methodology was first to summarise Henry Martyn’s beliefs and then reject them all methodically and rationally, providing different quotations from Martyn’s tracts before adding his response to or rebuttal of each quotation. What follows is a thematic summary of his riposte to Henry Martyn’s polemic.

The Unity of Religions

In his treatise Martyn claimed that the Old and the New Testaments do not negate each other. Therefore, one cannot believe in one and reject the other. Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh concurred and added that, similarly, if one negates Islam, then one negates all other religions because their essence is the divine light.⁸⁷ Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh remarked, 'Also, I say that he whose light was in Adam's forehead, was transferred to Eve's forehead. And continuously, it was transferred from fathers to mothers until he [Muḥammad] was born. Always and in all eras, prophets gave the good tidings of the manifestations of the light and they were proud of it. The priests of Judaism and Christianity have given the good tidings about his [Muḥammad's] coming.'⁸⁸ Even though Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh noted the good tidings of the appearance of the 'Prophet at the end of time', he still maintained that there was always a light which was transferred through the prophets and their spouses down to the next prophet. With the birth of the Prophet Muḥammad this light reached its perfect manifestation. The philosophy of 'Muhammadan Light' will be explained in detail later.

Miracles

Henry Martyn proposed that a miracle should be defined as an extraordinary act that no human being can perform, which is one sign of prophet-hood.⁸⁹ Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh did not see any problem in this statement. He maintained that miracles (*mu'jiza*), wonders (*karāmat*) and sorcery (*sihr*) were extraordinary acts, but there were differences between the first two and the last type.⁹⁰ One could perform miracles and wonders while in a state of proximity of God, while sorcery was due to distance from God and proximity to Satan.⁹¹

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh proposed that God was obligated not to let his people be led astray by a mendacious sorcerer.⁹² He advocated that those who did not follow the prophets for their behaviour and attributes understood the sincerity (*ṣidq*) of the prophets through their miracles.⁹³ Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh criticised Martyn's definition of miracles as defective and nonsensical.⁹⁴ He stated that he did not need to investigate the miracles of previous prophets because of the certitude he felt for the authenticity of Muḥammad and all the prophets, while asserting that Martyn was obligated to investigate these miracles so that their truthfulness would be revealed to him.

Henry Martyn remarked that Muslim historians proposed that the miracles of the prophets must be appropriate to the common understanding of people, which was a false belief because none of the prior Christian historians had written about this. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh rejected Martyn’s claim and countered that many miracles, such as the miracle of Ṣāliḥ’s camel, were not in accordance with the accepted norms and manners of their respective ages.⁹⁵

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh addressed Henry Martyn and commented, ‘If Paderi believes in religion, he must be aware that the claim of prophethood from the immaculate Muḥammad was proven many times.’⁹⁶ Only those who had enmity towards Muḥammad did not become believers and denied his prophethood. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh stressed that the Qur’ān is the eternal miracle of the Prophet Muḥammad.⁹⁷

He also explained that prophecy had been divided into ‘general prophecy’ (*nubuwwat-i āma*), which is divine inspiration from the divine realm, and ‘specific prophecy’ (*nubuwwat-i khāṣa*), which belongs to the group of prophets who brought new laws and a new way of life to their followers.⁹⁸ ‘Specific prophecy’ and ‘general prophecy’ have been the subject of disputes between different theological schools of Islam.⁹⁹ Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh wrote:

Our prophet, peace be upon him . . . claimed to be a prophet during his own era and this is proved to be so for both those who agree and disagree with him, as there are a series of narrations about it. No one denies these narrations. Also he performed miracles as a sign of his claim [to prophecy] and there are numerous narrations about the miracles among those who agree and also those who disagree and doubt the miracles of prophet.¹⁰⁰

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh pointed out that no one can deny the Prophet’s extraordinary acts. However, many accused the Muhammad of being a sorcerer.¹⁰¹ In response, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh maintained that anyone who was aware of the virtue, good manners and acts of the Prophet would not have these doubts.¹⁰² Martyn asserted that if the miracles of the Prophet of Islam were so well documented and clear and Islam was the religion of Truth, then why had the Jews, Christian, and some Arabs not converted to Islam? And why did they have to be converted by the sword? Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh rejected this assertion and stated that those Jews, Zoroastrians and Christians who did not convert to Islam and continued their beliefs did so because they were not able to distinguish between the miracles and sorcery, while some did not

convert because of their love of wealth and social status. Nevertheless, many did convert, otherwise who were the Muslims of the time? Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh maintained that the early Muslim wars were all fought in self-defence.¹⁰³

The Qurʾān as Miracle

Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh explained that anyone who rejects the stories of the Qurʾān implicitly rejects the Torah and the New Testament because most of their stories accord with those in the Qurʾān. Therefore, if Henry Martyn insults the Qurʾān he is rejecting his own scriptures.¹⁰⁴ He went on to warn that those who are opposed to the prophethood of Muḥammad need to realise that the Qurʾān is an inimitable inspired scripture beyond the capability of human beings to comprehend. The Qurʾān's inimitability is one of the major subjects of his treatise.

Henry Martyn asserted that one could not claim that there is absolutely no one who could write a book like the Qurʾān, because in the future someone who was well versed in the Arabic language might succeed in writing such a book. Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh asserted that '[i]t is enough that the contemporaries of the Prophet were helpless to write a book like the Qurʾān... it is obligatory for all human beings to answer the call of the prophets.'¹⁰⁵ He added that those who do not have enough knowledge of the Arabic language should put their trust in the opinion of those who do.¹⁰⁶ Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh then remarked that Martyn went to those Jews and Christians who were well versed in Arabic and asked them to write a book like the Qurʾān, and that their inability to do so was proof of the author's claim.¹⁰⁷

He maintained that the miracles of the former prophets were linked to the sensible world. He remarked, 'Since the Qurʾān is in written form, it is sensible for the eye, and since it is literal, it is sensible for the ear as well. Regarding other miracles, such as the utterance of the burning bush to Moses which were audible to the sense of hearing and Moses' staff which turned into a giant snake that was sensible to the eyes,'¹⁰⁸ Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh argued that 'the Qurʾān is a superior type of miracle because it is intellectual as well as sensible.'¹⁰⁹ The 'Word' or Logos was manifested in a book (Qurʾān) in Islam, whereas in Christianity it is manifested in flesh (Jesus Christ); this means that the bodily form has disappeared in the case of Christianity, whereas in Islam the living Logos, which is the inspired book, can still be perceived today.

Henry Martyn asserted that there were no more than five or six secrets in the whole of the Qurʾān.¹¹⁰ Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh's response was that Martyn

was not trustworthy enough to be privy to the Qur’ān’s secrets. He indicated that only the Imāms were privy to its secrets, saying that the Qur’ān is like a bride wearing a veil (*burqa*); those who are not trustworthy are not able to see its beauty.¹¹¹

He argued that those who have become saints (*awliyā’*) have a true understanding of the Qur’ān.¹¹² This is especially true for the 12 Imāms of Shi‘ism who are privy to the Qur’ān’s secret beauties. The tradition that ‘Saints have gnosis of the real meaning of the Qur’ān’ had long been part of Sufi culture. Mahmoud Ayoub quoted Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdallah al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1391), ‘Outward expressions or explanations [*‘ibārāt*] are for the generality of men; they are for the ear. Subtle allusions [*isharat*] are for the elect; they are for the mind. Subtleties of meaning [*laṭā’if*] are for the friends [*awliyā’*] of God; they are glimpses [*mashāhid*] of divine presence.’¹¹³ Therefore, Sufis have the inner understanding of the reality of the Qur’ān, through their moments of ecstasy (*wajd*).¹¹⁴ On the other hand, Shi‘ites of a formalist persuasion believe that the Shi‘ite Imāms are the only ones who have the inner understanding and complete knowledge of the Qur’ān. ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī thus reasoned that the verse, ‘In a book safeguarded, none shall touch it save those who are purified’,¹¹⁵ refers to the ‘People of House’ (Fatima and the Shi‘ite Imāms). Ṭabāṭabā’ī asserted, ‘They are the People of the House who have the knowledge of the exegesis of the Qur’ān.’¹¹⁶ Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh cautiously created an amalgamation of both viewpoints, emphasising the superiority of the Imāms’ knowledge of the Qur’ān’s inner meaning. Saints (*awliyā’*) also possess certain knowledge, although limited in comparison to that of Shi‘ite Imāms.

Islamic Canon Law

Henry Martyn argued that many commandments in Islamic law had been promulgated merely to satisfy human lusts and the passions of the carnal soul (*nafs*).¹¹⁷ He questioned the role of polygamy in Islam and why Muslims were permitted to have no more than four wives, whereas the Prophet Muḥammad was permitted to have nine wives. He questioned the stories of the marriage of the Prophet Muḥammad to Zaynab, the wife of his adopted son, and suggested that the Prophet also took an oath that he would not have sexual intercourse with Maria, and that this oath was apparently later removed by divine revelation. Martyn also questioned why the wives of the Prophet Muḥammad were prohibited from re-marrying.¹¹⁸ By referring to these stories and traditions from the Prophet Muḥammad, Martyn tried to

prove that the Qurʾān is not a divine revelation and that it is a book written by a human being. Martyn thus concluded that many of the Islamic laws that are in the Qurʾān are based on the Prophet Muḥammad’s carnal desires.

In response, Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh referred to a Prophetic tradition where the Prophet says, ‘Three things have been made beloved to me in this world of yours: women, perfume, while the coolness of my eye was placed in ritual prayer.’¹¹⁹ He stressed that this saying indicates the perfection of the Prophet. The Prophet’s love of women was in accordance with Islamic laws and for the satisfaction of lust within the legal limits permitted by the sharia and for the continuation of the human race.¹²⁰ Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh proposed the view that love of these three things results in the acquisition of gnosis (*maʿrifā*).¹²¹ He then provided an esoteric interpretation of this Prophetic tradition. He asserted that Muḥammad’s main consideration was the ultimate fruition of these three. He understood that anyone who was wise would follow Muḥammad because the human race needed reproduction for the survival of humanity and the reproduction of the human race in conformity with Islamic Laws was a basic principle of human life. Ibn ʿArabi’s interpretation of this tradition is that the word perfume is the only masculine term among the other two terms (women and prayer), which specifies the governance of the feminine. He proposed that the masculine term was placed between the two feminine ones, as the man was placed between the Divine Essence (a feminine noun) and the woman.¹²²

Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh then turned and asked why Martyn did not condemn Solomon for having had 1,000 wives and having followed the temptations of his carnal soul. He contended that ‘[t]hese criticisms by Martyn are out of his enmity toward the Prophet and because of this enmity, his research does not bring him to the truth of the situation.’¹²³ Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh provided a mystical interpretation of the prohibition on the Prophet’s wives remarrying other Muslims. He asserted that the Prophet is the spiritual father of the community and the wives of the Prophet are, therefore, its spiritual mothers; in Islamic jurisprudence men cannot marry their mothers or their step-mothers; thus if any other Muslims were to remarry his wives that would be a shameful act.¹²⁴

Shiʿism

Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh asserted that anyone who does not believe in the five pillars of Islam, which are Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*), Justice (*ʿadl*), Prophecy (*nubuwwa*), the Imamate (*Imāmat*) and Resurrection (*maʿād*), is

not a follower of Islam.¹²⁵ He claimed that Shi‘ism is the only true path of Islam,¹²⁶ and also proposed that the only true heir of the Prophet Muḥammad was ‘Alī.¹²⁷ This exclusivist view was inherited from the Safavid era, in which Sunni Muslims were suppressed at certain times.¹²⁸

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh stated that none of the three first caliphs was worthy of the caliphate and they were not appointed by the Prophet Muḥammad. Only ‘Alī was worthy as he was appointed by Muhammad.¹²⁹ He maintained that ‘[a]lso, many observed the miracles of ‘Alī ibn Abī al-Ṭālib as proof of his Imamate based on definite reports and correlated narrations. Also, it is obligatory for all prophets and Imāms to declare their prophethood and Imamate to their followers.’¹³⁰ Therefore, he maintained that while ‘Alī claimed to be the rightful successor of the Prophet, he never took up arms against any of the other caliphs, thus making an indirect criticism of Sunnis for believing in other caliphs of the Muslim community.

Ḥusayn ‘Alī also declared that he believed in 124,000 prophets, as well as their heirs, who were the Imāms of Shi‘ism, mentioning each of the names of the 12 Imāms.¹³¹ Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh maintained that the appointment of the Imāms was by God and only bearers of divine knowledge, which he called ‘the knowledge of the first and the last’, can be Imāms.¹³² Their line of spiritual knowledge was continued down to the twelfth Imām, who was in occultation.¹³³ He even referred to the theological disagreements between Shi‘ite and Sunni Muslims. As he proposed, Henry Martyn referred to the Sunni interpreters, who do not believe in the immaculacy of the Prophet, unlike the Shi‘ites. He called Shi‘ite Muslims the rightful people of Islam and disapproved of Sunni beliefs.¹³⁴

Intercession (shifā‘at) in Christianity and Shi‘ism

The concept of ‘spiritual intercession’ was another important theological doctrine followed by many Sufis as well as Shi‘ites. Shi‘ites believe that the Imāms and higher rank followers of the Imāms can intercede for the salvation of their followers.¹³⁵ The early Shi‘ite theologian Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) explained that only the sin of infidelity cannot be forgiven by intercession, and it is in the power of God alone to forgive that sin. He continued by indicating that the Imāms and those who have faith in them and who have not polluted their lives with sin have the power of spiritual intercession.¹³⁶

Sufis also believe in the spiritual intercession by the Prophet Muḥammad and saints, who can intercede on behalf of their followers. Rūmī held this belief as well, saying:

He [Prophet Muḥammad] is the intercessor in this world and in yonder world – in this world (for guidance) to the (true) religion, and yonder (for entrance) to Paradise.¹³⁷

Rūmī narrated from the Prophet Muḥammad that the righteous ones, the Sufi saints, do not need intercession and can intercede on behalf of others, as he remarked:

The Prophet has said, ‘On the day of Resurrection how should I leave
the sinner to shed tears?

I will intercede with (all) my soul for the disobedient, that I may
deliver them from the heavy torment.

I will deliver by my efforts the disobedient and those who have
committed capital sins from (suffering) punishment for breaking their
covenant.

The righteous of my community are, in sooth, free from (have no need
of) my intercession on the Day of Woe;

Nay, they have the (right to make) intercession, and their words go
(forth) like an effective decree.

No burden one shall bear another’s burden, (but) I am not burdened:
God hath exalted me.¹³⁸

In the last verse of this poem Rūmī referred to a verse of the Qurʾān that says, ‘Is it other than Allah I should desire as a lord while He is the Lord of all things? And every soul earns not [blame] except against itself, and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. Then to your Lord is your return, and He will inform you concerning that over which you used to differ.’¹³⁹ This verse evidently rejects the Christian belief in Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for the sins of humanity. Rūmī referred to this verse to distinguish his belief from the Christian doctrine of Christ’s intercession.

When Martyn explained the Christian idea of spiritual intercession (*shifāʿat*), Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh responded that spiritual intercession was possible only if it was in accordance with wisdom (*hikmat*).¹⁴⁰ He defended the theological beliefs of Shiʿites and Sufis about intercession and rejected the idea of general intercession based on Christian principles. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh

used the term ‘physician’ for intercessor, as it had been used by other Sufis before. In this context Rūmī remarked:

Hail, O love that bringest us good gain – thou that art the physician of
all our ills,
The remedy of our pride and vainglory, our Plato and our Galen!¹⁴¹

The title of one of Rūmī’s stories in the *Mathnawī* is ‘The meeting of the king with the divine physician whose coming had been announced to him in a dream.’¹⁴² The phrase indicates that the saints are viewed as divine physicians. Ibn ‘Arabī also compared apostleship (*risāla*) with the physicians’ duty and said:

Know that, just as the physician is said to be a ‘servant of Nature’
(*khādim al-ṭabī‘a*), so the apostles and their successors are commonly
said to be the ‘servant of the Divine command.’¹⁴³

Ibn ‘Arabī elucidated the superiority of the apostle as the physician of the soul. The apostle in his definition is a spiritual doctor.¹⁴⁴ Physicians have limited control and knowledge of physical bodies, and their power is inferior to the power of spiritual doctors. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh maintained that sins are like rotten food: if a person eats it, he will need medicine for the prevention of sickness. If he becomes sick he needs to go to a physician. The physician will tell him that he cannot eat any food other than the distasteful medicine.¹⁴⁵ Of course, if he continued to eat the rotten food, he would die.

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh used these examples and, continuing with his mystical explanation, commented that the medicine is repentance (*tawba*), the physician the intercessor or saint who prescribes self-mortification for the sinner to purify his soul, without which he is worthy of hell-fire, which is death.¹⁴⁶ Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s explanation here contains an indirect reference to the Sufi path. According to most Sufi masters, the spiritual physician is the Sufi saint and repentance is his medication. He also indicated that one recovers to a healthy spiritual state from affliction with the sickness of deviations and disobedience through the guidance of the spiritual physician. In this regard, Abū al-Qāsim Qushayrī (d. 465/1074) proposed that repentance is a return to the Islamic Law and spiritual codes,¹⁴⁷ and likewise Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988)¹⁴⁸ and ‘Alī ibn Uthmān Hujwīrī (d. 463/1071)¹⁴⁹ also considered repentance (*tawba*) to be the first station (*maqām*) on the spiritual path.

Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh asserted that Martyn was wrong to claim that Jesus Christ was the spiritual intercessor for all humanity. He also maintained that this idea of general intercession was contrary to Divine Justice and the religious Law.¹⁵⁰ However, in praising Jesus one should include all the prophets and the faithful, to receive spiritual blessings.¹⁵¹ Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh believed that if the sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ were for the purification of humanity, then there would be no need for any laws and prohibition for humanity after him. Therefore, all religions, including Christianity, would be abrogated due to the abrogation of those laws. Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh's understanding of religion had two aspects: interior and exterior, the latter consisting of the laws, prohibitions and commandments brought to humanity by the prophets.¹⁵² These two aspects are inseparable. If one part is destroyed, it brings about the destruction of the whole.

The 'People of the Book'

Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh stated that Jews and Christians who lived around Mecca in the Prophet's day socialised with Muslims and there was no antagonism between them.¹⁵³ His views about the wars between the people of the book and the Muslims during the time of the Prophet are crucial. He believed that these wars were fought by Muslims in defence of their territories and their faith, and not for conquest.¹⁵⁴ He admired Sunni Muslims for their relationship with the people of the book, and remarked, 'Sunni people, who are the dignified people of Islam on account of their numerousness and wealth, maintained their friendship, brotherhood and social interactions with Jews and Christians.' However, he imposed certain limitations on this relationship.¹⁵⁵

Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh had the same belief about the Bible as other Muslim theologians, stating that the companions of Jesus altered the Word of God and that there are different narrations of the Gospels (*'Injīl'*) among various Christian sects. If there is no consensus about the Bible among Christians, how then can Muslims validate it?¹⁵⁶ He specified that he did not reject the former prophets because he believed in Muḥammad,¹⁵⁷ stating that if one rejects one prophet, one has rejected the rest.

Martyn contended that there were three or four people involved in writing the New Testament. Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shāh stated that the New Testament was the Divine Word, but since the text had been altered, it is now nearly impossible to distinguish the truth from falsehood in it.¹⁵⁸ Martyn declared

that there is no mention of the Prophet Muḥammad in the books of former prophets. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh replied that:

. . . the Prophet Muḥammad in both the Torah and the Gospels was described in appearance and name. Some people do not come across it or they do not recognize it, whilst others have said that these signs that are in the Torah and the Gospels are for a savior that will come in the future. The consensus [among Muslims] is that this was Qā’im Āl-i Muḥammad [Mahdī] who is the promised Messiah.¹⁵⁹

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh believed that the leaders of the Christian community omitted the name and titles of the Prophet Muḥammad from the Gospels and attributed these titles to themselves because of their love of power and wealth.¹⁶⁰

Martyn defended the idea of the trinity in Christianity, which Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh rejected, contending that Christians believe that God has created someone in his own likeness, a God-figure who is Jesus Christ, and this idea is evidently untrue.¹⁶¹ Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh explained that believing in the trinity is due to a lack of understanding and the Christians’ alteration of the sayings of the prophets. He also rejected the idea of the incarnation of the divine in human beings (*hulūl*),¹⁶² calling the trinity ‘foolish imitation’ and apostasy.¹⁶³ He also noted that those who believe in the trinity are placed in the lowest level of hell (*asfal al-sāfilīn*).¹⁶⁴ He affirmed that he has no doubt that Jesus Christ was the true prophet of God, but he adds that with the emergence of Islam the religion of Jesus was abrogated.¹⁶⁵ His views were closer to those of theologians of Shi‘ism than to the Sufis in this regard.¹⁶⁶

Martyn claimed that the vast diffusion of Christianity and conversion of people to its faith was a miracle. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh counterclaimed that these conversions were to a false religion which is no miracle at all.¹⁶⁷ He believed that the Christians of his time were not the true heirs of Jesus. He asserted, ‘The religion that Paderi and his cohorts hold, is not the religion of Christ.’¹⁶⁸ He believed that the religion of Christ was the religion of Truth, whereas the religion of Christians had strayed from the straight path of truth. However, he remarked, ‘Truly, Christians (*naṣāra*) are superior in knowledge, intelligence, truthfulness, serenity, chivalrousness and loyalty in comparison to the followers of other religions.’¹⁶⁹ He asserted that the Jews and the Magians who were converted to Islam during the time of the Prophet Muḥammad were not true Muslims, whereas the Christians who converted to Islam converted out of ‘truthfulness, serenity and right-

eousness.¹⁷⁰ He invited Christians to contemplate the truthfulness of the Qur‘ān and Islam, and reminded them that Islam had abrogated all former religions.¹⁷¹

To conclude, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s treatise is more theological than mystical. He wrote it as a theologian and jurist, responding to Henry Martyn’s refutation of Islam; however, there are some veiled mystical points in that treatise. According to the social and religious context of his time, he was more moderate in his defence of Islam than the majority of his contemporaries. This moderation was the effect of his Sufi beliefs, however; since he lived during an era of persecution of Sufis, he was careful not to provoke the wrath of his fundamentalist Uṣūlī enemies by any mystical interpretations of Christianity.

Conclusion

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s comportment, as the first Iranian Ni‘matullāhī master after Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh, was appropriate to the context of the religious seminary milieu and the wider socio-political situation of that period. His mission was to dissimulate his beliefs and to conform to mainstream Shi‘ism. He presented himself as a preacher and scholar, and wrote his only treatise as a Shi‘ite theologian defending Islam against Christian missionaries, specifically, a refutation of Henry Martyn. This treatise was an important contribution to the literary and religious genre of *Radd-i Padri*. As one of the first treatises written by a Shi‘ite seminary scholar, it influenced other scholars to write treatises in refutation of Martyn.

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh lived as an active scholar, in the sense that he held communal prayers and preached in the mosque and seminary colleges. Before him, Ni‘matullāhī masters had appeared only as wandering dervishes aiming to revive Ni‘matullāhī Sufism in Persia, putting their emphasis on love and the emotional aspects of Sufism. Thus, they developed their own ecstatic poetry and music, which inspired seekers.

As explained earlier, the fundamentalist Shi‘ite scholars persecuted Ni‘matullāhī Sufis, which is why Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh did not follow the same path as his predecessors. He was a conservative master whose appearance was far from that of the dervishes of the time. Unlike his predecessors (Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh, Nūr ‘Alī Shāh and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh), he did not wear a dervish’s cloak (*khirqā*) or hat (*tāj*). This was indicative of an inner and philosophical change within the Ni‘matullāhī order: the transformation

from a charismatic Sufi movement to a theologically orthodox mystical order.

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s treatise in refutation of Henry Martyn, which was his main contribution to the literary and intellectual milieu of his time, was not as important as the writings of the next two masters (Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh and Mast ‘Alī Shāh) who were more thinkers trying to create a mystical philosophy out of Ni‘matullāhī Sufism. Since Ḥusayn ‘Alī did not distinguish himself from seminary scholars, his treatise was more of a dry Shi‘ite jurisprudential refutation of Martyn with some hints of his mystical thinking, and is hardly recognisable today as being the work of a Sufi who was also the supreme master of the Ni‘matullāhī Order.

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s approach to converting people to Sufism was, in a way, elitist. He examined his students and followers to see if they were ready for Sufism and would dissimulate his Sufi beliefs so as not to invite persecution. He encouraged his followers to keep their outward appearances in conformity with mainstream Shi‘ism and to avoid any acts that might distinguish them as Sufis. The revival of the Ni‘matullāhī order was Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s mission, yet he was not as active as the Ni‘matullāhī masters before or after him; he was more of an intermediary for the order’s transformation from an enthusiastic mystical movement directed towards the masses to a ‘theologically correct’ Shi‘ite Sufi order directed by and towards an intellectual elite.

The Life and Works of Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh

Introduction

Muḥammad Ja‘far Kabūdarāhangī (1172/1759–1238/1823), known by the spiritual title of Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh,¹ was one of the greatest Ni‘matullāhī masters of the Qājār dynasty. He belonged to the Qarāguzlūw tribe, and his father and ancestors were the elders, nobles and commanders-in-chief of their tribes and provincial districts.² He started learning religious sciences from an early age and became a well-versed seminary scholar.³ His successor, Mast ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1253/1837), maintained that the Ni‘matullāhī order flourished during Majdhüb’s leadership.⁴ He claimed that Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh was like Shāh Ni‘matullāh and Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) as regards his place in the development of Sufi theosophy, and referred to a dream in which he saw Majdhüb as the essence of Shāh Ni‘matullāh.⁵

Many scholars believe that he, along with Kawthar ‘Alī Shāh, was the most important disciple of Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh.⁶ After Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh passed away, Majdhüb became the Master of the Ni‘matullāhī order, but his approach to the survival of Ni‘matullāhī Sufism was different from that of Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, and he introduced a novel perspective on the religious sciences.⁷ As an erudite Shi‘ite seminary scholar during the reign of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh Qājār (r. 1212/1772–1250/1834), he was both a philosopher and an independent religious thinker.⁸ He wrote masterly philosophical glosses on marginal interpretations of Bāghūnawī on the *Muḥkamāt-i Quṭb al-Dīn Rāzī*.⁹ He also studied Shi‘ite jurisprudence under the direction of well-known Uṣūlī jurists, but at the same time corresponded with Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā‘ī (1756–1825), seminary scholar and founder of the Shaykhī school, with anti-*Ijtihād* arguments about the philosophical concept of ‘Existence’ (*wujūd*).¹⁰ As a result, in his treatises one can find writings on theology (*kalām*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*), although he is more focused on philosophical matters, with an approach dominated by his mystical beliefs.



Portrait of Majdhüb 'Ali Shāh. (Private collection of Sultānḥusayn Tābandih)

Unlike Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, Majdhüb did not dissimulate his Sufi beliefs. He held Sufi sessions, just like Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh, Nūr ‘Alī Shāh and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh. The difference was that, unlike them, he did not wear Sufi attire in public but instead chose the garments of the ulama. Although he did not identify himself as a scholar, he always mentioned that he studied in religious seminaries and that he was qualified to issue fatwas. He was the first Ni‘matullāhī master who wrote in Qājār Iran in defence of Sufism, while dissociating himself from non-Shi‘ite Sufi beliefs, which he considered to be heterodox. During Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh’s lifetime, as we shall see, his ability to defend Sufi beliefs proved extremely useful, particularly since religious verdicts were issued against Sufis and the Sufis of the Ni‘matullāhī order fell victim to persecution.¹¹

The Life of Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh

In his autobiography, entitled *Majdhüb’s Beliefs* (*Aqā’id al-Majdhübīyya*), Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh defends his Sufi beliefs and relates them to his studies at a religious seminary school and his quest for the truth.¹² Mast ‘Alī Shāh in his *Walled Gardens of Travel* (*Ḥadā’iq al-siyāha*) and *Gardens of Travel* (*Būstān al-siyāha*), and Mīrzā Ma‘šūm Shīrāzī in his *The Paths of Spiritual Realities* (*Tarā’iq al-ḥaqā’iq*), both provide detailed biographies of Majdhüb. There are also secondary sources such as *Riyāḍ al-‘arifīn* by Riḍa Qulī Khān Hidāyat and *Shams al-tawārikh* by Asad Allāh Īzadgushasb, which will be used here to reconstruct his biography.

In his autobiography Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh begins by describing his ancestors, since belonging to a noble and religious family was held to be a virtue during that period. As noted above, Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh belonged to the Qarāguzlūw tribe,¹³ a branch of the Qizilbāsh tribe, in which all his ancestors were nobles and commanders-in-chief.¹⁴ His grandfather, Ḥājji ‘Abdullāh Khān ibn Ja‘far Khān, was a trusted ally of Karīm Khān Zand, and a general renowned for his fairness.¹⁵ Ḥājji Şafar Khān, his father, was a religious man who avoided worldly matters and spent most of his time in prayer and self-mortification.¹⁶ His father was well versed in the religious sciences and was among the class of religious elites in his city who were students of Sayyid Muḥaqqiq Ibrāhīm Raḍavī. Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh introduced his father as a devout Muslim who performed his ordinary religious duties as well as supererogatory exercises and certain prayers and religious invocations (*dhikr*). His father also went on an annual pilgrimage to the shrines

of Shi'ite Imāms. On one of his pilgrimages he passed away in Karbalā and was buried near the shrine of the second Shi'ite Imām Ḥusayn.¹⁷

Majdhūb, apart from belonging to a noble and religious family, took pride in being knowledgeable about the religious seminary sciences and having an interior realisation of Sufi mystical states (*aḥwāl*). Mast 'Alī Shāh claims that Majdhūb was a unique man owing to what he called the 'tri-partite virtues'. The first was his noble ancestry, the second his knowledge of outward religious learning, and the third his realisation of those mystical states and possession of spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*). Mast 'Alī Shāh believed that Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh had reached the level of perfection in all three virtues to the extent that he exceeded all other Sufi masters of his time.¹⁸

Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh started learning religious sciences at an early age. Until the age of 17 — that is, until the year 1189/1776 — he lived in Hamadan, where he mostly studied logic and literature, and then moved to Isfahan to study scholastic theology (*kalām*), mathematics, philosophy (*ḥikmat*) and natural sciences.¹⁹ In Isfahan he lived as a student, studying the traditional and speculative sciences (*'ulūm-i naqlī wa 'aqlī*), which he continued to do for a further 20 years in different cities, according to his own account.²⁰

After five years in Isfahan, in the year 1195/1781 he moved to Kashan,²¹ where he was a student of the well-known scholar, Mullā Muḥammad Mahdī Narāqī (d. 1209/1795).²² In Kashan Majdhūb studied jurisprudence (*fiqh*), principles of religion (*uṣūl*) and theosophy (*ḥikmat Ilāhī*) under Narāqī's instruction.²³ It was during his stay in Kashan that he began to familiarise himself with mystical and philosophical texts by philosophers such as Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), Ibn Fahad Ḥillī (d. 841/1437), Qāḍī Nūru'llāh Shūshtarī (d. 1019/1610), Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 787/1385), Maytham Baḥrānī (d. 678/1280), Shaykh Bahā'ī (d. 1030/1621), Mīr Findiriskī (d. 1050/1640), Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1632), Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī (d. 1070/1660), Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Māzandarānī (d. 1080/1670) and Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1090/1680).²⁴ Majdhūb's studies of these theologians and philosophers proved to be crucial for the formation of his own thought, particularly since later in his books, he used their words as proof-texts for his own ideas.

By studying these texts he understood that he should practise certain types of self-mortification that conformed to the Shi'ite tradition.²⁵ During this period Majdhūb lived an ascetic lifestyle. He did not pursue knowledge in order to attain social status, but to gain proximity to God through gnosis.²⁶ He went in search of admirable men of learning and good char-

acter, and he endeavoured to learn various litanies and prayers of the heart from them.²⁷ He mentions the scholars from whom he was inculcated with the practices of remembrance of God (*dhikr*). In Isfahan, Muḥammad ‘Alī Muẓafar and Miḥrāb Jilānī instructed him to occupy himself with practices of spiritual remembrance. In Kāshān, he received invocation and litanies from Mīr Muḥammad ‘Alī Muẓafar.²⁸ Majdhüb also met many other scholars and philosophers (*ḥukamā*), such as Mīrzā Muḥammad Muddaris Bīdābādī (d. 1197/1783), Mīrzā Muḥammad ‘Alī Muẓaffar Iṣfahānī (d.n.), Mulla ‘Alī Nūrī (d. 1246/1831), Mīrzā Muḥammad ‘Alī Kāshānī (died after 1217/2803), Mīrzā Mahdī Mashhadī (d. 1215/ 1801), Āqā Muḥammad Baqir Bihbahānī (d. 1204/1790), Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Bihbahānī (d. 1229/1814) and Mīrzā Mahdī Shahrīstānī (d. 1214/1800), and became their disciple.²⁹ In his *Mīrāt al-Haqq*, Majdhüb says that he spent his life in search of different sciences, including Islamic philosophy (*ḥikmat*), the natural sciences and the divine sciences, in order to obtain spiritual knowledge and gnosis.³⁰

At the age of 30, Majdhüb moved from Kashan to Qum, where he became the pupil of Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim Qumī (d. 1231 /1816), known as Mīrzā-yi Qumī. During this period, he secluded himself and strictly limited his social life. According to his autobiography, he was consequently accused of being a Sufi.³¹ In Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat’s account, he says that Majdhüb lived this life of seclusion in Qum from the age of 27.³² During this time, he also made many pilgrimages to the holy Shi’ite cities in Iraq.

While Majdhüb was a student of Mīrzā-yi Qumī, Qumī ordered him to write books. Majdhüb wrote an exegesis on Shams al-Dīn Sayyid Muḥammad ‘Āmilī’s (d. 1009/1600) *Madārik al-aḥkām* and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Makki ‘Āmilī’s (d. 786/1385) *Luma’ya Damishqīyya*, which Qumī praised.³³ Once Qumī felt that Majdhüb was qualified to be a Shi’ite jurist and satisfy the religious needs of the people, he asked Majdhüb to leave Qum and go to Hamadan, giving him permission to issue public religious verdicts.³⁴ However, Majdhüb refused Qumī’s offer.³⁵ Although he was not initiated into any Sufi order during that period, he had his own mystical point of view and tried to avoid religious quarrels, spending his time occupied with spiritual matters and in prayer.

From Majdhüb’s own autobiography as well as the other accounts of his life, it seems that he had succeeded in attaining a very high level in his knowledge of the sciences of philosophy (*ḥikmat*), scholastic theology (*kalām*), Qur’anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Ma’ṣūm Shīrāzī claims that Majdhüb received numerous authorisations to teach from different Shi’ite scholars.³⁶ Mast ‘Alī Shāh, with

typical hyperbole, celebrated Majdhūb as being the most eminent *mujtahid* as well as the foremost exponent of rational sciences of his day.³⁷

Majdhūb ended his seclusion after four years and then spent most of his time studying religious texts. It was during this time that he wrote glosses on *Kifāyat al-maqṣad*.³⁸ Although Majdhūb now had a social life and attended religious seminaries, he still avoided eating meat as much as possible and continued to practise a 40-day retreat and seclusion (*chilih nishīnī*) in his leisure time. However, he stipulated that he would never avoid meat completely, on the basis of the tradition from Shi'ite Imāms ordering their followers not to avoid meat for more than 40 days at a time.³⁹

Majdhūb was never satisfied with the sciences taught in the religious seminaries, which were purely exoteric (*ẓāhirī*).⁴⁰ It was during this period of Majdhūb's life that he began his quest for realisation of the divine reality and truth (*ḥaqīqat*) within Islam and travelled to different places, like Khurāsān and Iraq, where he met different Sufi masters. At the end of this quest he met Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh Iṣfahānī, who initiated him into the Ni'matullāhī order.⁴¹ He also met Sayyid Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh Iṣfahānī.⁴²

In Karbalā in the year 1207/1792 Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh appointed Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh as a shaykh to guide seekers and inculcate the practice of spiritual remembrance (*dhikr*) to novices.⁴³ Eight years later, in 1215/1800, Riḍā 'Alī Shāh passed away, leaving Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh as the spiritual pole (*quṭb*) of the Ni'matullāhī order.⁴⁴ In the year 1234/1818⁴⁵ Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh appointed Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh as next in line to serve as the spiritual pole.⁴⁶

At this juncture, Majdhūb moved back to his home town of Hamadan. There, he encouraged people to unify their practice of the exoteric canonical law (*sharī'at*) of Islam with the esoteric Path (*ṭarīqat*) of Sufism and claimed that the combination of the two led one to salvation.⁴⁷ He remained in Hamadan where he spent most of his time trying to reconcile Shi'ism with Sufism and engaging in public debates over religious books.⁴⁸

Majdhūb was well known among his contemporaries as an extremely pious and sincere ascetic. These qualities led Mast 'Alī Shāh, as well as later biographers, to compare Majdhūb to Salmān al-Farīsī⁴⁹ and to Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī;⁵⁰ he was called the Salmān of his time (*Salmān-i Zamān*) and the Abū Dharr of his time (*Abūdharr-i Zamān*).⁵¹

There are several accounts of Majdhūb's death. According to Mast 'Alī Shāh, Majdhūb lived for 64 years.⁵² He said that before Majdhūb travelled to Azerbaijan he had predicted his imminent death, and claimed that Majdhūb told his disciples that he would not return from this journey.⁵³ On the other

hand, Ma‘šūm Shīrāzī believed that Majdhüb passed away at the age of 63, when there was a cholera epidemic in Tabriz and the city was evacuated.⁵⁴ Although Majdhüb himself became afflicted with cholera, he commanded his disciples to leave, except for Mīrzā Naṣrullāh Ṣadr al-Mamālik Ardabīlī. Majdhüb asked Mīrzā Naṣrullāh to perform the ritual prayer for his funeral and bury him in the holy shrine of Sayyid Ḥamza.⁵⁵ According to some of his biographers, Majdhüb passed away during his prayers⁵⁶ on 1239/1823 in the city of Tabriz.⁵⁷

* * *

In what follows I will outline Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh’s religious, philosophical and mystical thought and place it in the socio-political and theological context of Qājār Persia. First, I review his views on the issue of imitating religious authority (*taqlīd*), before outlining his views on various mystical topics such as the ‘Divine Faculty’, the remembrance or invocation of God, religious extremism and so on. Next, a major section of the chapter is devoted to Majdhüb’s interpretation of *waḥdat al-wujūd* or ‘unity of being’, that had come to be associated with the the mystical philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabī. A rather long review is then given of Majdhüb’s views on the different types of Sufism, that is, his distinction between the religiously acceptable vs. damnable and heretical mystical paths in Islam. The final section of the chapter is devoted to Majdhüb’s works.

* * *

Majdhüb tried his best to stay out of religious disputes among Shi‘ite seminary scholars, since he knew that not doing so would inevitably increase his religious duties and responsibilities. He tried to ensure that his fundamental and mystical beliefs were always kept in line with mainstream Shi‘ism. Hence, throughout his own writings he always derived most of his arguments and evidence from the great Shi‘ite texts. For example, in his *Aqā‘id al-Majdhübīyya* Majdhüb claims that it was his study of Shi‘ite books such as *Hujjat al-Kāfi*, *Ziyārat Jāmi‘ Kabīr* and *Ziyārat Mulūd* that enabled him to gain knowledge of the spiritual dignity of the Shi‘ite Imāms.⁵⁸ As cautious as he tried to be, historical narration and texts written by Majdhüb and his contemporaries suggest that his life was threatened because of his mystical beliefs.⁵⁹ Although Majdhüb never wrote any apologetic text in direct defence of his mystical beliefs, since it had become life-threatening to do so,

he referred to a verse from the Qur'ān: 'Do not seek destruction at your own hands' (Qur'ān: 2:195). He continued, 'I am afraid of this verse, otherwise there is no escape from God's destiny; since his destiny is predestined.'⁶⁰ Consequently, he decided to write apologetic treatises in defence of his theological and mystical beliefs after all.

Commenting on Majdhūb's life-threatening situation, Mast 'Alī Shāh states that he was oppressed by the political powers and the bigoted seminary scholars of Shi'ism, some of whom issued fatwas that Majdhūb was an infidel who should be executed.⁶¹ Mast 'Alī Shāh himself will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Imitation (*taqlīd*)

Taqlīd is one of the controversial principles of Shi'ite theology which 'in Islamic jurisprudence means "emulation of another in matters of the law"'.⁶² Although in early Shi'ism the concept of *taqlīd* was not highly disputed, there were some instances in which narrators of hadith, such as Muḥammad al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940) and Shaykh al-Mufīd (d.413/1022),⁶³ rejected *taqlīd* and *ijtihād*.⁶⁴ The majority of Shi'ites, on the other hand, believed that a Shi'ite must emulate a mujtahid on the derivatives of faith (*furū' al-dīn*). Muqaddas Ardibīlī (d. 993/1585) said, 'The "imitation" [*taqlīd*] of the mujtahid is good and permissible.'⁶⁵ *Ijtihād* and imitation were subjects of dispute between the two seminarian schools of Uṣūlī and Akhbārī Shi'ites from the early days of their formation.⁶⁶

The Akhbārī School was founded at the beginning of the 11th/17th century by Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1033/1623),⁶⁷ who did not believe in the legitimacy of *ijtihād* and was the first to criticise mujtahids.⁶⁸ Afterwards, several Shi'ite scholars adopted his beliefs and became influential during the late Safavid period, before being suppressed by the Qājārs.⁶⁹ The Akhbārīs are known for their rejection of *taqlīd*. They believe that Shi'ites must imitate their Imāms, while it is not permissible to imitate a mujtahid.⁷⁰ They also believe in the illegitimacy of *ijtihād*⁷¹ and, as Arjomand stated, they clearly challenge the authority of mujtahids.⁷² They firmly believe that the religious needs of Shi'ite society were formed by the traditions of Shi'ite Imāms. The Akhbārīs stood in opposition to Uṣūlī scholars and rejected Uṣūlī beliefs about ulama being the general deputy of the Imām.⁷³ They restricted the authority of scholars to the area of jurisprudence and Shi'ite tradition.

Some scholars with Sufi tendencies and Shi‘ite Sufis, like Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī and Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, adopted Akhbārī views on jurisprudential matters. As their name indicates, the Akhbārīs relied on scripture and traditions (*akhbār*) from Imāms. This ‘non-rational’ approach to religious matters led to the belief that knowledge could be gained through spiritual disclosure (*kashf*) and the mystical sciences. Many Akhbārī scholars also adopted a mystical lifestyle.⁷⁴

Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī expressed Akhbārī views in his writings, and an Akhbārī seminary school was founded by this great mystic scholar.⁷⁵ His pupils, including Mullā Muḥammad Šālih Māzandarānī (d.1081/1670), were among the followers of the school of Akhbārism.⁷⁶ He was also close to Sufi traditions, and some people claim that he was initiated into the Dhahabīyya order.⁷⁷ Muḥammad Akhbārī (d. 1232/1817), a zealous Akhbārī, practised some mystical rituals related to folk Sufism.⁷⁸

In opposition to Akhbārī views, the Uṣūlī scholars, who considered themselves to be the general deputies of the Imām (*nā’ib al-‘āmm*) in spiritual and jurisprudential matters, emphasised the importance of *taqlīd*, especially during Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh’s era.⁷⁹ Mīrzāy-i Qumī in his *Qawānīn al-uṣūl* and Sayyid Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī Ṭabāṭabā’ī (d. 1242/1826) in his *Mafātīḥ al-uṣūl* have lengthy discussions about *ijtihād* and *taqlīd* with a firm anti-Akbārī tone.⁸⁰ Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī, known as Waḥīd,⁸¹ already discussed in detail above, delivered the final blow to the Akhbārīs by making the Uṣūlī Shi‘ite school dominant amongst the seminary schools.⁸² The Uṣūlīs divided people into two groups. The first were mujtahids, and the second were laymen imitating the mujtahid, known as *muqallids*.

Like many other Shi‘ite mystics, Majdhüb criticised the controversial concept of *taqlīd*, or imitation of a mujtahid. He stated that the imitation of mujtahids is from the Divine Legislator, *shāri’ muqaddas*.⁸³ Obviously, his views are similar to those of the Akhbārī School on this matter.

He also made reference to and relied on Akhbārī scholars like Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī and Mullā Muḥammad Šālih Māzandarānī. In confrontation with Uṣūlī scholars, however, he was cautious and did not directly challenge their ideas; instead of posing any direct opposition, he quoted from Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī. Majlisī says that he has taken the middle path: he is neither suspicious of the Shi‘ite ulama nor believes them to be the perfect leaders of the community. Consequently, they cannot be imitated.⁸⁴ Their responsibility, in his view, is limited to the branches of religion (*furū’ al-dīn*).⁸⁵

Majdhūb said that when the Shi‘ite Imāms pass away or for any reason cannot be accessed by their followers, the Shi‘ites must go to the narrators and knowers (*‘arifīn*) of hadith, who know the traditions by heart.⁸⁶ The master who has become illuminated by the Lights of the Prophet and Shi‘ite Imāms becomes a knower of divinity, and it does not matter if he is called a Sufi or not.⁸⁷

With regard to the term Majdhūb used above, *‘arifīn*, some further explanation is required. The Akhbārī scholar Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī used the term *‘arifūn* to refer to scholars who are qualified to interpret the Qur’ān. Akhbārīs believe that the Imāms provided the real meaning of the Qur’ān through their hadith and, therefore, those who have knowledge of hadith can interpret the Qur’ān.⁸⁸ Astarābādī, the first known Akhbārī scholar, believed that the only true knowledge (*‘ilm*) is the knowledge of hadith, whereas mujtahids based their religious verdicts on their own opinions.⁸⁹ Kāshānī merged his mystical theology with his Akhbārī beliefs and created a new amalgamation of Akhbārī theology and Sufi philosophy, teaching that through following the acts and sayings of Shi‘ite Imāms one can become endowed with spiritual insight (*ṣāhib baṣīrat*).⁹⁰

In a similar idea to Kāshānī’s, in his *Mir‘āt al-Ḥaqq* Majdhūb stated that although following the Shi‘ite Imāms is a divine command, imitating the scholars and righteous men is not; in fact, it has even been prohibited in some traditions.⁹¹ However, Majdhūb did not want to distance himself from the Uṣūlī school, the dominant school of Shi‘ism in the Qājār era. He opposed any harsh criticism of the Uṣūlī scholars and even condemned Ghazālī, who had reproached ‘evil’ scholars (*‘ulamā’i sū’*).⁹² In this he referred to Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Māzandarānī, an Akhbārī jurist who stated that Ghazālī was excessive in his reproach.⁹³ As we have seen, Shi‘ite Sufis and Akhbārī scholars constituted religious masters who challenged the ultimate authority of Uṣūlī scholars, creating a spiritual alternative to *ijtihād* for their followers.⁹⁴

The ‘Divine Faculty’ (*quwwa qudsiyya*)

A number of Shi‘ite scholars with tendencies towards Islamic mysticism believed that for a scholar to be qualified to issue a religious verdict he must possess a divine faculty (*quwwa qudsiyya*).⁹⁵ In this regard, Majdhūb referred to a tradition attributed to Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, who said, ‘It is not permitted for a person to issue a religious legal opinion (*fatwā*) who does not seek it from God with inner purity.’⁹⁶

Majdhūb distinguished between different levels of scholarship within the Shi‘ite tradition. In the *Mir‘āt al-Ḥaqq*, he refers to *Munīyāt al-murīdīn*, in which Shahīd Thānī divides the ulama into three groups. The first group has the gnosis of God in its heart; the second is well versed in exterior religious sciences; and the third has gnosis in its heart and is well versed in the exterior sciences. In order to reap the rewards of the hereafter, people should follow the first group. From the second group people can obtain their religious opinions. Being with the third offers both benefits. Majdhūb does not draw any conclusion on this matter in his treatise of *Mir‘āt al-Ḥaqq*; he just refers to these great scholars.⁹⁷ However, in his *Marāḥil al-sālikīn* he is more explicit, stating that the first group are like stars that illuminate only a small area around them,⁹⁸ while the second group are like candles that burn themselves and provide only a little light. Among this group there are some scholars whose love of the material world destroys religion. They do not have knowledge of the afterlife or qualifications for the guidance of anyone except common people (*‘awwām*).⁹⁹ The third group, however, are those who possess both exterior and interior knowledge, and are like the sun whose light is a guide for humanity.¹⁰⁰ Majdhūb called them the pole (*qutb*) of their time, which is a Sufi term. He continues by remarking that this group has been excessively criticised and unfairly persecuted by the scholars of the exterior sciences.¹⁰¹

Sufi masters can be found among the first or the third group, according to the level of their seminary background. The only group that may destroy itself is the second group. Therefore, it is evident that in terms of guiding humanity Sufi masters are in a superior religious condition compared to ordinary seminary-trained Shi‘ite scholars. Majdhūb believes that the seminary scholars should engage in mystical practices. He refers to a tradition from Imām Ḥusayn stating that scholars (*‘ālim*) should always have fear as they become familiar with the Majestic and Beautiful Attributes of God, and their deeds must be in accordance with their words, so that what they teach and preach are one. Majdhūb says that when a scholar reaches the state of fear, his soul becomes imbued with Divine Light, which extinguishes his carnal desires. During this stage he witnesses the Divine Attributes through the Eye of Certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*). Every blameworthy quality is burnt away through the fire of witnessing.¹⁰²

Majdhūb maintains that a gnostic jurist, contrary to the doctrine taught in in the seminary schools, knows that he has to hide his knowledge, since many people are not worthy of understanding it. He also exhibits patience towards those who are harsh in criticising him. Silence, a quality given

only to the possessors of chivalry, is also an attribute of a gnostic jurist.¹⁰³ Another point is that the scholar possessing the ‘divine faculty’ cannot be corrupted, in contrast to the multitude who, although they may claim to be scholars, are too close to the authorities of their time, foolishly using their knowledge to further material concerns related to their worldly careers.¹⁰⁴

Majdhūb provides a mystical explanation of the true scholar, explaining that scholars like Kāshānī, Shaykh Bahā’ī and others of their type emphasised the belief that Shi‘ite scholars must possess the divine faculty, which cannot be gained merely by attending a seminary school. There is need for a certain mystical progression through Sufi practices.¹⁰⁵

Dhikr

Dhikr is a fundamental practice within the Sufi tradition, but not in Shi‘ism. It is such an important concept that Sufi masters such as Abū Naṣr Al-Sarrāj,¹⁰⁶ Abūl-Qāsim Qushayrī,¹⁰⁷ Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (d. ca. 618/1221),¹⁰⁸ ‘Alī ibn Uthmān Hujwīrī¹⁰⁹ and many others have written extensively about its practice. In this regard, Majdhūb chose to be a Sufi and a Shi‘ite seminarian at the same time, integrating authentic Shi‘ite prayers with the *adhkār* (plural of *dhikr*) of the Sufis. In order to do this, he sought help from the Shi‘ite Sufi masters before him.

Majdhūb believed that the invocation of God (*dhikr*) during a period of seclusion constitutes spiritual medication for human beings and leads them to salvation.¹¹⁰ This seems to contradict the general Muslim belief that following obligatory religious duties is the only path to salvation. However, Majdhūb indicated that each obligatory act is inseparable from *dhikr*, and there is no contradiction between the two.¹¹¹

In the *Mirṣād al-‘ibād* Najm al-Dīn Rāzī declares that constant practice and persistence (*mulāzimat wa mudāwimat*) in the invocation (*dhikr*) free the soul of the wayfarer from everything other than God.¹¹² Majdhūb follows the same doctrine, and he considers ‘practice of the invocation’ (*mulāzimat-i dhikr*) as a principle on the spiritual path. One must avoid the remembrance of other than God, and remember only God.¹¹³ Continuance in *dhikr* leads to its domination over the heart and, consequently, the heart becomes the locus for the manifestation of Divine Attributes.¹¹⁴ The attachment (*uns*) to *dhikr* is more important than any other attachment. The invoker (*dhākir*) needs both physical and spiritual purification and must sit cross-legged while doing *dhikr*.¹¹⁵

Vocal Dhikr (dhikr-i jalī) vs. Silent Dhikr (dhikr-i khafī)

Najm al-Dīn Rāzī stated in *Mirṣād al-‘ibād* that the *dhikr* starts from verbal invocation (*dhikr-i lisānī*), but as it progresses it is transformed into the heart’s invocation, and that is when the invoker (*dhākir*) stops repeating it verbally. Rāzī believes that *dhikr-i lisānī* is a lower level of remembrance and is for novices.¹¹⁶

Majdhüb first explains the same practice by referring to Qur’ānic verses about remembrance and Shi’ite traditions from the *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*.¹¹⁷ The heart must be always in remembrance and remembrance must become part of the heart, but the purpose is not merely remembrance of the tongue.¹¹⁸ Many exoteric scholars criticised the way Sufis practised remembrance, so Majdhüb made frequent reference to Shi’ite traditions to counter their criticisms.

Majdhüb states that the affirmation of faith, ‘There is no god but God’ (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*) is one of the most common remembrances of Sufis and is also, in a way, the foundation of Islam, because anyone who becomes a Muslim must utter ‘*lā ilāha illā Allāh*’ first. Since this remembrance is so fundamental in Islam, Majdhüb confidently condemned those scholars who issued a fatwa excommunicating Sufis practising remembrance.¹¹⁹

Majdhüb discusses the difference between vocal invocation (*dhikr-i jalī*) and silent invocation (*dhikr-i khafī*). He states that *dhikr-i jalī* is different from *dhikr-i lisānī*.¹²⁰ Majdhüb did not believe that the Prophet and Shi’ite Imāms practised open vocal remembrance.¹²¹

Majdhüb himself divided authentic *adhkār* into two categories: verbal remembrance (*dhikr-i lisānī*), which is on the lowest spiritual level, and invocation of the heart (*dhikr-i qalbī*), which is the same as silent invocation.¹²² In *dhikr-i qalbī*, when one reaches the highest level, one realises ‘the innermost remembrance’, which is the invocation of the transconscious (*dhikr-i sirr*).¹²³

He asserts that, based on traditional and speculative sciences, both *adhkār* are supererogatory acts. Rationally speaking, remembrance of God is the reason for inner purification, and there is no doubt that silent invocation is less hypocritical a practice than vocal invocation. Majdhüb cites some traditional accounts of silent invocation as supererogatory act,¹²⁴ referring to traditions from Jesus Christ, the Prophet Muḥammad, Imām Sajjād and Imām Ja’far al-Ṣādiq in praise of silent invocation and invocation of the heart.¹²⁵ From these he concludes that the inculcation and instruction of the silent invocation is not an innovation, but an authentic tradition and practice received from the prophets and the Imāms.¹²⁶

Dhikr with Permission (dhikr ba ijāza)

In *Mirṣād al-‘ibād*, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī states that the *dhikr* must be inculcated from a shaykh who is a possessor of sainthood (*ṣāhib wilāyat*). The possessor of sainthood must have received this grace through a spiritual chain of other Sufi saints.¹²⁷ Majdhūb likewise emphasised the importance of having a master, to the extent of claiming that even Moses needed a guide. These spiritual guides, according to Majdhūb, are possessors of sainthood and spiritual influence.¹²⁸ He refers to Shi‘ite traditions, Shi‘ite scholarly writings and Sufi writings, all of which state that a wayfarer needs a shaykh, who is the deputy of the Prophet.¹²⁹ It is also notable that, since *dhikr* is not known to be part of Shi‘ite culture, when he discusses this subject Majdhūb is careful not to distance himself from Shi‘ite traditions, referring to Shi‘ite prayers frequently. In *Kanz al-asmā’*, he discusses the requisite remembrance (*adhkār-i lāzima*). For example, the recitation of “There is no brave youth except ‘Alī and there is no sword save Zulfiqār” (*lā fatā illā ‘Alī lā sayf illā Zulfiqār*) and other litanies prove his devotion to the Shi‘ite Imāms.¹³⁰

Majdhūb had strong reasons for believing that following the Sufi path requires the help of a pathfinder. There are trials and tribulations on the Path, and the shaykh can move the wayfarer towards his goal.¹³¹ As he reaches a higher state, the seeker may be dangerously waylaid by his own pride, and here the shaykh becomes his conscience. Not all the manifestations along the path are divine, and there is a need for a shaykh to interpret both sacred and profane experiences.¹³²

Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh emphasised that one must receive *dhikr* from a person who is permitted to give it through a spiritual chain or lineage that can be traced back to a Shi‘ite Imām or a well-known companion of the Imāms.¹³³ A real shaykh resides in the court of God and can lead the wayfarer to that majestic presence.¹³⁴ Majdhūb believed that in all Sufi orders, novices must put their hearts in concord with the heart of the shaykh,¹³⁵ and the disciple (*murīd*) needs to be sincere (*ṣādiq*) with his shaykh.¹³⁶

Majdhūb referred to different Qur’ānic verses and traditions about companionship with shaykhs and the way pious people help the wayfarer on the path due to their illumination with the lights of Shi‘ite Imāms.¹³⁷ It is through the possessor of spiritual permission, the shaykh, that the wayfarer can attain any spiritual degree and, by the grace of the light of the Imāms, his heart may be illuminated.¹³⁸

Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh referred to a long quotation from Aḥsāwī, the author of *Majlā*, who stated that novices must be obedient to their mas-

ters (*mashāyikh*), because they are the people who have purity of beliefs. Therefore, they will receive great illumination from proximity to them.¹³⁹ He also referred to another Shi‘ite scholar in this context, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Damāwandī (d. ca. 1160/1747), known to be a Nūrbakhshī master living at the time of Nādir Shāh.¹⁴⁰ Using many sources and references, Majdhüb discussed the importance of the spiritual master and also referred to traditions in *Uṣūl al-Kāfi* and *Biḥār al-anwār* regarding the same.¹⁴¹

Majdhüb also wrote about the duties of the seeker of truth (*ṭālib*), who must search for the true master who will enlighten his heart with the Light of God and gnosis.¹⁴² The seekers seek not their master, but this light. In this regard, Majdhüb referred to Sufis such as ‘Aṭṭār (d. ca. 618/1221), Rūmī and Abū Sa‘īd Abū al-Khayr,¹⁴³ as well as to Shi‘ite traditions from *Biḥār al-anwār*, compiled by Majlisī, and from Ibn Ṭawwūs, to prove that it is out of ignorance that some people accuse Sufis of worshipping their masters in lieu of the light of God.¹⁴⁴ He narrates that some of the ulama accused Sufis of being idolaters because of their concentration on the faces of their masters.¹⁴⁵ Majdhüb condemns those Shi‘ite scholars who excommunicated Sufi masters and speculates that it was due to their lack of knowledge, concluding that any excommunication of a spiritual seeker is not in accordance with either reason or tradition.¹⁴⁶

Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh said that the faithful (*mu‘min*) know the Imām through this spiritual light obtained by the practice of *dhikr*.¹⁴⁷ He believed that when a wayfarer is always absorbed in *dhikr*, at the end he will see the Light of the saint or Imām, which is derived from the Light of God.¹⁴⁸ The subject of *dhikr* with permission was controversial in mainstream Shi‘ism and, therefore, he refers to authentic Shi‘ite sources such as *Sharḥ-i Kāfi* by Mawlānā Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Māzandarānī.¹⁴⁹ Majdhüb says that Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī had received permission to inculcate *dhikr* to seekers from Shaykh Bahā‘ī.¹⁵⁰ While Majdhüb was in religious seminaries, he was always searching for a person among the ulama who had genuine permission to offer instruction in the practice of *dhikr*. He asked for *dhikr* and prayers like *Du‘ā-yi ṣabāḥ* and *Saḥīfa Sajjādiyya* from whomever he thought had the virtue and permission to administer them.¹⁵¹

Majdhüb’s Views about Shi‘ite Extremism (*ghuluww*)

Sufism in the Qājār era was highly influenced by a Safavid Sufi culture inspired by extremist views.¹⁵² Those who exceeded the proper boundaries

of religion became known as extremists (*ghulāt*).¹⁵³ Shiʿite scholars were vehemently against *ghuluww*, and the Safavid Shāhs used the religious decrees of Shiʿite scholars to suppress *ghulāt*.¹⁵⁴

Shiʿite Sufis and Shiʿite mystic philosophers like Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, who had more of a conciliatory attitude towards Sufism, were also critical of extremists claiming to be part of Shiʿite Sufi culture. Āmulī believed that these quasi-Sufis, like the *ghulāt*, the Ismāʿīlīs and Zaydīs, were infidels.¹⁵⁵

Majdhūb was also highly critical of the *ghulāt*, just like his predecessors, especially those who were extremists regarding their spiritual masters. From the beginning of the Safavid era extremist Sufis believed in the divinity of their masters; the Qizilbāsh dervishes thus venerated the Safavid shahs as God.¹⁵⁶ Majdhūb made the definitions of what a master is and is not clear and emphasised that a master should be praised only to a certain extent. The definition he provides indicates that a master is a person with authentic permission and an intermediary for the seeker of God, who is responsible for the inculcation of *dhikr*. Majdhūb also emphasised that the divine blessing (*baraka*) is from the spirit of Shiʿite Imāms, not the master himself.¹⁵⁷ Majdhūb also believed that it is outside a master’s authority to permit what is religiously prohibited (*ḥarām*). He emphasised that having permission to inculcate *dhikr* does not bring about permission to change the Divine Law, and thus those disciples who called their masters the thirteenth Imām were fools whom he vehemently opposed.¹⁵⁸

Contemplative Vigilance (*murāqaba*)

Contemplative vigilance (*murāqaba*) is one of the most important duties for all Sufis, emphasised by all Sufi masters. Sufis must be vigilant of the Divine presence in all their acts and movements. Just as the sharia controls the external aspects of life, so contemplative vigilance controls the heart and interior aspects of life.¹⁵⁹ Abū Naṣr Al-Sarrāj dedicated a chapter of his book to ‘Contemplative vigilance of states, its realities, and the attributes of the people of vigilance.’¹⁶⁰ Qushayrī also has a chapter about vigilance in which he refers to traditions from the Prophet and Sufi masters to prove that one must be vigilant all the time, as God is omnipresent.¹⁶¹ Likewise, according to Majdhūb, ‘contemplative vigilance’ is one of the most important principles on the spiritual path for a wayfarer.¹⁶²

Majdhūb explained that a devotee of God must be aware of his acts. The first and highest level of contemplative vigilance is the contemplation

of 'those made near to God' (*muqarrabīn*), who bear witness to the Divine Majesty. The lowest level is contemplation of the people of abstinence, in whom the certitude of divinity dominates.¹⁶³

He referred to the sermons and sayings of Shi'ite Imāms and suggests that the vigilant person must be like a dead body without any authority and power, immersed in the sea of love, waiting for the appearance of the countenance of the Beloved.¹⁶⁴ The outcome of contemplative vigilance is annihilation in that Divine Realm, where the contemplative is illuminated by the lights of the Divine Names.¹⁶⁵

He again referred to a statement by Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, who declared that he had practised invocations such as 'O the Living, the Everlasting, O there is no God but you' (*Yā Ḥayy u yā Qayyūm yā man lā ilāha ilā Anta*) and 'Ya Allāh', and believed that the continuous practice of *dhikr* and *murāqaba* for a 40-day retreat (*'arba'in*) ends in the the heart being enlightened with wisdom (*ḥikmat*), gnosis (*ma'rifat*) and spiritual love (*maḥabbat*). An invoker (*dhākir*) will also progress to the state of annihilation in God and subsistence with God (*fanā'i fi Allāh wa baqā'i bi Allāh*).¹⁶⁶ Majdhüb believed that contemplation is emptying the heart of all thoughts, and the invoker must consider God as present at all times.¹⁶⁷

The result of *dhikr* is love (*maḥabba*), which is the fruit of unity (*tawḥīd*).¹⁶⁸ There are different levels of the remembrance of the heart. The lowest is focusing the attention of the heart on one of the Divine Attributes without concentrating on the meaning of it. The second lowest level is knowing the meaning yet doing the ritual with attention to its meaning. The third level is when the invoker of remembrance is immersed in witnessing Divine Majesty and Beauty. During this stage, the invoker reaches the state of annihilation in God (*fanā' fi Allāh*), becomes free of the self and does not find anything in the heart other than the one invoked or remembered (*madhkūr*).¹⁶⁹ The highest stage of remembrance is that which flows through all the limbs and every part of the body, thereby preventing the invoker from committing any sins, inspiring him to perform works of devotion and supererogatory acts.¹⁷⁰

The Spiritual Heart (*qalb*)

Majdhüb also wrote a detailed explanation of the spiritual heart (*qalb*). He says that in its physical sense it is a cone-shaped piece of flesh positioned in the left side of the chest.¹⁷¹ However, this heart has a soul—the intellect—

which is possessed only by human beings. The wellbeing and soundness of the spiritual heart results in a state of spiritual purity (*ṣafā*), whereas the corruption of the spiritual heart leads to its darkening and turbidity (*kudūrat*). He believed that the heart has five spiritual senses:

1. sight, which witnesses the visions of the invisible;
2. hearing, which audits the sayings of God and the sayings of beings of the Divine Realm;
3. smell, which imbibes the scent of the world of the invisible;
4. touch, which benefits from the spiritual connection with physical beings; and, finally,
5. taste, which relishes love, the sweetness of faith and gnosis.¹⁷²

Furthermore, Majdhūb believed that the heart experiences different stages. The first is the breast (*ṣadr*), which is the essence of a person's beliefs, whether submission to God (*islām*) or infidelity. The *ṣadr* is the shell of the heart. The second stage is the heart (*qalb*) itself, the source of faith and the light of the intellect. The third stage is the pericardium (*shaghāf*), the place of love for creatures. The fourth part is the inner heart (*fuād*), the locus of mystical witnessing, gnosis and spiritual visions. The fifth is the grain of the heart (*ḥabbat al-qalb*), the source of love of God. About this fifth stage Ibn ‘Arabī stated that, since the heart is the place for knowledge of God, it can become the place for love of God when it fully recognises Him.¹⁷³ The sixth stage is the heart's core (*suwaydā*), where the gnosis of Divine Secrets descends, which is the source of divinely inspired knowledge and the cause for divine visions.¹⁷⁴ The seventh is the blood of the heart (*muhjat al-qalb*), the place for the manifestation of Divine Attributes and Divine Lights.¹⁷⁵ These seven stages lead a wayfarer to give up his dependence on material beings.

Majdhūb also explained the concept of tranquillity (*sakīna*). There are three types of *sakīna*. The first is peace of the heart (*sakīna-i qalbīyya*); the second is inner peace of the chest (*sakīna-i ṣadriyya*); and the third is spiritual peace of the intellect (*sakīna ‘aqliyya*). These are gained through the recitation of certain remembrances and litanies.¹⁷⁶ Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh believed that the heart needs instruction, which is obtained by practising the *sharī‘at*, and the heart of the *sharī‘at* is the Sufi Path (*ṭariqat*),¹⁷⁷ and, therefore, he recognised the *sharī‘at* to have a certain role in the purification of the heart.¹⁷⁸ He wrote that it is by the grace of sainthood (*wilāyat*) that the rust of human nature and the darkness of human attributes are

removed from the heart, allowing it to become the place of illumination and manifestation of lights.¹⁷⁹ Majdhüb, in his interpretation of the Sufi *mathnawī* poem *Sab‘i mathānī*,¹⁸⁰ stated that as a person becomes a knower or adept of the heart (*ṣāhib dil*), he moves in the spiritual path towards the divine presence. The divine lights will settle on the wayfarer and the wayfarer’s heart will become purified by the love of God. Then the poet explains the heart by saying that it is the locus of apparition of revelation, the rose garden of the Beloved, both Mount Sinai and heaven, both Moses and the divine illumination. Therefore, the heart is God’s abode if purified from worldly distractions.¹⁸¹ When the mirror of the heart is polished it is time to engage in spiritual invocation (*dhikr*).¹⁸² The ‘invocation of God’ detaches the seekers from all other material attachments.¹⁸³ Perseverance with *dhikr* leads to the domination of the one remembered (God) over the heart.¹⁸⁴ It is at this stage that the heart becomes the place for the manifestation of Divine Attributes.¹⁸⁵

The Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*)

In order to elaborate on the concept of the unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), it will be necessary to explain some of the intellectual history behind the theory. The main exponent, but by no means originator, of the concept of unity of being was the Andalusian mystic and theosopher called Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ḥātīmī al-Ṭā’ī (560/1162–638/1240), one of the most popular thinkers of the medieval period of Islam.¹⁸⁶ He was so influential in the history of Islamic thought that, in the conclusion of her biographical study of Ibn ‘Arabī, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, Claude Addas mentions a metaphorical story about his worldwide influence. The story is that Ibn ‘Arabī felt a hair rising from his chest and expanding to the eastern and western horizons. His own interpretation of this vision was that his word (*kalamī*) would expand through both the East and the West of the Islamic world.¹⁸⁷ And, of course, there is no doubt about the influence of Ibn ‘Arabī and his school of thought on Islamic culture.

There are different opinions about Shi‘ism’s influence on Ibn ‘Arabī. Scholars such as Henry Corbin believe that Shi‘ism influenced the formation of his philosophy.¹⁸⁸ However, scholars like Michel Chodkiewicz fervently oppose Corbin’s representation,¹⁸⁹ asserting that Corbin falsely interpreted certain of Ibn ‘Arabī’s views as crypto-Shi‘ite, when in fact Ibn ‘Arabī was a self-confessed Sunni Sufi.¹⁹⁰ Whatever the truth may be, Shi‘ite

philosophy was highly influenced by Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings and the school of thought that was developed by Sufi scholars after his passing. Scholars like Maytham al-Baḥrānī and Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī were among the first Shi‘ite philosophers to present their interpretation of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī. As mentioned above, the formation of the ‘School of Isfahan’ was a pivotal event in the marriage of Shi‘ite thought with Ibn ‘Arabī’s philosophy.

There are different interpretations of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī, although his emphasis on God’s transcendence is indisputable. Despite this, the school of *waḥdat al-wujūd* is still accused of the heresies of union (*ittihād*) and incarnation (*ḥulūl*), and of having pantheistic views towards all beings. Ibn ‘Arabī says, ‘God is identical with the existence of the things, but He is not identical with the things.’¹⁹¹ In other words, God is not physically incarnated in or substantially united with any existent being. God’s being is inherent in all beings; there is a reality in the essence of every being and that reality emanates from God, which is the spirit. These spirits are the manifestation, *tajallī*, of the Divine.¹⁹²

Majdhūb is a pivotal figure in propagating a Shi‘ite interpretation of the teaching of unity of being and in laying down the foundations for all the later philosophical beliefs of the Ni‘matullāhīyya order. After Aqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī led the persecution of Sufis in Persia, Majdhūb was the first Ni‘matullāhī master versed in religious sciences to propagate the philosophy of the school of Unity of Being. He was highly influenced by mystical thinkers of the school of Isfahan, especially by Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī.

The followers of Ibn ‘Arabī’s school of thought believe that God in His essence is transcendent, which is beyond the capacity of human beings to apprehend or perceive. However, there are emanations or manifestations from the Divine that are perceivable. As Ibn ‘Arabī says, ‘It is impossible for any being to be related to Allāh directly in the original form of synthesis.’¹⁹³ Ibn ‘Arabī was precise about the independence of God from all creatures. However, there is only one real expanding existence, which is identical to God, and those ‘other’ (than God) are manifestations of this expanding divine being.¹⁹⁴ Each and every being represents God’s Attributes. These manifestations and attributes are separate entities from God’s essence.¹⁹⁵

Majdhūb gives a detailed explanation of this mystical philosophy in his *Aqā’id*. In the first chapter he says that Ibn ‘Arabī was the first theosopher among Sufis who believed that God is the Absolute Being.¹⁹⁶ Majdhūb referred to Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt* and the writings of a number of other Sufi thinkers to dispel the accusation that Ibn ‘Arabī’s theory could lead to pan-

theism, and to establish that he believed in God’s transcendence and the fact that God’s Being is above and beyond all other beings in its ‘Divine Essence’.¹⁹⁷ Majdhüb made a reference to ‘Abd Razzāq Lāhījī (d. 1072/1662), the great Shi‘ite philosopher from the School of Isfahan, that believing in ‘unity of being’ is believing in the unity of God (*tawhīd*); however, he also stated that this is difficult for ordinary people to understand.¹⁹⁸

Majdhüb was cautious about conforming to mainstream Shi‘ism, so he stayed as close as possible to the perspectives and beliefs of Shi‘ite scholars by referring to their traditions and authenticated books. At the same time, he was vigilant about not distancing himself from the unity of being school of thought and emphasised that unity with God is impossible only in regard to the Essence of God, but not in regard His attributes. Majdhüb’s position on the unity of being is ambiguous. In some of his treatises he refutes the certain beliefs associated with the teaching, especially those that are close to pantheism. Beginning with a refutation, he then demonstrates his own views and praises the school, which he nonetheless tries to avoid calling ‘unity of being’.

Most scholars were against Ibn ‘Arabī and the the evolving teachings of unity of being presented by Ibn ‘Arabī and Sufis who followed after him. Among the important Shi‘ite scholars who opposed this theory should be mentioned Abū al-Qāsim ibn Ḥasan Jilānī (d. 1231/1816), known as Mīrzāy-i Qumī, who was discussed above, one the most prominent Shi‘ite jurists, specialising in the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) during the Qājār era.¹⁹⁹ He was a student of Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir (Waḥīd) Bihbahānī and the successor to Kāshif al-Ghitā’ in Qum and the teacher of Majdhüb ‘Alī Shah.²⁰⁰ His *Masā’il ar-rukniyya* consists of correspondence between him and his followers about jurisprudential matters.²⁰¹ In this book one of the questioners asks him about Sufism, and Qumī refutes the school of Ibn ‘Arabī and his Shi‘ite predecessors, especially Mullā Ṣadrā and Qāḍī Nūrullāh Shūshtārī.²⁰² He criticises this school because of its belief in incarnationism (*ḥulūl*), divine union (*ittihād*) and divine manifestation (*tajallī*).²⁰³ Majdhüb and Qumī, his teacher at the seminary school, disagreed about Muḥaqqiq Ardabīlī (d. 1585). Majdhüb argued that Muḥaqqiq, in his book *Ḥāshīya bar Ilāhīyāt*, upheld the philosophy of the unity of being. Qumī, on the other hand, did not accept this claim, and asked to see the book. After he read it, he told Majdhüb that he was astonished by Muḥaqqiq’s beliefs.²⁰⁴

Qumī referred to ecstatic utterances (*shaṭḥīyāt*) from Ḥallāj and Bistāmī as blasphemous.²⁰⁵ Majdhüb’s response was that they issued from the state of contemplative unity (*tawhīd-i shuhūdī*) instead of the state of the unity of

being (*tawhīd-i wujūdi*).²⁰⁶ He believed that many religious scholars wrongly interpreted them as Incarnationism, therefore they excommunicated Sufis from the Muslim community. That is because they were unable to perceive that those sayings were based on the 'contemplative visions' of Sufis.

Again, not wanting to distance himself from the views of the ulama, Majdhūb clearly refuted the philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and referred to the Sufi masters like 'Alā' al-Dawla Simnānī and Aḥmad Sirhindī, who argued vehemently against this metaphysical theory as well. In some of his writings, without however mentioning the theory of the Unity of Being by name, he defended it and noted how it was in conformity with traditional Shi'ite doctrine.

Heterodox and Orthodox Theories of the *waḥdat al-wujūd*

While Majdhūb refuted many of their beliefs, he did not excommunicate those who held to belief in the unity of being. He believed that there were some Sufi masters who had a true understanding of its philosophy. He explained the unity of being in two different ways. The first explanation is that all beings are non-being and their being is due to the Real Being (*wujūd-i ḥaqīqī*). The followers of this school believe that the manifestation of an object is by the Light of God, which is a manifestation of the Absolute (*Zuhūr-i muṭlaq*). Whatever is in the world emanates from God.²⁰⁷ The second explanation is that it is impossible for a creature to have any perception of God and that there is no possibility of multiplicity in God. However, there is a lower realm, which is the realm of divine actions (*fi'l ul Allāh*) or Shadow of God (*Zil ul Allāh*). This realm is separated from Divine Essence (*dhāt*) and it is like a ray of light from the sun.²⁰⁸

The Heterodox School of the Unity of Being

After the formation of the school of unity of being, many Sufi thinkers who were accused of heretical beliefs became categorised as belonging to the movement. Nevertheless, Majdhūb did not reject all of the accusations relating to the followers of this school.²⁰⁹ Where he agreed with the accusations, he referred to strong refuters of the school of Unity of Being, such as 'Alā' al-Dawla Simnānī. Simnānī claimed that as he reached a certain spiritual state he perceived everything to be in union with the Absolute

Being. According to him, once a wayfarer achieved spiritual disclosure (*mukāshifa*) the futility of the unity of being would be revealed to him.²¹⁰

Famous Sufis accused of heretical beliefs were Ḥallāj and Bistāmī, an accusation that Majdhüb rejected on both accounts. He stated that some may have drawn the conclusion from the sayings of Ḥallāj and Bistāmī that they believed in incarnationism and unificationism, but that was not true because they were endowed with many holy virtues.²¹¹

The Orthodox School of the Unity of Being

After explaining the unacceptable and reprehensible doctrine of the school of unity of being, he told his Shi'ite audiences that he did not find any evidence of the belief in incarnationism (*ḥulūl*) and unification (*ittiḥād*). He said that one must be cautious about the correct use of the term.²¹² Another explanation that Majdhüb provided about the unity of being was that God was the Absolute Pure Being who did not rely on any other being. There was no possibility of multiplicity and diversity in God; no human being, even the prophets, saints and philosophers, could perceive the essence of divinity. Majdhüb suggested that if one could perceive that essence, it would then become limited by human perception. Majdhüb believed that imagining God and building a philosophy based on that imagination would limit God and bring about a lack of belief in the oneness of God.²¹³ He also referred to Shi'ite traditions to back up his beliefs.

Another plane of being (*wujūd*), which is separated from the Being of God, is the plane of the Divine Shadow (*Zil ul Allāh*) and Divine Action (*fi'l ul Allāh*).²¹⁴ Ḥaydar Āmulī used a similar term, mentioning that a realm separated from the Realm of Divine Essence was the Realm of Divine Names (*asmā'*). The third category in the Realm of Divine Names was called the Names of Actions (*asmā' al-af'āl*), which necessitated the existence of creatures.²¹⁵ The term Shadow of God (*Zil ul Allāh*) was first mentioned by Ibn 'Arabī. He used this metaphor to clarify that the creatures were manifestations of the Shadow of God; however, the transcendence of God remained intact.²¹⁶

Majdhüb believed that God was existent in His essence and that all spiritual realities were generated by God. Some wrongly conceive that this results in pantheism. The divine emanation was like a ray of light from the sun, which at the same time did not have the same identity as the sun. Therefore, the Essence of God (*dhāt*) was free and independent of the realm of

the Divine Shadow and Actions. Whatever one conceived as being immutable and firmly unchangeable properly belonged to the Divine Essence and was inseparable from God.²¹⁷

Majdhūb went on to point out that all beings were contained and integrated in the 'Ever-expanding Being' (*wujūd-i munbasit*). He stated that there were other names for the 'Ever-expanding Being'—some called it the Muhammadan Reality (*ḥaqīqat-i Muḥammadiyya*) and the Absolute Sainthood (*al-wilāyat-i muṭlaqa*).²¹⁸ Majdhūb used different terms like the the Station of the Mystery (*maqām-i sirr*), the Reality of Realities (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā'iq*), the Light of Lights (*nūr al-anwār*) and the Point (*nuqṭa*) when mentioning this Being.²¹⁹

Majdhūb referred to verse 156 of the seventh chapter (*I'rāf*) of the Qur'ān, which reads, 'My mercy extendeth to all things.'²²⁰ From this verse Majdhūb concluded that God's mercy, which extended to all things, was the 'Ever-expanding Being'. He referred to the prayer of Kumayl, which read, 'O God, I beseech Thee by Thy mercy, which extendeth to all things . . .' and he also referred to other traditional Shi'ite prayers.²²¹

Intuitive Philosophy (dhawq-i ta'āluh)

In many treatises and books related to the school of unity of being, the school of Intuitive Philosophy (*dhawq-i al-muṭāliḥīn*) has been discussed and analysed.

In Muṭaharī's commentary, known as *Sharḥ-i Mabsūt-i Manzūma*, on Sabzivārī's theosophical poem (*Manzūma-yi Hikmat*), he explained that a group of gnostics believed that the Being is a single reality in which there is no multiplicity. Muṭaharī said that the Being is the absolute unity. 'Intuitive Philosophers' believed that all existent beings, creatures (*muwjūdāt*), were related to God (Being).²²²

The followers of the school of unity of being believed that there was no existent being (*muwjūd*) and everything was the emanation from the divine Being, whereas the school of *dhawq-i ta'āluh* believed that there was only one Being and that existent beings (*mujūdāt*) were numerous.

Majdhūb reasoned that many of those who had personally verified and realised the truth for themselves (*muḥaqqiqīn*) were followers of the school of Intuitive Philosophy. The term 'realised person' (*muḥaqqiq*) was a respectful and positive term used by Majdhūb, which provided evidence that he did not reject its followers as philosophers, regardless of any disagreements he had with them. Although he clearly stated that he did not adhere to the

school of Intuitive Philosophy, he did not reject them as being heretical or unorthodox. He said that Shaykh Mufid and Shaykh Murtiḏā, two great Shi‘ite scholars, disagreed about a lot of jurisprudential issues, but neither of them excommunicated the other from the Muslim community.²²³

The Theory of Theophany (*tajallī*)

The concept of theophany (*tajallī*) was a pivotal point in the philosophy of the unity of being, around which Ibn ‘Arabi’s philosophy revolved. Izutsu said, ‘His entire philosophy is, in short, a theory of *tajallī*.’²²⁴ Majdhüb believed that the human intellect was incapable of conceiving the Absolute Luminous Manifestation (*ghāyat-i nūrīyat zuhūrīyat*) and he referred to different Shi‘ite traditions and prayers in this regard, which said that God is the Light of Lights and God is hidden due to His excessive manifestation. This Real Light was the reason for the manifestation of creatures: God’s attributes were manifested for the creation of creatures. Majdhüb believed that this viewpoint expressed the orthodox and correct understanding of the theory of the Unity of Being.²²⁵

He recounted that God was the East (*mashriq*) for the lights of intellect. He narrated a tradition by ‘Alī and other Shi‘ite Imāms to prove that everything was a manifestation of the Divine Lights.²²⁶ In order to illustrate his philosophical beliefs, Majdhüb cited the Supplication of Kumayl, where the Imām ‘Alī had prayed ‘by the light of Thy face, through which all things are illumined.’²²⁷

Two Types of Theophany

Sometimes the soul becomes the manifesting place of all the Divine Attributes and the human attributes are extinguished.²²⁸ There are two kinds of theophanies of the divine: the theophany of Lordship (*rubūbiyat*), such as happened to Moses, and the theophany of Divinity (*ulūhiyat*), which happened only to the Prophet Muḥammad.²²⁹ The theophany of Lordship did not eradicate the existence of the Prophet Muḥammad as a human being. However, the theophany of divinity did annihilate his being. Humanity then received this divine grace from the Prophet Muḥammad.²³⁰

Majdhüb stated that there were also two kinds of theophanies of the Attributes: the disclosure of Attributes of Divine Majesty (*jalāl*) and dis-

closure of Attributes of Divine Beauty (*jamāl*). A wayfarer on the Sufi path experiences a mixture of both qualities of God. Unlike the disclosure of the Attributes of Majesty, the disclosure of the Attributes of Beauty came through witnessing. The real theophany was the extinction of duality and the appearance of unity.²³¹ Majdhūb concluded that human beings were the mirror of the Attributes and Essence of God. This is why they became the deputies of God on earth.²³²

Earlier masters of the school of the Unity of Being had also emphasised the doctrine of the disclosure of Divine Majesty and Divine Beauty. Ibn 'Arabi believed that intimacy (*uns*) was related to Divine Beauty, which is a manifestation of God's loving and comforting attributes, while in contrast awe (*haybat*) was related to Divine Majesty and the manifestation of Divine Might.²³³ Āmulī confirmed this view and he asserted that human beings alone were the whole manifestation of Divine attributes.²³⁴ Thus Majdhūb's view was greatly influenced by the philosophy of his Shi'ite predecessor, Āmulī.

The Theory of Divine Light

Majdhūb explained how the wayfarers through the spiritual stations would witness different coloured lights. As the light of the soul became stronger, the colour of the light became red and then, at the end, yellow. As the light of God began to shine without the veils of the soul and the heart, there would be no colour and no limits. This Light, which was never extinguished, was the beginning of the Lights of the Divine Beauty signifying Annihilation of Annihilation (*fanā' al-fanā'*). On the other hand, the Lights of the Divine Majesty appeared as a black Light, which was the all comprehensive Light.²³⁵ The black light is reflected on as the holiest of all spiritual lights in the path.

In the hierarchy of spiritual lights, the first kind of light was the white light, which symbolised the end of inanimate creation.²³⁶ Due to the warmth of invocation (*dhikr*), the white light gradually turned to yellow. The wayfarer's desire became love; his heart opened so that he could distinguish a friend from an enemy just by looking at them. The third kind of light was a purple light, which was the station of love, reached when the heart was purified by the remembrance of God. As the wayfarer came to belong among the company of the 'people of purity', he witnessed the lights of his religious duties and his spiritual manners. He recognised the light of love, patience and all other stages on the path. The fourth and last of these lights, the green light, appeared to the dying just before death.²³⁷

In the fifth station, the wayfarer saw the green light as he had in the fourth. This stage represented the return from intoxication. The tree of his being became fruitful, and his spiritual body was illuminated. During this spiritual state the Light of Divinity extinguished the light of human intelligence.²³⁸ In the sixth spiritual station, the black light would appear to the wayfarer, which is the ever-expanding existence (*wujūd-i inbisātī*). Here the black light was manifested in the heart of the wayfarer, which is the Light of Divine Essence; and the manifestation of this light exemplified the highest rank of proximity to the Divine, the stage of Annihilation in God (*fanā' fi Allāh*).²³⁹ The seventh and highest stage was the Light of Lights, which had no colour and was infinite. This was the station of eternity in God, at which the wayfarer was endowed with the Divine Attributes.²⁴⁰

Spiritual Disclosure (*kashf*)

In Ibn 'Arabī's philosophy there were two kinds of knowledge: the first was gained through the rational faculty, and the second, gnosis, was gained through spiritual disclosure (*kashf*).²⁴¹ Majdhüb explained that on the spiritual path there were 70,000 worlds.²⁴² The spiritual path began from the material lowest of the low in nature (*asfal al-sāfilīn-i ṭabī'at*) and progressed to the highest of the high in Islamic laws (*a'lā 'ilīyīn-i sharī'a*). It was through sincerity (*ṣidq*) that one entered into the esoteric path of religion (*ṭarīqat*). The eye of the intellect became clear-sighted and could experience spiritual disclosures. This was the state of theosophers and philosophers.²⁴³

Āmulī believed that the followers of the Muhammadan path had spiritual insight and that the eye of the heart was open for them. They witnessed God through spiritual disclosure.²⁴⁴ Disclosures by mystical witnessing (*kashf-i shuhūdī*) came through revelation and inspirations, and according to Āmulī were experienced only by prophets and saints. Majdhüb's explanation of disclosure by witnessing was highly influenced by Āmulī.²⁴⁵ He said that when the eye of the heart was opened spiritual witnessing began. This witnessing had different levels; one of the highest was the Disclosure of Transconscious (*mukāshifāt-i sirrī*). Through this disclosure the secrets of creation, creatures and the wisdom underlying existence were revealed. Then there were the disclosures of the Spirit, which were called Spiritual Disclosures. These were disclosures of ascensions (*ma'ārij*), from earth, into the heavens, and visions of angels.²⁴⁶ As the soul was purified from corporeal contamination, the veils of time and place were removed.²⁴⁷

When God reveals His Attributes to the mystic, it is called 'unveiling of Attributes' (*kashf-i šifātī*), which a mystic needs to reach the state of annihilation, when he becomes immersed by the Attributes of Divine Majesty. If the wayfarer had experienced the disclosure of the Attributes of Absolute Unity, then he became subsistent (*bāqī*). Majdhūb said he was unable to explain the disclosure of Divine Essence (*kashf-i dhātī*) because mere phrases and expressions could not clarify this concept.²⁴⁸ Āmulī, before him, had likewise explained that verbal expressions (*'ibāra*) and symbolic allusions (*ishāra*) could not explain the gnosis of the divine essence, which could only be known through witnessing (*shuhūd*), spiritual taste (*dhawq*) and spiritual disclosure (*kashf*).²⁴⁹

Majdhūb believed that Sufis, 'the people of the Path', could experience these spiritual disclosures and thereby manifest the attributes of God, but the highest level of God's Self-disclosure was that of the divine Essence.²⁵⁰ No one could reach this stage except the Seal of the prophets, who is the Prophet Muḥammad, and the Seals of Sainthood, the Shi'ite Imāms.²⁵¹ Majdhūb emphasised that the Divine Attributes were manifestations of the Divine Essence and the only name for Divine Essence was Allāh.²⁵²

Creation

Ibn 'Arabī's theories about creation and cosmology were at this time widely diffused throughout Iran, but there were vast differences of opinion about his doctrines among scholars who claimed to be his followers. Ibn 'Arabī believed that the Divine Attributes stood between the creatures and Divine Essence, which he sometimes called the Isthmus (*barzakh*). However, when the Divine attributes were created, they became an act of God that emanated from God, which then descended into the material world through a series of manifestations. The Divine essence of all beings was the Breath of the All-Merciful (*nafas al-rahmān*).²⁵³ If one recognised this being, then one gained the gnosis of the Divine.

Majdhūb also expounded a detailed theory of creation, based on what he had heard and read from the gnostics. He adopted the concept of macrocosm and microcosm: whatever was created in the world had a counterpart in the human soul. Although God was not tied to time and place, He dwelt in the hearts of the faithful. The human being was a model of the macrocosm, yet the material world was a less perfect manifestation of God than the inner world of human beings, which was a part of the spiritual world.²⁵⁴

Majdhüb cited verses from the Qur'ān and concluded that the final purpose of creation was to gain gnosis, which could be done by following Islamic laws and undertaking the contemplative disciplines and practices of Sufism.²⁵⁵ The wayfarer had to take a journey within himself and return to a younger age, as far back as the foetal stage. He had to return to his spiritual origin, which was the soul (*jān*); the soul was a Divine being and issued from the world of the divine command.²⁵⁶ Once the wayfarer realised his divine origin, he gained gnosis.²⁵⁷

Majdhüb said that all living beings were by nature in love with the beauty of Canaanite Joseph (who is a symbol of divine beauty in Sufi philosophy), and it was only from their stupidity that they had imprisoned this lovely Joseph in the dark well of the physical aspects of human nature.²⁵⁸ Those who inclined towards the material world failed to recognise their need to return to their spiritual origins and so did not gain gnosis. The Divine Soul was placed in the body and through servitude, gnosis and devotion was able to return to its origin. The wayfarer could reach the spiritual stage where he witnessed the manifestation of the Divine Attributes in every being in this world. Getting to this stage was possible through one's innate ability, Divine graces and the guidance of a qualified master.²⁵⁹

The Spiritual Leaders: The Shi'ite Imāms

Izutsu, in his definition of the Perfect Man, said, 'The Absolute, in its self-revealing aspect, reaches perfection in the Perfect Man' and added that there could be no more perfect self-manifestation than this being.²⁶⁰ This reflects the views adopted by the Shi'ite followers of Ibn 'Arabī and applied to mean the perfection of the Shi'ite Imāms alongside which could be found lesser ranks of perfection that belonged to those who guided others during the time of the occultation of the twelfth Imām.

The book of *Mashāriq al-anwār-i al-yaqīn* by Ḥafīz Rajab Bursī (d. 813/1411) is an influential text on Majdhüb's theology. Majdhüb said that the physical body of an Imām was perishable but the act of the Divine was manifested in his person. Majdhüb asserted that the Shi'ite Imāms were the manifestations of the Divine. He referred to Shi'ite traditions, which could be interpreted as the Imāms being the place of the Divine manifestation.²⁶¹ The spiritual reality of the Shi'ite Imāms belongs to the Divine act, which is not perishable.

He also referred to a hadith by Imām 'Alī from *Ḥayāt al-qulūb* and *Jalā' al-'uyūn* by Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, which stated that the first emanation

from God was the ‘Muhammadan Light’ (*al-nūr al-muḥammadī*). From that Light 12 ranks of Lights emanated, which were the lights of the 12 Imāms. From these 12 lights, according to their rank, the lights of the prophets and other creatures emanated.²⁶² He believed that everything was created by this ‘Muhammadan Light’, directly or indirectly. The Light of Muhammad and Shiʿite Imāms was the source for all beings.²⁶³ Āmulī made the same claim that the existence of the lights of Imāms (the Muhammadan Light) was the source for the manifestation of the rest of creation and the main purpose of creation.²⁶⁴

Majdhūb referred to another hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, which stated that the first created being was the ‘Muhammadan Light’ and that the Divine Throne (*ʿarsh*), the Divine Pedestal (*kursī*), the Bearers of the Divine Throne (*ḥamalih ʿarsh*) and the spirits of prophets, saints and martyrs were all created from a ray of this Light.²⁶⁵ He believed that ‘[t]he Prophet and Saints [Shiʿite Imāms] are the direct Divine Grace and all the beings are the manifestation of the Prophet Muḥammad and Saints.’ He continued, ‘No one became the manifestation of the name of the Essence, which is Allāh, except Muḥammad and his progeny [Shiʿite Imāms] (Peace be upon them), and all prophets attained their sublime rank through this Light [Muḥammad and his progeny].’²⁶⁶

Majdhūb cited a tradition of the Prophet Muḥammad from the book of *Knowledge of Certitude* (*ilm al-yaqīn*) by Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, which stated that ‘Ali and the Prophet were the Light between the Hands of God before the existence of creation. He concluded that the Lights of Shiʿite Imāms were the manifestation of the most Beautiful Names of God, which at the end of the day was called the Muhammadan Light (*al-nūr al-muḥammadī*).²⁶⁷

The Gnostics (*ʿurafāʾ*)

Majdhūb defined a gnostic (*ʿarif*, pl. *ʿurafāʾ*) as a person with spiritual perception (*baṣīrat*) who would not see anything other than God and His Acts, which were the traces of His power. A gnostic could see the world as the Act of God and was the true Unitarian (*muwwahid-i ḥaqīqī*).²⁶⁸

The absolute possessors of sainthood (*ṣāhib wilāyat*) were the Shiʿite Imāms. They were like flowers, while those around them smelled like flowers but were not yet flowers themselves and therefore were not yet perfect human beings (*insān-i kāmil*). Hence the gnostic masters were interme-

diaries of the Imāms;²⁶⁹ their own lights were not perfect, but they could lead novices to the perfect light of the Imāms. In that sense, the face of the master was the representation of the face of the Imām.²⁷⁰ Āmulī had similar views, for he claimed that a knower (*‘arif*) was a knower in respect of his gnosis compared to other human beings, but not in regard to the perfect saint, who was the Imām.²⁷¹

Majdhūb stated that these Shi‘ite philosophers (*hukamā’*) and gnostics (*‘urafā’*) had spiritual visions because they followed the absolute prophet (*nabīy-i muṭlaq*) and the absolute saint (*walīy-i muṭlaq*).²⁷² Therefore, only those who were gnostics, but especially Sufis, could serve properly as intermediaries between the Imāms and the rest of humanity. They had gained enough gnosis to guide others towards the full gnosis of the Shi‘ite Imāms.

Annihilation and Subsistence (*fanā’* and *baqā’*)

The concept of annihilation in God (*fanā’ fi Allāh*) existed among Sufis long before the formation of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī. However, his followers elaborated this belief, and Majdhūb continued the Shi‘ite mystical and philosophical tradition on this subject.

Majdhūb believed that a lover must put everything aside for the Beloved. It is in the ultimate state of love that all the veils are lifted and the lover and beloved become one.²⁷³ It is the human soul that loses everything for love. The soul of the lover reaches the fire of the Divine Beauty. It flies towards the light, and its whole being is submerged in Divine Beauty.²⁷⁴ Majdhūb also stated that a wayfarer must drown in the sea of love, waiting for the appearance of the countenance of the Beloved.²⁷⁵ The outcome of contemplation is annihilation in that Divine Realm. Annihilation illuminates the contemplative person with the Lights of Divine Names.²⁷⁶

As the Light of God, free from the veils of the human soul and the human heart, begins to shine, there is no colour, no limits and no opposites. It is the beginning of the lights of the Divine Beauties and the state of Annihilation of Annihilation (*fanā’ al-fanā’*).²⁷⁷ Disclosure of the Attributes comes when the wayfarer acquires the Divine qualities. The Divine Attributes are then unveiled to the wayfarer; and if he or she receives the disclosure of the Attributes of Divine Majesty, then the wayfarer reaches the state of real annihilation and becomes subsistent (*bāqī*) in God. Sometimes the soul becomes the place where all the Divine Attributes are manifested and its human attributes are annihilated.²⁷⁸

Majdhūb explained that this union with the Divine is not physical but comes through the Divine graces and the effect of the raptures.²⁷⁹ One must transcend his or her own being to reach the state of ‘Or Nearer’ (*uw adnā*).²⁸⁰ Majdhūb cited the state of Muḥammad as explained in the Qur’ān. Human beings come into this world with the spirit of God; therefore, perfect happiness and salvation can come only by returning to God.²⁸¹ To reach Divinity the fire of love has to burn the tree of humanity to its very root.²⁸²

One of the first states is when the invoker is drowned in witnessing the Divine Majesties and Beauties. At this stage, he leaves everything behind and reaches the state of Annihilation in God (*fanā’ fi Allāh*); he becomes freed of his self and finds nothing in his heart other than the One he invokes or remembers (*Madhkūr*).²⁸³

* * * * *

Majdhūb’s philosophy of the unity of being differed sharply from that of mainstream followers of the school of especially Sufi Sunnis. He had always been careful to stay as close as possible to mainstream Shi‘ite beliefs. While he was highly influenced by Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī and Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī as well as Qāḍī Nūrullāh Shūshtarī (d. 1019/1610) and Ḥāfiz Rajab Bursī, he preferred to follow the path of Kāshānī and Āmulī. He developed a more moderate Shi‘ite interpretation of the Unity of Being, which was more comprehensible for mainstream Shi‘ites. He placed greater emphasis on the supremacy of the Shi‘ite Imāms. Finally, Sufis were portrayed as those who were knowers (*‘arif*) of the spiritual state of Shi‘ite Imāms and who had received rays of light from the sun of the sainthood of the Shi‘ite Imāms.

Muslim Sects and Heretical Sufism

Majdhūb rejected theologians who tried to prove the existence of the Creator through reason, because human reason belonged to the material world and was thus inconstant and fallible in its judgements.²⁸⁴ While he said that one must reflect on the doctrines of the theosophers (*ḥukamā*), he refuted the pretenders to philosophy (*mutifalsafa*).²⁸⁵ Majdhūb referred to pseudo-philosophers and pseudo-Sufis as *mutifalsif* and *mutiṣawwif* to distinguish them from real philosophers and Sufis; instead, he used the word scholar (*‘ālim*) to refer to pseudo-philosophers and pseudo-Sufis and rejected all theologians.²⁸⁶ In this his views agreed with those of the majority of Shi‘ite scholars.

Majdhūb was always more positive and sympathetic toward philosophers, even those such as Ibn Sina who were not part of the Sufi tradition. He cited a quotation from Shūshtarī, who said that the Sufi and the philosopher were following the same path; one relied on witnessing, while the other relied on intellect. But the path of philosophy was better avoided, because it was full of dangers that might take the wayfarer from the straight path to God.²⁸⁷ While Majdhūb did not deny that there were heretical beliefs among Sufis, he gives the impression of being an apologist for Sufism. He tried to show that he was innocent of heretical beliefs, and he tried to refute Shi‘ite clerics.²⁸⁸

Majdhūb claimed that his Sufi order did not share any of the views of the heretical Sufis. He said:

It is important to know that negating Sufism, in general, is due to the inability of people to discern and distinguish between Shi‘ite Sufis and Sunni Sufis. And as they perceive indecent beliefs in them, they think that all Sufis are like that. They have not taken notice of those elect members of the people of the house of the Prophet [Shi‘ites] who always practise self-mortification, the struggle against the carnal soul, and remembrance of God (*dhikr*), abandon the material world, and hold themselves aloof of the malefactors. Their path is the path of real Sufism.²⁸⁹

Religious verdicts of excommunication were issued against him.²⁹⁰ He tells us that he was accused of being a heretical Sufi because of the egocentric and ignorant nature of the common clerics.²⁹¹ He did not defend himself until he heard that the accusations had reached the holy cities where scholars (*‘ulamā’*), pious people (*atqīyā’*) and righteous people (*ṣulahā’*) resided, at which point those accusations became serious and life-threatening.²⁹²

He then referred to a hadith from *Al-Tawhīd* by Shaykh Ṣadūq (d. 381/991), where people came to Imām Ṣādiq and asked him, ‘Why is it that when we call God, there are no answers from Him?’ The Imām replied, ‘Because you do not know the person you are calling.’²⁹³ The majority of Shi‘ites believed that this saying had been addressed to the common people, but Majdhūb held that it was addressed to the Shi‘ite ulama.²⁹⁴ Therefore, like his predecessors, Majdhūb taught that some Sufis were heretics — an idea that remained key in his apologetic treatises — and while he opposed heterodox, deviant Sufis, he staunchly defended his own theology, philosophy and beliefs.

Shiʿism

Majdhüb's view of Shiʿism resembled that of mainstream Shiʿites who had tendencies towards extremist Shiʿism (*ghuluww*). He condemned any Shiʿite who did not declare his or her disgust at and hatred of the enemies of Shiʿite Imāms. He said that a real Shiʿite did not enter hell and believed that the traditions about these beliefs were authenticated. The real Shiʿite lived a life of piety.²⁹⁵

He discussed the succession of Shiʿite Imāms and their immaculate being.²⁹⁶ Intercession was possible only if it came from the Prophets, the Imāms and the companions or people of moral soundness.²⁹⁷ He strongly emphasised his Shiʿite beliefs as he said that the friends of the Imāms were friends of God, while the enemies of Imāms were enemies of God. If so, it did not matter if they were jurists, theosophists or pseudo-Sufis (*mutiṣaw-wif*); they were all damned and would be discarded.²⁹⁸

Majdhüb stipulated, however, that Shiʿites must not be proud of their beliefs; the people of faith had to stay between the two states of fear and hope (*khuwf wa rajāʾ*). According to him, if one gave way to fear it caused hopelessness, and if hope prevailed he would believe he was secure from Divine punishment.²⁹⁹ Majdhüb explained these beliefs but did not make any direct reference to the classical texts of Sufism, and he was careful to ensure that his words conformed to Shiʿite beliefs. He said a person who followed the traditions of the Shiʿite Imāms was safe from the devil. Based on a tradition from Prophet Muḥammad, Majdhüb believed that the Qurʾān and the people of the house (*ahl al-bayt*) were the only inheritance of Prophet Muḥammad, and the Shiʿite Imāms were the only ones who had the true perception of the Qurʾān.³⁰⁰ Majdhüb believed that one could not have the true perception of the Qurʾān without appealing to the Shiʿite Imāms, and that reaching for the Divine proximity without relying on the traditions of the Shiʿite Imāms would only lead to perdition.³⁰¹

Shiʿite Heretics

Āmulī said that there were some people who wrongly condemned Sufis, while there were also people who were Shiʿites only by name, such as the Ismāʿīlīs and Zaydis.³⁰² Majdhüb similarly classed the Zaydiyya, Fathīyya, Wāqifiyya, Kaysāniyya and Nāwūsiyya among the non-Imamate Shiʿites and condemned them as infidels because they refused to follow one of the tenets of Islam, which was the 'love of Imāms'.³⁰³ He called two groups of

Muslims infidels: the first group who did not believe in the Shi'ite Imāms at all, and the second group who exceeded the proper bounds and ascribed divinity to them.³⁰⁴

Shi'ite Sufism

While Majdhüb refuted the theologians (*mutakalimīn*), pseudo-philosophers (*mutifalsafih*) and pseudo-Sufis (*mutiṣawwifa*), he acknowledged that a few of them had acquired their beliefs from the traditions of Shi'ite Imāms. This small group, outwardly and inwardly, followed the path of Shi'ite Imāms who had received the gnosis.³⁰⁵ Āmulī believed that 'Shi'ite' and 'Sufi' were two different names that signified one reality, a reality which might also be named the 'True Believer' (*mu'min mumtaḥan*).³⁰⁶ In this matter, Majdhüb followed almost the same path as Āmulī, who believed that the true Sufi was the follower of Shi'ite Imāms.³⁰⁷ He stated that the true faithful, who were called Shi'ites, were Sufi, *faqīr* and *darwīsh*.³⁰⁸

Majdhüb believed that Shi'ite Sufis were innocent of the deviations held by Sunni Sufis. Those Sufis who had received their beliefs from the Light of the Shi'ite Imāms had attained the Divine gnosis (*ma'rifat ilāhī*) and were distinct from the heretical Sufis.³⁰⁹ Majdhüb claimed that Qāḍī Nūrullāh Shūshtarī was the most perfect transcendental theosopher and truthful narrator of Islamic traditions (*muḥadith*) of his time.³¹⁰ He discussed Shūshtarī's perfection in every religious science and referred to Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, who said that it was obligatory for every Shi'ite to have two books, *Iḥqāq Ḥaqq* and *Majālis al-mu'minīn* by Shūshtarī.³¹¹ Shūshtarī was a great seminary scholar and philosopher and said that if one accused Sufi masters like Bisṭāmī (d. 261/874) or Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 297/910) of heretical beliefs, it was calamitous for one's faith because they were followers of the Shi'ite Imāms.³¹²

Majdhüb, following the same path as Shūshtarī, claimed that Sufi masters like 'Aṭṭār, Rūmī, Sanā'ī (d. 525/1131), Jāmī (d. 898/1492), Abū Sa'īd Abū al-Khayr, Shāh Ni'matullāh and Shāh Qāsim Anwār (d. 837/1433) were all Shi'ites.³¹³ Making reference to Aḥmad Ghazālī (d. 520/1126), Majdhüb stated that Shāh Ni'matullāh, Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh, Iṣḥāq Khutlānī (d. 827/1423) and Mir Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī (d. 786/1385) were all Shi'ites who claimed to be followers of Aḥmad Ghazālī. Therefore, there could be no doubt that Ghazālī himself was a Shi'ite as well.³¹⁴

Majdhüb dedicated a chapter in *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq* to proving that a real Sufi could not be a follower of 'people of tradition and consensus' (*ahl-i sunnat*

wa al-jamāʿat). He believed that a Shiʿite could not be a disciple of a Sunni master, although Sunnis had been disciples of Shiʿites. Shiʿite Sufis had dissembled their Shiʿite beliefs to attract Sunnis and later on encourage them into Shiʿism.³¹⁵ Majdhūb referred to Āmulī, who said that the real Shiʿites were those Sufis who paid attention to the Islamic laws and spiritual aspects of Shiʿism.³¹⁶

Majdhūb referred with approbation to a treatise called *Insāfiyya* written by Fayḍ-i Kāshānī at the end of his life, where he had stated, 'I am neither a theologian (*mutikalim*), nor pseudo-philosopher (*mutifalsif*), nor pseudo-Sufi. I am an imitator of the Qurʾān and traditions of the Prophet. I am a follower of the People of the House (*ahl al-bayt*) of that master and I am tired of the sayings of the four sects. I am a stranger to anything other than the Qurʾān and traditions of the People of the House.'³¹⁷ Majdhūb concluded that no one could condemn Kāshānī as a debauchee (*fāsiq*) or excommunicate him, because he had reached the state of perfection on the spiritual path.³¹⁸ Majdhūb was a true follower of his predecessors, the Shiʿite mystics Āmulī, Kāshānī and Shūshtarī. He believed that Shiʿism and Sufism were two different words for one reality; therefore, all real Sufis were Shiʿite. He followed both Āmulī very closely and in certain aspects took Shūshtarī as his model.³¹⁹

Sunni Sufism

Majdhūb believed that Sufis who lacked the Light of Sainthood that came from the Shiʿite Imāms were heterodox and should be counted among the heretics of Sufism.³²⁰ He also made a direct and long reference to the *Ajwaba* by Majlisī to explain the different varieties of Sufi heretics. The first group of heretical Sufis were the Sunni Sufis. The second group had been Shiʿite in their hearts but had dissimulated. Majlisī and Majdhūb rejected the first group but reserved judgement about the second. The third group were the real Sufis, whose orthodoxy Majlisī and Majdhūb had also affirmed, and who had sought their gnosis from the Light of the Shiʿite Imāms and avoided whirling (*charkh zadan*) and listening to music (*samāʿ*).³²¹ Shūshtarī said that only the common Sufis were Sunnis, whereas the elect Sufis like Junayd and Bistāmī were real Shiʿites. He claimed that certain Sunni Sufis believed in incarnation and unification and did not follow Islamic laws.³²²

Shiʿite Sufis were very critical of Naqshbandī Sufis because the initiatic chain of their order went back through Abū Bakr and their strong Sunni beliefs. Majdhūb followed the same path in criticising Naqshbandīs, cit-

ing Shūshtarī’s contention that they were deviant Sufis who had introduced innovation and could be traced back to Abū Bakr.³²³ He claimed that all Sufi orders could be traced back to ‘Alī except the Naqshbandīs. He asserted that the Naqshbandī order had two chains of spiritual authority and both had the name of Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq. One of these went through the Shi‘ite Imāms to ‘Alī, while the other went to Salmān al-Fārsī and from Salmān to Abū Bakr. Shūshtarī therefore accused the Naqshbandīs of innovation,³²⁴ and Majdhüb developed Shūshtarī’s contention further. He argued that Salmān had been a disciple of the Prophet Muḥammad and a Shi‘ite based on authentic Shi‘ite traditions, and so no one could trace an order that derived from him to Abū Bakr.³²⁵ Majdhüb commented that many of the great figures in the history of Sufism had been followers of the Naqshbandī order, and he did not reject them, since one of the initiatic chains of their order was in clear accordance with Shi‘ism and most of their practices were in accordance with the traditions of the Shi‘ite Imāms.³²⁶

Majdhüb clearly stated that he did not intend to defend all Sufis, and certainly not Sunni Sufis. They followed the path of deceit and trickery (*shu‘badih*), and the common people thought of this deceit and trickery as a miracle (*karāmat*). Majdhüb reiterated that supernatural acts were no proof of Divine favour, because yogis, Christian monks and Hindus all performed these supernatural acts with the support of demonic powers. One had to evaluate such acts using the standard of the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Imāms.³²⁷

Heretical Sufism

In his apologetic treatises, *Mir‘āt al-Ḥaqq* and *‘Aqā’id*, Majdhüb’s style of writing in the prefaces closely resembled that of Shi‘ite scholars. He not only made no effort there to defend Sufism but also refuted the Sufi heretics. He discussed their heretical beliefs, which were the major focus of scholars when refuting Sufis.

Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh used several terms to distinguish what he considered real Sufism from heretical Sufism, referring to heretical Sufism (*taṣawwuf-i radīyya*), the evil pseudo-Sufis (*mutiṣawwifa khabītha*) and pseudo-Sufis (*mutiṣawwifa*).³²⁸ He believed that the beliefs of this group were all apostasy.³²⁹ One well-known book about the term *mutiṣawwif* was *Kasr-i aṣnām al-jāhiliyya* by Mullā Ṣadrā. He condemned pretenders of Sufism for believing in unificationism (*ittiḥād*), incarnationism (*ḥulūl*), partition (*tajziya*) and

cognition (*sinkhīyat*).³³⁰ Majdhūb emphasised that no one could perceive the essence of God. He refuted sophists, transmigratonists (*tanāsukhīyya*), Nuqṭawīyya, materialists, naturalists, anthropomorphists and agnostics. According to him, the only cure was to put them to the sword.³³¹

Majdhūb cited *Hadiqat al-Shīʿa* by Aḥmad Ardabillī as expounding the heretical beliefs of pseudo-Sufis. There Ardabillī had claimed that the very word Sufi was an innovation, which some of the extremist Sufis tried to justify by tracing it back to the ‘Companion of the Porch’ (*ashābi ṣuffā*).³³² This text identified the first known Sufi as Hāshim Kūfi, who had lived like a Christian and accepted belief in incarnation (*ḥulūl*) and unification (*ittiḥād*).³³³ Outwardly, he had believed in predestination (*jabr*), but inwardly he was a heretic and an atheist.³³⁴ Majdhūb also condemned the denial of the Divine Attributes (*taʿtīl*) and anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*), based on Shīʿite tradition. He believed that absolute predestination and absolute free will were worthless concepts.³³⁵

Majdhūb also cited *Tabṣarat al-ʿawām* by Sayyid Murtiḍā Rāzī regarding the heretical beliefs of Sufis. Sayyid Murtiḍā’s view of Sufism had been much harsher than Ardabillī’s, for he had attributed to them all kinds of forbidden and unethical acts. Majdhūb referred to Sayyid Murtiḍā’s account of Ḥallāj’s life as a Sufi claiming to be God on earth and deceived others through magic.³³⁶ Majdhūb also referred to Jāmī to clarify two groups of Sufis. Jāmī said that the first group, the pseudo-Sufis (*mutiṣawwifa*), were Sufis who had gone astray. The second group were the people of blame (*malāmātīyya*), who were far from hypocrisy and followed the religious laws. They were sincere (*mukhlis*), whereas real Sufis were purified (*mukhlas*). Therefore, the people of blame were not heretical, but they were not as close as Sufis to the path of truth.³³⁷ Majdhūb referred to Aḥsāwī, the author of *Majlā*, and explained how the pseudo-Sufis did not follow Islamic laws.³³⁸ Majdhūb believed in the damnation of those who claimed to be Sufi but believed in incarnation (*ḥulūl*), unification (*ittiḥād*) and transmigration of souls (*tanāsukh*) and failed to follow Islamic laws. The true Sufis were those who followed Islamic laws and the recommended duties (*mustaḥab*) of Islam.³³⁹

Incarnationism (*ḥulūl*) and Unificationism (*ittiḥād*)

Majdhūb held that ‘the believers of reincarnation’ were materialists and heretics. He said that if God were incarnated in an object, it would follow that He was in need of that object for His Being, which was blasphemy. Majdhūb

stressed that unification with God is impossible.³⁴⁰ According to him, the sayings of some Sufis appeared to imply that they believed in incarnationism like Christians, a position made by many Shi‘ite narrators of *ḥadīth* as well.³⁴¹ Majdhüb said that many of the followers of Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj believed that God was incarnated in the bodies of saints (*awlīyā*) and they had reached the degree of unification with God. Majdhüb refuted this belief and argued that it resembled the belief of the Christians about Jesus Christ, which was blasphemy.³⁴²

Majdhüb stipulated that one should not immediately accuse Sufis but should reserve judgement until one had studied their beliefs. Afīfī believed that Muḥammad had an eternal object, which one could conceive of as Annihilation in God and subsistence with God (*fanā’i fi Allāh wa baqā’i bi Allāh*). However, some, like Majlisī, held that such belief exceeded the proper bounds and was an example of extremism (*ghuluww*). Majdhüb believed that one should keep silent about Afīfī and Sufis like him and not accuse them of blasphemy and debauchery.³⁴³ Majdhüb cited Nūrullah Shūshtarī to prove that Sufis who believed in incarnation (*ḥulūl*) and unification (*ittiḥād*) belonged to low-brow, vulgar or pseudo-Sufism (*taṣawwuf-i ‘amma*) and not to the elect Sufism (*taṣawwuf-i Khāṣṣa*).³⁴⁴

Nuḡṭawīyya

Another heterodox Sufi sect that Majdhüb considered heretical because they believed in *tanāsukh*, reincarnation, was the *Nuḡṭawīyya*.³⁴⁵ According to him, they believed that the ‘primordial origin’ of everything was the ‘essence of the square’ (*dhāti muraba*), which was the spirit of human beings. They believed that they were divine as they had obtained the knowledge of God. He condemned these beliefs as clearly worthless and false and went on to curse the founder of that sect, Maḥmūd Paṣīkhānī.³⁴⁶

Wāṣīliyya (Mystics United with God)

According to Majdhüb, there was another group of Sufis known as *Wāṣīliyya* (those united with God), who believed they were directly united with God. They believed that because there were no veils between them and God, there was no need to follow Divine laws, prayers, fasting or other religious duties. Majdhüb refuted this sect, citing authenticated standard scholarly

Shiʿite books, and excommunicated it from the mainstream Muslims.³⁴⁷ He believed that following the canonical laws of Islam or sharia was one of the main principles for the wayfarer on the path of Sufism.

‘*Ushshāqīyya* (The Lovers)

Another heretical Sufi sect was the so-called ‘lovers of God’ or ‘*Ushshāqīyya*’ who believed that being occupied with the sayings and commands of prophets was being occupied with something other than God, which they believed was futile. Majdhūb condemned this sect and called them apostates. He believed that prophethood was the closest state to Divinity.³⁴⁸

Tanāsukhīyya (Transmigration and Reincarnation)

Majdhūb always emphasised that *tanāsukh*, reincarnation, was to be rejected and that believers in it denied God, since they believed in the eternity of the world and souls. Many of them did not believe in heaven and hell but held that souls transmigrated and reincarnated in this world forever and there was no other world beyond this material one.³⁴⁹ He referred to Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistārī and Imām Fakhr al-Dīn Razī (d. 606/1209), who said that true Muslims believed human souls were created by God and did not transmigrate from one body to another and that transmigration also contradicted the resurrection. Majdhūb concluded that believers in reincarnation and transmigration were not Muslims.³⁵⁰

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As can be seen from the foregoing discussion of unorthodox movements within the Sufi tradition, Majdhūb was clearly a follower of his predecessors in advocating a kind of Shiʿite Sufism within the context of various philosophical schools of mystical Shiʿism. He usually began his treatises by refuting what he saw as deviant, erroneous Sufi beliefs, and then went on to reject the doctrines of reincarnation, divine unification and other heretical beliefs held by these heterodox Sufi groups. However, he did not condemn Sufism as such; he believed that true Sufism was Shiʿism and that real Sufis were the followers of Shiʿite Imāms. To prove these beliefs he sought help from Shiʿite mystics such as Kāshānī, Shūshtārī and Āmulī.

Conclusion

Majdhüb ‘Alī Shāh became the leader (*quṭb*) of the Ni‘matullāhī order for a short time after Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh and played a crucial role in its revival. During this time, although subjected to criticism, he successfully managed to avoid persecution and prosecution by his fundamentalist foes, such as the anti-Sufi jurist Aqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī. In his book *Resurrection and Renewal*, Abbas Amanat made the crucial point that the Ni‘matullāhī order needed to be institutionalised rather than continuing to be led by wandering leaders. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh had begun to urbanise the order, but it became isolated during his time because of its suppression by Shi‘ite clerics.³⁵¹ Majdhüb was well versed in Shi‘ite theosophy and jurisprudence, and his treatises and scholarly disputes attracted many scholars and influential people. ‘Abd al-Ṣamad Hamadānī, the author of *Baḥr al-Ma‘ārif*, was initiated by Nūr ‘Alī Shāh, and his guide to initiation on the Sufi Path (*dalīl-i rāh*) was Majdhüb.³⁵² Other influential people like the Khān of Tālish, Ayāz Khān Tālishī, became his disciples.

There were a huge number of initiations into the Ni‘matullāhī order during his time, causing jealousy among some of the anti-Sufi clerics. For example, Muḥammad Riḍā Mīrzā, the ruler of Gilān, and a group of his deputies were initiated into the Ni‘matullāhī order. Ma‘ṣūm Shīrāzī, the author of *Ṭarā’iq Al-ḥaqā’iq*, and Arjomand suggested that a group of ‘ulama were unhappy with what was happening. Accordingly, they wrote a letter to Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh, the King of Persia, accusing the Ni‘matullāhī initiates of conspiring to seize power. The shah summoned Muḥammad Riḍā Mīrzā to Tehran and deposed him. He then sent Faḍīl Khān Gurūsī to Hamadān. Faḍīl Khān fined Majdhüb and his disciple, Ḥasan Hamadānī, a vast amount of money. By some accounts they were fined 1,000 tomans, whereas others record a fine of 2,000 tomans.³⁵³ To conclude, Majdhüb was more successful in engaging in religious dialogue with the Shi‘ite seminary scholars. He was able to bring the Ni‘matullāhī order out of its isolation through his writings and preaching, which led to the initiation of some influential people. His literary contribution to Shi‘ite Sufism was enormous. His philosophical and seminarian knowledge helped him to create an atmosphere of dialogue with Shi‘ite clerics.

The Life and Works of Mast ‘Alī Shāh

Introduction

Ḥājj Zayn al-‘Abdīn Shīrwānī, better known by his spiritual title Mast ‘Alī Shāh, was born on 15 August 1780 C.E. (15 Sha‘bān 1194 A.H.) in Shamakhi, a district of Shirwān in Azerbaijan.¹ Mast ‘Alī Shāh came from a family of scholars. Iskandar, his father, was among the class of Shi‘ite seminary scholars in Shamakhi.² The Uṣūlī scholars Sayyid ‘Alī Ṭabāṭabā‘ī (d. 1231/1816),³ known as Ṣāhib Rīyāḍ, and Aqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī (d. 1205/1790),⁴ known as Waḥīd (the ‘Unique One’), appointed Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s father as their deputy in Shamakhi.⁵ Mast ‘Alī states that many of the Sunnis, whom he called by the pejorative term *Bakrī wa ‘Amrī*, were converted to Shi‘ism through the efforts of his father.⁶ Through these accounts, which are to a large degree hagiographical, Mast ‘Alī tried to legitimise his father as having been an influential seminary scholar in the Shamakhi district. At the age of 5, Mast ‘Alī went to Iraq with his family and spent his childhood in the city of Karbalā. Over the next 12 years he studied literary and other seminary sciences.⁷ One night, during a long period of spiritual contemplation, he realised that the seminary sciences were not enough to gain gnosis.⁸ He realised that it was only through direct spiritual realisation and ‘self-disclosure’ or ‘unveiling’ (*kashf*) that one could gain the gnosis of God.⁹

He writes that it was during this period that he started to search (*ṭalab*)¹⁰ for the truth.¹¹ Mast ‘Alī met gnostics (*‘urafā*) and scholars, and in Baghdad he met Sunni scholars.¹² For 28 years¹³ he travelled and lived among Turks, Kurds and Indians, and met their saints and sages,¹⁴ writing long accounts of his meetings and conversations with them, which demonstrate his ecumenical views and his willingness to initiate a dialogue with members of other faiths and to open his ears to the beliefs and thoughts of people outside his own culture and civilisation. Near the end of his life, he summed up his views as follows: ‘I saw the world as a mirage and an appearance without being. There is no credit for its honour and no value for its hardship.’¹⁵ This

sentence clearly represents his Sufi detachment from the concerns of the material world.

It was during his travels that he heard about Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh. He heard that Sayyid 'Alī Bihbahānī,¹⁶ Ja'far Najafī (d. 1227/1813)¹⁷ and Aqā Muḥammad 'Alī Kirmānshāhī had issued religious verdicts to the effect that Ma'sūm 'Alī and Nūr 'Alī must be excommunicated and their beliefs vilified.¹⁸ Mast 'Alī decided to research the Sufis to gain first-hand knowledge of them.

Mast 'Alī spent time with Sufis and did not encounter anything other than goodness and piety, which eventually led to his initiation into the Ni'matullāhī order by Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh.¹⁹ Afterwards, he accompanied Nūr 'Alī Shāh to the 'Atabāt in Iraq and became his disciple. Later, he received spiritual lessons from Rawnaq 'Alī,²⁰ who was also his guide during his initiation (*dalīl-i rāh*). He also met Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh and became his close companion.²¹

Majdhūb ordered Mast 'Alī to reside in the province of Fars in order to guide spiritual seekers (*sullāk*), and in 1235/1819 Mast 'Alī was married there.²² During his stay in Fars, according to several of his autobiographical accounts, he was constantly persecuted by the clerics and harassed by the inhabitants of the province.²³ During his last visit to Majdhūb, Majdhūb mentioned that he was about to travel to Azerbaijan and that he was not coming back, meaning that he was about to die. Mast 'Alī begged Majdhūb to take him with him to the afterlife, and Majdhūb replied that Mast 'Alī had to stay in this world for a while, until his time came.

In the year 1239/1823, when Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh passed away, there were disagreements about succession within the order. However, the majority of Majdhūb's disciples became Mast 'Alī's disciples. So he became the spiritual Pole (*quṭb*) of the Ni'matullāhī order and remained in that position for about 14 years.²⁴ During his decade and a half as leader of the order he became a very well-known master. He tried to avoid worldly folk and sought out the company of people of faith and piety. He avoided as much as possible visitations from members of the Qājār court and from the social elite and nobility. He explained that it was not his manner to flatter courtiers; therefore, it was better if he stayed away from them. In 1253/1837 he passed away at the age of 57, while returning from hajj.²⁵ He was known for living as an ascetic. Shīrāzī quoted from Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat about Mast 'Alī Shāh's generosity and kindness, 'I have seen very few people like him being content with as little food as possible and simple clothes.'²⁶

The majority of his contemporaries harboured prejudices towards those holding opposing beliefs, while he exhibited broadmindedness towards

them. His extraordinary literary writings are indicative of open-mindedness to other religious groups, beliefs and philosophies. In his writings he treated other religious beliefs, practices and customs with an honesty and an objectivity unusual in his day and age, his approach standing in vivid contrast to contemporary exoteric Shi‘ite religious authorities who usually sought to refute beliefs and ideas different from their own.²⁷ He was an emotional person, as is evident in his writings, particularly when he talks about historical events concerning Sufism and Shi‘ism. He was subjected to attacks and accusations by those who opposed his Sufi beliefs, which sometimes provoked angry reactions in his writings.

As explained in previous chapters, Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh was a superstitious and sharia-minded ruler who did not have a good relationship with Sufis in general, although he treated them with unexpected kindness on certain occasions. One can refer to Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s meeting with Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh in Chapter Four as an example. Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh was attracted to Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s religious attitudes and admired him for his personality. Because of these unexpected reactions of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh, Shi‘ite clerics were always anxious about Sufis entering the royal court, which challenged the clerics’ authority. Their jealous and oppressive behaviour ended in the persecution of Sufi masters like Mast ‘Alī, who was not always protected by the political and religious elites of society. For instance, the Nizārī Ismā‘īlī Imām had a friendly relationship with Mast ‘Alī,²⁸ and some believed that the Ismā‘īlī Imām had become a disciple of Mast ‘Alī. Mast ‘Alī even took refuge in the Aqā Khān’s house in Maḥallāt from the persecution of Shi‘ite seminary scholars.²⁹ Although it seems contradictory, this relationship did not affect his theological views about Ismā‘īlis in general, because he categorised them as being among the rejected groups of extremist Shi‘ites (*ghulāt*).

Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh did not favour Mast ‘Alī and, in certain situations, Mast ‘Alī was persecuted by the agents of the Qājār government. However, as a frequent traveller, he was welcomed by rulers and monarchs of other regions. For instance, he was welcomed by the Mughal king, Akbar Shāh II (d. 1252/1837). Although Mast ‘Alī did not mention his name, he did indicate that he had a friendly relationship with the governor of Egypt.³⁰ His eagerness to meet political, intellectual, philosophical and religious elites introduced him to many Europeans as well. He admired Westerners (*farangīyān*) for their generosity and manliness, and he spoke highly of their progress in technological matters. This way of speaking about Westerners created a misrepresentation of Mast ‘Alī Shāh, as scholars like Ḥā’irī asserted that he

was a Western instrument and had direct relationships with Western countries such as Austria and England.³¹ This was, in fact, a malevolent conclusion. Mast 'Alī Shāh admired many other ethnicities and countries, including the more positive aspects of their cultures and religious systems, which was indicative of his non-judgemental attitude. For example, he admired Hindus for being tolerant of other religious minorities.

The Works of Mast 'Alī Shāh

Mast 'Alī Shāh's contribution to the theological, philosophical and mystical milieu of Persia is not as well known as Majdhūb's. However, he was one of the most influential spiritual masters of his time due to his sociability and keen perceptions of other philosophical, ethnic and religious groups. As Leonard Lewisohn has pointed out, 'Zayn al-'Ābidin Shirvānī ("Mast 'Alī Shāh") was by far the strongest nineteenth-century Ni'matullāhī master.³²

His experiences of travelling to different places and countries made him more of a cosmopolitan person. Leonard Lewisohn notes how '[h]is prodigious literary output shows a warm personality whose universal concerns and broadminded cosmopolitan humour are largely absent in his immediate predecessors and contemporaries.³³ He was keen to have dialogues with the sages and scholars of other cultures and religious systems. He travelled from North Africa to Bengal and became familiar with their different cultures and religions; at one time he claimed to have knowledge of about 100 different religions. His visit to India (1216/1801) demonstrated his conciliatory conduct towards other religions. He admired the people of India for respecting different religions and for living in peace with them. He thought highly of Hindus for not harming anyone for their religious beliefs and practices. He eagerly explained that in India Hindus worshipped their own gods and Muslims went to their own mosques, each peacefully respecting the other.³⁴ He was fascinated by this religious diversity. Mast 'Alī Shāh's travelogues are a great contribution to the better understanding of the religious, ethnic and social life of the era.

He was famous for composing three different travelogues: *Rīyāḍ al-sīyāḥa* (*The Meadow of Travel*), *Ḥadā'iq al-sīyāḥa* (*The Walled Garden of Travel*) and *Bustān al-sīyāḥa* (*The Garden of Travel*). These three very large volumes comprise the accounts of his travels in India and the Middle East, but often repeat content so that the three travelogues sometimes appear to be merely rewritings or slightly different versions of his travel stories.³⁵

Nonetheless, each of these travelogues allows the reader better to understand the socio-religious and political milieu of the time as well as Mast 'Alī's attitude to other beliefs, religions, schools of thought and ethnicities. They are old-style anthropological and geographical studies of different places and people in which Mast 'Alī shared his observations of their conduct and beliefs as well as other aspects of their social life.

Disclosure of Gnosis (Kashf al-ma'ārif)

Kashf al-ma'ārif is a short, apologetic treatise that explains Mast 'Alī's mystical beliefs.³⁶ It is similar to, but not as scholarly and well-organised as, Majdhūb's *'Aqā'id*. Mast 'Alī explained that he called this treatise *Kashf al-ma'ārif* (*Disclosure of Gnosis*) because in it he narrates the traditions of the 'gnostics of religion' (*'arifān-i dīn*) and the 'scholars of certitude' (*'alimān-i ahl-i yaqīn*).³⁷ The treatise consists of three chapters and an epilogue, and while it appears to be a summary of Majdhūb's *'Aqā'id*, it does have a few differences. His views on the Shi'ite Imāms as perfect Divine manifestations, his rejection of heretical Sufis and his views about the school of intuitive philosophy are all in accordance with Majdhūb's views. This is important because, in a sense, his *'Aqā'id* is something of a short autobiography.

Mast 'Alī's *Kashf al-ma'ārif* belongs to a tradition of treatises written by apologetic mystics like Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, Mullā Ṣadrā and Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, who opposed libertinism, incarnation and other heretical Sufi beliefs. One of the important points in this treatise is that, although some scholars rejected Mullā Ṣadrā and Fayḍ Kāshānī as part of organised Sufism, Mast 'Alī accepted them and suggested that their beliefs were part of the Ni'matullāhī Sufi tradition.

The Meadow of Travel (Rīyāḍ al-Siyāḥa)

The first travelogue written by Mast 'Alī was *Rīyāḍ al-Siyāḥa* (*The Meadow of Travel*).³⁸ Mast 'Alī was well versed in anthropological studies of different races and cultures, which made him less prejudiced in comparison to other scholars, considering the extremely conservative social and religious context of his era. It is notable, though, that his personality as a devout Sufi and a Sufi master did affect his writing.

In this volume the names of the places he visited are arranged in alphabetical order. *Rīyāḍ* consists of six chapters: one Place of Beauty (*khuld*), four Gardens (*rawḍa*) and one Spring (*bahār*). The first chapter is called

heaven (*khuld*) and is an explanation of the geographical divisions of the earth based on the traditional geographical sciences. The first division or *rawḍa* explains different regions within Iran, and the second *rawḍa* is about *Tūrān* (the Persian term used for Turkish Central Asia), *Kabulistān* (north-east of Afghanistan, centred on Kabul) and *Kashmīr* (the region located between Pakistan and India, located in the north-west of the Indian peninsula). The third *rawḍa* is about the region of *Rūm* (Asia Minor). Finally, the fourth *rawḍa* is about the Arabian Peninsula, *Shām* (Syria), and Egypt. The last chapter, which is called *Bahār*, is an explanation of the social, religious and geographical region of the Indian Peninsula.

He wrote *Riyyāḍ* during a 20-month period of exile in Qumsha, near Isfahan.³⁹ Throughout his life he faced discrimination from members of the royal court, and so during the third decade of the 19th century had been exiled there. The book was dedicated to the prince Muḥammad Riḍā Mīrzā (d. 1287/ 1870), son of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh. Mast ‘Alī wrote in particular in this book about different tribes, especially those that ruled Persia, like the Afshārs and Qājārs. He also wrote about kings and various rulers.⁴⁰

The Walled Garden of Travel (Ḥadā’iq al-Sīyāḥa)

Ḥadā’iq al-Sīyāḥa was written starting on 13 July 1827 (18 Dhul-ḥajja 1242) in the city of Shiraz.⁴¹ This book is organised according to a different method from the other two travelogues. The names of the places are organised in the alphabetical order of *tahjī*, according to the Arabic system. This book includes one garden (*bustān*), which is an introduction. Then there are 28 walled gardens (*ḥadiqa*) and one orchard (*gulistān*), the very terms used by Mast ‘Alī for chapters of his book. This book’s structure is more like the structure of *Bustān al-Sīyāḥa*. However, as these two books were written during different periods of his life, there are a few minor differences.

The Garden of Travel (Bustān al-Sīyāḥa)

Bustān al-Sīyāḥa is the most extensive and famous treatise written by Mast ‘Alī.⁴² A draft of this work was written in 1247/1831 and its final version was finished in 1248/1832.⁴³ In this work he explains clearly his beliefs about different sects in Islam and other religious traditions while detailing his travels. The *Bustān* is a masterpiece, a work that is crucial for understanding the circumstances of the Ni‘matullāhī order during the 19th century, in which his views about different Shi‘ite schools of thought are elaborated.⁴⁴

In *Bustān* the names of the places he travelled to are arranged in alphabetical order, and whenever there was a well-known person (a Sufi master or a scholar) in a certain city, he provided his biography.⁴⁵ The book has 28 chapters called gardens (*gulshan*) and one chapter called spring (*bahār*).⁴⁶

Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s Mystical Theology and Sufism

As the heir to Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh and supreme leader of the Ni‘matullāhi order, Mast ‘Alī Shāh tried to follow Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh’s mode of spiritual practice, mystical teachings and philosophy. Nevertheless, there are certain differences in their personal and seminary backgrounds which lead to differences between their teachings and practices. An important difference between them is how Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s frequent travels to different countries made him a cosmopolitan person, relatively accepting of other religions and philosophies.

Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s conduct towards and relationship with Shi‘ite seminaries and Shi‘ite clerics was different from Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh’s. Majdhūb studied seminary sciences before devoting his life to Sufism, and he was therefore a well-versed seminary scholar as well as a Sufi master. Mast ‘Alī Shāh did not have this background, which made it easier for some malicious seminary scholars to persecute him. Mast ‘Alī Shāh was not conservative at all; his warm and emotional personality made him aggressive in his conduct towards Shi‘ite clerics, such that he made direct and harsh criticisms of the seminary scholars in his *Kashf al-mā‘arīf*, *Bustān*, *Rīyāḍ* and *Ḥadā’iq*.

Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s Views on Shi‘ism

As far as formal Shi‘ite theology and doctrines were concerned, Mast ‘Alī mostly followed the example of his predecessors and, like Majdhūb, firmly emphasised his Shi‘ite beliefs. After all his travels, he concluded that the only way to be rescued was to board the ship of salvation, which was called ‘the ship of love for People of the House [of the Prophet]’ (*ahl al-bayt*), a reference to a tradition spoken by the Prophet Muḥammad: ‘[m]y family among you are like Noah’s Ark. He who sails in her will be safe, but he who refuses to board her will perish.’⁴⁷ Mast ‘Alī mentioned the twelve Imāms of Shi‘ism as his Imāms and spiritual guides, and indicated that the Twelfth Imām was alive and was his master (*murshid*).⁴⁸ He used the term *murshid*

for the Twelfth Shi‘ite Imām, which was the same Sufi term for ‘spiritual master’. Thus, the distinction between the Sufi master and the Shi‘ite Imām becomes ambiguous in his writings, although he clearly affirmed that the guidance from the Shi‘ite Imām was superior to that offered by Sufi masters. By believing in the superiority of Shi‘ite Imāms, he also elaborated his own views about the Shi‘ite messianic belief in the return of Mahdī (the Twelfth Imām) from occultation,⁴⁹ stating that the time of his appearance is destined by God’s Will, and that he will bring justice to the world when that is full of injustice and tyranny.⁵⁰ He also believed that the Shi‘ite Imāms were the best guides after the Prophet Muḥammad, and that they were immaculate and protected from committing sins (*maṣūm*). However, he specified that they were created beings in order to distance himself from Shi‘ite extremists (*ghulāt*). He also stated his belief in the intercession (*shifā‘at*) of the Imāms, and that he decided to base his life on the traditions of the Shi‘ite Imāms.⁵¹

Uṣūlīs and Akhbārīs

Mast ‘Ali Shāh’s views on the Uṣūlīs and Akhbārīs are similar to Majdhūb’s.⁵² Majdhūb was an Uṣūlī Shi‘ite, but he criticised both schools. His views on *taqlīd* are closer to those of Akhbārī scholars. In the strictly doctrinal sense, therefore, neither Mast ‘Ali nor Majdhūb ‘Ali Shāh was theologically affiliated to either of these two schools. Mast ‘Ali followed the same path as his master. However, he issued a frank refutation of both schools, referring to the tradition that scholars were the heirs of the Prophet. Then he stated that there were three major groups among the Shi‘ites: the Uṣūlīs, the Akhbārī scholars and the Sufis.⁵³ Mast ‘Ali refuted both Uṣūlīs and Akhbārīs and said that Akhbārīs did not have the power to discern the Divine Reality (*ḥaqīqat ilāhīyya*).⁵⁴ Mast ‘Ali affirmed his strong ties to the Shi‘ite Imāms in his refutation of these schools.

Sufi Apologetics

As Royce notes, ‘There is a strong apologetic tone to Mast ‘Ali Shāh’s writings. The Ni‘mat Allāhīs are portrayed as patient friends of God who are tormented by his enemies.’⁵⁵ However, Mast ‘Ali Shāh’s knowledge of theology and general seminary sciences was not as vast and profound as Majdhūb ‘Ali Shāh’s, and he was fortunate to have Majdhūb’s teachings and writings

to draw on after succeeding him as the spiritual master of the Ni‘matullāhi order. His mystical teachings and philosophy were influenced by Majdhūb, to the extent that most of his apologetic writings are simply rewritings of Majdhūb’s works. Sometimes his style of writing is less scholarly, and as a consequence of his lack of nuance, his style is harsher in tone and certainly more opinionated than that of his master, sometimes for good, sometimes for ill.

In his apologetic treatise, *Kashf al-ma‘ārif*, he wonders whether the people who accuse him of having heretical beliefs are enamoured with the material world and overwhelmed by carnal desires.⁵⁶ Mast ‘Ali recites traditions which state that the real Muslim must conceal the faults and deficiencies of others. He refers to sayings of the Imāms, claiming that they did not condemn or excommunicate their close companions who had heterodox beliefs. Instead, the Imāms tried to direct them to the straight path. Mast ‘Ali complains that these seminary scholars claim to be the followers of the Imāms, and yet they excommunicate others. Like his master, Majdhūb, he tells the story of Shaykh Mufīd (d. 413/ 1022) and Sayyid Murtidā (d. 436/1044) whose theological disagreements never led to either attempting to excommunicate the other.⁵⁷ Using this example, he reproached Shi‘ite clerics for issuing excommunication verdicts against other Muslims.

Mast ‘Ali contends that every member from every level of the Shi‘ite community probably will have minor heterodox beliefs for a certain period of their life, so seminary scholars should not issue religious verdicts against them. Only the Shi‘ite Imāms were immune to any deviation. Mast ‘Ali asserted that the Shi‘ite Imāms did not issue verdicts against those hypocrites who professed to be Muslims.⁵⁸ Therefore, fundamentalist Shi‘ite seminary scholars issuing jurisprudential edicts of excommunication had strayed from the path of the Shi‘ite Imāms. Mast ‘Ali also narrates traditions from Shi‘ite Imāms that explained why no one could accuse other Shi‘ites of debauchery (*fisq*), because even though some of them might be guilty of wrongdoing, they should be pardoned due to their Shi‘ite beliefs.⁵⁹

The Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*)

The philosophy of the unity of being was extremely important among Sufis in Qājār Persia. In the previous chapter, some of the key concepts of this mystical vision of the world were discussed. The followers of this

school believe that all existence is a manifestation of One Being. Therefore, everything exists through One Being, which is God.⁶⁰ This means that nothing exists other than God. As Chittick states, ‘When “existence” is discussed, it is contrasted with a thing or entity that exists. Hence one speaks of the existence of the cosmos or of a tree. But the term “Being” refers strictly to God in Himself and cannot be juxtaposed with any entity other than Being, since God’s “thingness” or entity is Being Itself.’⁶¹ God reveals Himself to creation through manifestations as the whole of creation is composed of different forms of divine manifestations.⁶² Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s conception is very close to the philosophical School of Isfahan and largely follows that of his teacher, Majdhūb. He refers to Majdhūb using the clause ‘[m]y master [Majdhūb] says . . .’,⁶³ and began by emphasising the issue of God’s transcendence, affirming that no one, including the prophets, gnostics (*‘urafā*) and theosophers (*hukamā*), could have any perception of the Divine Essence. He refers to different traditions from Shi‘ite Imāms that are indicative of the impossibility of perceiving God’s Essence.⁶⁴ He refers to God as ‘the Necessary Existent’ (*wājib al-wujūd*), which is the reality of Being, and everything else is made up of ‘contingent existents’ (*mumkin al-wujūd*). The ‘contingent existents’ rely on ‘the Necessary Existent’. The reality of their existence is the emanation of God, which was like a light that emanates from the sun. The divine light from God was the reason for the manifestation of all objects in the world.⁶⁵

Next, he explains the issue of God’s action (*fi’l Allāh*), which is the first emanation from the essence of God, but it is not part of the Essence, as no one can reach the realm of divine essence. He says that the First Emanation is called the ‘Act of God’ (*fi’l Allāh*) or the ‘shadow of God’ (*Zil ul Allāh*). The ‘Act of God’ is like the light from the sun, though it is not the sun itself but only something through which the sun can be perceived. One can perceive God through the ‘Act of God’.⁶⁶ He also refers to it by using the term ‘Muhammadan Light’ (*Nūr-i Muḥammadi*), which is exactly the same terminology as that used by Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh. He also uses the term ‘Ever-expanding Being’ (*wujūd-i munbasit*), meaning that all beings emanate from this realm.⁶⁷ He emphasises that this was the realm of the lights of the Shi‘ite Imāms.⁶⁸ As this philosophy was fundamental for Ni‘matullāhī Sufism, Mast ‘Alī could not disregard it; however, because he was not as well-versed as Majdhūb in mystical philosophy, he just followed his master, rewriting what Majdhūb had written in his theological treatises.

The Perfect Man (*insān-i kāmīl*)

The philosophy of the Perfect Man in the Sufi tradition was explained in the last chapter. Mast ‘Alī’s own views are again similar to Majdhūb’s. According to Majdhūb, the final apex of creation is the human being, and the ultimate goal in the creation of human beings is one’s annihilation in the Divine Being.⁶⁹

According to Mast ‘Alī, there has to be a perfect man at all times for the continuity of the world. The world is nurtured, sustained and kept in harmony by the grace of this being, who is the deputy of God on Earth; this Perfect Man was the Prophets, Imāms and saints.⁷⁰ Sufis call this person the Great Deputy (*khalīfa a‘zam*), the Pole of the Poles (*quṭb al-aqtāb*), the true human being (*Ādam-i ḥaqīqī*), the Perfect man (*insāni kāmīl*) or the First Intellect (*‘aql-i awwal*).⁷¹ Mast ‘Alī emphasises that the perfect man is the Shi‘ite Imām; hence, the 12 Imāms are called the Pole of Poles, whose deputies take Imāms’ position during the time of occultation. These deputies are the Sufi saints. Mast ‘Alī writes, ‘*Sufī walīst wa walī Sufīst wa munkir īshān kamtar az kāf kūfīst*’, which means that ‘a Sufi is a friend of God and the friend of God is a Sufi and anyone who rejects them is of less worth than the letter “K” of a heretic from Kūfa.’⁷² Sufis are here presented as deputies of the twelfth Imām during the time of occultation. Therefore, those who reject and cast aspersions on the Sufis, by which he meant the exoteric Shi‘ite seminary scholars, are, spiritually speaking, utterly despicable.

Sainthood (*wilāyat*) and Prophethood (*nubuwwat*)

One of the essential doctrines of both Shi‘ite and Sufi thought during the Qājār period was the symbiotic connection between the cycles of sainthood and prophecy. As Michel Chodkiewicz states, ‘Sufism and saint-hood are inseparable. In the absence of saints there is no Sufism; it is born of their saint-hood, nourished by it, and led to reproduce it.’⁷³ Dhābiḥu’llāh Ṣafā believed that the major reason seminary scholars opposed the Sufis was their different interpretation of sainthood. The Shi‘ite clergy believed that the divine guidance of humanity was through the Shi‘ite Imāms and the ulama who, due to their religious training in the sharia, hadith and fiqh, are the true deputies and intermediaries between the Shi‘ite masses and the Imāms. In contrast, the Sufis believed that sainthood was achieved through the mediation of their masters that combines both the esoteric (*bāṭin*) and

exoteric (*ẓāhir*) dimensions of the Shi‘ite faith (*dīn*) necessary for guiding the community of believers.⁷⁴

Mast ‘Alī explains how the prophet has both an esoteric and exoteric mission.⁷⁵ This tradition of a prophet as spiritual guide and receiver of Divine revelation had been elaborated among Shi‘ites long before Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s time. From the time of Adam, the first prophet, down to the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, the succession of Imāms as divine guides was continuous, such that the earth was never without an Imām. Moojan Momen cites a hadith from the fifth Imām, Muḥammad al-Bāqir: ‘[b]y God! God has not left the earth, since the death of Adam, without there being on it an Imām guiding (the people) to God. He is the Proof of God to His servants and the earth will not remain without the Proof of God to his servants.’⁷⁶ Mast ‘Alī also explains the divine and spiritual role of the Imām. He believes that the Imām receives divine inspiration by the grace of angels, whereas prophets receive direct divine revelations.⁷⁷ The question whether the Imām receives divine inspiration (*ilhām*) or divine revelation (*wahy*) was discussed and debated among Shi‘ite seminary scholars, theologians and philosophers from the very first formation of the Shi‘ite sect as an independent theological school of thought. There is a tradition attributed to Imām Bāqir that says, ‘It is not the *wahy* of prophethood but, rather, like that which came to Mary, daughter of ‘Imrān and to the mother of Moses and to the bee.’⁷⁸ Most Shi‘ite mystics have believed that the Imāms receive divine inspiration. The traditions of saints receiving divine inspiration pre-dates Mast ‘Alī Shāh. The Shi‘ite and Sunni mystics have held that the spiritual ear, *gush-i jān*, was the recipient of divine inspiration. As Rūmī says:

Then the spiritual ear becomes the place where inspiration descends.

What is inspiration? A speech hidden from sense-perception.

The spiritual ear and eye are other than this sense-perception, the ear of (discursive) reason and the ear of opinion are destitute of this (inspiration).⁷⁹

Great Sufi figures like Rūmī used the term ‘divine inspiration’ with respect to the saints (*awliyā*). There were qualifications for receiving these revelations and inspirations. One needed to be purified to become spiritually ready. Just as the Shi‘ite Imāms were known to be immaculate through divine inspiration, the Sufi saints were protected (*maḥfūz*) from sins as they received divine revelation from God. Rūmī says:

His (Bāyazīd) guide is ‘the guarded tablet’ [*luwḥih maḥfūz*]. From what is it guarded? It is guarded [*maḥfūz*] from error.

The inspiration of God is not (like) astrology or geomancy or dreams – and God best knoweth what is right.

The Sufis in explaining (their doctrines) call it (the divine inspiration) the inspiration of the heart, in order to disguise (its real nature) from the vulgar.

Take it to be the inspiration of the heart, for it (the heart) is the place where He is seen: how should there be error when the heart is aware of Him?

O true believer, thou hast become seeing by the light of God: thou hast become secure from error and inadvertence.⁸⁰

Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s view is close to that of classical Sufism; however, he was careful to integrate his Shi‘ite beliefs with his Sufism, affirming that the Shi‘ite Imāms are the ultimate source of divine guidance and the Sufi saints are their intermediaries and their inheritors. Mast ‘Alī says that sainthood is at the core of prophethood, and sainthood and prophethood are at the core of messenger-hood, which does not mean that saints are higher than prophets. Prophets are saints (*awalīyā*) and prophets (*anbiyā*) at the same time, enabling them to have both spiritual graces to guide others. However, their sainthood is a nobler state than their prophethood, as sainthood is regarded as the core of prophethood.⁸¹ Ḥakīm ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Tirmidhī (d. 295/ 908) was among the first Sufi figures who elaborated on the relationship between sainthood and prophethood, and he indicated that ‘*Walāya* is superior to *nubuwwa* or *risāla* in the persons of the prophets and messengers; it is the hidden and enduring face of their being; and the mandate which they execute here below represents only its external and transitory aspect.’⁸² Later on in the history of Sufism, Shāh Ni‘matullāh indicated that prophethood (*nubuwwat*) is the exterior aspect of spiritual guidance, whereas sainthood (*wilāyat*) is its inner aspect. Therefore, Muḥammad (the perfect representation of prophethood) was the exterior phase of the greatest (Divine) Name of Truth (*ism a‘zam-i Ḥaqq*), whereas ‘Alī (the first saint after the seal of prophethood) was the core meaning of the greatest (Divine) Name of Truth.⁸³

Sufi writings such as *Khatm al-awliyā*’ by Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī support the view that Sufis believed sainthood was in this sense superior to prophethood because of its inner dimensions. However, Mast ‘Alī was careful in this case to explain clearly that prophets were in a higher state than saints,

drawing the boundaries between the Shiʿite Imāms and the Sufi saints. The Shiʿite Imāms are held to be the ultimate source of divine guidance, whereas the Sufi masters received their light of guidance from the light of the Shiʿite Imāms.⁸⁴

Mast ʿAlī followed the same path as Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 787/1385) who believed that prophethood was perfected in the Prophet Muḥammad, making him the Seal of prophethood.⁸⁵ However, sainthood continued through the Shiʿite Imāms, and would reach its perfection with the advent of the Messiah, who was the Twelfth Imām expected to reappear at the end of time. Mast ʿAlī used the same terminology as Āmulī,⁸⁶ calling the Mahdī the Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood (*khātam wilāyat Muḥammadīyya*).⁸⁷

The term ‘Seal of Sainthood’ (*khatm al-wilāya*) was one of the most important theological terms developed within Sufism, and great importance was given to this term in Shiʿite Sufism in particular. Ibn ʿArabī was one of the first Sufi thinkers to use this term, and his successors continued to elaborate on this philosophy. Before him, Ḥakīm Tirmidhī (d. 295/908) was one of the first mystics to use the term in his book, *Seal of Sainthood* (*Khatm al-wilāya*).⁸⁸ Āmulī also used the term ‘*khatm al-wilāya*’ in reference to ʿAlī as the Seal of Sainthood, so that ʿAlī’s role of being the first saint after Muḥammad became emblematic of the ‘Seal of Sainthood’. Āmulī criticised Ibn ʿArabī, Dāwūd Qaysarī (d. 751/1350) and Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī for attributing sainthood to others and not to the Shiʿite Imāms.⁸⁹ In addition to following the same path as Majdhūb, Mast ʿAlī focused on the Akbarian philosophy of sainthood that had been adopted by Shiʿite mystics of this school such as Ḥaydar Āmulī, who highly influenced him through his master Majdhūb.

Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*)

Formalist Shiʿite clerics usually criticised the Sufis for the alleged deviance and heresy of their beliefs concerning the Muslim dogma of divine Unity. The Sufis believed that the ultimate goal was to reach the station of annihilation in God (*fanāʾ fī Allāh*), where the veil of duality between human beings and divinity is lifted. As Ḥallāj (d. 309/ 922) says:

In the religion of God I have become an infidel.
But upon me infidelity is incumbent,
Even if unto the Muslims it be hateful.⁹⁰

Literalists, rationalists and legally oriented clerics of Islam accused Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers of holding pantheistic beliefs. Mast ‘Alī was well aware of this accusation and the strong opposition that Shi‘ite scholars had for the Sufi understanding of divine Unity. Therefore, he was always precise in explaining that the unity of God is a unity on the level of the divine Essence (*waḥdat-i dhātī*).⁹¹⁹⁹ Mast ‘Alī also pointed out that God was free from both the denial of the Divine Attributes (*ta‘tīl*) and anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*). Both of these accusations were levelled against Shi‘ite extremists and Sufi mystics. The Shi‘ite extremists (*ghulāt*) were known for believing in anthropomorphism.⁹² Hushām ibn Ḥakam (d. 179/795) was among the first Shi‘ites who believed in anthropomorphism.⁹³ Mast ‘Alī was, however, careful to distance himself from the heretical beliefs of both the Sufis and the Shi‘ite extremists.

Vision of God

Another theological concept was the vision of God, which was always connected to the subject of anthropomorphism. The Shi‘ite Imāms believed in a spiritual vision of God which was beheld through the heart. The majority of Sufis adopted this belief. Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, the most influential Imām and thinker of Shi‘ism, wrote a mystical interpretation of the Qur‘ān, which was included in a commentary written by a Sunni Sufi, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Sulamī (d. 412/ 1021). Ja‘far states, ‘No eye can see him, no heart attain him, and no intellect intuit him.’⁹⁴ This general belief that ‘no eye can see him’ was held by the majority of Shi‘ites. Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq undoubtedly rejected the concept of the perception of God in this world. He believed that the corporeal eye did not have the capability of beholding God’s vision.⁹⁵ Shi‘ite scholars Shaykh Ṣadūq and ‘Allāma Ḥillī (d. 726/ 1326) followed him in believing that there would be a spiritual vision of God instead of a physical vision.⁹⁶

Abū Ḥamid Ghazālī (d. 504/ 1111), whose great influence on the development of Sufi theosophy is undeniable, believed that a physical vision of God was possible in the afterlife, while only a spiritual vision was possible in this world, saying that the perfection of spiritual disclosure (*kashf*) was spiritual vision.⁹⁷ Mast ‘Alī’s views about the vision of God in this world and the hereafter represented a *via media* between Sufis who expressed a belief in being able to see God and Sufis who denied it, which was in accordance with Shi‘ite orthodox beliefs about the impossibility of any corporeal vision of God. Although Mast ‘Alī indicated that no one could perceive the Divine

Essence, he drew clear boundaries between the ‘Essence of God’ (*dhāt*) and the human perception of it.⁹⁸ These beliefs did not contradict the views of the Shi‘ite clerics in the seminaries.

Knowledge (*‘ilm*)

Mast ‘Alī Shāh believed that the quest for knowledge (*‘ilm*) was a religious obligation for everyone, based on the traditions narrated from the Prophet and Shi‘ite Imāms. His interpretation of knowledge was similar to Majdhūb’s: he believed that the source of real knowledge was the light of the Shi‘ite Imāms.⁹⁹

His interpretation of the science of jurisprudence (*‘ilm-i fiqh*) was mystical too. Because jurisprudence was a prerequisite for knowledge of the spiritual path of Sufism (*ṭarīqat*), he maintained that it would eventually lead to Divine gnosis. Although jurisprudence comprised an introductory path to Sufism, Mast ‘Alī complained that during his time jurisprudence had been corrupted by its emphasis on the material and worldly matters of marriage, commercial transactions and divorce, whereas real knowledge (*‘ilm-i ḥaqīqī*) was esoteric knowledge (*‘ilm-i bāṭin*).¹⁰⁰

Mast ‘Alī divided religion into inner Sufi aspects (*ṭarīqat*) and outer legalist aspects (*shari‘at*). He believed that the contribution of scholars of the exterior (*‘ulamāy-i zāhir*) dimensions of religion was not fundamental because it did not end in the attainment of gnosis of the self (*ma‘rifat-i nafs*).¹⁰¹ In this respect, citing the authority of the first Majlisī, he maintains that Shi‘ite-seminary-trained scholars who do not have interior gnosis and who lack the ‘divine faculty’ (see below) are subject to the wiles of Satan and are among the worst of human beings.¹⁰² Therefore, those scholars without mystical gnosis cannot lead people to the path of God.

Mast ‘Alī’s opinion about Shi‘ite seminary scholars was important because, following the occultation of the twelfth Shi‘ite Imām, those sharia-minded scholars who recited the legal injunctions (*aḥkām*) did not actually possess this gnostic knowledge. These scholars had the ability to understand the exterior aspects of Islamic laws only as a result of their seminary knowledge; however, they did not have the gnosis needed for a deeper understanding of religion. The gnostic scholars (*‘ulamāy-i ‘arif*), who are the knowers of religious injunctions, on the other hand, are the possessors of this knowledge. These scholars are not just narrators of the traditions; they are the scholars of certitude (*mujtahidān-i ahl-i yaqīn*).¹⁰³ Mast ‘Alī believed

that the realised gnostics (*'urafāy-i muḥaqqiqīn*), who had received the blessings of the Imāms, had the innermost understanding of the secrets of religion. Through their obedience to God they had received these graces from the Imāms and their spiritual state had been elevated to such a supreme extent that it was beyond description.¹⁰⁴ Mast 'Alī viewed Sufi saints as being the true inheritors of the Prophet. He also referred to Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 908/ 1502) who said that the children of the Prophet Muḥammad were divided into two groups: the first were his physical children and the second were his spiritual children.¹⁰⁵ The physical ones were the children of 'Alī and Fatima, and the giving of alms to them was forbidden. The second were saints (*awlīyā'*), spiritually poor men (*fuqarā*) and gnostics (*'urafā*).¹⁰⁶

However, due to their non-mystical approach, the exoteric scholars were blind to the saints and unaware of their states. In this respect, Mast 'Alī refers to the tradition, attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad and Imām Ḥusayn, that '[s]cholars are the heirs of prophets'.¹⁰⁷ Mast 'Alī's interpretation of this tradition was different from that of the majority of the narrators. He believed that the word 'scholars' (*'ulamā'*) did not refer to the scholars of Shi'ite seminary schools, for among them there were disagreements; and, therefore, they could not be the real heirs of prophets. As well, this tradition did not address any other seminary scholars of Islam because there were quarrels between the seminary scholars of Shi'ism and Sunnism. Nor did it address the scholars of Shi'ism because Zaydīs, Ismā'īlīs and Ithnā 'asharīs did not agree with one another. It also did not address the Twelver Shi'ites (*ithnā 'asharī*) because arguments existed between the two schools of Uṣūlī and Akhbārī scholars. In order to introduce the word 'scholars' (*'ulamā'*), he first explained the term scholar (*'ālim*).¹⁰⁸ He referred to Muḥaffar 'Alī Shāh and the fact that the scholars referred to in this tradition were not the exoteric jurists (*fuqahā-yi zāhir*), because they had confessed that they did not have knowledge of the secrets and their judgements were based on personal presumptions, guesswork and their subjective juristic preferences. He mentioned that whenever they were with their disciples, they mocked the Sufis by saying that they went on nocturnal journeys (*mi'rāj*) every night.¹⁰⁹

Mast 'Alī's definition of a person with religious qualities who was a scholar was in accordance with that of Majdhūb and Kāshānī, as explained in the previous chapter. A student could not become a scholar of religious sciences just by going to a seminary school. He believed that seminary scholars had not received this eternal favour (*'ināyat-i azalī*);¹¹⁰ a lack of which designated them as belonging to an inferior class to the knowers (*'urafā*), who were the Sufis. Mast 'Alī criticised those scholars who issued

verdicts against Sufis. He referred to a book written by Muḥammad Kāzim Hizār Jarībī (d. 1238/1823) in which he refuted Sufis.¹¹¹ According to Mast ʿAlī, Jarībī was a dilettante who dabbled and played with the principles of religion (*uṣūl-bāz*), and because he led common people astray he was a destroyer of the faith (*īmān-barandāz*).¹¹²

The Divine Faculty (*quwwa qudsiyya*)

The concept of the ‘Divine Faculty’ (*quwwa qudsiyya*) as being the key qualification for a student to become a true scholar of the religious sciences was explained in detail in the previous chapter on Majdhūb. In brief, the ‘Divine Faculty’ is gained through spiritual gnosis, which itself is gained through the path of Sufism. Mast ʿAlī Shāh believes that a person of religious qualities must be a deputy of the Imām; therefore, it is mandatory for the scholar of religious sciences, one who issues religious verdicts, to be Shiʿite.¹¹³ The scholar who was a deputy of the Imām also had to have the attributes of the Imāms, to a certain extent.¹¹⁴ Similarly, Āmulī holds that a Sufi saint has to possess a divine manner (*akhlāgh-i ilāhiyya*) and be endowed with Divine Attributes.¹¹⁵ Mast ʿAlī’s view is closer to that of the Shiʿites because he sees the Imāms as being the perfect manifestation of the Divine, whose attributes the scholars must be endowed with. Mast ʿAlī indicates that scholars must possess the Divine Faculty (*quwwa qudsiyya*), and those scholars who do not cannot issue any *fatwās*.¹¹⁶ Mast ʿAlī points out that although the Akhbārīs and Uṣūlīs believed that religious scholars must have the Divine Faculty, their understanding of it was incorrect.¹¹⁷

Mast ʿAlī Shāh declares that the exoteric Shiʿite clerics are, in fact, utterly impoverished as regards understanding true scholarship, and he denigrates them as ‘poor helpless scholars’ (*ulamā-yi bīchāra*) because their judgements are based on purely exterior considerations and they did not have inner perception. Therefore, they need to engage in mystical exercises to gain true spiritual insight in order to become real scholars.¹¹⁸ Mast ʿAlī further notes that the Divine Faculty can be gained through inner purity; he refers to a tradition from Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq which states that a man of religious background is not qualified to issue religious verdicts unless he has inner purity.¹¹⁹

Mast ʿAlī specifies that if jurists are looking for salvation they must come to the people with an inner knowledge of religion who are in possession of the Divine Faculty. He stresses that the final fruit of *ijtihād* has to be Divine Faculty, which can be gained only through the companionship

and guidance of Sufi masters, or at least one who had spiritual permission from a person endowed with the Divine Faculty to issue religious verdicts. Mast ‘Alī points out that Sufis are superior to seminary scholars because they possess these inner insights, which are the core meaning of religion. In sum, although Shi‘ite clerics are allocated a high position in the social and religious milieu of Persia, Mast ‘Alī bravely challenged their status and questioned their importance, speaking unfavourably and disparagingly of those seminarians who lacked mystical gnosis. On the other hand, he accorded a Sufi who had some learning in the seminary sciences the highest religious rank, should that Sufi have actualised the ‘Divine Faculty’.

Imitation (*taqlīd*)

The issue of imitation in Twelver Shi‘ism was explained extensively in the previous chapter on Majdhūb. Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s view is similar. He condemns imitation that lacked any knowledge of the spiritual path (*ṭarīqa*), that is Sufism. He observes that, in the quest for spiritual realisation, those people who followed the religion of their ancestors were no better than a blindfolded ox.¹²⁰ Blind imitation can lead to some terrible consequences. If, for example, a certain scholar declares that a certain Sufi was an infidel, others often immediately condemn that Sufi merely out of their respect for and in imitation of that scholar’s authority without bothering to investigate the matter for themselves. Mast ‘Alī considers these sorts of bigoted judgements as blatant religious transgressions, which are quite beyond the purview of an ordinary scholar’s authority.¹²¹ He asserts that those who follow blindly the scholars’ excommunication verdicts destroy the faith of others.¹²² Shi‘ite seminary scholars were protective of their position in the Persian community and of course did not tolerate Mast ‘Alī’s challenge to their authority.

The Spiritual Path (*ṭarīqat*)

From the very earliest development of Sufi theology, Sufi masters have emphasised that there are two dimensions of religion: the exoteric aspects (*sharī‘a*) and the inner aspects, which make up the mystical path (*ṭarīqa*). This theological position was developed and theorised through generations of mystical philosophers and Sufi theologians.¹²³ Abū al-Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) was among the first great mystic theologians who spoke of this

distinction between esoteric and exoteric forms of Islam in his *Revivification of the Sciences of Religion (Ihyā' 'Ulūm dīn)*.¹²⁴ Mast 'Alī Shāh, in line with Ghazālī's philosophy, asserts that there is a path beyond the *sharī'a* taught in seminary schools.¹²⁵

Master and Guide

Mast 'Alī Shāh emphasises the necessity of prophethood for the guidance of humanity towards divine gnosis. Although prophethood was sealed by the Prophet Muḥammad, the need for guidance did not end. He asserts that after Muḥammad, the Shi'ite Imāms took on the role of being guides for humanity. Mast 'Alī Shāh argues that it had become customary for Muslims to imitate the path of their ancestors in religious matters without searching for the inner meaning and the truth of these beliefs and practices. However, in order to find one's spiritual path (*tariqa*) following the precedent of one's ancestors does not work, because the first stage on the path is for an individual to search for a master, regardless of what their ancestors have done. This path is not an easy one and the individual has to exercise serious effort if he wants to attain his spiritual goal. Mast 'Alī states, '[Common Muslims believe that] nothing is safer than staying with the beliefs and practices of their ancestors, and not troubling to put more effort [in search of truth].'¹²⁶

He believes that spiritual wayfarer must pray and ask for the blessing of the Prophet and Imāms to help him find a real guide. He considers that the gnostics (*ārifān*) are the real guides after the Imāms.¹²⁷ He uses the phrases 'following the religion of their fathers' and 'the path of their ancestors', comparing them to idol-worshippers of the Prophet's day. The Qur'an says, 'When it is said to them: "follow what God has revealed," they reply: "No, we shall follow only what our fathers had practised," even though their fathers had no wisdom or guidance!'¹²⁸ Mast 'Alī asserts that these people were ignorant that this spiritual guidance taught by Sufis brings spiritual gnosis. However, in order to avoid incurring the condemnation of Shi'ite clerics, he was extremely cautious and conservative in these criticisms.

The Muslims and the Faithful (*mu'min*)

There are some verses in the Qur'an that hint at the differences between the two terms *muslim* and *mu'min*. The distinction between the two terms became

a theological theme which Muslims, philosophers, mystics and theologians elaborated in detail. As Schimmel has points out, 'Islām is the complete and exclusive surrender of the faithful to God's will and his perfect acceptance of the injunctions as preached in the Koran, whereas *īmān*, "faith," constitutes the interior aspect of Islam. Thus, a *muslim* need not be a *mu'min* "one who has faith," but the *mu'min* is definitely a *muslim*.¹²⁹ Therefore, the faithful believers are the followers of the inner path of Islam. Mast 'Alī Shāh also differentiated between the two terms, the faithful and the Muslims, indicating that while many Muslims confess Islam with their tongues, not all have faith in their hearts. Mast 'Alī's definition of 'the faithful' was slightly different from that of other Islamic scholars because he emphasises that some Muslims hypocritically follow Islam while not truly being Muslims at heart.¹³⁰

His explanation of the term 'faithful believer' is elitist, arguing that he is a Sufi saint rather than simply a spiritual Muslim. He believed that the real faithful believers were as scarce as red sulphur (a metaphor used for Sufi saints), and if one found such a believer one should follow him. Therefore, he limited the term 'real faithful believer' to the religious elites of Islam who are qualified to guide others spiritually. His definition does not include traditional Shi'ite clerics among this group.

The Tried and Tested Faithful Believer (*mu'min mumtaḥan*)

The term 'the tried and tested faithful believer' was first used by Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, and later adopted by Shi'ite mystics. Āmulī referred to the traditions in which Shi'ite Imāms said that their command can be realised by an archangel (*malik muqarrab*), by prophets or by the tried and tested faithful believer (*mu'min mumtaḥan*).¹³¹ Āmulī said that the archangels were the real Shi'ites and Sufis who received the divine secrets from the Shi'ite Imāms.¹³² Mast 'Alī refers to Āmulī to prove his point that the real guides are the realised faithful believers, rather than making direct references in his text. Āmulī claimed that the real Sufi was one of the tried and tested faithful believers of whom it was said that he was the bearer of religious secrets. The seminary sciences were not part of the religious gnosis, and therefore one could not discover the spiritual secrets of religion through them. However, those who are intimate companions and followers of the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*), that is, true Shi'ites, always conceal their beliefs in the secrets of religion, secrets which are only for that elect company who have started the spiritual quest for the path of truth ending in gnosis, which was Sufism.¹³³

In his explanation of sainthood (*wilāyat*), Mast 'Alī claims that through the blessings of the members of the Prophet's household (*ahl al-bayt*) he has perceived that sainthood belonged to the Imāms.¹³⁴ He asserts that sainthood is the most important principle in religion and itself is the fruit of the tree of religion. One is required to take an oath of allegiance (*bay'at*) to the Imāms as they did with the Prophet. He emphasised that the Twelfth Imām in occultation (*ghayba*) had appointed some scholars to teach certain exoteric religious sciences such as the lore of Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), but that there had to be a deputy of the Imām for the esoteric part of religion, who was one of the tried and tested faithful believers (*mu'min mumtaḥan*).¹³⁵

Mast 'Alī clearly mentioned the Akhbārīs' claim that the tried and tested faithful believer was a narrator of religious traditions (*akhbār*). The Uṣūlīs, however, claimed that the mujtahids were the tried and tested faithful believers, while illuminationist philosophers believed it was the philosophers. Nevertheless, Mast 'Alī asserts that they are all wrong because those who merely refer to the traditions of the Imāms, who base their judgement on jurisprudential opinions or who base their opinions on human intellect, cannot be the realised faithful. Only those who had personal experience of theophany, who had received spiritual realisation and inspiration directly from God—that is, those who were real gnostics (*ārif*)—qualified as being genuine tried and tested faithful believers.¹³⁶ During the time of occultation, the presence of a tried and tested faithful believer is a must, in order to serve others as a spiritual guide. That can only be done by the traditions of the people of the house; its knowledge is only possessed by the gnostics.¹³⁷

Authentic Sufis (*ṣūfiyya ḥaqqā*)

As we have seen, after the Safavid era the Sufis of Persia changed the expression of their beliefs and every aspect of their practice and conduct was affected by Shi'ism, and the concept of Shi'ite Imamology in particular became dominant.¹³⁸ However, Shi'ite mystics, especially the followers of the school of Isfahan, tried to maintain their adherence to the philosophy of the Akbarian school and reconcile it with Shi'ite theology. Even before the Safavid era, scholars like Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī and Maytham Baḥrānī (d. 678/1280) introduced the mystical philosophy of the Akbarian school and assimilated it with Shi'ite theology. This process of reconciliation con-

tinued through to the Qājār era. The return of the Ni‘matullāhīs to Persia was another historical turning point in the integration of Sufi beliefs with Shi‘ite theology. The Ni‘matullāhīyya had already been familiar with Akbarian theology from the time of Shāh Ni‘matullāh,¹³⁹ and were known for their strong ties to the people of the house (*ahl al-bayt*) from that time as well.

Mast ‘Alī’s views regarding who the genuine and authentic Sufis are were similar to Majdhūb’s. He referred to Wā‘iẓ Kāshifī’s *Rashaḥāt*,¹⁴⁰ which said that the real Sufis were a group of elect mystics from among the whole community of Muslims.¹⁴¹ Sufi masters had the highest status after Shi‘ite Imāms, because they recognised the reality of sainthood,¹⁴² and among all the Sufi orders he believed that the path of Shāh Ni‘matullāh was the most pious (*aṣlah*) of the spiritual paths, implicitly declaring the superiority of the Ni‘matullāhī Sufi order.¹⁴³ Mast ‘Alī also refers to a tradition attributed to Imām ‘Alī which provides 12 definitions of Sufism. Mast ‘Alī interpreted these 12 meanings as metaphors for the 12 Imāms on the basis of which he argued that there was no Sufi other than Twelver Sufis. That was the reason all the true Sufi orders were connected to one of the Shi‘ite Imāms.¹⁴⁴ However, as explained earlier in this chapter, there were some beliefs held by Shi‘ite Sufis that differed from mainstream Shi‘ism. For example, in the *Rīyaḍ*, Mast ‘Alī mentions that mainstream Shi‘ites believe that the immaculacy of the Imāms was acquired, whereas Shi‘ite Sufis believed that it was their inborn (*fitri*) quality.¹⁴⁵

He also followed Majdhūb in believing that Sufi masters like Shāh Ni‘matullāh were Shi‘ites. Majdhūb inherited this belief from Qādī Nūrullāh Shūshtarī, where Shūshtarī tried to reinterpret the lives and writings of all the great Sunni Sufi masters as being crypto-Shi‘ite. Mast ‘Alī even indicates that the Sufi orders like Ni‘matullāhīyya, Nūrbakhshīyya, Safawīyya, Baktāshīyya, Khalwatīyya and Shaṭṭārīyya did not have a Sunni master in their entire spiritual chain. Although the majority of Sufi masters living prior to Shāh Ni‘matullāh were known to be Sunnis, Mast ‘Alī asserts that the realised gnostics (*urafāyi muḥaqqiqīn*) did not recognise Sunni Sufis as genuine Sufis, and he rejects all Sunni Sufis.¹⁴⁶ Mast ‘Alī did not refute other Shi‘ite Sufi orders; he only believed in the superiority of the Ni‘matullāhī order over them all. He explicitly stresses the importance of Islamic laws for the Sufi, describing the real Sufi as a person who follows Islamic Law and he further argues that the practices of self-mortification were in complete accord with Islamic Law and the traditions of the Imāms.¹⁴⁷

The School of Illumination (*ishrāq*)

Mast ‘Alī’s position regarding the School of Illumination (*ishrāq*) is, again, similar to Majdhūb’s. He argues that Sufi practices are in accord with the religion and the Prophet of their time. However, the followers of the School of Illumination were not necessarily followers of the Prophet, and their practices were based on their philosophical practices.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Mast ‘Alī expresses sympathy for them and he does not categorise them among the heretical philosophies.

Intuitive Philosophy (*dhawq-i ta‘aluh*)

The school of ‘Intuitive Philosophy’ (*Dhawq-i Ta‘aluh*) was explained in detail in Chapter Five. The followers of this school believed that the Being was a single reality in which there is no multiplicity. Therefore, absolute unity is the reality of being.¹⁴⁹ The followers of the school of Unity of Being believe that there is no entity (*mawjūd*) and everything is being, but the school of *Dhawq-i Ta‘aluh* considers that there is only one Being and the entities (*mawjūdāt*) are multiple. Mast ‘Alī gives a detailed explanation of the philosophy of this school, making reference to Majdhūb’s own explanation of it, which is similar to his own. He believes that Jurjānī, Dawānī and Shūstārī followed this school,¹⁵⁰ as did many other spiritually realised adepts. He warns, however, that some of the school’s beliefs are not in accordance with religion,¹⁵¹ such as the doctrine that the entities were multiple but Being itself is one.

Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism

Mast ‘Alī indicates in his writings that one cannot reject Sufism just because some Sufis held heretical beliefs, just as no one should reject Shi‘ism due the presence of extremists.¹⁵² He refers to Āmulī who wrote that real Sufis could not be blamed for the ones who called themselves Sufis but were not so in reality. Mast ‘Alī said that the followers of antinomianism (*mubāḥiyya*), the proponents of incarnationism (*hulūliyya*) and of unity of the divine with the human (*ittiḥādīyya*), and the agnostics (*mu‘aṭala*) are not real Sufis but are, in fact, extremists (*ghulāt*) just like the Kaysāniyya, Zaydiyya and Ismā‘īliyya Shi‘ite sects. According to the historical narratives, there is evi-

dence illustrating the close relationship between the Ni‘matullāhīs and the Ismā‘ilis. It has been suggested that Nūr ‘Alī and Mushtāq Alī were supported by Ismā‘ilī notables.¹⁵³ Mast ‘Alī Shāh is known to have had a very close relationship with the Ismā‘ilī Imām, and once took refuge in Maḥallāt, and he benefited from the hospitality of Āqā Khān, the Ismā‘ilī Imām.¹⁵⁴ Their relationship was so close that once Mast ‘Alī said, ‘I have a *murīd* like Āqā Khān who himself has thousands of *murīds* in most countries (*bilād*) of the world.’¹⁵⁵ Although this may appear to be a boastful claim from Mast ‘Alī, it does give a hint of his close relationship with the Ismā‘ilī Imāms. In *Ḥadā’iq al-siyāḥa* he wrote a short biography of Ḥassan ‘Alī Shāh ibn Shāh Khalīl Allāh (d. 1298/1881) in which he claimed that Ḥassan ‘Alī Shāh was adorned by the ‘perfection of spirituality’ (*kamāl ma‘nawī*).¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, Mast ‘Alī Shāh refuted Ismā‘ilī’s beliefs and philosophies and categorised them among the rejected groups of *ghulāt*.

Mast ‘Alī asserts that scholars like Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Sayyid Murtiḍā Rāzī¹⁵⁷ and Aḥmad Ardabīlī (also known as Muqaddas) had divided Sufis into 6 or 12 groups, which Mast ‘Alī rejected them as pseudo-Sufis. Real Sufis are, in his view, those who guide humans with the permission of God.¹⁵⁸ Those who claim to be Sufi but wear patchwork cloaks to gain fame in public are acting against Sufi customs. He believed that there were hypocrites among all classes and levels of people, and it did not matter if they were Sufis or any other type of Muslim.¹⁵⁹

Mast ‘Alī is very precise in his explanation of the traditions espoused by the Shi‘ite Imāms in refutation of Sufis. While not rejecting their authenticity, he notes that these sayings were addressed to Sufi heretics, who denied the sainthood of the Shi‘ite Imāms. At the same time, he notes that there are also other traditions handed down from the Prophet Muḥammad and Shi‘ite Imāms that praise Sufis.¹⁶⁰

Mast ‘Alī believes that the Umayyads and Abbasids supported this group of Sufi heretics in order to reduce the sainthood of Shi‘ite Imāms.¹⁶¹ He even cites the poetry of Ḥāfiz and Rūmī as proof of his claim that heretical beliefs are not part of Sufi beliefs.¹⁶² He uses terms like pseudo-Sufis (*mutiṣawwifā*) and evil pseudo-Sufis (*mutaṣawwifay-i khabītha*). Mast ‘Alī denounced the followers of incarnationism (*ḥulūl*), antinomianism (*ibāḥa garī*) and transmigration of the soul (*tanāsukh*), calling them heretics.¹⁶³ However, unlike Majdhūb, he did not give a detailed explanation of these beliefs.

In *Rīyaḍ* he offered the following definitions of pseudo-Sufism given by scholars in refutation of Sufism. Those believing in the Unity of Being (*waḥdatīyya*) were the ones who believed in the essence of God as the being of all

creatures. Those believing in indwelling of the divine (*ḥulūliyya*) believe in the incarnation of God in humans. And those believing in unificationism (*ittiḥādīyya*) hold that humans become united with God. The school of the ‘United’ (*wāṣilīyya*) believes that if one is united with God, there is no need to follow Islamic laws. The lovers (*‘ushshāqīyya*) are those who believe that one should not busy oneself with the sayings of prophets and must focus on God alone. The believers in the transmigration of souls (*tanāsukhīyya*) reject belief in heaven and hell, believing that spirits are eternal. He indicated that he did not have any doubt that all these groups must be rejected and asserted that there was only one group of real Sufis.¹⁶⁴

Mast ‘Alī refers to Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, quoting from ‘Allāma Ḥillī, who refuted the belief in incarnation held by Sunni Sufis. Ḥillī also refuted those Sufis claiming to be united with God and not following Islamic laws. Mast ‘Alī indicates that the Sunnis who believe in incarnation are not real Sufis, thus concluding that Ḥillī was not against Sufism.¹⁶⁵ It should be noted that Mast ‘Alī did not hesitate to criticise Shi‘ite Sufi orders such as Ahl-i Ḥaqq and ‘Alī allāhī which were known to be extremists (*ghulāt*). He also criticised the Dhahabī Sufi order, which was close to mainstream Shi‘ism, and had actually met their master, Aqā Muḥammad Kāzirūnī.¹⁶⁶ He said that it had been years since there had been a real spiritual guide among the masters of the Dhahabī order as the leadership had become hereditary. The masters performed exterior rituals based on Islamic law with no inner spirituality.¹⁶⁷

Imitators of Sufis (*mutishabihān*)

Mast ‘Alī Shāh divided the imitators (*mutishabihān*)¹⁶⁸ into two groups. The first group was right and acceptable (*muḥiq*), whereas the second was false (*mubṭil*) and was refuted by him.¹⁶⁹

Upright Sufi Lookalikes (*mutishabihāni muḥiq*)

Mutishabiha muḥiq is that group of people who are familiar with the beliefs and states of Sufis and yearn to practise Sufism, but are unable to overcome their carnal souls and reach the state of purity; therefore, they are unable to acquire gnosis.¹⁷⁰ Although these people are not technically followers of

Sufism, their beliefs are not heretical since they yearn to be real Sufis. Mast ‘Alī Shāh divides this rightful group into five categories.

1. Those who are similar to the people who could rightfully claim to be drawn to the ocean of divinity on the basis of divine attraction (*mutishabiha muḥiq bi majdhūbān*). They have the zeal and longing, they witness some lights, but are unable to put aside carnal desires, and are not pure enough to enter onto the path.¹⁷¹
2. Those who rightfully claim to be the people of blame (*mutishabiha muḥiq bi malāmatīyya*); they follow the obligatory laws of religions and perform the prayers, but their outward appearance is criticised by the public. These people are called *qalandariyya*¹⁷² and their difference from the people of blame (*malāmatīyya*) is that the latter also performed all of the supererogatory acts.¹⁷³ Mast ‘Alī does not use the term *qalandariyya* in its pejorative sense. In addition to praising ‘the people of blame’, he also praises those who yearn to be part of this group and calls them *qalandariyya*. However, he notes that they follow the sharia in order not to confuse them with libertine Sufis.
3. Those who rightfully claim to be ascetics (*mutishabiha muḥiq bi zuh-hād*), but whose delight in the material world has not been completely overcome, in spite of their efforts.¹⁷⁴ Though at certain periods of history Sufis distanced themselves from complete asceticism, they always condemned any reliance on the material world. Therefore, those longing to give up their attachment to the material world are admired by Sufis.
4. Those who aspire to being similar to the spiritually poor (*mutishabiha muḥiq bi fuqarā*), suppressing the longing for wealth.
5. Those who claim to be similar to Sufis and who rightfully claim to be worshippers (*mutishabiha muḥiq bi ‘ubād*), who spend most of their time performing prayers, litanies and spiritual remembrance, though sometimes they are prevented from doing so by their carnal desires.¹⁷⁵ Mast ‘Alī does not categorise these people as heretical Sufis, but rather admires them for striving to be on the Sufi path.

The False Sufi lookalikes (*mutishabihān-i mubṭil*)

Mutishabihān-i mubṭil are those who claim to be Sufis but whose beliefs are heretical. Mast ʿAlī again divides them into five groups.

1. Those who falsely claim to be people drawn into divine love by divine attraction (*mutishabiha mubṭil bi majdhūbān*) and claim to have reached the state of annihilation (*fanā*), to which they attribute all of their acts. Mast ʿAlī says their claim merely represents an attempt to conceal and an attempt to justify their prohibited acts.¹⁷⁶
2. Those who falsely claim to be similar to the people of blame (*Mutishabiha mubṭil bi malāmatīyya*); this group has committed prohibited acts and also molested other people.¹⁷⁷ These people claim that their sins did not offend God and, therefore, there was no need to follow Islamic Law (*sharīʿa*). The first two groups were those who were known as *qalandars* and wandering dervishes among the common people.
3. Those who are false lookalikes to ascetics (*mutishabiha mubṭil bi zuh-hād*); these people avoid the material world for the sake of rank and dignity.¹⁷⁸
4. Those who are false lookalikes of the poor (*mutishabiha mubṭil bi fuqarā*); their external appearance indicates that they are longing for spiritual poverty but, like the third group, they have done this for the sake of appearances and social rank.
5. Those who are false lookalikes of worshippers (*mutishabiha mubṭil bi ʿubād*), in whose hearts no light of faith could be found and who are known to be hypocrites.¹⁷⁹

Thus, Mast ʿAlī concludes that the first two groups of false lookalikes are heretics, not Sufis, whereas the beliefs of the other three groups are at least a kind of imitation of Sufi conduct and doctrines. However, because they practise these beliefs for the sake of material and social rank, their conduct is classified as ‘rejected Sufism’.

The Naqshbandī Order

Mast 'Alī Shāh explains the history of the Naqshbandīs and the order's main figures, examining their two chains of spiritual masters (*silsila*), one of which went through Abū Bakr, the first Sunni caliph. Mast 'Alī tries to prove that the order's spiritual lineage actually went first through Salmān al-Fārsī and then to Abū Bakr. However, this was impossible because Salmān was a Shi'ite, in the eyes of Shi'ites as recorded in Shi'ite texts. Mast 'Alī also emphasises that this could not be a Sunni order because the name of the sixth Shi'ite Imām, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, appears in the lineage of the order. He refers in this respect to the well-known Naqshbandī scholars whom he respected. However, Mast 'Alī did mention Shūshṭarī's claim that the Naqshbandī order was an innovative order because of its claim to be a Sunni Sufi order, and Mast 'Alī agreed with him.¹⁸⁰

Although Mast 'Alī spoke disparagingly of this Sufi order for following Sunni traditions, he acknowledged that they practised the ritual of spiritual remembrance according to the traditions of the Imām.¹⁸¹ Mast 'Alī Shāh was, in certain cases, much more moderate than Majdhūb towards 'heretical' Sufi Orders. Nevertheless, he affirmed that the only real Sufis were those who believed in God, the prophets and the Shi'ite Imāms, and thus were the bearers of the secrets of Shi'ite Imāms during the occultation of the twelfth Imām.

Mast Ali Shāh and Jurist-Sufi Conflict in Qājār Iran

Mast 'Alī Shāh sometimes openly criticised the scholars of the exterior sciences of religion, for which he was more heavily persecuted than Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh and Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh by the political and religious authorities of the day. Practically everywhere he travelled he was excommunicated by Shi'ite clerics, and intimidated and insulted to the extent that he had to escape from some cities.¹⁸² Despite this, he gained much fame among the followers of the Ni'matullāhī order and attracted the support of some members of the royal court.

He continually mocked the scholars of the exterior sciences, calling them stupid idiots (*kuwdan*). The following statement gives a good taste of his attitude: '[n]ow, in the country of Irān I hear much incoherent discourse: Sufis are called apostates and atheists, Akhbārīs are named debauchees . . . A thousand bravos to this scientific knowledge, this faith and

this religion! God be praised for this *ijtihād* and justice. We give thanks to God for this accusing a pious fasting and praying Muslim to be an infidel and ordering of his execution!¹⁸³ Mast ‘Alī believed that the Shi‘ite scholars were taking revenge on the Sufis simply out of jealousy. He observed how ‘[a]ll the Sufi lodges built by Safavid kings were destroyed and its dervishes banished, and thus they took revenge on Sufis.’¹⁸⁴

Mast ‘Alī always complains in his writings about suffering oppression from Shi‘ite clergy. Occasionally he criticises all Muslims. He relates a story about a wise Christian who built the first *khānaqāh*. Then he praises the Christian sage and reproaches the Persian Muslims for making Persia an unbearable place for Sufis and dervishes to live.¹⁸⁵ He remarks likewise, ‘People of all classes! People of the court! See how they use their power to harm and persecute of the adepts of the heart [Sufis].’¹⁸⁶

Once during Majdhūb’s life when Mast ‘Alī went to Ray, he related how the king summoned him to his court and told him that Sufis were damned and were to be banished from his country and, therefore, Mast ‘Alī also had to condemn them. They debated for a while, and Mast ‘Alī agreed to condemn only those who did not follow the Islamic laws and did not believe in the sainthood of the Shi‘ite Imāms. Consequently, the king expelled him from Ray. Mast ‘Alī claimed that after this incident he was not welcome in any city in Persia.¹⁸⁷

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Majdhūb ordered him to reside in Fārs, where he set about confronting the clerics. He was persecuted again and again by the people of Fārs¹⁸⁸ and subjected to accusations by the city’s seminary scholars.¹⁸⁹ Clerics wrote a request to the Qājār prince, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Mīrzā (d. 1250/1835), shortly before the death of Fath ‘Alī Shāh, that he expel Mast ‘Alī from Shiraz, and he was thus expelled from the province of Fārs for a period.¹⁹⁰ By contrast, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh and Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh, who were more cautious in expressing their views, had relatively tranquil periods of leadership.

Conclusion

Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s role in the spread of the Ni‘matullāhī order in Persia was quite different from that of Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh and Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh. He was more of a traveller and an acute observer of other cultures than a seminary scholar. When explaining the different schools and philosophies, he exhibited less bias than other scholars of his time, which made him a

more accurate and reliable guide. He closely examined different cultural and religious practices, which makes his work an important source from that era. The majority of Shi‘ite Sufi orders had extreme, exclusivist views of religious beliefs and sects other than their own, which they inherited from their Shi‘ite seminary background. The Ni‘matullāhī Sufi order was not immune to this exclusivism. Mast ‘Alī did not criticise the Shi‘ite philosophical schools and, in certain cases, he did not refute the Naqshbandī order, as his predecessors had done.

He was more oppressed and persecuted than his two predecessors in the Ni‘matullāhī order, as can be seen from the way in which he was expelled from Tehran, Fārs and several other cities in Persia. He was more vulnerable to attack because he did not have sufficient knowledge of the seminary sciences and did not write as an expert on religious sciences. Most of his books were more like travel diaries (*Siyāḥat Nāma*) than works on Sufism, and his work *Kashf al-ma‘ārif* was his only apologetic treatise. Majdhūb, by contrast, was well versed in the religious sciences, and therefore his books had a larger audience among the ulama. Mast ‘Alī’s contribution was, for the most part, to elaborate on the beliefs of Majdhūb.

Mast ‘Alī clearly stated his Sufi beliefs and he openly criticised and confronted Shi‘ite clerics. He provoked outrage among Shi‘ite clerics with his belief that Sufis were superior to Shi‘ite ulama, because the Sufis had first to gain gnosis under the guidance of Sufi masters.

It should be noted that he was a recognised Sufi and was respected by other Sufi masters during his day. He gained popularity within the Ni‘matullāhī order when disagreements regarding succession began to emerge, and was very popular among the common people of his time who were not influenced by the verdicts of Shi‘ite scholars. While his contribution to Sufism was not as influential as Majdhūb’s, his travel diaries remain an invaluable resource on the geographical, historical, social, ethical and mystical milieu of that era.

Conclusion:

Ni‘matullāhī Shi‘ite Sufism in Qājār Persia

Between the years 1433 and 1435 Shāh Khalilullāh (d. 1455) (Shāh Ni‘matullāh’s only son and successor) left Persia for India. He left his son, Mīr Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, in charge of the order in Persia.¹ By the end of the 16th century, after decades of oppression by the Safavids, the appearance of the Ni‘matullāhī order waned and it became gradually removed from the Persian socio-religious scene.² Around the year 1776 Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh came to Persia for the revival of Ni‘matullāhī Sufism.³ For a couple of centuries there had been no Ni‘matullāhī masters among the Persians to guide the people, and consequently Persian society had become estranged from the Ni‘matullāhī Sufi tradition and its beliefs.⁴ The Ni‘matullāhī masters had resided in India where they themselves had also become estranged from the Persian religious and social milieu for many centuries. Although the Ni‘matullāhī order had strong ties to the Shi‘ite Imāms and Shi‘ite mysticism,⁵ Ni‘matullāhī masters in India were not familiar with the seminary system of Shi‘ism, for it was before the formation and importation of Shi‘ite clerics from Lebanon⁶ into Persia that the Ni‘matullāhī masters had migrated to India.⁷ Whilst in India, although they kept their contact with Ni‘matullāhī initiates in Persia, they did not maintain any relations with the Shi‘ite seminary schools. During this period the Shi‘ite clerics did not feel threatened by the Ni‘matullāhī masters in India, as there was no growth in the number of Ni‘matullāhī initiates in Persia. This all changed when Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh decided to send his deputies to Persia for the revival of the order and to look after the spiritual needs of the initiates.⁸ The most important and crucial of Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh’s deputies was Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh, who entered Persia looking like a wandering dervish⁹ to begin the movement for the revival of the Ni‘matullāhī order in Persia.

The animosity between the ‘people of the exoteric Law’ (*ahl-i sharī‘a*) and the Sufis (*ahl-i ṭarīqa*) was not a sudden incident in the intellectual

history of Islam. From the very first generations of Sufism Sufis faced criticism and persecution by sharia-minded scholars of Islam, whether Sunni or Shi‘ite. Therefore, Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh was aware of possible opposition to Sufism from the exoteric clerics in Persia. However, as stated above, although Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh was familiar with Persian culture, he was not familiar with the Shi‘ite seminary schools of Persia. When he appeared in Persia, these schools had suffered a great decline in power as a consequence of the fall of the Safavid dynasty in the early 18th century. After a long intermission, Shi‘ite clerics were now regaining their power,¹⁰ becoming influential figures in Persian society, and they were therefore tremendously protective of their status. The revival movement of Ni‘matullāhīs in Persia, the burgeoning of Dhahabī Sufi activities, and the presence of wandering dervishes constituted a challenge for Shi‘ite ulama with their legalistic preoccupations.

Shi‘ite clerics were well aware of the chaotic and unstable political situation in Persia, which was due to the constant battles between the Afshār, Zand and Qājār tribal leaders. The Afshār and Zand kings (1148-1209/1750-1794) ruled for but a short period of time in comparison with the reign of the Qājār dynasty (1209-1304/1795-1925). Each king and ruler had his own distinctive relationship with the Shi‘ite clerics. Nādir Shāh (r. 1736-1747) was known to be more compassionate towards the Sunni Muslims,¹¹ and yet he revered the Shi‘ite Imāms and rebuilt the Shrine of Imām ‘Alī in Najaf.¹² Karīm Khān Zand (r. 1751-1779) viewed the religious scholars who received financial support from the state as parasites on society.¹³ Therefore, the position of the office of religious ministry (*mullā bāshī*) was unstable during his reign and Shi‘ite seminary scholars did not have a secure position as a bureaucratic class within the state. Accordingly, Shi‘ite clerics spent a great deal of effort on forming a hierarchical clerical system independent of the state.

The Shi‘ite clerics developed their own independent financial system, which was supported by religious taxes, offerings and revenues received from religious endowments (*awqāf*). Their financial independence made them intolerant of any challenges, so their religious opponents or rivals were freely persecuted. The reliance of the Qājār king, Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh, on foreign countries limited his reaction to Christian missionaries entering Persia. Due to the close relationship between Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh and the Shi‘ite seminary scholars, the king moderated the Shi‘ite clerics’ reaction to Christian missionaries. Were it not for his restraint, the Shi‘ite clergy would have reacted much more harshly to the Christian missionaries than simply writing refutations of them. The clerics encouraged people to avoid contacting the Christian missionaries so as to be safe from Satanic temptations. How-

ever, in certain cases the Shi‘ite ulama’s behaviour towards rank-and-file Muslims, who did not believe in the Shi‘ite Uṣūlī system of thought, was much harsher than that towards non-Muslims. These Muslim minorities were viewed as both apostates and rivals of Shi‘ite Uṣūlism. The Akhbārī scholars, whose theological beliefs led them to be far less domineering over the religious lives of the Shi‘ites, were severely persecuted by Uṣūlī scholars. As a consequence, the Uṣūlī clerics were able to chase the Akhbārīs altogether out of the Shi‘ite seminary system in Persia.

They had similar harsh confrontations with the Sufis as well. Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī, the son of Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī (known as ‘reviver of Uṣūlism’ for his persecution of and quarrels with the Akhbārīs), championed the persecution of Sufis by Uṣūlī scholars. The Shi‘ite clerics diligently campaigned against Sufis and did not let the state intervene in these matters. Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī self-righteously believed it was his religious obligation to chastise the Sufis, and his bias resulted in his murdering a number of Sufi masters without any consultation with the state authorities. There were also many influential figures from the royal court, like Ibrāhīm Khān, who supported scholars like Bihbahānī.

Thus, when Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh came to Persia with the mission to revive the Ni‘matullāhī order, the Shi‘ite clerics, despite their relative decline, still held vast influence within Persian society. Ma‘ṣūm sought meritorious people to train for the spiritual guidance of Persians. Most of the Ni‘matullāhī masters who were initiated and spiritually guided by Ma‘ṣūm were of Persian descent. Nūr ‘Alī Shāh was originally from Khurāsān and grew up in Isfahan. Muḥaffar ‘Alī Shāh and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh were from Kirmān. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh was from Isfahan, Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh from Hamadān, and Mast ‘Alī Shāh from Shirwān. In this manner, most of the disciples whom he spiritually trained for the revival of the Ni‘matullāhī order were Persian. The fact that the future masters of the Ni‘matullāhī order were Persian and thus more familiar with the social, political and religious milieu of Persia provided great benefits for the revival of the order there. Most of the future leaders of the order also belonged to families of Shi‘ite clerics. Nūr ‘Alī Shāh, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh and Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh were Shi‘ite clerics who had studied in seminary schools.

Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh appeared as a wandering dervish propagating ‘intoxicated Sufism’ for the revival of the Ni‘matullāhī Sufi order. His disciples, Nūr ‘Alī Shāh and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh, also wandered and wore dervishes’ garments. They propagated the Ni‘matullāhī order by singing mystical poetry while giving voice to ecstatic utterances (*shaḥīyāt*). Because this

movement was based on intoxication and a loving relationship with God, it attracted numerous Persians of a mystical bent who were dissatisfied with Uṣūlī rigidity in terms of following sharia. Seminary Shi‘ite scholars grew anxious about the increasing number of Ni‘matullāhī converts.

Of course, the writings of Ni‘matullāhī masters of that era ridiculed, to some extent, the orthodox Shi‘ite scholars. Some of the poetry written by Nūr ‘Alī Shāh made sarcastic comments about the exoteric scholars. The scholarly writings of Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh criticised hardline Shi‘ite seminary scholars who did not pay attention to the inner meanings of religion. He put strong emphasis on the correct inner character of the scholars because he believed it was this that alone qualified them as religious scholars. However, Ni‘matullāhī masters did not denounce Islamic law but focused on the need to combine following the *sharī‘a* with inner practices of religion (*ṭarīqa*). The role of Ni‘matullāhī masters as spiritual guides to the inner aspect of religion was a direct challenge to the authority of Shi‘ite clerics. As a result, the Shi‘ite clerics were intolerant of the Ni‘matullāhī Sufis and confronted them with harsh criticism and opposition and instigated anti-Sufi campaigns against them.

Among them was Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī, who was the most influential figure in these movements and whose staunch support of the anti-Sufis campaign resulted in the murder of Sufis like Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh. In the beginning, Ni‘matullāhī masters resisted the persecution of Shi‘ite clerics. However, as the clerics’ persecution became much harsher, the Ni‘matullāhī masters became aware that the Shi‘ite clerics’ opposition could prevent the revival movement from spreading and could, in fact, destroy the entire order. Therefore, they introduced reforms during the time of Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh which reached their peak during the time of Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh and Mast ‘Alī Shāh. Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh and Nūr ‘Alī Shāh commanded Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh to continue wearing his traditional garments of the Shi‘ite clerics and to continue teaching and preaching in seminary schools and mosques. In this manner, Ni‘matullāhī masters actively propagated the Ni‘matullāhī beliefs within the seminary school system. In so doing, they were able to attract some of the Shi‘ite clerics to enter the order. All of these changes represented necessary evolutionary reforms of the Ni‘matullāhī order in order to bring it into conformity with Shi‘ite seminary beliefs.

These superficial reforms were necessary for the survival of the Ni‘matullāhī order in Persia but did not change the foundational philosophy of the order; rather, its theological and philosophical beliefs conformed to

Shi'ite theology without affecting the substance of its mystical doctrines. Although the reforms reduced the differences and moderated the theological disagreements to a certain extent, theological differences continued to exist. During the spiritual leadership of Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh and Mast 'Alī Shāh there was opposition from Shi'ite clerics, but this opposition was much reduced from that which existed during the time of Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh. From the time of Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh down to the period when the order's leadership in Persia was transferred to Mast 'Alī Shāh, no one was murdered for being a Sufi. Although there was some humiliation of the Sufis committed by Shi'ite ulama, members of the royal court and the common people generally regarded Ni'matullāhīs positively and much more lenient in comparison to the earlier behaviour of Shi'ite scholars, who believed that Ni'matullāhīs deserved death. The actions of the three masters examined in Chapters Four, Five and Six above as regards Persian society and the Shi'ite clerics who surrounded them were completely in touch with the social, political and religious contexts of the time, which suggests that their seminary background played a crucial role in their apologetic defence of Sufism.

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh's Intellectual Contribution to the Ni'matullāhī Order

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh became the master of the Ni'matullāhī order after the persecution of Ni'matullāhīs. He was well aware that the order's outward practices and manners had to be reformed in order to moderate the harsh persecution suffered by Sufis from Shi'ite clerics, and that otherwise the Ni'matullāhīs would not survive in Persia.

During the era of Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh's spiritual leadership, the Qajar king was in need of the Shi'ite clerics' support for his handling of different internal and external problems,¹⁴ and commissioned them into his service.¹⁵ As a result, Shi'ite clerics became increasingly powerful within the social and political milieu of Persia. The king also let the clerics interfere in political matters, which made the Shi'ite clerics more self-centred and ambitious. Their judicial power in social matters became so vast that in certain cases the state would not dare to interfere. The Shi'ite clerics were always quite cautious to ensure that there would be no sympathy felt towards Sufism in the royal court, for they were well aware that the Sufis' mystical beliefs potentially presented a challenge to their authority. It often happened that when the king harshly opposed the Sufis, he was praised by Shi'ite clerics.¹⁶

In this tense situation between Uṣūlī clerics and Sufi masters, when Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh became the leader of the Ni'matullāhī order open conflict between the Shi'ite ulama and Sufi masters came to a head as the Ni'matullāhī masters openly presented their anti-clerical views through their polemical writings. The flame of this fiery campaign against Sufism needed first to subside so as to create an environment that would allow religious dialogue between Sufis and Shi'ite clerics. For the survival of the Ni'matullāhī order Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh felt that Ni'matullāhīs needed to dissimulate their mystical beliefs for a while and thus let the virulent opposition of the Shi'ite clergy settle down.

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh did not propagate Sufism openly but only to his own circle of companions. Any practice that distinguished his disciples from mainstream Shi'ism was abandoned by Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh. He never announced publicly that he was practising 'Sufi invocation' (*dhikr*), so no one ever became suspicious that he was a Sufi. He ordered his disciples not to close their eyes while practising their invocations as a way to disguise their Sufi practices.¹⁷ Even when he was asked about his litanies and extra religious duties, which were a part of his Sufi practices, he would reply that they were prayers he had received from Shi'ite scholars. He behaved in this manner to avoid controversies between Shi'ite seminaries and the Ni'matullāhīs, and practised all of the normal Shi'ite religious duties so that no one would think he was not one of the ordinary Shi'ite clerics.¹⁸

After the return of the order to Persia, Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh was the first Ni'matullāhī master not to wear the dervish's garment. Instead, he wore the garment of Shi'ite clerics and he was very cautious in distinguishing his order from wandering dervishes, although he did not openly propagate Sufism and he did not let wandering Sufis participate in his sessions. He was against those Sufis who did not follow the exoteric laws of Islam (*sharī'a*). He was the first Ni'matullāhī master in Persia to reject the libertinism of Sufis and the wandering dervishes, a custom which his successors, Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh and Mast 'Alī Shāh, continued to follow. He emphasised the prominence of the exoteric aspects of religion and society over the esoteric aspects.¹⁹ However, he emphasised following the exoteric and esoteric aspects together.

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh was a member of the Shi'ite clerical class, and his ancestors had also been members of Shi'ite seminaries. His grandfather, Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn, was a well-known Shi'ite scholar in Isfahan. As already mentioned, being a member of a family of Shi'ite clerics as well as belonging to the class of seminary scholars gave his family a certain prestige within the religious milieu of Persia.

Ma'şūm 'Alī Shāh was well aware of being excluded from the class of Shi'ite clerics and there were no signs to indicate that he had any inclination to create a relationship with them. His exotic appearance as a wandering dervish from India did not in any way allow him the chance of creating a dialogue with the Shi'ite clergy of Persia. However, he did train Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh to pursue a relationship with the clerics. Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh always accompanied Ma'şūm 'Alī Shāh, who encouraged him to reside in Shi'ite seminary schools instead of Sufi lodges due to his noble religious background and his seminary education. Ma'şūm also encouraged Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh to continue teaching in seminary schools and leading the communal prayers in mosques,²⁰ and in this fashion Ma'şūm prepared Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh to establish good relations with the clerics.

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh was not completely immune from the harsh opposition of Shi'ite seminary scholars. Even though he dissimulated his Sufi beliefs, some of his disciples were philosophers and followers of Mullā 'Alī Nūrī, a Shi'ite philosopher who became jealous of Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh. He wrote letters to well-known, high-ranking Shi'ite jurists and asked for their opinion on Sufism. He was successful in motivating Shi'ite jurists and influential figures to turn against Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh. For example, Ḥāj Ḥusayn Khān Marwī, the protector of Shi'ite jurists (*fuqahā*), turned the king (Fath 'Alī Shāh) against Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh by bringing his attention to the Sufi masters' so-called claim to kingship. The shah ordered him to the royal court in a most humiliating manner, but later regretted his anger and summoned him more politely.²¹ This conflict between Mullā 'Alī Nūrī and Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh illustrates that this was not a good time to start a dialogue between Sufis and Shi'ite clerics, as it could result in the weakening of the order in Persia.

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh's intellectual contribution to Sufism was meagre. However, he trained a number of disciples from the ranks of Shi'ite ulama, including Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh and Mullā Muḥammad Riḍā Hamadānī, known as Kawthar 'Alī Shāh. Kawthar 'Alī Shāh was more of a seminary preacher and jurist than a defender of Sufism. His contribution to the intellectual and literary work of his period can be found in his 'Riposte to Padri', his essay in refutation of the Christian missionary, Henry Martyn, known as Paderi. The social and political crisis in Persia created many opportunities for Christian missionaries to enter the land and proselytise. Most of these missionaries were from England or France, countries to which the royal court was in debt, so the royal court avoided any direct interference.²² Christian missionaries became influential in certain areas of Persia, such as Azerbāijān.²³

Henry Martyn was the most well-known and influential Christian missionary who entered Persia during the Qājār era. He came to Persia as an energetic orientalist and wrote tracts in defence of Christianity and in refutation of Islam. He was a polemicist who challenged the Shi‘ite scholars. Qājār Persia was a Muslim country, and it had been a long time since there had been any serious conflict between different religions. Religious minorities like Jews and Christians did not dare to get involved in any debates with the influential Shi‘ite clerics. Theological differences between ‘the people of the book’ were not discussed in Shi‘ite seminary schools, as these differences had crystallised during the Middle Ages with little new in Muslim-Christian relations. Thus, most of the debates between Martyn and Shi‘ite clerics were unsophisticated.

Suddenly however, the danger of Muslims converting to Christianity became a serious matter for Shi‘ite clerics, insofar as Martyn’s Persian translation of the Gospels created an opportunity for Muslims to become more familiar with the Christian holy book, and some Persians became sympathetic to Christianity.

Henry Martyn’s teachings became so well known in Persian society that the royal court even became concerned. Muḥammad Ma‘šūm Shīrāzī deemed it a calamity (*fitna*) for the Muslim Persian society.²⁴

Refutations of Martyn became part of a literary genre that started as apologetic writings, mostly written by seminary scholars. Among these Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s is one of the most important and earliest treatises written in refutation of Martyn’s claims about Islam. Though this treatise is short, it was very influential on future writings and, as Shīrāzī has pointed out, became the basis for most of the treatises written later.²⁵

Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh believed that if one refutes Islam one has refuted all other religions, because the essence of all religion is a light transferred through the prophets. This divine light was perfected through prophets and reached its ultimate perfection in the religion of Islam. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh was cautious not to relate himself to Sufism and so he explained the concept of ‘Muhammadan Light’ without using the term. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s explanation of the ‘inimitability of the Qur’ān’ starts off in the style of a Shi‘ite cleric, before cautiously, bringing in some mystical concepts. He emphasises his belief that Martyn does not understand the real meaning of the Qur’ān because he is not privy to its inner meaning. He uses the same terms used by mystics like Sanā‘ī. He describes the Qur’ān as a bride wearing a veil, showing its beauty only to those who are privy to its secrets. Then he explains that only a saint (*walī*) would be able fully to understand

the Qur'ān. However, he does not go into detail about the explanation of sainthood and the secrets of the Qur'ān to avoid any suspicions from Shi'ite clerics.²⁶

In his treatise he clearly emphasises his Shi'ite beliefs. Although he does not condemn Sunnis, he clearly states that the heirs to the Prophet Muhammad are the Shi'ite Imāms. Therefore, his explanation of Shi'ism and Imamate is quite similar to the conventional beliefs prevalent in the contemporary Shi'ite seminary school milieu. He emphasises the importance of Islamic Laws, which the majority of Sufis were accused of disobeying. Contributing to the genre became an important obligation, and most seminary scholars wrote treatises on the 'Refutation of Henry Martyn' (*radd-i padrī*). Besides being one of the first examples of *radd-i padrī* literature, Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh's treatise is his only surviving text; therefore, it is important for a better understanding of Ni'matullāhī beliefs.

By the end of his life he had established a relative truce between Shi'ite clerics and Ni'matullāhī masters, such that the Shi'ite clerics did not feel any challenge to their authority from Ni'matullāhīs. Since Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh felt that Persian society was prepared to gain knowledge from and engage in dialogue with Sufism, he trained Shi'ite seminary scholars, among whom Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh became his most important and learned disciple. On his pilgrimage to Karbalā, he sensed that he had accomplished his spiritual mission; he gathered all his disciples and appointed Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh as his successor. About a year later he passed away, and Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh became the sole leader of the Ni'matullāhī order.

Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh's Intellectual Contribution to the Defence of Sufism

As we have seen, Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh was able to establish a relatively peaceful relationship between Sufis and Shi'ite clerics. As Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh dissimulated his Sufi beliefs, Shi'ite jurists were hard pressed to find fault with him and his followers. The harsh opposition from Shi'ite clerics to the Sufis now calmed down. Although they still did not accept Sufi beliefs, practices and philosophies, Shi'ite clerics did not vehemently call for public opposition to them either. Society was ready for the smooth re-emergence of Sufism.

Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh wrote numerous books and treatises that illuminate the Ni'matullāhī philosophy and beliefs as befitted his time. His seminary status was different from Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh's; the latter was more of a preacher, with the experience of preaching for the common people. He

was an ordinary scholar, whereas Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh was a well-versed, distinguished seminary scholar, with a more complete and rigorous seminary background in philosophy and Shi‘ite mysticism. He was also the pupil of well-known Shi‘ite clerics like Mahdī Narāqī and Mīrzā-yi Qumī, which gave him more prestige among the Shi‘ite ulama. He was also well versed in the mystical philosophy of Shi‘ism, being familiar with Shi‘ite mystics like Mullā Ṣadrā, Fayḍ Kāshānī and Shaykh Bahā’ī.

His seminary background and relatively peaceful attitude to Sufism allowed the Ni‘matullāhī order to take a defensive rather than a dissimulative stance. Majdhūb was well aware of the accusations from Shi‘ite clerics against Sufism and the conservative beliefs of Persian society; therefore, he defended Ni‘matullāhī Sufism in accordance with the social and religious context of the Persian society of his time. Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh was one of the greatest Ni‘matullāhī masters during the Qājār era. The order had been in a period of intermission during the leadership of Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, as he did not openly have his community perform most Sufi practices. However, Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh took a different position, which revived the order. His conduct was quite different from that of Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh, Nūr ‘Alī Shāh, Fayḍ ‘Alī Shāh and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh. He did not base his Ni‘matullāhī teachings on emotional considerations (ecstasy, enthusiasm, rapture) but founded an elitist intellectual movement, based on seminary sciences. At the end of his life he dedicated it to writing in defence of Sufism. Most of his writings referred to well-known Shi‘ite seminary scholars, Shi‘ite philosophers and mystics who were widely accepted in the Shi‘ite seminary schools, or at least known as part of Shi‘ite culture. Instead of wearing the garb of a wandering dervish, he always wore the traditional robes of other Shi‘ite clerics; however, he did not conceal his Sufi tendencies and he propagated his mystical beliefs. Under his leadership, the Ni‘matullāhī order flourished.²⁷ Mast ‘Alī Shāh claims that he was similar to Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunawī and Shāh Ni‘matullāh Walī in the development of Sufi doctrine. Though Mast ‘Alī Shāh may have exaggerated, he was correct to a certain extent. Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh was like Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunawī in that he tried to revive Akbarian philosophy outside the seminary and within the Sufi orders, and like Shāh Ni‘matullāh he tried to restore the Ni‘matullāhī order in Persia.

Religious sciences are divided into two parts in the traditional seminary school curriculum: the rational and the traditional. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s position leaned towards the traditional sciences; however, he used rational methods in his treatise and relied heavily on the Qur’ān and traditional nar-

rations about the life of the Prophet and the Imāms. Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh was more of a thinker who relied on the rational sciences. He wrote glosses on marginal interpretations of Bāghūnawī on the *Muḥkamāt* of Quṭb al-Dīn Rāzī, which was more of a philosophical than a Sufi work. Although he was known to be an Uṣūlī jurist, he made references to Akhbārī scholars on different jurisprudential issues, showing his vast knowledge of seminary Shi'ite jurisprudence and its historical background.²⁸ He was proud of his seminary qualifications, and frequently mentioned that he was permitted by Qumī to issue religious verdicts (*fatwā*).

Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh openly held his Sufi sessions, although they did not have any loud vocal remembrance accompanied by music. He had his own disciples who accompanied him, and he did not forbid them openly to practise Sufism contrary to Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh's practice. His open practise and propagation of Sufism led to the harshly written treatises of opposition from seminary Shi'ite scholars. However, their opposition became more moderate for a few reasons. First, the Ni'matullāhīs had already adjusted their practices to fit in better with mainstream Shi'ism. Second, a period of time had elapsed under the mastership of Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, during which the Ni'matullāhīs had interrupted their public appearances to calm down their fundamentalist clerical opponents. Third, the seminary knowledge of Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh and Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh brought their Sufi thinking more respect from among the religious elites.

Majdhūb's social status also helped him to propagate Sufism. He came from the nobles of his tribe, his ancestors being respected elders of the Qarāguzlūw tribe and, as they were chief commanders of their district, were well known in the area. It has been reported that as a result of his influence his grandfather became a trustee of Karīm Khān.²⁹

Majdhūb claims that he was the pupil of Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī, who was known as the reviver of the Uṣūlī School. All of his seminary teachers were members of the Uṣūlī school of Shi'ism; however, one can find some similarities between his philosophical and seminary beliefs and those of the Akhbārī school. He also refers to Akhbārī scholars with mystical tendencies, for example, the first Majlisī, Fayḍ Kāshānī and Mullā Sālīḥ Māzandarānī. There are certain subjects which clearly distinguished Majdhūb from a mainstream Shi'ite thinker.

The subject of 'imitation' (*taqlīd*) was one of the major disagreements between the two schools of the Uṣūlīs and Akhbārīs. Akhbārīs are known for their rejection of *taqlīd*. The Akhbārīs hold the belief that Shi'ites must imitate their Imāms, and it is not permissible to imitate a mujtahid.

Therefore, the only use of Shiʿite seminary scholars in the Akhbārī school was their knowledge of narrating the traditions of Shiʿite Imāms.³⁰ They restricted the authority of scholars to the area of jurisprudence and Shiʿite tradition. As Arjomand had stated, this view clearly challenged the authority of the mujtahids.³¹ There were others in Persian society who challenged the authority of Uṣūlī scholars and they were vehemently persecuted.

The Akhbārī doctrine was adopted by some scholars who leaned towards Sufism and by Shiʿite Sufis like Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī and Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī. These mystics became members of the Akhbārī school as well, as their books indicate how important the traditions narrated by Shiʿite Imāms were. They were against rational striving in terms of *ijtihād* and pure philosophical speculation, and instead emphasised a ‘non-rational’ approach to religion and developed an intuitive philosophy. This intuitive philosophy was based on contemplative intuition (*kashf*) and mystical sciences. Many Akhbārī scholars adopted a mystical lifestyle or they expressed interest in Sufi sciences, because such beliefs could be easily assimilated into Akhbārī beliefs. Certain Akhbārī scholars adopted Sufi philosophical beliefs and applied them to Akhbārī doctrines.³²

Majdhūb was well aware that if he opposed the Uṣūlī system and showed his sympathy towards the Akhbārī movement he would face harsh opposition; therefore, he avoided showing any opposition to the Uṣūlī school and took a middle-of-the-road position between the two schools. He relied heavily on Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī and Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, both of whom were well respected in Uṣūlī seminaries. He avoided explaining his belief about imitation and referred to Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī. Majlisī had taken the middle path; he was neither suspicious of ulama nor did he believe them to be the perfect leaders of the community; he also knew they could not be imitated.³³ By referring to Majlisī, Majdhūb limited the authority of Shiʿite clerics to the branches of religion (*furūʿ al-dīn*), such as the responsibility for the instruction of spiritual remembrance. He clearly stated that the imitation (*taqlīd*) of a mujtahid in matters of faith was not permitted.³⁴

Majdhūb also introduced the term ‘knowers of the narrated traditions’ from the Prophet and Shiʿite Imāms (*ʿarīfīn ḥadīth*).³⁵ There were some qualifications for these knowers, the most important being that they could not simply narrate the traditions but had to know the traditions by heart. The master who had received the Lights of the Prophet and Shiʿite Imāms became a knower of divinity, and it did not matter whether he was called Sufi or not. The definitions that he gave to the roles of these knowers were

the same definitions of Sufi masters,³⁶ who were immune from making mistakes and they were known for their intuitive knowledge.³⁷

Another qualification for Shi'ite clerics, as Majdhüb explains in detail, is possession of the 'divine faculty'. He divides Islamic scholars into three groups. The first group is those who had direct knowledge (gnosis, *ma'rifa*) of God but do not have any exterior knowledge of Islamic sciences. The second group is those who do have knowledge of exterior Islamic sciences but do not have any knowledge of God in their hearts. The third group is those who have both. Certainly, the third group is superior to the rest; however, when he compares the first and second groups, he clearly suggests that the first group is those Sufis who did not have knowledge of seminary sciences, while the third group is the spiritual pole (*quṭb*) of its time, which is a Sufi term.³⁸ Later on, he indirectly concludes that the real scholars are those in whom the Divine Light has extinguished their carnal passions, and as such these scholars cannot be corrupted.³⁹ He concludes that the true jurist must have spiritual insight.

Majdhüb's philosophy in this respect was highly influenced by Fayḍ Kāshānī and Majlisī, sharing with them his Sufi beliefs as interpreted through mystical Shi'ite philosophy, which he relates to the philosophical Shi'ite schools of thought. He also refers to traditions from Imām Ḥusayn and Imām Riḍā in order to legitimise his claims and to be immune from persecution by Shi'ite clerics. When he challenges the authority of Shi'ite clerics, he does so in sophisticated scholarly language, referring to Shi'ite traditions and well-respected scholars.

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh's manner towards practising 'Sufi invocation' (*dhikr*) was different from Majdhüb 'Alī Shāh's. During Majdhüb's leadership of the order, Sufi practices emerged from the closet. Majdhüb openly held Sufi invocation sessions and all of his disciples practised them. Sufi invocation was a practice foreign to the Shi'ite tradition; however, Majdhüb more or less introduced this practice to Shi'ism. He taught that the invocation and remembrance of God is the purpose of creation and that every human being is obliged to practise it.⁴⁰ Majdhüb was highly influenced by Sufi master Najm al-Dīn Rāzī's explanation of Sufi invocation, which he applied to the Shi'ite tradition. He legitimised Sufi invocation by referring to the Qur'ān and to Shi'ite traditions.⁴¹ Majdhüb refers to many Shi'ite traditions as a way to avoid opposition from Shi'ite clerics, since the Sufi way of practising invocation had become a subject of criticism among Shi'ite clerics.

However, Majdhüb condemned 'vocal invocation' (*dhikr-i jalī*) because it was known to be practised by Naqshbandī Sufis. The Naqshbandīs were

known as a staunch Sunni Sufi order at the time and, in certain cases, Majdhūb distanced himself from them. Majdhūb did not deny that some Sufis practised vocal invocation, but he did not believe that the Shi'ite Imāms did so; therefore, it was not part of the Shi'ite tradition, and thus implicitly he confirmed that the 'silent invocation' (*dhikr-i khafī*) was a part of Shi'ite culture and that Sufi invocation by extension was also part of authentic Shi'ite tradition. He believed that the fourth and sixth Imāms of Shi'ism praised the 'silent invocation' when referring to their traditions.⁴²

In Shi'ite-Sufi culture the masters were only appointed through spiritual permission. Although they were different in certain ways, the masters were important spiritual guides. Within the Shi'ite tradition many mystically-minded Shi'ite scholars and Sufi masters knew how important it was to have a spiritual guide.

Majdhūb understood that there were different types of Sufi invocations which were not in the books and that the invocations had been transmitted by oral means through the spiritual permission of the saints, saints who were the intermediaries between the human and divine worlds.⁴³ He explains that novices had to have complete reliance on their guides (*shaykh*), without using the term Imām. His explanation of the importance of spiritual guides was more of a Sufi than Shi'ite explanation. However, after this explanation he indicates that the *shaykh* was illuminated by the light of Shi'ite Imāms.⁴⁴ He believes that the saints must receive their spiritual initiation through Shi'ite Imāms. For Majdhūb, Sufi orders that are not derived from Shi'ite Imāms are not genuine. In his writings he draws on compilations of authentic Shi'ite traditions such as the *Biḥār al-anwār* and *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* to explain the importance of the spiritual guide,⁴⁵ explaining that there are different terms used for 'faithful': Sufi, Faqīr, Shi'ite and Darwīsh.⁴⁶ In doing so he does not distinguish between the Sufi and the Shi'ite.

Majdhūb condemned Shi'ite scholars for excommunicating Sufi masters, which he judged was done because of their lack of knowledge about Sufism and its masters. Those clerics who excommunicated Sufi masters acted contrary to both reason and tradition. Majdhūb did create conformity between some of the Sufi practices and Shi'ism, which was not accepted by Shi'ite clerics. The practice of Sufi invocation (*dhikr*), monasticism and contemplative vigilance (*murāqaba*) are examples of Sufi practices that Majdhūb considers to be part of the Shi'ite tradition.

Another great contribution that Majdhūb made to the intellectual and theological milieu of Persia was his elaboration of Akbarian philosophy. He followed the path of earlier Shi'ite Akbarian philosophers and elaborated

on the philosophy of the Unity of Being. From the time of Shāh Ni‘matullāh the Ni‘matullāhī Sufi order was known for propagating this doctrine. However, due to the harsh criticism of the Shi‘ite clerics, Majdhūb was cautious when explaining this philosophy through the traditions of Shi‘ite Imāms and famous Shi‘ite scholars.

Majdhūb was well aware of the corrupt beliefs among some of the followers of this philosophy and kept himself aloof from the doctrines of union [of man and God] (*ittiḥād*) and incarnationism (*ḥulūl*). Majdhūb is among the very few scholars of his time who elaborated on the practical and theological aspects of Sufism, such as the Unity of Being doctrine that he both learned in the seminary school and inherited from the Ni‘matullāhī tradition. There is no doubt that he was highly influenced by Shi‘ite mystics like Fayḍ Kāshānī and Nūrullāh Shushtarī, who were well respected among the seminarians. However, he did not just focus on the theological aspects of this philosophy, he also elaborated on the importance of the masters. He tried to prove that this philosophy did not contradict Shi‘ism but that it was, indeed, the reality of Shi‘ism.

Majdhūb believed that there were certain groups among the scholars of Shi‘ism whose beliefs and philosophies deviated from the reality of Shi‘ism. He held that scholastic theologians (*mutakallimūn*) who tried to prove the existence of the Creator through the material world had gone astray. However, he did not refute any philosophers and theosophers, but used the term pseudo-philosophers (*mutifalsifa*) to refer to them.⁴⁷ He clearly indicated that philosophy was a path full of dangers, whereas the way of Sufism was more reliable since it was grounded in direct unification.⁴⁸

As well, Majdhūb acknowledged that there were heretical Shi‘ite sects as well as heretical Sufis. He asserted that the Zaydiyya, Faṭḥiyya, Wāqifiyya, Kaysāniyya and Nāwūsiyya were among the non-Imamate Shi‘ites and, since they rejected one of the necessities of Islam (the love of Imāms), they were infidels.⁴⁹ Majdhūb’s definition of a real Shi‘ite reads more like a definition of the true Sufi, a definition in which he uses Sufi terminology. Majdhūb argues that the Shi‘ites must not be proud of their beliefs, that they must stay in between the two states of fear and hope (*khuwf wa rajā’*), which is the attribute of people of faith. According to him, if fear dominates a person it will cause hopelessness, and if hope prevails it will cause one to think one can avoid Divine punishment. In this ethical sense, he does not distinguish between the Sufi and the Shi‘ite. His explanation of the real Shi‘ite as being the real Sufi was highly influenced by Āmulī.⁵⁰ Majdhūb asserted that all of the Shi‘ite Sufis were innocent of the erroneous beliefs of pseudo-Sufis,

and that the great Sufis masters like 'Aṭṭār, Rumi and Sanā'ī were part of an authentic Shi'ite culture.²¹

Majdhüb attributes all of the erroneous beliefs of the Sufis to the Sunni Sufis and rejects any Sufi order that claimed to be derived from the Sunni tradition of Islam. He uses different terms for heretical Sufis, such as 'Rejected Sufis' (*taṣawwuf-i radiyya*), 'the evil pseudo-Sufism' (*mutaṣawwifah khabītha*) and 'pseudo-Sufism' (*mutiṣawwifa*). These terms were used by other Shi'ite Sufi masters prior to Majdhüb to differentiate between real Sufism and pseudo-Sufism. Shi'ite mystics and philosophers during the Safavid era and afterwards who wanted to distinguish themselves from libertine Sufis always differentiated between the terms 'pseudo-Sufi' (*mutiṣawwif*) and Sufi in their treatises.

From the foregoing summary of his ideas it is evident, then, that Majdhüb 'Alī Shāh followed the path of Shi'ite philosophical Sufism. He had been influenced by the Shi'ite philosophers Maytham Baḥrānī and Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī before the formation of the school of Isfahan. His propagation of the Ni'matullāhī order, however, was much more systematic than that of Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh. To begin with, he established a philosophical written dialogue with the Shi'ite seminary schools, a dialogue without any prejudice, in which he discussed important theological, jurisprudential and philosophical aspects of Shi'ism. In so doing he revived the Shi'ite-Sufi philosophy of Āmulī and the later followers of the school of Isfahan who had tried to create a reconciliation between Shi'ite theology and Sufi mysticism.

As a thinker, seminary writer, Sufi master and philosopher, Majdhüb's contribution to the literary and intellectual milieu of Persia was vast. He wrote more than 24 treatises with intricately argued philosophical discussions. Some of his treatises (e.g. *Ḥāshīyih bar ḥāshīyih muḥkamāt-i bāghūnawī*) were philosophical ones that revealed his vast knowledge of Islamic theology (*ḥikmat*). Others were guides for his followers which promoted a better understanding of the theological beliefs and the esoteric philosophy of Shi'ite Sufism. He wrote numerous treatises in defence of Sufism and in defence of the Akbarian school of thought, writings that mixed practical Sufism with philosophical Sufism and promoted a greater understanding of Akbarian philosophical beliefs among the Shi'ite mystics. In following the more scholastic and philosophical path of Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh he rejected Sufis who were not part of traditional Shi'ite culture, thus moderating the opposition of Shi'ite clerics to Ni'matullāhī Sufism.

Mast 'Alī Shāh's Intellectual Contribution to the Defence of Sufism

Mast 'Alī Shāh's contribution to the intellectual and literary milieu of Persia was not as vast as or far-reaching as Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh's. While most of his works incorporate the writings of Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh, he did not have the same well-respected seminary religious background. Since Mast 'Alī Shāh was not as knowledgeable as Majdhūb in the seminary sciences, he was subjected to far more pressure and opposition from the Shi'ite clerics. However, he did not adopt a stance of dissimulation in opposition to the Shi'ite clerics. Instead, he continued Majdhūb's apologetic tradition and condemned those scholars who excommunicated Sufis.⁵²

Mast 'Alī Shāh was much more frank and harsh in his apologetic writings compared to Majdhūb, who always tried to veil his philosophical beliefs about the Unity of Being. He asserts that at all times there must be a perfect man for the continuity of the world, who is the living deputy of God on earth, the true prophet, imām or saint. Sufis called this person the Supreme Deputy (*khalīfa-yi a'zam*), Pole of the Poles (*quṭb al-aqṭāb*), the Real Human Being (*ādam-i ḥaqīqī*), the Perfect Man (*insān-i kāmīl*) and the First Intellect (*'aql-i awwal*).⁵³ Mast 'Alī clearly emphasised that the Perfect Man was the Shi'ite Imām, who is called the Pole of Poles and whose deputies will take his place during the time of occultation. These deputies are the Sufi saints. Therefore, the Sufis are presented as the true deputies of the Twelfth Imām during the time of occultation. He does not explain the role of Shi'ite clerics in this respect, but it is clear that the role of the saints is far greater in importance.

He divides religion into inner and outer aspects. The exterior part of religion belonged to the exoteric scholars (*'ulamā-yi zāhir*). Mast 'Alī Shāh believed that what the scholars of the exterior did for religion was of mere incidental importance and not a fundamental duty. Whatever explanations were written or given by them was unimportant because it did not culminate in the attainment of gnosis of the self (*ma'rifat-i nafs*).

Not everyone possessed this esoteric knowledge. Only the Shi'ite Imāms and the gnostic scholars (*'ulamā-yi 'arīf*), who were the knowers of religious injunctions had this knowledge. These scholars were not just narrators of the traditions, but scholars with certitude (*mujtahidān-i ahl-i yaqīn*). He believes that the gnostics (*'urafā-yi muḥaqqiqīn*), with the blessing of Imāms, through their obedience receive the secrets of the religion, although one cannot explain their supreme state. However, the exoteric scholars were unaware of their state because of their deficient perception.⁵⁴ Referring to a

famous tradition that the ‘scholars are the heirs of the prophets,’ he clearly indicates that the Sufis or gnostics are those heirs and thus superior to the exoteric Shiʿite seminary scholars. This, of course, outraged the latter.

Mast ʿAlī Shāh also elaborated on the importance of a spiritual guide during the time of occultation, stating that the common people were not aware of the spiritual guide and so merely followed the path of their ancestors. He declared that one must pray and ask for aid from the blessing of the Prophet and the Imāms to be guided along the path. He also stated that the gnostics (*ʿarīfān*) and the tried and tested faithful believers (*muʿmin mumtaḥan*) were the real guides after the Imāms.⁵⁵

Mast ʿAlī Shāh asserts that sainthood is the most important aspect of the Islamic faith and the fruit of the tree of religion. One has to take the oath of allegiance (*bayʿat*) to the Imāms because they did so with the Prophet through the medium of Imām ʿAlī.⁵⁶ He emphasises that the Twelfth Imām, who is in occultation, appointed some scholars to address the exterior matters of religion, arguing that there had to be also a deputy of the Imām to address the inner part of the religion. This person is a tried and tested faithful believer (*muʿmin mumtaḥan*). It is important to note how Uṣūlī scholars asserted their authoritative position over all matters of religion, while Akhbārī scholars did not wish to dominate every small matter in believers’ lives. Mast ʿAlī Shāh, like Majdhūb ʿAlī Shāh, made references to Akhbārī scholars. However, his belief about Uṣūlīs and Akhbārīs was slightly different from Majdhūb’s. Mast ʿAlī Shāh frankly refuted both schools, referring to traditions that stated that the scholars are heirs of the Prophet. Then he stated that there were three major groups of believers among Shiʿites: the first were *mujtahidīn* (Uṣūlīs), the second were *Akhbārīs*, and third were Sufis, and that the Sufis are superior to the first two groups.⁵⁷

Uṣūlīs believe that the heirs of the Prophet are scholars of high rank with all the conditions needed to be qualified (*mujtahid jāmiʿ al-sharāyit*). This means that they are well versed in seminary sciences such as jurisprudence, theology and Arabic literature, and that they believe there is no way to salvation other than by following such a scholar. They claim that ‘striving’ (*ijtihād*) brings a believer religious rewards, even if the mujtahid’s striving is wrong.⁵⁸ Akhbārīs believe that the only authentic source of faith is the traditions of the Prophet and that the Shiʿite Imām would guide the people to salvation, while mujtahids only caused confusion within the Muslim community. Mast ʿAlī refutes both groups and says that Akhbārīs did not have the power to discern the Divine Reality (*ḥaqīqat ilāhīyya*).⁵⁹ Sufis claim that they follow a master who was the heir of the Prophet through a chain

of spiritual initiation passed through the Imāms. However, it is clear that Mast 'Alī Shāh viewed all the other Sufi orders, Shi'ite or Sunni, as inferior to his own, and in this sense his religious exclusivism appears bigoted to the modern eye.

While most of Mast 'Alī Shāh's treatises are apologetic, they are not heavily laden with references to seminary sciences. Mast 'Alī Shāh was not a mystical philosopher like Majdhūb, but rather he was a Sufi who had inherited some of the seminary sciences from Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh. He was, however, a very frank person and in certain cases far bolder than Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh.

Among the many books he wrote was the *Kashf al-ma'ārif*, a short apologetic treatise. Mast 'Alī Shāh's greatest contributions to the Persian literary milieu are his travelogues in which he explains the cultural, religious, political and social situations of important cities in the Muslim world. These travel diaries are crucial to providing a better understanding of the Persian society of the time. He travelled to many neighbouring countries where he had an opportunity to talk to influential people in religious and political circles. In total, he wrote three itineraries (*Siyāhat-nāma*): 'The Meadows of Travel' (*Riyād al-Siyāha*), 'The Walled Gardens of Travel' (*Hadā'iq al-Siyāha*) and 'The Gardens of Travel' (*Bustān al-Siyāha*).

Mast 'Alī Shāh continued the mission of reviving the Ni'matullāhī order, but due to his frank personality he faced much greater opposition from Shi'ite clerics than did Majdhūb. Nonetheless, he gained fame among some of the influential political people, and the Ni'matullāhī order did flourish during his leadership as a result of his extensive travels to different cities. However, he was not as successful as Majdhūb in attracting seminarian scholars to the order in creating a religious dialogue with them.

Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh and Mast 'Alī Shāh and Their Battle with Islamic Fundamentalists

Each of the leaders of the Ni'matullāhī Order discussed in this book had different reactions to the Islamic fundamentalists of their era. During the Safavid era Shi'ism became the dominant religion within Persia, but there remained an ongoing struggle between Shi'ite clerics, Sufis and the ruling elites over power and the direction Persian society was to move in in response to foreign pressures and threats. Nādir Shāh and Karīm Khān did not favour Shi'ite clerics, who were less influential in state matters during

their reigns. During the reign of Karīm Khān Zand (1163-1192/1750-1779) wandering Indian dervishes started to migrate to Persia, and organised Sufi orders began to flourish and increase. During this period Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh sent his deputies to revive the Ni‘matullāhī order. Religious missionaries of different sects became more active, and even Christian missionaries arrived to promote their faith.

It was during this time that the Shi‘ite clerics began to regain their diminished social power. Although they had been members of the most influential class of society during the Safavid era, their political power had been challenged during the transfer of power through different dynasties after the fall of the Safavids. Some of the rulers were known for their negative views of Shi‘ite clerics. Nonetheless, they were able to create an organised hierarchical office, independent of the state but powerful among the people, and establish an influential system that allowed them to challenge the state—so much so that the state sometimes offered them money for their silence. Because they could not tolerate any challenges to their authority, they became quite exclusivist and intolerant of any religious opinions or sects other than those of their own school.

When Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh sent his deputy, Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh, to revive the Ni‘matullāhī order in Persia the only contact he had was with a few disciples living there, who were not deeply acquainted with the social, religious and political milieu of Persia. While they had their own ‘Alīd beliefs with strong ties to Shi‘ite Imams, they were not familiar with the Shi‘ite judiciary system. Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh and Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh had no seminary background, for the Shi‘ite community in the Deccan was not strong enough to have a well-established Shi‘ite clerical system. Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh’s enthusiastic presence in Persia attracted many Persians to the Ni‘matullāhī order, among whom were important mystics such as Nūr ‘Alī Shāh and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh, Sufis whose charismatic personalities attracted many Persians. They became well known throughout the country but were not welcomed by the Iranian fundamentalist Uṣūlī Shi‘ite clerics of the day.

The Shi‘ite mujtahids, who ruled tyrannically over the religious lives of late 18th- and early 19th-century Persians, considered Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh and his disciples a threat to religion and accused them of deviating from the straight path of Islam. Sufis also challenged the exoteric system of Shi‘ite Islam by emphasising a direct experience of God and the futility of worldly matters and sciences. Whereas most of the seminary sciences dealt with religious laws, obligations, duties, transactions and relationships of Muslim daily life, the Sufis preached how individuals can forge a direct relation-

ship with the Divine, so as to bring divine knowledge into the heart of the believer and diminish all other material concerns. Such an individualistic mystical philosophy represented a powerful and direct challenge to the role and authority of the Shi‘ite clerics.

Another anxiety felt by the Shi‘ite clerics was the unquestioning devotion of Sufi novices and disciples to their masters. Novices and disciples believed that their masters held communion with and had knowledge of the Divine world and so viewed their masters’ commandments as religious obligations. This posed another threat to the authority of the Shi‘ite clerics, who had only recently re-established a firm foothold over Persian society.

For these and other reasons the Ni‘matullāhī revivalist movement faced harsh opposition from many well-known Shi‘ite clerics. Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī spearheaded the campaign against the Sufis. He himself successfully persecuted many Sufis and happily encouraged other Shi‘ite clerics and private Persian citizens to persecute them. Consequently, many Ni‘matullāhī Sufi masters were forced to flee or lie low and, as detailed above, masters such as Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh and Mushtāq ‘Alī Shāh were murdered by the fundamentalist clerics. The Ni‘matullāhī movement found it difficult to survive during these challenging times. As the number of Ni‘matullāhī initiates increased in Persia, Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh asked Nūr ‘Alī Shāh to appoint the future leader of the Order for Persia, and he appointed Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, who became the first Persian-born Sufi to become leader of the order. As a preacher and teacher in a seminary school, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh was well aware that the Ni‘matullāhī order needed to change its direction and find a way to exist within the dominant fundamentalist religious culture of Persian society. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh’s solution was to practise pious dissimulation, so that the Order effectively went into hiding to escape the persecution and opposition of the Shi‘ite clerics. Under his leadership most of the practices indicative of Sufi belief were abandoned. Sufi invocations (*dhikr*) were modified, and his disciples dressed to look like all other people. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh did not wear any distinctive Sufi garment and he participated in preaching in mosques and leading public congressional prayers. In this way he calmed Shi‘ite opposition. Nonetheless, he was persecuted a few times; but compared to what his prior masters had suffered these were moderate outbreaks.

Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh’s approach to the Shi‘ite fundamentalists was substantially different. He was a profound thinker and a trained seminary scholar who had a vast knowledge of Shi‘ite mystical philosophy and scholastic theology. Majdhūb’s strategy for defending Sufism was different from

that of Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh, Nūr 'Alī Shāh and even Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh. His audiences came more from the élite part of society, which was well versed in Shi'ite seminary sciences. He was the pupil of several well-known Shi'ite clerics and had built up connections within the Shi'ite seminary school system. He wrote many books in defence of Sufism and about the significance of Sufi mystical philosophy within Shi'ite culture. He voiced many critical points about the qualifications and limitations of Shi'ite clerics. He always adopted the views and sayings of prior Shi'ite Sufis and mystics by emphasising that Sufism and Shi'ism were two different terms for the same belief. Whenever he mentioned Sufi doctrines such as the Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) or the 'Importance of having a spiritual guide (*shaykh*); he would refer to Shi'ite traditions to back up his arguments. Though he was not immune to persecution, he did gain relative respect among certain groups of Shi'ite seminary students and professors. Even some great Shi'ite clerics like Qumī, who were critical of Sufism and considered it 'error' and 'heresy', were not as harsh as Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī had been. Therefore, Majdhūb was able to establish a relatively firm intellectual and theological framework for the future master of the Ni'matullāhī order, Mast 'Alī Shāh, to propagate his teachings.

Mast 'Alī Shāh suffered more oppression than either Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh or Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh from the Qājār political establishment and the fundamentalist religious authorities. He wrote and spoke in a frank manner, sometimes openly criticising scholars of the exterior sciences of religion, which was one reason why he was constantly harassed, persecuted and subjected to excommunication judgements (*fatwās*) by his clerical opponents.⁶⁰ And yet he fearlessly mocked these scholars, calling them idiots (*kuwdan*).⁶¹ Mast 'Alī believed that the scholars were taking their vengeance on Sufis out of jealousy. He said, 'Whatever was built by the Safavid kings was destroyed, and dervishes were expelled. They took complete vengeance on Sufis.'⁶²

Mast 'Alī always complained about the oppression and persecution by the scholars in his writings. He sometimes criticised all Muslims. He used the story about a person of spiritual gnosis, a Christian, who built the first Sufi lodge (*khānaqāh*). Then he said, 'Well done, a compassionate Christian; and who are the wicked Muslims, that in the whole country of Īrān there is no place for Sufis and Dervishes?'⁶³ He continually complained about what the people had done to him and to Sufism: '[p]eople of all classes! People of the court! They all put all their powers into harming and persecuting the possessors of hearts [Sufis].'⁶⁴ Though he was summoned to the royal court

and persecuted more often than Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh and Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh had been, his strong personality attracted influential members of the court. He also faced a schism within the Ni‘matullāhī order, yet he attracted a majority of the followers to his side.

In a word, these three masters laid the foundations for the Ni‘matullāhī order to flourish in Persian society, carrying forward the movement started by Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh. Under their leadership the order evolved from a charismatic popular Sufi movement into a highly sophisticated mystical philosophy followed by élite members of the Persian intelligentsia. As Ata Anzali notes, ‘After a couple of decades they gradually came to terms with this new cultural landscape as their masters transitioned the order towards a more conformist and orthodox-friendly one.’⁶⁵ Not only did an élite part of the society become Ni‘matullāhīs, but there also emerged a genre of intricately argued Sufi apologies and theological responses to the criticism of the fundamentalist Shi‘ite clerics. The efforts of Ni‘matullāhī masters who belonged to the scholarly class of seminary scholars, with their knowledge of Shi‘ite seminary sciences and wide reading of traditional Sufi classics, managed to turn the direction of the order and refine its teachings and mystical practices in an intellectually sophisticated manner. As Ata Anzali observes, ‘Unlike early masters who were either illiterate or less educated, an advanced level of knowledge in exoteric matters through madrasa training was a routine part of later Ni‘matullāhī masters’ intellectual outlook.’⁶⁶ Since Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh and Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh belonged to the élite class of Shi‘ite seminary scholars, they were able to create a spiritually and intellectually refined mystical theosophy for their followers. Majdhūb’s intellectual contribution to Sufism and his apologetic writings created opportunities for Shi‘ite scholars to read and hear the intellectual and seminary response of the Sufis who led the initiation of some Shi‘ite seminary scholars. These scholars were attracted through the philosophy elaborated by the Ni‘matullāhī masters, which had been inherited from pro-Sufi Safavid Shi‘ite philosophers such as Fayḍ Kāshānī, Mullā Ṣadrā and Shaykh Bahā’ī.

Today, the differences between the exoteric scholars of seminary sciences and Sufis appear as irreconcilable as ever. Since the arrival of Sayyid Ma’sūm in Persia almost two and a half centuries ago, the differences and disputes between the two camps have only worsened, at least on the public and political levels. The Ni‘matullāhī masters’ writings, like those of their predecessors of the Safavid period, argued that Shi‘ism was the reality of Sufism and that Sufi and Shi‘ite were two different names for the same reality. The Ni‘matullāhīs were among the very few Sufis of their time who

openly propagated the philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabī within Shi‘ite culture. Their contribution to Persian Shi‘ite culture was vast; and through the reforms introduced by Ni‘matullāhī masters outlined above Sufis became better able to resist the opposition and harassment of the Shi‘ite clerics. By the time of Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s leadership the Ni‘matullāhī order was a very influential Sufi order in Persia and had established a firm foothold within Persian society, where its followers even included members of the royal court and the respected theologians of the seminary madrasa system. One can conclude that the revivalist movement founded by Riḍā ‘Alī Shāh and directed by Ma‘ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh would not have reached its perfection and fruition without the leadership of these three figures, who were largely responsible for re-establishing the Ni‘matullāhī order within Persian society and for its endurance to the present day.

Afterword

Uṣūlī Shi'ism exercised an extremely strong influence over the theory and practice of the Sufis of the Ni'matullāhī order. The first generation of this revival movement, whose champion was the Indian master, Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh, had not been at all influenced by the Uṣūlī system of theology and its doctrine of *taqlīd*. They identified themselves as followers of the Shi'ite Imāms but abstained from following (*taqlīd*) any Shi'ite clerics. However, the harsh persecution of the Sufis made it inevitable for the Ni'matullāhīs to put more emphasis on the 'political correctness' of their theological beliefs, and consequently their doctrines grew closer to the mystical philosophy of Shi'ite seminary scholars. It would seem that the initiation of some Shi'ite clerics into Sufism and prevention of further persecution were the two main factors leading to this deep infiltration of Shi'ite theology into Ni'matullāhī Sufi thought.

The theory of *wilāya* in traditional Sufism, in which the Sufi master was understood to be a living saint or *walī*, differed substantially from the concept of *wilāya* in Shi'ite theology, in which *wilāya* remained the sole prerogative of the Imāms. Accordingly, Ni'matullāhī masters of this era sought to amalgamate Shi'ite theology with Sufi beliefs about the theory of *Wilāya*. Shāh Ni'matullāh and his successors were known to be the propagators of Ibn 'Arabī's mystical philosophy in Persia. Although Ibn 'Arabī had elaborated a complex theory of Sufi *wilāya*, since the Ni'matullāhī masters after Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh were not able to refer directly to writings of Shāh Ni'matullāh on *wilāya* — which in turn were based on the Sufi teachings of Ibn 'Arabī — they relied heavily on the Shi'ite mystic philosophers from the school of Isfāhan, whose doctrines were taught in Shi'ite seminary schools. This direct influence from Shi'ite seminary scholars sparked a rivalry between Shi'ite clerics and Sufi masters. Sufi masters came to be viewed as representatives of the Imām for spiritual guidance at the time when there was no access to a living Imām.

Ibn 'Arabī's philosophy of Sainthood (*wilāyat*) was the foundation for the corresponding philosophy within Shi'ite-Sufi culture. Ibn 'Arabī sometimes used the term 'general prophethood' (*nubuwwa 'amma*) for sainthood

(*wilāyat*) after the Prophet Muḥammad, which implies the continuation of divine guidance through sainthood.¹ Hence Sufi saints were considered the only religious guides worthy of the titles of true scholars (*ulamā*) and true heirs of the Prophet.²

Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, one of the early Shi‘ite mystics, largely adopted the philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabī. He contended that Sufism and Shi‘ism were one reality and not separated. However, Āmulī criticised Ibn ‘Arabī for not recognising the first Shi‘ite Imām, ‘Alī, as the seal of sainthood (*khātām al-wilāya*). He always asserted that the Shi‘ite Imāms were the superior recipients of divine inspiration through sainthood and Sufis received their divine guidance through the Shi‘ite Imāms.

The Ni‘matullāhī masters basically adopted the same theory and philosophy as Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī. Nūr ‘Alī Shāh presented the Imām ‘Alī as ‘the seal of the Imamate’ (*khatm-i imāmat*),³ which shows a direct influence from the Akbarian Shi‘ite philosopher, Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī. Sainthood (*wilāyat*) was represented as the charismatic authority of Sufi masters derived through Shi‘ite Imāms.⁴ This presented a great challenge to the Uṣūlī system of thought, since these mystics appealed to a different religious authority during occultation from Uṣūlī scholars. As Scharbrodt observes, the Ni‘matullāhī masters created an amalgamation of the Shi‘ite and Sufi philosophy of sainthood (*wilāyat*) by claiming that their spiritual leaders (*quṭb*) were both possessors of sainthood and true representatives of the Shi‘ite Imāms.⁵ The charismatic authority of the Ni‘matullāhī masters and their claims to sainthood gave them such a venerable status that Shi‘ite scholars criticised them for competing with the charisma of the Shi‘ite Imāms.⁶ The relationship with the twelfth Imam can be seen as a product of the Uṣūlī school of thought: the Shi‘ite seminary scholars claimed to exercise the general deputyship (*nīyābat-i āmma*) of the Imām, while in contrast the Ni‘matullāhī masters claimed spiritual contact with the twelfth Imām, which was in theological opposition to Uṣūlī claims.⁷ These Ni‘matullāhī masters, Nūr ‘Alī Shāh, Muḥammad ‘Alī Shāh, Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh and Mast ‘Alī Shāh, thus all played crucial roles in the assimilation of the Shi‘ite doctrine of *wilāya* into Ni‘matullāhī Sufism.

Today, history has repeated itself. Historically, the current harsh persecution of Sufis in Iran can be seen as stemming from this animosity between fundamentalist Shi‘ite scholars and the Ni‘matullāhī order, which is rooted in centuries of conflict between them. Further research into the roots of these theological and philosophical conflicts should greatly help future generations to mitigate these quarrels and misunderstandings between Shi‘ite clerics and Sufi masters.⁸

Notes

Chapter 1

- 1 For further information on the Safavids see Darwīsh Tawakulī ibn Bazzāz Ardabīlī, *Şafwat al-Şafā* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zaryāb, 1375 A. Hsh./1997 C.E.); Rasūl Ja'fariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsāt dar dawra-yi Şafawī* (Qum: Intishārāt-i Anşāriyān, 1370 A. Hsh./ 1991); Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), pp. 33-175; Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Işfahān', in L. Lewisohn and D. Morgan (eds.) *The Heritage of Sufism; Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750)*, vol. III (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999); Maryam Mīr Aḥmadī, *Dīn wa dawlat dar 'aşr Şafawī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1369 A. Hsh./ 1990); David Morgan, 'Rethinking Safavid Shī'ism', in L. Lewisohn and D. Morgan (eds.), *Heritage of Sufism*, vol. III (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'The Place of the School of Işfahān in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism', in L. Lewisohn and D. Morgan (eds.), *Heritage of Sufism*, vol. III (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'The School of Isfahan', in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. II (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966); Andrew J Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006); Roger Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- 2 Robert Gleave, 'Religion and Society in Qajar Iran', in R. Gleave (ed.), *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), pp. 3-4.
- 3 Azar Tabari, 'The Role of the Clergy in Modern Iranian Politics', in Nikki R. Keddie (ed.), *Religion and Politics in Iran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 48.
- 4 The relationship between clerics, Sufis, Nādir Shāh and Karīm Khān is explained in Chapter Two.
- 5 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 122.

- 6 Michael Axworthy, *A History of Iran: Empire of Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), pp. 166-167; Dr. Ghulām Riḍā Warhām, *Tārīkh-i Siyāsī va Ijtimā'ī Irān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mu'īn, 1368 A. Hsh./ 1989), p. 31.
- 7 Sa'īd Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimā'ī wa Siyāsī dar dawra-yi mu'āṣir*, vol. I (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād, 1354 A. Hsh./1975), p. 45.
- 8 For further information about his wars and negotiation with neighbouring countries see Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, pp. 130-158; Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimā'ī wa Siyāsī*.
- 9 Edward Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. IV-*Modern Times (1500-1924)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 144.
- 10 Sa'īd Arjomand, 'Political Ethic and Public Law in the Early Qājār Period', in R. Gleave (ed.), *Religion and Society in Qājār Iran* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 21.
- 11 The term 'mujtahid' in Shi'ism means a high ranking Shi'ite cleric who is authorised to interpret religious legal issues not explicitly explained in the Qur'ān and religious traditions. A mujtahid is a highly qualified jurist, who is qualified to practise *Ijtihad*, which is personal interpretation and decisions about Islamic laws. A mujtahid is imitated by his followers. For further information about the concept of *ijtihād* see Norman Calder, 'Doubt and Prerogative: The Emergence of the Imāmī Shi'ī Theory of Ijtihād', *Studia Islamica*, Vol. 70 (1989), pp. 31-51; Oliver Scharbrodt, 'The *qutb* as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam: The Conflation of Shi'ī and Sufi *Vilāyat* in the Ni'matullāhī Order', in D. Hermann and S. Mervin (eds.), *Shi'ī Trends and Dynamics in Modern Times (XVIIIth-XXth centuries) Courants et dynamiques chiites à l'époque modern (XVIIIe-XXe siècles)* (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut, 2010), p. 33.
- 12 For his biography see Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān Tunikābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-'Ulamā'* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i 'ilmī farhangī, 1383 A. Hsh./2004), pp. 225-228.
- 13 Arjomand, 'Political Ethic and Public Law', p. 24.
- 14 Robert Gleave, 'Jihād and the Religious Legitimacy of the Early Qājār State', in R. Gleave (ed.), *Religion and Society in Qājār Iran* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 43.
- 15 'Abd al-Hādī Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn rūyārūyī andīshih garān-i Irān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1367 A. Hsh./ 1988), p.233.
- 16 Ibid., p. 240.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 239-242.
- 18 Muḥammad Hāshim Āṣif (Rustam al-Ḥukamā'), *Rustam al-tawārikh* (Tehran: Chāpkhānih Sipīhr, 1352 A. Hsh./1973), p. 21.
- 19 Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. IV, p. 146.

- 20 Denis Wright explains Richard Wellesley's entitlements from England as follows 'Richard Wellesley, 1st Marquess, Earl of Mornington (1760-1842). Governor General of India 1787-1805; Foreign Secretary 1809-12; Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1821-8 and 1833-4; Elder brother of the 1st Duke of Wellington' (Denis Wright, *The English Amongst Persians* (London: William Heinmann Ltd., 1977), p. 3, footnote).
- 21 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, pp. 244-245; Wright, *The English Amongst Persians*, pp. 3-7.
- 22 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, pp. 247-248.
- 23 For further information see Iradj Amini, *Napoleon and Persia; Franco-Persian relations under the first empire* (Washington, DC: Mage Publisher, 1999).
- 24 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, pp. 250-251.
- 25 Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. IV, p. 146.
- 26 Āṣif, *Rustam*, p. 464.
- 27 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 252.
- 28 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 253; Wright, *The English Amongst Persians*, p. 7.
- 29 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, pp. 255-257; Wright, *The English Amongst Persians*, p. 7.
- 30 Arjomand, 'Political Ethic and Public Law', p. 21; Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 357.
- 31 The 'greater occultation' of twelfth Imām was followed by the 'lesser occultation'. During the 'lesser occultation', there were agents as intermediaries between the twelfth Imām and the Imām's followers. By the death of the last agent (*vakīl*) in 329/940, the 'greater occultation' had started and is still continuing, and since then there had been no direct contact with the Imām. The twelfth Imām is the last Imām of Twelver Shi'ites, and is the Messiah for Shi'ites. Although since then, there has been no direct contact with the twelfth Imām. There are seminary scholars acting as his representation in Shi'ite culture. (Hamid Algar, *Religion and state in Iran* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1969), p.262; Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (New York: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 162-171.)
- 32 Algar, *Religion and State in Iran*, p. 3.
- 33 Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), pp. 21-23.
- 34 Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. IV, p. 353.
- 35 Algar, *Religion and State in Iran*, p. 5; Henry Corbin, *Pour une Morphologie de la Spiritualité Shi'ite* (Zurich: Eranos Jahrbuch, 1960), p. 69.
- 36 Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, pp. 21-25; Scharbrodt, 'The *qutb* as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', p.34.

- 37 Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, p. xii-xiii.
- 38 Algar, *Religion and State in Iran*, p. 5; Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 323.
- 39 Arjomand, 'Political Ethic and Public Law', p. 21.
- 40 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 324; Tunikābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 252.
- 41 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 324.
- 42 Ibid., p. 325.
- 43 Ibid., p. 324.
- 44 The literal meaning of Mahdī is 'guided one'. He is an eschatological figure in Islamic tradition, who is the Messiah for Muslims. Twelver Shi'ites believe that the twelfth Imām, Muḥammad al-Mahdī (b. 255/860), is the messiah, who is in occultation (Momen, pp. 161-172). For further information see Said Amir Arjomand, 'Messianism, Millennialism and Revolution in Early Islamic History', in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (eds.), *Imagining the End* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 116-129.
- 45 Ḥā'irī, p. 326.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Arjomand, 'Political Ethic and Public Law', p. 31.
- 49 Ibid.; Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, pp. 326-327.
- 50 Arjomand, 'Political Ethic and Public Law', p. 31; Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, pp. 327-328.
- 51 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 356.
- 52 Ibid., p. 358.
- 53 Muḥammad Ma'sūm Shīrāzī, *Tarā'iq al-Ḥaqā'iq*, Vol. III (Tehran: Sanā'ī publication, 1966). p. 171.
- 54 Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran*, pp. 5-6.
- 55 Ibid., p. 7.
- 56 For further information about the Akhbārī school of Shi'ism see Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Devin J. Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shiite Responses to the Sunni Legal System* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1998), pp. 175-209.
- 57 Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal, the making of the Babi movement in Iran, 1844-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 34-38; Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 217; Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 361.
- 58 Mangol Bayat, 'Anti-Sufism in Qajar Iran', in F. De Jong and B. Radtke (eds.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 627.

- 59 Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, p. 21.
- 60 For further information about Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī see Nīmatullāh Chugānī, *Ta’mūlī dar zindigī-yi Āqā Muḥammad‘Alī Kirmānshāhī (Şūfik-ush)* (M.A. Dissertation, Danishgāh Adyān wa Mazāhib, Qum, 1385 A. Hsh./2006).
- 61 Shīrāzī, *Tarā’iq*, vol. III, pp. 209-210.
- 62 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 77.
- 63 Juan R. Cole, ‘Imami Jurisprudence and the Role of the Ulama: Morteza Ansari on Emulating the Supreme Exemplar’, in Nikki R. Keddie (ed.), *Religion and Politics in Iran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 40; Moojan Momen, *Introduction*, p. 128. For further information about thugs, mobs and their relationship with Shi’ite clerics see Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, p. 42; Juan R. I. Cole and Moojan Momen, ‘Mafia, Mob and Shiism in Iraq: The rebellion of Ottoman Karbala 1824-1843’, in *Past and Present*, No. 112 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Aug. 1986), pp. 112-143.
- 64 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 77-78.
- 65 Leonard Lewisohn, ‘An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I: The Nīmatullāhī order: persecution, revival and schism’, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), vol. 61, Part 3, p. 440.
- 66 Muḥsin Kīyānī, *Tārīkh-i khāniqāh dar Īrān* (Tehran: Kitābkhānih Ṭahūrī, 1369 A. Hsh./1990), p. 213.
- 67 Algar, *Religion and State in Iran*, p. 14.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 69 Ḥā’irī, *Nakhushtīn*, p. 357.
- 70 *Ibid.*
- 71 The use of the term ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ in this book refers primarily to hard-line, intolerant elements of thinking that belonged to the Uṣūlī theological tradition going back to the 16th century Safavid Persia. For further information relevant to this discussion about Islamic fundamentalism see A. K. S. Lambton, ‘The Clash of Civilizations: Authority, Legitimacy, and Perfectibility’, in R. M. Burrell (ed.), *Islamic Fundamentalism* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1989), pp. 33-47; Juan Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi’ite Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 31-78; Richard Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995); B. B. Lawrence, ‘Fundamentalists in Pursuit of an Islamic State’, in his *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age* (London: I. B. Tauris 1990), pp. 189-226; Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Random House, 2004).

- 72 Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. IV, p. 168.
- 73 Ibid., pp. 177-181.
- 74 Ibid., pp. 181-182.
- 75 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 352.
- 76 Āṣif, *Rustam*, p. 231.
- 77 Ibid., p. 232.
- 78 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 353.
- 79 Ibid., p. 354.
- 80 Ibid., p. 374.
- 81 Ibid., p. 363.
- 82 Ibid., p. 365.
- 83 Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. IV, p. 298.
- 84 Ibid., p. 309.
- 85 Muḥammad Taqī Bahār (Malik al-Shu'arā), *Sabk Shināsī ya tārikh taṭawur nathr-i fārsī*, vol. III (Tehran: Intishārāt-i zawwār, 1381 A. Hsh. /2002), pp. 311-312.
- 86 The name of Maḥmūd Khān was used by 'Abd al-Hādī Ḥā'irī, whereas the majority of other sources called him Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān of Kāshān.
- 87 Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. IV, p. 307.
- 88 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 407.
- 89 Ibid., p. 407.
- 90 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 14.
- 91 Muḥammad Taqī Khuyī, *Ādāb al-Musāfirīn*, (Tehran: Kitābkhānih Dānishgāh-i Tehran, Manuscript number: 2409), p. 372.
- 92 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla-yi Justujū dar taṣawwuf-i Irān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1362 A. Hsh./ 1983), p. 309.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Ata Anzali, 'Safavid Shi'ism and the Eclipse of Sufism and the Emergence of 'irfān' (Ph.D.thesis, Houston, TX: Rice University, 2012), pp. 193-209; Leonard Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II: A socio-cultural profile of Sufism, from the Dhahabī revival to the present day', in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), vol. 62, Part 1, p. 47.
- 95 Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II', p. 57.
- 96 Leonard Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I: The Ni'matullāhī order: persecution, revival and schism', in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), vol. 61, Part 3, p. 438; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 309.

- 97 ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū dar taṣawwuf-i Īrān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1367 A. Hsh./ 1988), p. 375.
- 98 Ḥusayn Munajjimī (Lāhījānī), *Mabānī-yi Sulūk dar silsila Khāksār-i Jalālī wa taṣawwuf* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Tābān, 1378 A. Hsh./ 1999), p. 40. For further information about Ghulām ‘Alī Shāh see Tūraj Adhamī, *Az khāk tā Khāksār, silsila-yi Salmānī Abū Turābī Jalālī* (Tehran: Nashr-i Shaivard, 1387 A. Hsh./ 2008), pp. 592-605.
- 99 Zayn al-‘Abidīn Shīrwānī (Mast ‘Alī Shāh), *Bustān al-Sīyāḥa* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥaqīqat, 2010), pp. 364-365.
- 100 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 310.
- 101 Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Ltd., 1998), p. 37.
- 102 Sulṭānī, Ḥāj Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir. *Rahbarān-i ṭarīqat wa ‘irfān* (Tehran: Mu‘āsisih Intishārātī Maḥbūb, 1371 A Hsh/ 1992), p. 180.
- 103 Dr. Ḥamīd Farzām, *Tahqīq dar aḥwāl wa naqd athār wa afkārī Shāh Ni‘matullāhi Walī* (Tehran: Soroush Press, 2000), pp. 34-39.
- 104 Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān-i ṭarīqat wa ‘irfān*, p. 177.
- 105 Shāh Ni‘matullāh Walī, *Kuliyāt-i ash‘ār-i Shāh Ni‘matullāh Walī*, Javad Nurbakhsh (ed.) (Tehran, 1361 Hsh/1981), p. 880.
- 106 Ni‘matullāh Walī, *Kuliyāt*, p. 880; Shahrām Pāzūkī, ‘Shāh Ni‘matullāh Walī wa ṭarīqa way’, in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Jilwih ḥāy-i ma‘nawī dar jahān-i islām; ṭarīqih ḥāy-i ‘irfānī*, trans. Faṭīmih Shāhhosseini (Tehran, 1391Hsh/2012), p. 321.
- 107 Javad Nurbakhsh, ‘The Nīmatullāhī’, in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality; Manifestations* (New York, 2015), p. 147.
- 108 Javad Nurbakhsh, ‘The Nīmatullāhī’, p. 148.
- 109 See Javad Nurbakhsh, ‘The Ni matullāhī Order’, *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, pp. 145-150.
- 110 Anzali, ‘Safavid Shi‘ism’, p. 252; Terry Graham, ‘The Ni‘matullāhī Order under Safavid Suppression’, p. 178; Scharbrodt, ‘The *quṭb* as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam’, p.37.
- 111 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 71; Anzali, ‘Safavid Shi‘ism’, p. 252; Sayyid Aḥmad Dīwānbaygī Shīrāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shu‘arā*, vol. II, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Nawā‘ī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zarrīn, 1364 A. Hsh./ 1985), p. 1036; Scharbrodt, ‘The *quṭb* as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam’, p. 37.
- 112 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 295.
- 113 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 71; Scharbrodt, ‘The *quṭb* as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam’, pp. 37-38.

- 114 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 72; Dīwānbaygī Shīrāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shu'arā*, vol. II, p. 1037; Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 230; Khuyī, *Ādāb*, pp. 352-353; Javad Nurbakhsh, *Masters of the Path; a History of the Masters of the Nimatullahi Sufi Order* (New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publication, 1980), p. 76; Scharbrodt, 'The *quṭb* as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', pp. 37-38; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. II, p. 332 and vol. III, p. 171; Shīr-wānī, *Bustān*, p. 661; Zayn al-'Ābidīn Shīr-wānī (Mast 'Alī Shāh), *Ḥadā'iq al-Siyāḥa* (Tehran: Sāzmān-i Chāp-i Danīshgāh, 1348 A. Hsh./ 1969), p. 27; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 206.
- 115 During that era there was no distinction between the *Qalandars* (as a formal order) and itinerant wandering dervishes. Specific *Qalandarī* beliefs are explained below.
- 116 Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, p. 358.
- 117 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 295.
- 118 Dīwānbaygī Shīrāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shu'arā*, vol. II, p. 1037; Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 230; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl* (Hamadān), p. 359.
- 119 This event of Jānī is explained in detail in Chapter Three.
- 120 Kiyānī, *Tārīkh*, p. 267.
- 121 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 231; Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 38; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 173; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 207; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 320.
- 122 Kiyānī, *Tārīkh*, p. 269.
- 123 Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I', p. 441.
- 124 Ibid.
- 125 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 287.
- 126 For further information about Mullā 'Abd al-Ṣamad Hamadānī see Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 555; Shīr-wānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1911-1914. For further information see Shīrāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shu'arā*, vol. II, p. 1044; Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 542; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 233; Shīr-wānī, *Bustān*, pp. 884-886 and p. 662.
- 127 Nasrollah Pourjavady in *Kings of Love* has a chapter called 'Mullās and Kings' elaborating on this transformation of the Ni'matullāhi order from a *Qalandarī*'ite to a scholarly movement (Pourjavadi and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, pp. 136-155).
- 128 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 72.
- 129 Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, p. 360.
- 130 Ibid., p. 362.
- 131 Muḥammad Ja'far Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il Majdhūbīyya* (Tehran: Intīshārāt-i Ḥaqīqat, 1377 A. Hsh./ 1998), p. 5; Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 639.

- 132 Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Bihbahānī, *Khayrātīyya* (Qum: Intishārāt-i Anṣārīyān, 1412 A.Hsh./1991 C.E.). For further information about *Khayrātīyya* see Chugānī, *Ta’mulī dar zindigī-yi Āqā Muḥammad‘Alī Kirmānshāhī (Şūfikush)*, pp. 7-11; Royce, *Mīr Ma’şūm ‘Alī Shāh and the Ni‘mat Allāhī Revival*, pp. 169-172; Sayyid Muḥammadhādī Abū Turābī, *Naqdi bar Kharātīyya* (M.A. dissertation, Danishgāh Adyān wa Mazāhib-i Qum, Qum 1385 A. Hsh./ 2006).
- 133 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 43.
- 134 For further information one can study the lifestyle of the Dhahabī masters of Shīrāz living in this era: Dr. Iḥsānu’llāh Istakhrī, *Uṣūl-i taṣawwuf* (Tehran: Chāpkhānih Būzarjumīhrī, 1338 A. Hsh./ 1959), pp. 422-496.
- 135 Lewisohn, ‘An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II’, pp. 46-47.
- 136 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, pp. 332-333.
- 137 Ibid., p. 332.
- 138 Dhahabī Shīrāzī, *Khurshīd-i Jān*, p. 11; Istakhrī, *Uṣūl-i taṣawwuf*, pp. 462-463; Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, p. 328; Lewisohn, ‘An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II’, p. 37; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā’iq*, vol. III, p. 219; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, pp. 335-336.
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- 140 Dhahabī Shīrāzī, *Khurshīd-i Jān*, p. 13; Istakhrī, *Uṣūl-i taṣawwuf*, p. 464; Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, p. 329.
- 141 Dhahabī Shīrāzī, *Khurshīd-i Jān*, pp. 15-16; Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, pp. 330-331; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 336.
- 142 Dhahabī Shīrāzī, *Khurshīd-i Jān*, p. 16; Istakhrī, *Uṣūl-i taṣawwuf*, p. 465; Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, p. 331; Lewisohn, ‘An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II’, p. 37; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 336. For further information about Shaṭṭārīyya Sufi Order see J. Spencer Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 96-98.
- 143 Dhahabī Shīrāzī, *Khurshīd-i Jān*, p. 17; Istakhrī, *Uṣūl-i taṣawwuf*, p. 466.
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- 145 Istakhrī, *Uṣūl-i taṣawwuf*, p. 472; Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, p. 337; Lewisohn, ‘An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II’, p. 37.
- 146 Ibid.
- 147 Dhahabī, *Manāhil*, p. 5; Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, p. 338.
- 148 Istakhrī, *Uṣūl-i taṣawwuf*, p. 476; Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, p. 342; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 336.

- 149 Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim Dhahabī Shīrāzī, *Khurshīd-i Jān; Qaṣīda-yi Shamsīyya*, ed. M. Nayirī (Qum: Intishārāt-i Daryāyi Nūr, 1381 A. Hsh./2002).
- 150 Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim Dhahabī, *Manāhil al-taḥqīq*, ed. M. Nayirī (Qum: Intishārāt-i Daryāyi Nūr, 1382 A. Hsh./2003).
- 151 *Ibid.*, p. 348.
- 152 *Ibid.*, pp. 352-353.
- 153 Istakhrī, *Uṣūl-i taṣawwuf*, p. 476.
- 154 Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, pp. 351-352.
- 155 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 336.
- 156 Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, p. 354.
- 157 Istakhrī, *Uṣūl-i taṣawwuf*, p. 492; Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, p. 357; Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II', p. 38.
- 158 *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- 159 Istakhrī, *Uṣūl-i taṣawwuf*, pp. 698-711; Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, pp.157-165.
- 160 *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- 161 Istakhrī, *Uṣūl-i taṣawwuf*, p. 657.
- 162 Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II', p. 37.
- 163 Khāwarī, *Dhahabīyya*, pp. 72-88.
- 164 Baluchistān is a province located in the South East of Iran, mostly inhabited by Sunni Muslims (Zībā 'Arshī and Naṣr Allah Kasrā'īyān, *Baluchistān* (Tehran: Nashr-i Āgah, 1380 A. Hsh./2001)).
- 165 The literal translation of Sayyid is 'lord', indicating a leader. Descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad are called Sayyids to indicate their superior spiritual lineage.
- 166 Kamāl Rūḥānī, *Taṣawwuf-i Kurdistān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Samirand, 1385 A. Hsh/2006), pp. 129-130.
- 167 Rūḥānī, *Taṣawwuf-i Kurdistān*, p. 230; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1834.
- 168 *Ibid.*
- 169 Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I', p. 438.
- 170 Dina Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism; Naqshbandīs in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), pp. 23-25.
- 171 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1071.
- 172 *Ibid.*, p. 1835.
- 173 *Ibid.*, p. 1838.
- 174 *Ibid.*, p. 1342.
- 175 *Ibid.*, p. 1439.

- 176 Dr. Mahīndukht Mu'tamidī, *Mawlānā Khālid Naqshbandī wa payruwān ʔarīqat ū* (Tehran: Pazhang, 1368 A. Hsh./ 1989), p.17.
- 177 Mu'tamidī, *Mawlānā Khālid*, p. 23; Rūhānī, *Ṭaṣawwuf-i Kurdistān*, pp. 259-263.
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- 179 For general information about the Qādirīyya order see Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, 'The Qādirīyya Order', in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality* (Lahore: Caravan Press, 2000), vol. II, pp. 6-26; Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam*, pp. 40-44.
- 180 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1075.
- 181 Ibid., p. 437.
- 182 Rūhānī, *Ṭaṣawwuf-i Kurdistān*, p. 134; Muḥammad Ra'ūf Tawakulī, *Tārīkh ṭaṣawwuf dar Kurdistān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i tawakulī, 1381 A. Hsh./ 2002); pp. 155-156.
- 183 Ibid., p. 128.
- 184 For further information on Badawī see Muḥammad Abū Zayd, *Al-murabī al-rabbānī al-sayyid Aḥmad al-Badawī* (Cairo: Dār al-Īmān wa al-ḥayāt, 2007); Abdullah Schleifer, 'Sufism in Egypt and the Arab East', in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality*, vol. II, pp. 195-196. For further information on Rifā'ī see Schleifer, 'Sufism in Egypt and the Arab East', pp. 194-195.
- 185 Rūhānī, *Ṭaṣawwuf-i Kurdistān*, p. 192.
- 186 Ibid., pp. 137-140.
- 187 Ibid., p. 152.
- 188 Ibid., p. 155; Tawakulī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 161-162.
- 189 Rūhānī, *Ṭaṣawwuf-i Kurdistān*, pp. 155-156; Tawakulī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 162-164.
- 190 Rūhānī, *Ṭaṣawwuf-i Kurdistān*, p. 130.
- 191 Nūr 'Alī Ilāhī, *Burhān al-Ḥaqq* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Jayhūn, 1373 A. Hsh./ 1994), pp. 634-654.
- 192 Ibid., pp. 15-16.
- 193 Muḥammad 'Alī Sulṭānī, *Qīyām wa nihḏzat 'Alawīyān zāgrus ya tārikh tahlīlī ahl-i Ḥaqq* (Tehran: Mu'asisih farhangī-yi Nashr-i Suhā, 1377 A.Hsh./ 1998), p. 143.
- 194 Sulṭānī, *Qīyām wa nihḏzat 'Alawīyān*, pp. 144-145.
- 195 Dr. Şiddiq Şafāzāda, *Dānishnāmih nām āvarān-i yārisān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Hīrmand, 1376 A. Hsh./ 1997), pp. 335-339.
- 196 On these figures, see *ibid.*, pp. 339-347.

Chapter 2

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- 2 Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke, 'Introduction,' in de Jong and Radtke (eds.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, p. 1.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 4 Vincent J. Cornell, 'Faḳīh versus Faḳīr in Marinid Morocco: Epistemological dimension of a polemic,' in Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke (eds.) *Islamic Mysticism Contested* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 32.
- 5 'The Meccan Revelation (*Futūḥāt-i al-Makkiyya*)', as James W. Morris states, 'is Ibn 'Arabī's longest and most comprehensive work' (Muḥyi Al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, trans. William C. Chittick and James W. Morris (New York: Pir Press, 2002), pp. 1-6).
- 6 Cited by Leonard Lewisohn, 'Overview: Iranian Islam and Persianate Sufism,' in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *Heritage of Sufism: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)*, vol. II (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), p. 21.
- 7 Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam*, p. 1.
- 8 Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press,), p. 43.
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- 10 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Arzish-i mīrāth-i Ṣūfīyya* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1385 A. Hsh./ 2006), p. 167.
- 11 Gerhard Bowering, 'Perimeters and Constants,' in de Jong and Radtke (eds.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, p. 45.
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- 17 Shīrwānī, *Rīyād*, pp. 301-302.
- 18 He will be discussed in this chapter.
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- 21 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. I, p. 6.
- 22 Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār Nayshāburī, *Tadhkirat al-uliā’*, Muḥammad Isti‘lāmī (ed.) (Tehran: Intishārāt Zawwār, 1383 A. Hsh./2004).
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- 26 Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, p. 23.
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- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Shīrīn Bayānī, *Dīn wa dawlat dar Īrān-i ‘aḥd mughul*, vol. II (Tehran: Markaz-i nashr-i dānishgāhī, 1371 A. Hsh./ 1992), pp. 481-482; ‘Abd Allāh Abū al-Qāsim Kāshānī, *Tārīkh-i Uljāyṭu*, ed. Mahīn Hanbali (Tehran: Bungāh-i tarjumih wa nashr-i kitāb, 1348 A. Hsh./1969), pp. 90-96 and pp. 99-101; Shīrwānī, *Rīyād*: pp. 67-68.
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- 70 Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 68.
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- 76 Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 73.
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- 78 Graham, 'The Ni'matu'llāhī order under Safavid Suppression', in L. Lewisohn and D. Morgan (eds.), *The Heritage of Sufism; Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750)*, vol. III (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), p. 176.

- 79 Newman, *Safavid Iran*, pp. 32-33.
- 80 Anzali, 'Safavid Shi'ism', p. 252; Graham, 'The Ni'matu'llāhī Order under Safavid Suppression', p. 178; Scharbrodt, 'The *qutb* as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', p. 37.
- 81 Graham, 'The Ni'matu'llāhī order under Safavid suppression', pp. 183-184.
- 82 Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū*, p. 369.
- 83 Kathryn Babayan, *Mystic, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 225.
- 84 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 115.
- 85 Many Sufi orders claimed that Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī was a member of their order. However, the Nūrbakhshī order has a more authentic claim in putting Shaykh Bahā'ī's (Shaykh al-Islām of Iṣfahān) name in Nurbakhshī's genealogies. There is no strong evidence that indicates that Shaykh Bahā'ī was initiated into a Sufi order, and it is possible that he dissimulated his affiliation with a Sufi order. The name of Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1030/ 1621), who lived during Shāh 'Abbās II's reign, also appears in Nurbakhshī genealogies (Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 116).
- 86 Ḥāfiz Ḥusayn Karbalā'ī, *Rawḍāt al-jinān wa Janāt al-jinān* (Tabriz: Intishārāt-i sutūdiḥ, 1381 A. Hsh./ 2002), p. 159.
- 87 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 14.
- 88 Mansur Sefatgol, 'From Dār al-Salṭana-yi Iṣfahān to Dār al-Khilāfa-yi Ṭihrān: continuity and change in the Safavid model of state-religious administration during the Qājārs (1795-1895/1209-1313)', in R. Gleaves (ed.), *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 72.
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- 90 Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir Khunsārī, *Rawḍāt al-Janāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Islāmiyya, 1991), vol. IV, pp. 346-348.
- 91 Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 79.
- 92 Khunsārī, *Rawḍāt al-Janāt*, vol. IV, pp. 348-349.
- 93 Maryam Mīr Aḥmadī, *Dīn wa dawlat dar 'aṣr Ṣafawī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1369 A. Hsh./ 1990), p. 77.
- 94 Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 80. Āqā Buzurg Tihrānī and some other scholars recalled that Karakī wrote a treatise in refutation of Sufism entitled '*al-Maṭā'in al-mujrimīyya fī radd-i al-Ṣūfiyya*'. However, this treatise has been lost: Āqā Buzurg Tihrānī, *al-dhuriya ilā taṣānīf-i al-Shī'a*, vol. 21 (Qum: Mu'asisih Ismā'īliyyān, 1187 A.H./ 1773), p. 328.
- 95 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 244.

- 96 For further information about La'ī Shāhbāz Qalandar see Sarah Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power: the Pirs of Sind, 1843-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 19. Abū 'Alī Qalandar's poetry made a great contribution to the Qalandari'ite literary canon. For further information about Abū 'Alī Qalandar see *Dīwān-i Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn Bū 'Alī Qalandar*, ed. Mīr Ṭāhīr (Tehran: Intishārāt-i tikkīya Khāksār, 1361 A.Hsh./1981).
- 97 Malāmatiyya began as an ascetic movement without any hypocrisy (Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū*, p. 346).
- 98 Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū*, pp. 372-373.
- 99 For further information see Muḥammad Riḍā Shafī'ī Kadkanī, *Qalandariyya dar tārikh: digardīshāy-i yik īdiuluzhī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i sukhan, 1386 A. Hsh./2007 C.E.).
- 100 Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū*, p. 346
- 101 Ibid., pp. 372-373.
- 102 They were called *Jalālī* because they were named after Sayyid Jalāl Thānī (d. 785/1383), known as *Makhdūm Jahānīān* (Master of both worlds). His grandfather was a master of the Suhrawardiyya order, but Sayyid Jalāl was a deputy of Quṭb al-Dīn Ḥaydar. He spread the Qalandari'ite spiritual doctrines but did not accept any disciples, as he believed that he was not qualified to be a master (Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū*, p. 373).
- 103 Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū*, p. 375.
- 104 Ibid., p. 359.
- 105 It has been said that Shaykh Ḥaydar ibn Junayd (the father of Shāh Ismā'īl) had a vision of Imām 'Alī who commanded him that he had to make a sign for his followers to distinguish them from hypocrites. Therefore, he commanded his disciples, to wear red hats, and they were called *Qizilbāsh* ('red heads') (Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1328-1329).
- 106 Anzali, 'Safavid Shi'ism', p. 42.
- 107 al-Shaybī, *Tashayū' wa Taṣawwuf*, p. 399.
- 108 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 239.
- 109 Anzali, 'Safavid Shi'ism', pp. 54-56; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 241.
- 110 Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 83.
- 111 Rasūl Ja'fariyān, 'Tashayū' I'tidālī', in *Haft Āsmān: faṣlnāma-yi takhaṣuṣī adyān wa madhāhib* (Qum: Haft Āsmān Publications, 1383 A. Hsh./2004), Vol. 6, No. 22, pp. 58-59.
- 112 Ibid., p. 57.
- 113 Ibid.
- 114 Rasūl Ja'fariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsāt dar dawra-yi Ṣafawī*, pp. 251-254.

- 115 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 200.
- 116 Ibid., p. 262, 1848.
- 117 Tamīmdārī, *irfān wa adab dar 'aṣr ṣafawī*, vol. I, p. 37.
- 118 Hamid Dabashi, 'Mir Damad and the founding of the 'School of Isfahan', in O. Leaman and S. H. Nasr (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Routledge Curzon, 1996), p. 597.
- 119 Nasr, 'The Place of the School of Iṣfahān', p. 11.
- 120 Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 86.
- 121 Ibid., p. 67.
- 122 Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 90; Nasr, 'The Place of the School of Iṣfahān', p. 121.
- 123 Ibid., p. 8.
- 124 Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 95.
- 125 Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *Kasr al-aṣnām al-jāhilliya fī dham-i al-jamā'at al-Ṣūfiyya* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh Tehran, 1340 A. Hsh./ 1961).
- 126 Jāwidān, 'Ālimān-i Shī'a wa taṣawwuf', pp. 210-211.
- 127 Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', pp. 95-96.
- 128 Ibid., p. 97.
- 129 Ibid., p. 98.
- 130 Ibid., pp. 130-131.
- 131 Known as Shaykh Bahā'ī, he was born in 1546 in Ba'albak in present-day Lebanon. His father emigrated to Persia as a Shī'ite seminary scholar (Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 88).
- 132 Royce, *Mir Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 37; private interview with Dr Shahrām Pāzūkī, August 2011, and Nasr, 'The School of Isfahan', p. 910.
- 133 Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 93.
- 134 Jāwidān, 'Ālimān-i Shī'a wa taṣawwuf', p. 211.
- 135 Ja'farīyān, *Dīn wa siyāsāt dar dawra-yi Ṣafawī*, p. 227; Jāwidān, 'Ālimān-i Shī'a wa taṣawwuf', p. 211.
- 136 Ibid.
- 137 For this dispute between Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī and Qumī see Ja'farīyān, *Ṣafawīyya dar 'arṣih dīn, farhang wa siyāsāt*, vol. II, pp. 605-658.
- 138 Ibid., p. 241.
- 139 Ibid., pp. 242-243.
- 140 Aḥmad Muqadas Ardibīlī, *Ḥadiqat al-Shī'a* (Tehran: Nashr-i Dilshād, 1387 A. Hsh./ 2008). 'Allāma Burqī'ī has a detailed explanation about Shī'ite clerics proving that *Ḥadiqat al-Shī'a* was written by Ardibīlī (Allāma Burqī'ī, *Ḥaqīqat al-irfān* (place unknown, date unknown), pp. 47-48).

- 141 Nasrollah Pourjavady, 'Opposition to Sufism in Twelver Shiism', in F. de Jong and B. Radtke (eds.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 622.
- 142 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1109; Shīrwānī, *Rīyād*, p. 55.
- 143 Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 132; Scharbrodt, 'The *quṭb* as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', p. 34.
- 144 Ja'fariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsāt dar dawra-yi Ṣafawī*, p. 254.
- 145 Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', pp. 132-133.
- 146 Bayat, 'Anti-Sufism in Qājār Iran', p. 625.
- 147 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1114-1115.
- 148 Muḥammad Bāqir Khuwnsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-'ulamā' wa al-sādāt*, vol. I (Tehran: Ismā'iliyān publication, 1390/ 2011), p. 129; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 38.
- 149 The school of *Akhbārism* is explained below.
- 150 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. I, p. 268.
- 151 Kabūdarāhangī, *Ras'āl Majdhūbiyya*, p. 5; Shīrwānī, *Rīyād al-Sīyāḥa*, p. 621.
- 152 Ja'fariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsāt dar dawra-yi Ṣafawī*, p. 235.
- 153 Ibid., pp. 246-249.
- 154 Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, *Risāla tashwīq al-sālikīn* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Nūr-i Fāṭima, 1375 A. Hsh./1996).
- 155 Ibid., pp. 1115-1116.
- 156 Ja'fariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsāt dar dawra-yi Ṣafawī*, p. 253; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1115-1116.
- 157 Ibid., p. 256.
- 158 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 262-265.
- 159 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 171.
- 160 Ibid.
- 161 Ibid.
- 162 Sefatgol, 'From Dār al-Salṭana-yi Iṣfahān to Dār al-Khilāfa-yi Ṭihhrān', p. 72.
- 163 Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, pp. 17-18; Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, pp. 3-4. Amanat, *Modern Iran*, pp. 142-151.
- 164 Āṣif, *Rustam*, p. 182.
- 165 Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, pp. 165-166 and pp. 171-193; Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 45; John R. Perry, *Karīm Khan Zand* (Oxford: One-world Publications, 2006), p. 12.
- 166 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 45; Perry, *Karīm Khan Zand*, p. 12.
- 167 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 45.

- 168 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1770.
- 169 Ibid., p. 51.
- 170 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 51.
- 171 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1848.
- 172 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. I, p. 58.
- 173 Ibid., p. 59.
- 174 Amanat, *Modern Iran*, pp. 152-153.
- 175 Ibid., p. 153.
- 176 Ibid.
- 177 Āṣif, *Rustam*, p. 408.
- 178 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 71.
- 179 Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 91.
- 180 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 71.
- 181 Perry, *Karīm Khan Zand*, p. 123; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 661.
- 182 Perry, *Karīm Khan Zand*, p. 123.
- 183 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, p. 87.
- 184 Āṣif, *Rustam*, pp. 322-324.
- 185 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 86.
- 186 Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 127.
- 187 Perry, *Karīm Khan Zand*, p. 122.
- 188 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Ruzigārān: Tārīkh-i Īrān az āghāz ta suqūṭ-i salṭanat pahlawī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sukhan, 1390 A. Hsh./ 2011), p. 727.
- 189 Āṣif, *Rustam*, p. 436.
- 190 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 75; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 130; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq Al-Ḥaqā'iq*, Vol. III, p. 187.
- 191 Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū*, p. 376.
- 192 Joanna De Groot, *Religion, Culture and Politics in Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 89.
- 193 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 40.
- 194 Zarrīnkūb, *Arzish-i mīrāth*, p. 98.
- 195 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 66; Amanat, *Modern Iran*, pp. 162-166.
- 196 For further information about his wars and negotiation with neighbouring countries see Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, pp. 130-158; Amanat, *Modern Iran*, pp. 166-172.
- 197 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 75.
- 198 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1283.
- 199 Bayat, 'Anti-Sufism in Qājār Iran', p. 627.

- 200 Ibid.
- 201 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 540.
- 202 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 359.
- 203 Kamran Aghaie, 'Religious Rituals, Social Identities and Political Relationships in Tehran under Qājār Rule, 1850s-1920s', in R. Gleaves (ed.), *Religion and Society in Qājār Iran* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 376.
- 204 Arjomand, 'Political Ethic and Public Law', p. 21.
- 205 Ibid.
- 206 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 76-77; Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 358.
- 207 De Groot, *Religion, Culture and Politics in Iran*, p. 90.
- 208 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1432.
- 209 Ibid., p. 1433.
- 210 Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, p. 21.
- 211 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1431.
- 212 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 410; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 251.
- 213 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1912; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, pp. 314-315.
- 214 Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū*, p. 375.
- 215 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 364-365 and 1054.
- 216 Ibid., p. 1041.
- 217 Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir was highly regarded by the followers of the Uṣūlī school. As Abbas Amanat observed, 'In the late eighteenth century, perhaps with some attention to the great scholars of the past and in comparison with the Sunni religious hierarchy, Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī was acknowledged the "master of all," the "unique," and the "promoter" of the modern Uṣūlī school. Some scholars, most of them Bihbahānī's own students, regarded him as the "renewer of the beginning of the century," a concept more familiar in Sunni than in Shi'ite thought' (Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 41).
- 218 Bayat, 'Anti-Sufism in Qājār Iran', p. 627.
- 219 Ibid.
- 220 Andrew Newman, 'Anti-Akhhārī Sentiment among the Qājār 'Ulamā's: the case of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Khwānsārī (d. 1313/ 1895)', in R. Gleaves (ed.), *Religion and Society in Qājār Iran* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 155.
- 221 De Groot, *Religion, Culture and Politics in Iran*, pp. 95-96.
- 222 Newman, 'Anti-Akhhārī', p. 165; Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 77; Jāwidān, 'Ālimān-i Shī'a wa Taṣawwuf', p. 210.
- 223 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 43.
- 224 Ibid.

- 225 Ibid., p. 78.
- 226 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1461-1463.
- 227 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 267; Shīrwānī, *Riyād*, p. 657.
- 228 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1495; Shīrwānī, *Riyād*, p. 315.
- 229 Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī, *Khayrātīyya* (Qum: Intishārāt-i Anṣārīyān, 1412 A.H./1991), p. 459.
- 230 Jāwidān, 'Ālimān-i Shī'a wa Taṣawwuf', p. 211. For further information see Royce, *Mīr Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, pp. 169-172.
- 231 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1433.
- 232 Bihbahānī, *Khayrātīyya*, vol. I, p. 9.
- 233 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 77.
- 234 Bihbahānī, *Khayrātīyya*, vol. I, p. 16.
- 235 Ibid., pp. 40-43.
- 236 Ibid., pp. 30-40.
- 237 Ibid., pp. 13-15.
- 238 Ibid., pp. 23-29.
- 239 Ibid., pp. 21-23, 29-30.
- 240 Ibid., pp. 15-21.
- 241 Āqā Muḥammad Ja'far ibn Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī, *faḍāyih al-Ṣūfiyya* (Qum: Intishārāt-i Anṣārīyān, 1413 A.H./ 1992 C.E.).
- 242 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 267; Shīrwānī, *Riyād*, p. 657.
- 243 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 257.
- 244 His role in Shī'ite seminary schools was explained in Chapter One.
- 245 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, pp. 356-357.
- 246 Ibid., p. 360.
- 247 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 358
- 248 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 199.
- 249 Richard C. Foltz, *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble: How Iran Shaped the World's Religions* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), p. 145.
- 250 Shīrwānī, *Riyād*, p. 655.
- 251 Ibid., p. 265.
- 252 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, pp. 142-143.

Chapter 3

- 1 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 14.
- 2 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 229; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl al-fuṣūl*, Hamadān, fols. 358-359; Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 10; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq*, vol. III, p. 171; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 309.
- 3 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 262. Muḥammad Maʿṣūm Shīrāzī likewise asserts that prior to the spiritual leadership of Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh for 70 years no one in Persia had received any spiritual guidance and Sufi mystical teaching (Shīrāzī, *Ṭarāʾiq*, vol. III; p. 171).
- 4 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 264.
- 5 Foltz, *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble*, p. 143.
- 6 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 71.
- 7 That is to say, they originated from the Deccan Plateau in India.
- 8 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 93; Royce, *Mīr Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh and the Niʿmat Allāhī Revival*, pp. 82-83.
- 9 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p.71; Royce, *Mīr Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh and the Niʿmat Allāhī Revival*, pp. 83-86.
- 10 Dīwānbaygī Shīrāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shuʿarā*, vol. II, p. 1036.
- 11 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 219; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl* (Tehran), p. 547; Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 11; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarāʾiq*, vol. III: pp. 170-171; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 264; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 206.
- 12 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 264.
- 13 Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 11; Royce, *Mīr Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh and the Niʿmat Allāhī Revival*, pp. 86-87.
- 14 Īzadgushasb, *Shams al-tawārīkh* (Tehran: Chāpkhānīh Naqshi Jahān, 1345 A. Hsh./ 1966), p. 75; Khuyī, *Ādāb*, p. 351; Royce, *Mīr Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh and the Niʿmat Allāhī Revival*, p. 87; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarāʾiq*, vol. III, p. 170; Sulṭānī, p. 206.
- 15 Īzadgushasb states that many have used the word ʿdhūʾlgharnaynʿ as the numerical value 1147 A.H. (Īzadgushasb, *Shams*, p. 75).
- 16 Khuyī, *Ādāb*, p. 352; Royce, *Mīr Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh and the Niʿmat Allāhī Revival*, p. 87; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarāʾiq*, vol. III, p. 170; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 660; Sulṭānī, p. 206.
- 17 Royce, *Mīr Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh and the Niʿmat Allāhī Revival*, p. 87; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 660.
- 18 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 94; Royce, *Mīr Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh and the Niʿmat Allāhī Revival*, p. 673.

- 19 Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 10; Khuyī, *Ādāb*, p. 352; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, pp. 87-88; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 170; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 660.
- 20 Camel dung is still used for fuel among the lesser classes in India.
- 21 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 94.
- 22 Khuyī, *Ādāb*, p. 352; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 89; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 170; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 661.
- 23 Hidāyat, *Rīyāḍ*, p. 451; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 90; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 160; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 661.
- 24 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 125.
- 25 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 220.
- 26 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p.71; Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 10; Khuyī, *Ādāb*, p. 342; Pāzūkī, 'qarn shishum', p. 43; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 90; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 661; Sulṭānī, p. 206.
- 27 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, pp. 229-230.
- 28 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p.71.
- 29 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 220; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 310. [cf Amanat, Modern Iran]
- 30 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, Vol. II, p. 295.
- 31 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 171.
- 32 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 71.
- 33 For further information about Fayḍ 'Alī Shāh see Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, pp. 93-101.
- 34 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p.72; Dīwānbaygī Shīrāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shu'arā*, vol. II, p. 1037; Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 230; Khuyī, *Ādāb*, pp. 352-353; Javad Nurbakhsh, *Masters of the Path: A History of the Masters of the Nimatullahi Sufi Order*, trans. Leonard Lewisohn (New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publication, 1980), p. 76; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. II, p. 332; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 171; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq al-Siyāḥa* (Tehran: Sāzmān-i Chāp-i Danishgāh, 1348 A. Hsh./ 1969), p. 27; Sulṭānī, p. 206.
- 35 Dīwānbaygī Shīrāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shu'arā*, vol. II, p. 1037; Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 230; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. II, p. 332; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 661. For additional biography of Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh see Gulābzada, *Pazhūhishī dar rūy-dād-i qatl-i Mushtāq*.
- 36 Nurbakhsh, *Masters of the Path*, p. 84.
- 37 Āṣif, *Rustam*, p. 408.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 234.

39 Sufi masters, as spiritual guides, were viewed as deputies of God. Some Sufis took this philosophy to extremes. Shi'ite Sufis, who believed in the deputyship of Imām or had chiliastic beliefs, were always in danger of being accused of claiming their master to be the Mahdī. Shāh Ni'matullāh (d. 834/1431) with strong chiliastic beliefs was among the prominent Sufi masters, whose order, as explained, became one of the most influential Sufi orders within Shi'ite culture. Shaykh Ishāq Khutlānī (d. 826/1423) and Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh (d. 869/1464) were also among those Sufi masters who created fertile ground for chiliastic beliefs. Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh's views on the advent of the promised Messiah or Mahdī, for instance, did not provide any clear distinction between the person of the Mahdī and that of the Sufi master.

There were also extremist movements based on messianic beliefs. Shaykh Khalīfa (d. 736/1335) and Ḥassan Jūrī (d. 743/1342) formed a rebellious movement against the tyranny of Ilkhanid rulers in Persia, known as the Sarbidārī movement (explained in Chapter Two). Extremist mystical quasi-Sufi philosophies were also formed by Sufis like Faḍlullāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1394), the founder of the Ḥurūfī movement, who was brutally executed for his heretical beliefs. Maḥmūd Pasīkhānī (d. 831/1427) also formed the Nuqtawīyya movement and declared himself to be the promised Mahdī. Furthermore, Muḥammad Musha'sha' (d. circa 1461) was the founder of the Musha'sha'īyya movement and claimed to be the earthly representative of the Mahdī. For further information see Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 13-15; Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*; Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis*; Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions*; Siyāwash Dīlfānī, *Tārīkh-i Musha'sha'īyān* (Qazwīn: Baḥr ul-'ulūm publication, 1379 A. Hsh/2000); Muḥammadali Ranjbar, *Musha'sha'īyān: māhīyat fikrī-Ijtimā'ī wa farāyand taḥawulāt-i tārīkhī* (Tehran: Nashr-i āgah, 1382 A. Hsh./ 2003).

40 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 17.

41 Ibid., vol. III, p. 18.

42 Royce, *Mīr Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 128.

43 Āṣif, *Rustam*, p. 323.

44 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 295.

45 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p.75; Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 295.

46 Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 76; Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, p. 295; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 172; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 661; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 320.

- 47 Khuyī, *Ādāb*, p. 353; Nurbakhsh, *Masters of the Path*, p. 77; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 129; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 266-267; Scharbrodt, 'The quṭb as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', p. 38; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 207.
- 48 Khuyī, *Ādāb*, p. 353; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 172; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 266-267 and 661.
- 49 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 295; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 93.
- 50 A *tekke* is a building for Sufi gatherings. In Persia *tekkes* were also called *khānaqāh* and these buildings were often part of a complex which included the shrine of masters. A perfect example is the complex of Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn Ardabīlī, which is located in Ardabīl. For further information about *tekke* see Muḥsin Kīyānī, *Tārīkh-i khānaqāh dar Īrān*, pp. 106-110.
- 51 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 75; Dīwānbaygī Shīrāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shu'arā*, vol. II, p. 1037; Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, pp. 230-231; Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, p. 296; Nūr 'Alī Shāh, *Majmū'a az āthār-i Nūr 'Alī Shāh Iṣfahānī*, ed. Jawād Nūrbakhsh (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khānaqāh-i Ni'matullāhī, 1350 A. Hsh./1971-1972), introduction; Scharbrodt, 'The quṭb as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', p.38; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 207; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 320.
- 52 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 296; Scharbrodt, 'The quṭb as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', pp. 38-39; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 207.
- 53 Wandering dervishes wandered around and received donations from the public. Whenever they received a donation they would blow their trumpets in honour of the donor, which was a sign of joy, appreciation and happiness. Blowing their trumpets when 'Alī Murād Khān escaped Iṣfahān represented their joy at his escape and their aversion to 'Alī Murād Khān.
- 54 Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, pp. 37-38; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl* (Hamadān), p. 359; Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 296; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 137; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 172; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 207; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 320.
- 55 Muḥammad 'Alī Iṣfahānī (Nūr 'Alī Shāh), ed. Dr. Jawād Nūrbakhsh, *Dīwān* (Tehran: Intishārāt Yaldā Qalam, 1381 A. Hsh/ 2002), p. 6.
- 56 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 75.
- 57 Dīwānbaygī Shīrāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shu'arā*, vol. II, pp. 1037-1038; Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 231; Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 38; Īzadgushasb, *Shams*, p. 76; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl* (Hamadān), p. 359; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, pp. 138-139; Scharbrodt, 'The quṭb as Special Repre-

- sentative of the Hidden Imam', p. 39; Shirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 172-173; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 207.
- 58 Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 38; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 144; Shirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 173; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 207; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 320.
- 59 Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 38; Shirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 173; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 207; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 320.
- 60 Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 39; Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 297.
- 61 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 232.
- 62 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 662; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 320.
- 63 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 297.
- 64 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 232.
- 65 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, pp. 234-235; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 321.
- 66 *Kings of Love* has a chapter called 'Mullās and Kings' which elaborates and explains this transformation of the Ni'matullāhī order from a Qalandari'ite movement to a scholarly movement (Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, pp. 136-155).
- 67 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 234; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl* (Hamadān), p. 361; Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, pp. 297-298; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 171; Shirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 174; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 663; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 208; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 321.
- 68 Shirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 174; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 267 and 663; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 208; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 317.
- 69 Dīwānbaygī Shirāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shu'arā*, vol. II, p. 1039.
- 70 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 77; Dīwānbaygī Shirāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shu'arā*, vol. II, p. 1039; Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 15; Īzadgushasb, *Shams*, p. 76; Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 359; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl* (Hamadān), p. 361; Pāzūkī, 'qarn shishum', p. 43; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 171; Shirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 174; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 663.
- 71 Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 172.
- 72 Shirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 175; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 663.
- 73 Khuyī, *Ādāb*, pp. 365-366. Shirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 175; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 663.
- 74 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 72.
- 75 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, pp. 242-244.
- 76 Michael A. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Poetic and Theological writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), pp. 18-20.

- 77 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 185; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 666; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 209.
- 78 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 186; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 668.
- 79 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 171.
- 80 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 666, 668.
- 81 Cited in Sells, *Early Mysticism*, p. 163.
- 82 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 666; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 209.
- 83 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 184.
- 84 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 72.
- 85 He is discussed in the next chapter.
- 86 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 249.
- 87 Ibid., pp. 1911-1912.
- 88 Hidāyat, *Uṣūl* (Tehran), p. 509.
- 89 De Groot, *Religion, Culture and Politics in Iran*, p. 89.
- 90 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 35.
- 91 Ibid., pp. 77-78.
- 92 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 124; Scharbrodt, 'The quṭb as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', p. 40.
- 93 For further information about the spiritual life of Nūr 'Alī Shāh see Michel de Miras, *La method spirituelle d'un maître du Soufism iranien, Nur 'Ali-Shah, circā 1748-1798* (Paris: Edition du Sirac, 1974).
- 94 Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 699; Khuyī, *Ādāb*, p. 365; Scharbrodt, 'The quṭb as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', p. 37; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 187.
- 95 Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 699; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 187.
- 96 Ḥaḳīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 690; Khuyī, *Ādāb*, p. 365; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 93; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 187; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 262.
- 97 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p.72.
- 98 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 319.
- 99 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 72.
- 100 Ḥaḳīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 690; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 198.
- 101 Khuyī, *Ādāb*, p. 365.
- 102 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 198; Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 699; Ḥaḳīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 690; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 661; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 206; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, pp. 319-320.
- 103 Nurbakhsh, *Masters of the Path*, p. 83.
- 104 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 661; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 206.
- 105 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 188.

- 106 Dīwānbaygī Shīrāzī, *Ḥadīqat al-Shu'arā*, vol. II, pp. 1037-1038; Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 38; Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 231; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl* (Hamadān), p. 359; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 172-173.
- 107 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 690; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 198.
- 108 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 171, 198; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 661.
- 109 Pāzūkī, 'qarn shishum', p. 43; Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 125; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 206.
- 110 Īzadgushasb, *Shams*, p. 76; Royce, *Mīr Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 102.
- 111 Muḥammad 'Alī Mudarris, *Rayḥānat al-adab*, vol. 6 (Tabriz: Nashr-i Khayyām, 1335 A. Hsh./1956), p. 256.
- 112 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 198.
- 113 Iṣfahānī (Nūr 'Alī Shāh), *Dīwān*, p. 122; Scharbrodt, 'The *quṭb* as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', p. 43.
- 114 Iṣfahānī (Nūr 'Alī Shāh), *Dīwān*, p. 117; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 199.
- 115 Nurbakhsh, *Masters of the Path*, pp. 94-95; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 199.
- 116 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 199.
- 117 Ibid.
- ¹¹² Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 691; Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 699; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 199-200. For further information see Tunikābunī, 'Qīṣaṣ', pp. 211-218.
- 118 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 691; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 199-200.
- 119 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 43.
- 120 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 323.
- 121 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 215.
- 122 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 692; Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 699; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 200; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 268.
- 123 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 200-201; Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 699; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 269.
- 124 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 328.
- 125 Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 699; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 200-201; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 269.
- 126 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 326.
- 127 Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 699; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 200-201.
- 128 Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ*, p. 699; Muḥammad 'Alī Iṣfahānī (Nūr 'Alī Shāh), Rawnaq 'Alī Shāh and Nizām 'Alī Shāh, *Janāt al-Wiṣāl*, Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh (ed.) (Tehran: Intishārāti Khāniqāh Ni'matullāhī, 1348 A. Hsh./ 1969). Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 200-201; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 268-269.
- 129 Nūr 'Alī Shāh, Rawnaq 'Alī Shāh and Nizām 'Alī Shāh, *Janāt al-Wiṣāl*, p. T.

- 130 Mirsidih Hamadānī, 'Ṭarīqih ma'nawī Nūr 'Alī Shāh 'arif Īrānī', in M. Azmāyish (ed.), *'irfān-i Īrān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥaḡiqat, 1381 A. Hsh./2002), No. 13, p. 128.
- 131 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 200-201.
- 132 Ḥaḡiqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 692.
- 133 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 200.
- 134 Īzadgushash, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 41; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, pp. 322-323.
- 135 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 268.
- 136 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 127.
- 137 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 324.
- 138 Muḥammad 'Alī Iṣfahānī (Nūr 'Alī Shāh), *Rasā'il 'awārif al-ma'arif* (Shīrāz: Intishārāt-i Kitābkhānih Aḡmadī, 1363 A. Hsh./1984).
- 139 Hamadānī, 'Ṭarīqih ma'nawī Nūr 'Alī Shāh 'arif Īrānī', pp. 128-130.
- 140 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 249.
- 141 Ibid., p. 1492.
- 142 Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Bāstānī Pārīzī, 'Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh Shahīd Kirmānī', in M. Azmāyish (ed.), *'irfān-i Īrān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥaḡiqat, 1378 A. Hsh./1999), No. 2, p. 32.
- 143 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 587.
- 144 Ibid.; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1493.
- 145 Bāstānī Pārīzī, 'Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh Shahīd Kirmānī', pp. 32-33.
- 146 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1494.
- 147 Ibid., p. 662.
- 148 Ibid., p. 1494.
- 149 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 587; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1492-1493.
- 150 Bāstānī Pārīzī, 'Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh Shahīd Kirmānī', p. 35.
- 151 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 587.
- 152 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1492; Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 587.
- 153 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1494-1495.
- 154 Ibid.
- 155 Muḥammad Taqī Kirmānī (Muḡafar 'Alī Shāh), *Kibrīt aḡmar wa baḡr al-asrār*, Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh (ed.) (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khāniqāh Ni'matullāhī, 1350 A. Hsh./1971).
- 156 Muḥammad Taqī Kirmānī (Muḡafar 'Alī Shāh), *Diwān-i Mushtāqīyya*, Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh (ed.) (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khāniqāh Ni'matullāhī, 1347 A. Hsh./1968).
- 157 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1495.
- 158 Ibid., p. 1496.

- 159 Scharbrodt, 'The quṭb as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam,' pp. 43-44; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 664.
- 160 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 74.
- 161 Scharbrodt, 'The quṭb as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam,' p. 43; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1497.
- 162 For further information about Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh see Chapter Five.
- 163 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 117.
- 164 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 319.
- 165 Hamadānī, 'Ṭariqih ma'nawī Nūr 'Alī Shāh 'arif Īrānī', p. 124.
- 166 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 93.

Chapter 4

- 1 Nafisī, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimā'ī wa Siyāsī*, vol. I, pp. 102-103.
- 2 Ibid., p. 100.
- 3 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, pp. 356 and 360.
- 4 Nafisī, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimā'ī wa Siyāsī*, vol. I, p. 107.
- 5 Ibid., p. 98.
- 6 Algar, *Religion and State*, p. 16.
- 7 Tunikābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*.
- 8 Algar, *Religion and State*, p. 72.
- 9 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 355.
- 10 This term refers to a verse from the Qur'ān: 'O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority (*ulū'l-amr*) from among you' (Qur'ān 4:59). There were disagreements between Shi'ite clerics and Sunni scholars about who were 'those vested with authority' and what their role was. Qummi, a Shi'ite cleric, condemned those believing the monarch to be 'vested with authority' as being part of Sunni tradition. There are different interpretations of the term 'vested with authority'. For further information see Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, pp. 327-356; Said Amir Arjomand, 'Ideological Revolution in Shi'ism', in S. A. Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 178-209.
- 11 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 355.
- 12 Ibid., p. 360.
- 13 Algar, *Religion and State*, p. 64; M. Samī'ī and Kaywān Ṣadūqī, *Du Risāla dar Tārīkhi jadīd-i taṣawwuf* (Tehran: Pāzhang Publication, 1370 A. Hsh./1991), p. 63.

- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī, *Khayrātiya* (Qum: Intishārāt-i Anšāryān, 1370 A.Hsh./ 1991 C.E.).
- 16 Ibid., p. 457.
- 17 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 316.
- 18 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 249; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl* (Tehran), p. 644.
- 19 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 221; Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 78.
- 20 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 249.
- 21 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 249; Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 140.
- 22 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 221.
- 23 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 250.
- 24 Shīrāzī, vol. III, *Ṭarā'iq*, p. 221; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl*, p. 647.
- 25 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 250; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, p. 222.
- 26 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, p. 221.
- 27 Hidāyat, *Uṣūl*, p. 648.
- 28 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 78.
- 29 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, Vol. III, p. 221.
- 30 Ibid., p. 226.
- 31 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 341.
- 32 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 141; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, p. 225.
- 33 Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh Qaragūzluw, *Abḥāthi 'ashara* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥaḥiqat, 1385 A. Hsh./ 2007), p. 129; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, p. 223; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl*, p. 649; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 341.
- 34 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 250-251.
- 35 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 410.
- 36 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, pp. 223-224; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl*, p. 649; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 251.
- 37 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, p. 224.
- 38 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 251-252; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, p. 232; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 341.
- 39 Shīrāzī, vol. III, *Ṭarā'iq*, p. 227.
- 40 J. Elder, *Tārīkh-i mīssiun Āmrīkāi dar Īrān*, trans. Suhayl Āzarī, p. 9-15; Robine Waterfield, *Christians in Persia* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1973), pp. 79-84.
- 41 F. Hellot, 'The Western Missionaries in Azerbaijani society', in R. Gleave (ed.), *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 287.
- 42 For further information about Joseph Sabastiani see Abbas Amanat, 'Mujtahids and Missionaries: Shī'ī responses to Christian polemics in the

- early Qajar period', in R. Gleave (ed.), *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), pp. 251-252.
- 43 For detailed information on Martyn's beliefs and life see George Smith, *Henry Martyn, Saint and Scholar: First Modern Missionary to the Mohammedans, 1781-1812* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell Company, date unknown).
- 44 Waterfield, *Christians*, pp. 454-471.
- 45 Amanat, 'Mujtahids and Missionaries', p. 248; Waterfield, *Christians*, pp. 22-25.
- 46 Ibid.; Amanat, 'Mujtahids and Missionaries', p. 248; Ardeli, *Henry Martyn*, trans. Soheil Azari, p. 73.
- 47 Amanat, 'Mujtahids and Missionaries', p. 249.
- 48 Ibid., p. 92.
- 49 Ibid., p. 250.
- 50 H. Anushe, 'Paderi', in *Da'irat al-ma'arif-i Tashayu'*, Vol. 6 (Tehran: Dā'irat al-Ma'arif-i Tashayu' Publication, 1996), p. 598.
- 51 Ardeli, *Henry Martyn*, trans. Soheil Azari, pp. 126-135.
- 52 A. R. M. Dunbalī, *Ma'thir al-sultaniyya* (Tehran: Khwārazmī, 1351 H. Sh./1972), p. 145.
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- 54 Ibid., p. 251.
- 55 Carl Gottlieb Pfander, *Mizān al-Ḥaqq*, n.p., n.d.
- 56 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 227.
- 57 Amanat, 'Mujtahids and Missionaries', p. 256.
- 58 Ibid., p. 256.
- 59 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 227.
- 60 Ibid., pp. 264-266.
- 61 Shīrawānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1914-1915.
- 62 Amanat, 'Mujtahids and Missionaries', p. 256.
- 63 Muḥammad Riḍā Hamadānī, *Irshād al-mudhlīn* (manuscript in the possession of Ḥaqqīqat publication archive), p. 77.
- 64 Muḥammad Riḍā Hamadānī, *Miftāḥ al-Nubuwwah* (Tehran: publication unknown, 1961), p. 10.
- 65 Ibid., p. 89.
- 66 For further information see Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, Vol. III, pp. 247-249.
- 67 Āqā Buzurg Tīhrānī, *al-Dhuriyya ilā taṣānīf al-Shī'a*, vol. II (Qum: Mu'assisih Ismā'īliyyān, 1408 H.Q./1987), p. 454.
- 68 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 247.
- 69 Ibid., p. 96.

- 70 Amanat, 'Mujtahids and Missionaries', p. 261.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Hidāyat, *Rīyāḍ*, p. 696.
- 73 'Alī Nūrī, *Hujjat al-Islami* (Tehran: Manuscript, Majlis Library, Date Unknown), p. 110.
- 74 Amanat, 'Mujtahids and Missionaries', p. 256.
- 75 Aḥmad Narāqī, *Sayf al-ummah va burhan al-millah* (Qum: Centre for Revival of Islamic Heritage; Academy of Islamic Sciences and Culture, 2006).
- 76 "A new strategy in *uṣūl al-fiqh* devised by Shī'ī jurists in questioning the prophethood (*nubuwwa*) of Jesus, that came to be known as 'scriptural argumentation' (*iḥtijāj kitābī*) (Amanat, 'Mujtahids and Missionaries', pp. 256-257).
- 77 Momen, *Introduction*, p. 319.
- 78 Amanat, 'Mujtahids and Missionaries', p. 257.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 *Mubāhila* literally means 'mutual prayer', but in Islamic tradition it refers to a form of resolution of religious disputes. When the arguments from both sides fail to resolve a religious issue, the parties jointly pray to God to cast His curse on whichever of the two parties is false. The essence of the meaning of the practice is to invoke God's wrath on the liar. *Mubāhila* is a kind of ordeal where its instigation or the call to it may be more important than its execution (Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1988), p.78).
- 81 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, p. 227.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥaqīqat, 1387 A.Hsh./ 2008), pp. 43-45.
- 85 Ibid., p. 45.
- 86 Ibid., p. 51.
- 87 Ibid., p. 54.
- 88 Ibid., p. 156.
- 89 Ibid., p. 55.
- 90 For further information about the definition of miracles (*mu'jiza*) and wonders (*karāmat*) in classical Sufi texts see Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn 'Uthmān Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, ed. Maḥmūd 'Ābidī (Tehran: Soroush Press, 1384 A. Hsh./ 2005), pp. 329-352.
- 91 Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, pp. 55-56.

- 92 Ibid., p. 56.
- 93 Ibid., p. 58.
- 94 Ibid., p. 59.
- 95 Ibid., p. 92.
- 96 Ibid., pp. 52-53.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 'Aliriḍā Masjid Jāmi'i, *Pazhuhishī dar ma'ārif imāmīyih* (Tehran: Sāzmān-i chāp wa intishārāt-i wizārat irshād-i Islāmī, 1380 A. Hsh./ 2001), p. 329.
- 99 For further information see Muḥammadtaqī Miṣbāh Yazdī, *Ma'ārif-i Qur'an: rāh wa rahnamāshināsī* (Qum: Mu'asisih amuzishī wa pazhuhishī Imām Khumaynī, 1386 A. Hsh./2007), vols. 4 and 5; Ja'far Subḥānī Tabrizī, *Manshūr-i 'aqāyid imāmīyya: sharḥī gūyā wa mustadal az 'aqāyid Shī'a; athnā 'asharī dar yikṣad wa panjāh aṣl* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Imām Ṣādiq, 1385 A. Hsh./ 2006); Murtiḍā Muṭaharī, *Khatm nubuwat* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ṣadrā, 1388 A. Hsh./ 2009).
- 100 Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, pp. 65-66. Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Fasā'ī in his Arabic treatise (*Risāla*) in refutation of Henry Martyn wrote a detailed explanation of 'specific prophecy' and 'general prophecy' (Amanat, 'Mujtahids and Missionaries', p. 252).
- 101 Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, p. 66.
- 102 Ibid., pp. 66-67.
- 103 Ibid., pp. 98-99.
- 104 Ibid., p. 54.
- 105 Ibid., pp. 68-70.
- 106 Ibid., pp. 76-80.
- 107 Ibid., p. 80.
- 108 Ibid., p. 120.
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Ibid.
- 111 Ibid., pp. 120-121.
- 112 Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, pp. 187-188.
- 113 Cited by Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, vol. I (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 24.
- 114 Ibid., p. 34.
- 115 Qur'an, 56: 78-79.
- 116 Cited by Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, vol. I, p. 35.
- 117 Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, pp. 255-256.
- 118 Ibid., pp. 252-256.

- 119 Prophet Muhammad, *The Sayings of Muhammad*, trans. Neal Robinson (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2003), p. 18.
- 120 Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, pp. 173-174.
- 121 *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- 122 R. J. W. Austin, 'The Sophianic Feminine in the Work of Ibn 'Arabī and Rumi', in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)*, Vol. II (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), p. 240.
- 123 Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, pp. 175-176.
- 124 *Ibid.*, p. 177.
- 125 *Ibid.*, pp. 47-52. Sunni Muslim theologians generally accept that one must have faith in three principles of religion: Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*), Prophecy (*nubuwwa*) and Resurrection (*ma'ād*), to which Shī'ite theologians add two more: Imamate (*Imāmat*) and Justice (*'adl*): Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1998), p.43.
- 126 Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, pp. 51-52.
- 127 *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46
- 128 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, pp. 109, 119-121, 165-170 and 210-211.
- 129 Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, pp. 51-52 and 45-46.
- 130 *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.
- 131 *Ibid.*, pp. 224-225.
- 132 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 133 *Ibid.*, pp. 224-225.
- 134 *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.
- 135 For further information on this idea see Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tafsīr al-Mizān*, trans. Naṣīr Makārim Shīrāzī (Qum: Bunyād 'ilmī wa Farhangī 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1364 A. Hsh./ 1985); Murtiqā Muṭaharī, *Āshnā'ī bā Qur'ān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ṣadrā, 1381 A. Hsh/ 2002).
- 136 Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Ṭūsī, *Al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 12 (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā al-Tirāth Al-'Arabī, date unknown), p. 214.
- 137 Jalālu'ddīn Rūmī, *The Mathnawī*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (reprt. Istanbul: Konya Metropolitan Municipality, 2004), VI: 167.
- 138 *Ibid.*, III, 1783-1788.
- 139 Qur'an, trans. Sahih international, 6:164.
- 140 Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, p. 204.
- 141 Jalālu'ddīn Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, trans. Nicholson, I, 23-24.
- 142 *Ibid.*: I, p. 30.
- 143 Cited by Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1984), p. 173.

- 144 Ibid.
- 145 Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, p. 204.
- 146 Ibid.
- 147 Abū al-Qāsim Qushayrī, *Risāla Qushayrīyya*, trans. Unknown (Tehran: Markaz Intishārāt-i ‘ilmī wa farhangī, 1361 A. Hsh./ 1982), pp. 136-145.
- 148 Abū Naṣr Sarrāj Ṭūsī, *al-Lum‘a fi taṣawwuf*, trans. Dr. Miḥdī Maḥabbatī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Asāṭir, 1381 H. Sh./ 2004), pp. 98-99.
- 149 Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 274.
- 150 Ḥusayn ‘Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, p. 205.
- 151 Ibid., pp. 210-211.
- 152 Ibid., pp. 219-220.
- 153 Ibid., pp. 97-98.
- 154 Ibid., pp. 98-99.
- 155 Ibid., p. 108.
- 156 Ibid., pp. 124-128.
- 157 Ibid., pp. 128-129.
- 158 Ibid., p. 158.
- 159 Ibid., pp. 155-156.
- 160 Ibid., pp. 158-159.
- 161 Ibid., p. 208.
- 162 Ibid., pp. 208-209.
- 163 Ibid., p. 209.
- 164 Ibid.
- 165 Ibid., p. 225.
- 166 Ibid., p. 221.
- 167 Ibid., p. 222.
- 168 Ibid.
- 169 Ibid., pp. 215-216.
- 170 Ibid.
- 171 Ibid., pp. 225-226 and 220.

Chapter 5

- 1 Massoud Homayouni, *Tārīkh-i silsilihāy-i ṭarīqa Ni‘matullāhīyya dar Irān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Maktab-i ‘irfān, 1358 A. Hsh./ 1979 C.E.), p. 92; Kabūdarāhangī, *‘Aqā’id*, p. 3; Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā’il*, p. 5; Muḥammad Ja‘far Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil al-Sālikīn* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khaniqāh Ni‘matullāhī, 1351 A. Hsh./ 1973), p. ٤; Muḥammad Ja‘far Kabūdarāhangī,

- Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥaqqīqat, 1382 A.Hsh./ 2004), p. پانزدهه; Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 144; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 380; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1291; Sulṭānī, Rahbarān, p. 219; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 341.
- 2 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 638; Īzadgushasb, *Shams*, p. 79; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 258; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 416-417.
 - 3 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 638; Īzadgushasb, *Shams.*, p. 79; Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 4; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 258; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1293.
 - 4 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 380; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1291.
 - 5 Ibid.
 - 6 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 78; Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 582; Homayouni, *Tārīkh*, p. 92; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, pp. 551-552; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1914-1915; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 341.
 - 7 Homayouni, *Tārīkh*, p. 92; Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 144; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 260; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 418; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 216; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 341.
 - 8 Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 3; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 341.
 - 9 Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 3.
 - 10 The founder of the Shaikhi School. For further information see Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 48-65; Abū al-Qāsīm Khān Ibrāhīmī, *Fihrist-i kutub mashāyikh 'izām* (Kirmān: Chāpkhānih Sa'ādat, date: unknown), pp. 128-156; Zayn al-Ābidīn Ibrāhīmī, 'Aḥsā'ī, in *Dā'irat al-ma'ārif-i buzurg-i Islāmī*, Vol. 6 (Tehran: Markaz-i Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif Buzurgi Islāmī, 1373 A. Hsh./ 1994 C.E.), pp. 662-667; Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Najafī, *Bahā'iyān* (Tehran: Kitābkhānih Ṭahūrī, 1357 A. Hsh./ 1979), pp. 1-90; Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, *Dalīl al-Mutīḥayyirīn* (Kirmān: Chāpkhānih Sa'ādat, date: unknown), pp. 2-85; 'Abd al-'Azīm. Riḍāyī, *Ganjīnih Tārīkh Irān*, (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Atlas, 1378 A. Hsh./ 1999), p. 588; Tunikābunī, *'Qīṣaṣ al-'Ulamā*, pp. 40-68; Taqī Wāḥidī, *Az kūy-i ṣufiyān tā ḥuzūr-i 'Ārifān* (Tehran: Chāpkhānih Ḥaydarī, 1375 A. Hsh./ 1995), pp. 217-220.
 - 11 Ḥaqqīqat, *Tārīkh*, pp. 222-228.
 - 12 Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*; Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 1-111.
 - 13 Ḥaqqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 701; Homayouni, *Tārīkh*, p. 92; Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 3; Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. ٣ (of the Persian alphabet); Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 144; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 257; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1292.

- 14 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 638; İzadgushasb, *Shams*, p. 79; Şirwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 380; Şirwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 416-417; Sulţānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 219; Şirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 258.
- 15 Şirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 258; Şirwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 380.
- 16 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 638; Şirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 258; Şirwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 380; Şirwānī, *Bustān*, pp.1292-1293; Sulţānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 219.
- 17 Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 4; Şirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 258; Şirwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 380; Sulţānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 219.
- 18 Şirwānī, *Hadā'iq*, pp. 382-384; Şirwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1298-1299.
- 19 Haqīqat, *Tārīkh*, pp. 701-702; Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 638; Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 4; Şirwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 381.
- 20 Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 80; Şirwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1293.
- 21 İzadgushasb, *Shams*, p. 79; Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 4; Haqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 702; Şirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 258; Şirwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 381; Şirwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1293.
- 22 Haqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 702; Şirwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1293; Tunikābunī, *Qişaş*, pp. 168-170.
- 23 Haqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 702; Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 639; Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 4; Şirwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 381; Şirwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1293; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 341.
- 24 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 639; Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 5.
- 25 Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 4.
- 26 Şirwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1293; Şirwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 381.
- 27 Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, pp. 4-5.
- 28 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 639; Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 5.
- 29 Şirwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1294; Şirwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 381.
- 30 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'at al-Haqq*, p. 70.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 32 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 639.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'at*, p. 31.
- 35 Haqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 702; Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 639; Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 7.
- 36 Şirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 259.
- 37 Şirwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1299.
- 38 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 639; Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 8; Şirwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1308.
- 39 Kabūdarāhangī, *'Aqā'id*, p. 8.
- 40 Şirwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1295; Şirwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 381.

- 41 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 639; Īzadgushasb, *Shams*, p. 80; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1295; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā’iq*, p. 381.
- 42 Some believe that Majdhūb met Nūr ‘Alī Shāh in Karbalā and was instructed by him (Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 341).
- 43 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā’iq*, p. 381. However, Ma‘šūm Shīrāzī and ‘Abd al-Rafī‘ Ḥaḳīqat believe that Majdhūb was appointed by Nūr ‘Alī Shāh (Ḥaḳīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 702; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā’iq*, vol. III, p. 259).
- 44 Sulṭānī, *rahbarān*, p. 205.
- 45 Sulṭānī believes that it happened in the year 1817 (1233 H.Q.) (Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 220).
- 46 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā’iq*, vol. III, p. 259; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā’iq*, p. 381.
- 47 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā’iq*, vol. III, p. 260; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā’iq*, p. 381; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1296.
- 48 Kabūdarāhangī, *‘Aqā’id*, p. 80; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 341.
- 49 Companion of Prophet Muḥammad known for his piety and asceticism. Annemarie Schimmel quoting Massignon says, ‘Even more important is Salmān al-Fārisī, a Persian-born barber was taken into Muhammad’s household and became the model of spiritual adoption and mystical initiation—he is, thus, the symbol of the Persians, who were adopted into Islam, and links the Arabian world with Iranian tradition. His spirituality was later considered a decisive element in the history of Persian Sufism and in Shia thought. Salmān the Barber was later regarded as the patron saint of small artisans, just some of the ninth- and tenth-century Sufis were to become patrons of the artisan groups whose professions they shared; Salmān came to stand for the impact of Sufism on the large masses’ (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 28).
- 50 Companion of Prophet Muḥammad known for his sincerity. Schimmel says, ‘Among the Prophet’s companions, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 653) is often mentioned as “un socialiste avant la lettre,” as Louis Massignon puts it, it is to him that the tradition ascribes many sentences about poverty, and he appears as the prototype of the true *faqīr*, the poor person who possesses nothing but is totally possessed by God, partaking of His everlasting riches’ (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 28).
- 51 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 640; Īzadgushasb, *Shams*, p. 80; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā’iq*, p. 381; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1297.
- 52 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā’iq*, p. 381.
- 53 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1308; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā’iq*, p. 384.
- 54 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā’iq*, vol. III, p. 260.
- 55 Hidāyat, *Riyād*, p. 640; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā’iq*, vol. III, p. 261.

- 56 Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 221.
- 57 Īzadgushasb, *Shams*, p. 80; Shīrāzī, *Tarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 261.
- 58 Kabūdarāhangī, *ʿAqā'id*, p. 81.
- 59 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1297-1304; Shīrwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 381.
- 60 Kabūdarāhangī, *ʿAqā'id*, p. 7.
- 61 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1300-1301; Shīrwānī, *Hadā'iq*, p. 381.
- 62 L. Clarke, 'The Shī'ī Construction of *Taqīd*', in *Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 40.
- 63 Momen, *Introduction*, pp. 316-317.
- 64 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 139; Cole, 'Imami Jurisprudence', pp. 36, 39; Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, p. 182; Tunikābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 415.
- 65 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 138.
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- 67 Bayat, *Mysticism*, p. 21; Cole, 'Imami Jurisprudence', p. 39; Momen, *Introduction*, pp. 117 and 302; Kaykhusruw Isfandiyyār, *Dabistān-i Mazāhib* (Tehran: Kitābkhānih Tahūrī, 1362 H. Sh./ 1983), p. 247; Sayyid Riḍā Niyāzmand, *Shī'a dar tārikh Īrān* (Tehran: Hikāyat Qalam Nuvīn, 1383 H.Sh./ 2004), p. 190.
- 68 Bayat, *Mysticism*, p. 21; Cole, 'Imami Jurisprudence', p. 39; Gleave, *Scripturalist*, p. 79; Isfandiyyār, *Dabistān*, p. 253; Robert Gleave, 'Scriptural Sufism and Scriptural Anti-Sufism: Theology and mysticism among the Shī'ī Akhbāriyya', in Ayman Shihadeh (ed.), *Sufism and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 159; Momen, *Introduction*, p. 118; Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, p. 180.
- 69 Momen, *Introduction*, pp. 118, 222.
- 70 Momen, *Introduction*, p. 224; Niyāzmand, *Shī'a*, p. 161.
- 71 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 146; Gleave, 'Scriptural Sufism and Scriptural Anti-Sufism', p. 160; Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 81; Momen, *Introduction*, p. 223.
- 72 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 146.
- 73 Momen, *Introduction*, p. 225.
- 74 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 153; Gleave, 'Scriptural Sufism', p. 160; Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, p. 175; Momen, *Introduction*, p. 222.
- 75 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 146; Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, p. 298; Niyāzmand, *Shī'a*, p. 190.
- 76 Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, pp. 164-165; Gleave, 'Scriptural Sufism', p. 161; Momen, *Introduction*, pp. 117, 133.
- 77 Momen, *Introduction*, p. 115.
- 78 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 44.

- 79 Ibid., p. 42; Momen, *Introduction*, p. 186.
- 80 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 231.
- 81 For his short biography see Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 35; Momen, *Introduction*, p. 312.
- 82 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 217; Bayat, 'Anti-Sufism in Qājār Iran', p. 627; Cole, 'Imami Jurisprudence', pp. 39-40; Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, p. 301; Niyāzmand, *Shī'a*, pp. 161 and 202; Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, p. 180.
- 83 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 62.
- 84 Ibid., p. 104.
- 85 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 59.
- 86 Ibid., p. 60.
- 87 Ibid., p. 153.
- 88 Gleave, 'Scriptural Sufism', p. 163.
- 89 Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, pp. 89, 99.
- 90 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 61. Shaykh Bahā'i in 'Arba'in' claims that a jurist, *faqih*, must be endowed with spiritual insights (*ṣāhib baṣīrat*) about the afterworld. The jurist must have the eschatological knowledge (Shaykh Bahā al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Āmilī, *Arba'in*, trans. Shams al-Dīn Khātūn Ābādī (Tehran: Intishārt-i Ḥikmat, 1368 H.Sh./ 1989), p. 44).
- 91 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 60.
- 92 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
- 93 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, pp. 4-5.
- 94 Bayat, 'Anti-Sufism in Qājār Iran', p. 626.
- 95 The term *ijtihād* was not used because there are some Akhbārī scholars and Shaykhī scholars (Neo-Akhbārīs) who emphasised the 'divine faculty' as being one of the qualifications for issuing religious verdicts.
- 96 Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, *Misbāḥ al-Sharī'a wa Miftāḥ al-Ḥaqqīqa*, trans. 'Abbas 'Azizī (Qum: Intishārāti Salāt, 1383 A. Hsh/ 2004), pp. 182-184.
- 97 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 441-446.
- 98 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 22.
- 99 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
- 100 Ibid., p. 22.
- 101 Ibid., pp. 22-23.
- 102 Ibid., p. 14.
- 103 Ibid., p. 15.
- 104 Ibid., p. 16.
- 105 Ibid., p. 22.
- 106 Sarrāj, *al-Lum'a*, pp. 257-258.

- 107 Qushayrī, *Risālih Qushayrīya*, pp. 346-354.
- 108 Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-‘ibād* (Tehran: Intishārāti Tūs, 1368 A. Hsh. / 1989), pp. 145-152.
- 109 Hujwīrī narrates from Abū al-Sirrī Mansūr ibn ‘Ammār that God the Transcendent had set the hearts of gnostics (*‘arifān*) as the place of dhikr (Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, p. 193). He also narrates from Abū Bakr Muḥammad Wāsiṭī about the dhikr and the wayfarers practising dhikr (*dhākīr*) (Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, pp. 235-236).
- 110 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir’āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 160-161.
- 111 Ibid., pp. 207-208.
- 112 Rāzī, *Mirṣād*, p. 146.
- 113 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir’āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 161-162.
- 114 Ibid., pp. 247-249.
- 115 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 112.
- 116 Rāzī, *Mirṣād*, p. 150.
- 117 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 105.
- 118 Ibid., p. 107.
- 119 Ibid., pp. 109-111.
- 120 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir’āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 163-166.
- 121 Ibid., p. 229.
- 122 Ibid., p. 167.
- 123 Ibid., pp. 207-208.
- 124 Ibid., p. 209.
- 125 Ibid., pp. 211-214.
- 126 Ibid., pp. 214-215.
- 127 Rāzī, *Mirṣād*, p. 149.
- 128 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 81; Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir’āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 176-177; Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā’il*, pp. 132-133.
- 129 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir’āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 177-179.
- 130 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā’il*, pp. 149-150.
- 131 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 83.
- 132 Ibid., pp. 84-85.
- 133 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā’il*, pp. 5, 132-133.
- 134 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 86.
- 135 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir’āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 252.
- 136 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 112.
- 137 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir’āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 252-253.
- 138 Ibid., pp. 254-255.
- 139 Ibid., pp. 260-261.

- 140 Anzali, ‘Safavid Shi‘ism’, p. 240; Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 116; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarāḳ*, vol. III, p. 163. For further information about ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Damāwandī see Anzali, ‘Safavid Shi‘ism’, pp. 233-242.
- 141 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir‘āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 262-264.
- 142 Ibid., pp. 267-269.
- 143 Ibid., pp. 270-271.
- 144 Ibid., p. 255.
- 145 Ibid., p. 274.
- 146 Ibid., p. 218.
- 147 Ibid., pp. 257-258.
- 148 Ibid., pp. 275-276.
- 149 A well known Akhbārī scholar and student of Majlisī I (Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, p. 172).
- 150 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā‘il*, p. 5.
- 151 Ibid.
- 152 Said Amir Arjomand, ‘Religious Extremism (*ghuluww*), Ṣūfism and Sunnism in Safavid Iran: 1501-1722’, in *Journal of Asian Heritage*; 15, I (Wiesbaden: Journal of Asian Heritage, 1981), p. 1; Lewisohn, ‘Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān’, pp. 21-35.
- 153 Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1988), p. xiii.
- 154 Arjomand, ‘Religious Extremism (Ghuluww)’, p. 34.
- 155 Āmulī, *Jāmi‘ al-asrār*, p. 221.
- 156 Arjomand, ‘Religious Extremism (Ghuluww)’, pp. 4-5.
- 157 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā‘il*, pp. 6, 14.
- 158 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
- 159 Muhammad Isa Waley, ‘Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism’, in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism: Classical Persian Sufism from its origin to Rumi (700-1300)*, Vol. I (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 1999), pp. 535-538.
- 160 Sarrāj, *al-Lum‘a*, pp. 107-108.
- 161 Qushayrī, *Risāla Qushayrīyya*, pp. 288-293.
- 162 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir‘āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 194.
- 163 Ibid., p. 301.
- 164 Ibid., pp. 303-308, 194.
- 165 Ibid., 197.
- 166 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā‘il*, p. 89.
- 167 Ibid., p. 96.
- 168 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir‘āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 189.

- 169 Ibid., pp. 167-168.
- 170 Ibid., pp. 168-169.
- 171 Ibid., p. 241.
- 172 Ibid., p. 242.
- 173 William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 108.
- 174 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 244.
- 175 For further information about these terms see Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 43-45; Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, *The Psychology of Sufism* (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publication, 1993).
- 176 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 144-146.
- 177 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 246.
- 178 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, pp. 61-66.
- 179 Ibid., p. 126.
- 180 For further information about this famous poem by Abū al-Qāsim Rāz-i Shīrāzī (d. 1285/1869), a Dhahabī master of the 17th century, see Leonard Lewisohn, 'The Qawā'im al-anwār of Rāz-i Shīrāzī (d. 1869) and Shī'ite Sufism in Qājār Persia', in *Islam in the Indo-Iranian World during the Modern Epoch*, eds. Denis Hermann and Fabrizio Speziale (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag-IFRI, 2010), pp. 67-89.
- 181 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 529-534.
- 182 Ibid., p. 247.
- 183 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, pp. 67-68.
- 184 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 247-248.
- 185 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, pp. 61-66; Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 248-249. Ibn 'Arabī in this sense, following the famous *ḥadīth* to this effect, speaks of the heart as being the divine Throne (*al-'arsh*) (Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 107; Āmulī, *Jāmi' al-asrār*, p. 544).
- 186 Ian Richard Netton, *Allāh Transcendent* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994), p. 268.
- 187 Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, trans. Peter Kingsley (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1993), p. 290.
- 188 Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in Sūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 25-29.
- 189 Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī* (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1993), p. 5.
- 190 Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p. 15.

- 191 Cited by William Chittick from *Futūḥāt* (Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 80).
- 192 Ibid., pp. 80-90.
- 193 *Fuṣūṣ* Cited by Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, p.112.
- 194 Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp. 9, 58, 69; Robert Wisnovsky, 'One Aspect of the Akbarian Turn in Shī'ī Theology', in A. Shihadeh (ed.), *Sufism and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 53.
- 195 Chittick, *The Sufi*, pp. 9, 58, 69; Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, p. 135.
- 196 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 27.
- 197 Ibid., p. 33.
- 198 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 500-501.
- 199 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 37.
- 200 Momen, *Introduction*, p. 131.
- 201 Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim Qumī, 'Masā'il ar-Rukniyya', in S.H. Modaressi Tabātabā'ī (ed.), *Qumnamih* (Qum: Khayyām Publication, 1985).
- 202 Qumī, 'Masā'il ar-Rukniyya', pp. 330-331, 357-360.
- 203 Ibid., pp. 333-334.
- 204 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 73.
- 205 Qumī, 'Masā'il ar-Rukniyya', p. 331.
- 206 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 27.
- 207 Ibid., p. 45.
- 208 Ibid., pp. 47-51.
- 209 Ibid., p. 27.
- 210 Ibid., p. 32.
- 211 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 502-504.
- 212 Ibid., pp. 71-73.
- 213 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 47-48.
- 214 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 48.
- 215 Wisnovsky, 'One aspect of the Akbarian turn in Shī'ī theology', p. 55.
- 216 Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, p. 89.
- 217 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p 50.
- 218 Ibid., p. 51.
- 219 Ibid., p. 63.
- 220 Qur'ān, 7:156.
- 221 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 52.
- 222 Murtidā Muṭaharī, *Sharḥ-i Mabsūṭ-i Manzūma*, vol. I (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmat, 1367 A. Hsh./1988), p. 246.
- 223 Ibid., p. 43.
- 224 Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, p. 154.

- 225 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 46.
- 226 Ibid., p. 54.
- 227 Ibid., p. 57.
- 228 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 137.
- 229 Ibid., p. 138.
- 230 Ibid., pp. 137-138.
- 231 Ibid., p. 142.
- 232 Ibid., p. 139-140.
- 233 Wisnovsky, 'One Aspect of the Akbarian Turn in Shi'ī Theology', p. 51.
- 234 Ibid., pp. 54-56; Āmulī, *Jāmi' al-asrār*, pp. 134, 137.
- 235 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, pp. 130-131.
- 236 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 539.
- 237 Ibid., pp. 540, 546-548.
- 238 Ibid., pp. 550-551.
- 239 Ibid., pp. 552-554.
- 240 Ibid., p. 554.
- 241 Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 168.
- 242 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p.132.
- 243 Ibid., p. 33.
- 244 Āmulī, *Jāmi' al-asrār*, p. 307.
- 245 Ibid., p. 461.
- 246 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, pp. 133-134.
- 247 Ibid., p. 134.
- 248 Ibid., p. 135.
- 249 Āmulī, *Jāmi' al-asrār*, p. 125.
- 250 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 598-600.
- 251 Ibid., p. 600.
- 252 Ibid., pp. 607-608.
- 253 Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 34.
- 254 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 535-538.
- 255 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, pp. 36-37.
- 256 Ibid., p. 71.
- 257 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 521-524.
- 258 Ibid., p. 527.
- 259 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, pp. 38, 41, 42.
- 260 Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, p. 238.
- 261 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 56.
- 262 Ibid., p. 57.
- 263 Ibid.

- 264 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, p. 541.
- 265 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasāʿil*, p. 58.
- 266 Ibid., p. 58.
- 267 Ibid., p. 55.
- 268 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasāʿil*, p. 71.
- 269 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirʾāt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 548-549.
- 270 Ibid., pp. 275-277.
- 271 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, p. 175.
- 272 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasāʿil*, p. 58.
- 273 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 75.
- 274 Ibid., pp. 78-79.
- 275 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirʾāt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 194.
- 276 Ibid., p. 197.
- 277 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, pp. 130-131.
- 278 Ibid., pp. 135, 137.
- 279 Ibid., p. 143.
- 280 Referring to Sura 53:9.
- 281 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 144.
- 282 Ibid., pp. 146-147.
- 283 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirʾāt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 167-168.
- 284 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasāʿil*, p. 87.
- 285 Ibid., p. 43.
- 286 Ibid., p. 88.
- 287 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirʾāt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 120-123.
- 288 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasāʿil*, p. 3.
- 289 Ibid., p. 107.
- 290 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirʾāt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 33-34.
- 291 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasāʿil*, pp. 3, 7.
- 292 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasāʿil*, pp. 3, 7; Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirʾāt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 35.
- 293 Shaykh al-Saduq, *al-Tawḥīd*, II, p. 289.
- 294 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasāʿil*, p. 87.
- 295 Ibid., p. 16.
- 296 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirʾāt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 12.
- 297 Ibid., p. 13.
- 298 Ibid.
- 299 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasāʿil*, pp. 17-20.
- 300 Ibid., p. 18.
- 301 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
- 302 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirʾāt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 92-96.

- 303 Ibid., pp. 14-16.
- 304 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 14-16.
- 305 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 88-89.
- 306 Āmulī, *Jāmi' al-Asrār*, pp. 36-41.
- 307 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 87-89.
- 308 Ibid., pp. 150-151.
- 309 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 21.
- 310 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 114.
- 311 Ibid., pp. 115-116.
- 312 Ibid., pp. 104-105.
- 313 Ibid., pp. 128-129.
- 314 Ibid., pp. 147-148.
- 315 Ibid., p. 127.
- 316 Ibid., p. 125.
- 317 Ibid., pp. 377-378.
- 318 Ibid., p. 382.
- 319 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 106.
- 320 Ibid., p. 14.
- 321 Ibid., p. 106.
- 322 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 106-109.
- 323 Ibid., p. 125.
- 324 Ibid., pp. 128-130.
- 325 Ibid., pp. 133-135.
- 326 Ibid., pp. 135-139.
- 327 Ibid., pp. 148-149.
- 328 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 3, 7.
- 329 Ibid., p. 20.
- 330 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p.88.
- 331 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 8-11.
- 332 Ibid., pp. 41-43.
- 333 Ibid., p. 43.
- 334 Ibid.
- 335 Ibid., pp. 5, 7.
- 336 Ibid., pp. 50, 52-53, 54-58.
- 337 Ibid., pp. 79-80.
- 338 Ibid., pp. 81-86.
- 339 Ibid., pp. 96-98.
- 340 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 21-22.
- 341 Ibid., p. 24.

- 342 Ibid., p. 78.
- 343 Ibid., p. 24.
- 344 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqq*, p. 99.
- 345 For further information about the Nuḡṭawīyya see 'Aliriḡā Dhikāwatī Qarāquzlūw, *Junbish-i Nuḡṭawīyya* (Qum: Nashr-i Adyān, 1383 A. Hsh./2004).
- 346 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 11.
- 347 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
- 348 Ibid., p. 25.
- 349 Ibid.
- 350 Ibid., p. 26.
- 351 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 78.
- 352 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 211.
- 353 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 244; Nafisī, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimā'i wa Siyāsī*, vol. I, p. 443; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 260; Zarrinkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 341.

Chapter 6

- 1 Hā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 437; Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 709; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 972; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 222; Zarrinkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 342.
- 2 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 2.
- 3 Sayyid 'Alī Tabātabā'ī wrote one of the most important commentaries among Uṣūlī Shī'ites called '*Rīyāḡ al-masā'il*' in justification of Uṣūlī jurisprudence. Cf. Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 38.
- 4 For further information about Muḡammad Bāqir Bihbahānī see Tunikābūnī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 248-255; Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 35-38.
- 5 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 2.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 709; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 4 and 973; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 222.
- 8 The Sufi notion of the inadequacy of external knowledge (*'ilm-i zāhir*) and the shortcomings of the seminary sciences for the attainment of spiritual self-realisation were discussed in Chapter Two.
- 9 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 973; Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 3; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 275; Shīrwānī, *Rīyāḡ*, p. 83.
- 10 *Ṭalab* is a technical term in Sufism referring to the first stage of the spiritual path (*ṭarīḡa*), which is seeking for God. 'Aṭṭār dedicated a large section of

- his epic *mathnawī* poem, the *Mantiq al-ṭayr*, to explaining the ‘valley of spiritual search’ (*wādī-yi ṭalab*). For further information see Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ‘Aṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Mantiq al-ṭayr*, ed. Sayyid Ṣādiq Guwharīn (Tehran: Intishārāt-i ‘ilmī wa farhangī, 1378 A. Hsh./1999), pp. 180-181.
- 11 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 973; Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 3; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 222.
 - 12 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 25.
 - 13 In *Kashf al-ma‘ārif*, Shīrwānī says that for 27 years he travelled in search of the truth (Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 25). However, in *Bustān*, he says that it was for a period of 36 years (Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1076).
 - 14 Hā’irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 437; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1076 and 974-975; Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 25; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 342.
 - 15 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 975.
 - 16 Mast ‘Alī Shāh mentioned this name but he meant either Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī, known as Wahīd, or his son Āqā Muḥammad ‘Alī Kirmānshāhī, known as ‘Sufi-killer’ (*Ṣūfī kush*).
 - 17 Shaykh Ja‘far Najafī is among the famous Shī‘ite seminary scholars of Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s era. Ja‘far Najafī, later known as *Kāshif al-ghitā’*, wrote *Kashf al-Ghitā’*, which later became the classic text for Shī‘ite curricula (*Amanat, Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 37-42).
 - 18 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 16; Shīrwānī, *Rīyāḍ*, p. 83.
 - 19 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1076 and 1301-1302; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 223.
 - 20 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 439.
 - 21 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 252; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā’iq*, p. 275.
 - 22 ‘Fars Province in south-central Iran was the heart of the Achaemenian empire (559-330 B.C.) founded by Cyrus the Great, and had its capital at Pasargadae . . . Not until the 18th century, under the Zand dynasty (1750-79) of southern Iran, did Fars again become the heart of an empire, this time with its capital at Shiraz’ (Javad Yassavoli, *Iran, Land and People* (Tehran: Yassavoli Publication, 2004), p. 34). Therefore, the province of Fārs enjoyed relative prosperity and tranquility during Mast ‘Alī Shāh’s era.
 - 23 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 976; Shīrwānī, *Rīyāḍ*, p. 84.
 - 24 Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 223; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 342.
 - 25 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā’iq*, vol. III, p. 287; Hā’irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 437; Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 342.
 - 26 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā’iq*, vol. III, pp. 285-286; Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat, *Majma‘ al-fusahā* (Manuscript, private collection in the author’s possession, n.d.), p. 83.

- 27 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 16.
- 28 Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 507; Todd Lawson, 'Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Twelver Shi'ism: Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī on Fayḍ Kāshānī (the *Risālat al-'ilmiyya*); in R. Gleaves (ed.), *Religion and Society in Qājār Iran* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005).
- 29 Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, p. 507; Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I', p. 449.
- 30 Hā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, p. 437.
- 31 Ibid., pp. 438-439.
- 32 Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I, p. 446.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 477.
- 35 Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism', Part I, p. 446.
- 36 Zayn al-Ābidīn Shīrwānī (Mast 'Alī Shāh), *Kashf al-Ma'ārif* (Tehran: Chāpkhānih Firdawsī, 1350 A. Hsh./1971).
- 37 Ibid., p. 1.
- 38 Shīrwānī, *Rīyāḍ* (Tehran: Kitāb Furūshī-yi Sa'dī, 1339/ 1960).
- 39 Homayouni, *Tārīkh*, p. 183.
- 40 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 286.
- 41 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq al-Siyāḥa* (Tehran: Sāzmān-i Chāp-i Danishgāh, 1348 A. Hsh./ 1969).
- 42 Shīrwānī, *Bustān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥaqīqat, 2010).
- 43 Ibid., p. 21.
- 44 Ibid., p. 20.
- 45 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 283.
- 46 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 21.
- 47 Muḥammad ibn 'Abdul-Allāh al-Ḥākīm al-Nayshābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, 4 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat an-Naṣr al-Ḥaditha, n.d.), pp. 150-151; Aḥmad ibn Ḥajārah al-Makkī, *aṣ-Ṣawā'iq al-Muhriqa*, ed. 'Abdul-Wahhāb 'Abdul-Laṭīf, (Cairo: Maktab al-Qāhira, 1375/ 1955), pp. 150, 184; Momen, *Introduction*, p. 17.
- 48 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 30.
- 49 For further information about the signs of the return of the Mahdī see Sayyid Ibrāhīm Musawī, *Ithbāt al-Ḥujja wa 'alā'im al-zuhūr* (Tehran: Kitābforūshī Muṣṭafawī, 1344 A. Hsh./1965); Sayyid Aḥmad Ḥusaynī

- Ardikānī, *Surūr al-muminīn* (Qum: Markaz-i al-Iḥyā' al-tarāth al-Islāmī, 1294 A. H./1877); Momen, *Introduction*, pp. 171.
- 50 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1694-1699; Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, pp. 30-31.
- 51 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 31. The subject of 'intercession' was explained in Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh's chapter. For further information about intercession and Shi'ism see Muḥammad ibn Nu'mān Mufid, *Awā'il al-maqaṁāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Mufid, 1414 A. H./ 1993), pp. 79-101; Muḥammad ibn Ḥassan Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fi al-tafsīr Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-tarāth al-'Arabī, date unknown), pp. 213-214; Ḥassan Ṭabrasī, *Majma' al-bayān fi tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Mu'asisat al-a'lāmī lil-maṭbū'āt, 1415 A. H./1994), p. 201.
- 52 Some of the differences between these schools of Shi'ism were explained in the chapter on Majdhūb.
- 53 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1498. The general beliefs of the Akhbārī were explained in the chapter on Majdhūb.
- 54 Ibid., p. 1501.
- 55 Royce, *Mīr Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh and the Ni'mat Allāhī Revival*, p. 13.
- 56 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 32.
- 57 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
- 58 Ibid., pp. 24-47.
- 59 Ibid., p. 51.
- 60 Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 79.
- 61 Ibid., p. 80.
- 62 Ibid., p. 61.
- 63 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1863.
- 64 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1863-1864; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 564.
- 65 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1863.
- 66 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1865; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, pp. 564-565.
- 67 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1868.
- 68 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1862-1880; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, pp. 569-570.
- 69 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 822; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 244. For further information about *fanā'* see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 130-148.
- 70 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 823; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, pp. 244-245.
- 71 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 825; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 245.
- 72 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 310; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 245. The Kūfiyān (People of Kufa) were known as traitors to the second Shi'ite Imam. For further information see Ḥusayn Wā'iz Kāshifi, *Rawḍat al-shuhadā'* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Islāmīyya, date unknown).
- 73 Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p. 13.

- 74 Dhabīḥu'llāh Ṣafā, *Tārīkh-i adabīyāt-i Īrān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Firdaws, 1373 A. Hsh./ 1994), vol. V, pp. 203-204. Cited by Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism: Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750)*, Vol. III (Oxford: One-world Publications, 1999), p. 74, n. 53.
- 75 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 824.
- 76 Momen, *Introduction*, pp. 147-148.
- 77 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 824.
- 78 Momen, *Introduction*, p. 149; Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-Mubīn* (Kerman: Chāpkhānih Sa'ādat, 1354 A. Hsh./ 1975 C.E.), Vol. I, p. 281.
- 79 Rūmī, *The Mathnawī*, I, pp. 1461-1462.
- 80 *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 1851-1855.
- 81 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 824-825.
- 82 Chodkiewicz, *The Seal of the Saints*, p. 30.
- 83 Nur al-Dīn Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī, *Kullīyāt Ash'ār-i Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī*, ed. Dr. Jawād Nūrbakhsh (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khāniqāh-i Ni'matullāhī, 1361 A. Hsh./1982), p. 754.
- 84 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 827-830.
- 85 Āmulī, *Jāmi' al-asrār*, p. 384.
- 86 *Ibid.*
- 87 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 827.
- 88 Chodkiewicz, *The Seal of the Saints*, pp. 27-29.
- 89 Āmulī, *Jāmi'*, pp. 391 and 400-437.
- 90 Cited by Leonard Lewisohn, 'In Quest of Annihilation: Imaginalization and Mystical Death in the *Tamhīdāt* of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadhānī', in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism: Classical Persian Sufism from its origin to Rumi (700-1300)*, Vol. I (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), p. 314.
- 91 ⁹ Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 28.
- 92 Nasrullah Pourjavadi, *Ru'yat māh dar āsimān* (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 1375 A. Hsh./ 1996 C.E), pp. 51-54.
- 93 *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.
- 94 Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 80; Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sulamī, *Tafsīr Ja'far al-Ṣādiq naghlan 'an haqā'iq al-tafsīr al-Sulamī*, eds. Paul Nwiya, Vol. I (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 1369 A. Hsh./1990 C.E.).
- 95 Pourjavadi, *Ru'yat māh*, p. 64.
- 96 *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 68.

- 97 Abū Ḥamid Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'ulūm dīn, rub' munjīyāt*, vol. III, eds. Ḥusayn Khadiw Jam, trans. Mu'ayid al-Dīn Muḥammad Khawrazmī (Tehran: Bunyād Farhang Īrān, 1359 A. Hsh./ 1980 C.E.), pp. 870, 880.
- 98 ⁰⁶ Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 29.
- 99 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 3.
- 100 Ibid., pp. 6-7. The early Shi'ite mystic and philosopher Āmulī, who was significant in the formation of Shi'ite Sufi beliefs later on and an influence on Majdhūb and Mast 'Alī, believed that real knowledge is in the hearts of prophets, saints and realised ones; it is the secret of unity and the reality of all beings (Āmulī, *Jāmi'*, pp. 520-522).
- 101 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 3.
- 102 Ibid., p. 24.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1497.
- 105 Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Sa'd Kāzīrūnī, known as Muḥaqqiq Dawānī, was one of the *Ishrāqī* philosophers of the School of Shīrāz. For further information about this philosopher see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present; Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), pp. 197-199.
- 106 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1515-1516.
- 107 Abū al-Qāsim Pāyandih, *Nahj al-fisāḥa* (Tehran: Intishārāti Jāwīdān, 1374 A. Hsh./ 1995), p. 580.
- 108 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, pp. 4-5.
- 109 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1496.
- 110 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, pp. 4 and 24; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 451.
- 111 He was known for cursing Mullā Ṣadrā, Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī and other great followers of the Akbarian school of thought within Shi'ite culture. In his speeches he used to repeat the damnation of all Sufis (Tunikābunī, *Qīṣaṣ*, p. 84).
- 112 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1301.
- 113 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, pp. 48-49.
- 114 Ibid., p. 50.
- 115 Āmulī, *Jāmi'*, p. 390.
- 116 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, pp. 48-49.
- 117 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1502.
- 118 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, pp. 52-53.
- 119 Ibid., p. 6.
- 120 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 973.
- 121 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 52.

- 122 Ibid., pp. 10, 25.
- 123 For further information about the Spiritual Path (*ṭarīqat*) see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension*, pp. 99-186.
- 124 For further information see Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. II (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 188-192.
- 125 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 15.
- 126 Ibid., p. 12.
- 127 Ibid., 14.
- 128 Qurʾān: 2:170.
- 129 Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 29.
- 130 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 11.
- 131 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ*, pp. 32-33.
- 132 Ibid., pp. 36-37.
- 133 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1040.
- 134 Ibid., p. 1520.
- 135 Ibid., pp. 1524-1525.
- 136 Ibid., p. 1525-1526.
- 137 Ibid., p. 1531.
- 138 Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 66.
- 139 Ḥamid Farzām, *Tahqīq dar aḥwāl wa naqd athār va afkār Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī* (Tehran: Surūsh, 1379 A. Hsh./ 2000), pp. 613-620.
- 140 Fakhr al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn Wā'iz Kāshifī, *Rashahāt-i 'ayn al-ḥayāt*, ed. 'Alī Asghar Mu'iniyān (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Nikūkārī Nūriyānī, 1977).
- 141 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1042. In *Kashf al-Ma'ārif*, Mast 'Alī does not refer to the book by name (Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 21).
- 142 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 21; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1042.
- 143 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1362; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 39.
- 144 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 311.
- 145 Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 160.
- 146 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 872.
- 147 Ibid., p. 22.
- 148 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 22; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, pp. 311-312.
- 149 Murtidā Muṭaharī, *Sharḥ-i Mabsūṭ*, p. 246.
- 150 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 224.
- 151 Ibid., pp. 224-232.
- 152 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1041-1042; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 449.
- 153 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 76.

- 154 Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*, p. 507; Lawson, 'Orthodoxy and heterodoxy'.
- 155 Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*, p. 507; Lewisohn, 'An introduction to the history of modern Persian Sufism, Part I', p. 449.
- 156 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 524.
- 157 The author of "*Tabṣarat al-'awām*" lived during the tenth-eleventh centuries (5th-6th A.H.).
- 158 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, pp. 312-313.
- 159 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 18; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 450.
- 160 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, pp. 19-21; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 450.
- 161 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 19; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 450.
- 162 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, pp. 19-20.
- 163 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 164 Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 163.
- 165 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1110.
- 166 *Ibid.*, p. 1070.
- 167 *Ibid.*, p. 872.
- 168 Literally means 'those who makes themselves alike'.
- 169 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 315; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1052-1053; Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 169.
- 170 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 315; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1053; Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 169.
- 171 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 315; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1053; Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 169.
- 172 For further information see Muḥammad Reza Shafī'i Kadkani, *Qalandariyya dar tārikh: Digardisihāy-i yik idi'ulugy* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sukhan, 1386 A. Hsh./2007); Sayyid Abū Ṭālib Mīr'ābidīnī and Mīhrān Afshārī, *Āyīn qalandari* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i farārawān, 1374 A. Hsh./1995).
- 173 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, pp. 315-316; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1054; Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 169.
- 174 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 316; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1054; Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 170.
- 175 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 316; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1055-1056; Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 169.
- 176 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 315; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1053; Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 169.
- 177 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 316; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1054; Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 170.
- 178 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 316; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1054-1055; Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 170.
- 179 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 316; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1055-1056; Shīrwānī, *Riyāḍ*, p. 170.

- 180 For further information see 'Allāma Qāḍī Nūrullāh Shūshtarī, *Majālis al-Mu'minīn* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Islāmīyya, 1377 A. Hsh./1998 C.E.), vol. I.
- 181 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 1834-1840.
- 182 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 342.
- 183 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 95-96.
- 184 *Ibid.*, p. 889.
- 185 *Ibid.*
- 186 *Ibid.*, p. 941.
- 187 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 277.
- 188 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 976.
- 189 Hidāyat, *majma' al-fusahā*, p. 83.
- 190 Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran*, p. 109; Muḥammad 'Alī Mu'allim, *Makārim ul-Āthār dar Aḥwāl-i Rijāl-i dawra Qājār* (Iṣfahān: mu'asisih nashr makhṭūṭāt-i Iṣfahān, 1337 A.H./1958 C.E.), vol. I, p. 18.

Chapter 7

- 1 Graham, 'The Ni'matullāhī Order under Safavid Supression', p. 173.
- 2 Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 14.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p.71; Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 10; Khuyī, *Ādāb*, p. 342; Pāzūkī, 'qarn shishum', p. 43; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 661; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 206.
- 4 Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 170-171.
- 5 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 93.
- 6 It was only during the 16th century that Shāh 'Abbās I encouraged seminary Shi'ism, and around the year 1597 he built the first Shi'ite seminary school in Iṣfahān (Momen, *Introduction*, p. 111).
- 7 Between 1433 and 1435.
- 8 Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh*, p. 219; Hidāyat, *Uṣūl* (Tehran), p. 547; Īzadgushasb, *Nūr al-abṣār*, p. 11; Shīrāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, pp. 170-171; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 264; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 206.
- 9 Pourjavady and Wilson, *Kings of Love*, p. 94.
- 10 Momen, *Introduction*, p. 127.
- 11 Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 45.
- 12 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1770.
- 13 Perry, *Karim Khan Zand*, p. 122.
- 14 Ḥā'irī, *Nakhustīn*, pp. 356 and 360; Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimā'i wa Siyāsī*, vol. I, pp. 100 and 107; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 217.
- 15 Algar, *State and Religion.*, p. 44.

- 16 M. Samī'ī and Kaywān Ṣadūqī, *Du Risāla dar Tārīkhi Jadīd-i Taṣawwuf* (Tehran: Pāzhang Publication, 1370 A. Hsh./ 1991), p. 63.
- 17 Shirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, p. 226.
- 18 Ibid., p. 222.
- 19 Ibid., p. 226.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid., p. 223.
- 22 Elder, *Tārīkh-i mīssiun Āmrīkāī*, pp. 9-15; Waterfield, *Christians*, pp. 79-84.
- 23 Hellot, 'The Western Missionaries in Azerbaijani Society', p. 287.
- 24 Shirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, vol. III, p. 227. The term *fitna*, translated more literally as 'trial', indicates the danger of Martyn's beliefs for the Shī'ite society. *Fitna* is a great trial and tribulation experienced by a Muslim society; the Islamic society (*Umma*) was put to the test to find the straight path to God: Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994), p. 388.
- 25 Ibid., p. 227.
- 26 Ḥusayn 'Alī Shāh, *Radd-i Padrī*, pp. 187-188.
- 27 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 380; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 416.
- 28 Kabūdarāhangī, 'Aqā'id', p. 3.
- 29 Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, p. 380; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 416-417; Hidāyat, *Rīyāḍ*, p. 638; Īzadgushasb, *Shams*, p. 79; Sulṭānī, *Rahbarān*, p. 219; Shirāzī, *Ṭarā'iq*, p. 258; Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 416-417.
- 30 Momen, *Introduction*, pp. 224-225; Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān', p. 81.
- 31 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, p. 146.
- 32 Gleave, 'Scriptural Sufism and Scriptural Anti-Sufism', p. 160.
- 33 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 104.
- 34 Ibid., p. 62.
- 35 Ibid., p. 18; Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirā't*, p. 60.
- 36 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 19.
- 37 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirā't al-Ḥaqq*, p. 60.
- 38 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, pp. 21-22.
- 39 Ibid., pp. 13-16.
- 40 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirā't*, pp. 207-208.
- 41 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 105.
- 42 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirā't*, pp. 211-214.
- 43 Kabūdarāhangī, *Marāḥil*, p. 86; Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirā't*, pp. 176-177.
- 44 Ibid., pp. 252-253.
- 45 Ibid., pp. 262-264.

- 46 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 149-151.
 47 Ibid., pp. 87-88.
 48 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirā't*, pp. 120-123.
 49 Kabūdarāhangī, *Rasā'il*, p. 14.
 50 Ibid., pp. 87-89.
 51 Kabūdarāhangī, *Mirā't*, pp. 104-129.
 52 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, pp. 32-33.
 53 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 823-825; Shīrwānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, pp. 244-245.
 54 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, p. 1497.
 55 Shīrwānī, *Kashf*, p. 14.
 56 Ibid., p. 1521.
 57 Ibid., p. 1498.
 58 Ibid., pp. 1498-1499.
 59 Ibid., p. 1501.
 60 Zarrīnkūb, *Dunbāla*, p. 342.
 61 Shīrwānī, *Bustān*, pp. 95-96.
 62 Ibid., p. 889.
 63 Ibid.
 64 Ibid., p. 941.
 65 Anzali, 'Safavid Shī'ism', p. 257.
 66 Ibid., p. 257.

Afterword

- 1 Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p. 51; Ḥusayn Ruḥānīnīzhād, *Wilāyat dar 'irfān 'irfān* (Tehran, Sāzmān-i Intishārāt-i pazhūhishgāh-i farhang wa andīshih Islāmī, 1387 A. Hsh./ 2008), p. 61.
 2 Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, pp. 13, 51.
 3 Nūr 'Alī Shāh, *Majmū'a az āthār*, p. 45; Scharbrodt, 'The *quṭb* as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', p. 42.
 4 Ibid., p. 34.
 5 Ibid., p. 41.
 6 Bayat, 'Anti Sufi', p. 627; Scharbrodt, 'The *quṭb* as Special Representative of the Hidden Imam', p. 41.
 7 Ibid., p. 35.
 8 For further information about current persecution of Sufis see Leonard Lewisohn, 'Extremes of the Study of Mystic Man in Modern Iran: Review Article', in *Iranian Studies* (London: Routledge, 2009), vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 285-310.

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